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"I will go," she said. "You think it best?"
"Yes," he answered. "I think it best." She drew a sharp breath and was about to speak when the countess interrupted her.
"What!" she cried. "You are going away tonight like this, without any luggage! And pray what is to become of me?"
"You can join them in A—tea," said Paul in his quietest tone. "Or you can live in Paris at last."

CHAPTER XXXVII.
PAUL went out and inspected the harness by the light of a stable lantern held in the mittened hand of a yemshchick. He had reasons of his own for absenting himself while Catrina bade her mother farewell. He was rather afraid of these women.

Presently the door opened and Catrina came quickly out, followed by a servant carrying a small hand bag.

Paul could not see Catrina's face. She was veiled and furred to the eyelids. Without a word the girl took her seat in the sleigh, and the servant prepared the bearskin rugs. Paul gathered up the reins and took his place beside her. A few moments were required to draw up the rugs and fasten them with straps; then Paul gave the word, and the horses leaped forward.

As they sped down the avenue Catrina turned and looked her last on Thors. For nearly half an hour they drove in silence. Only the whistle of the iron-bound runners on the powdery snow, the creak of the warming leather on the horses, the regular breathing of the team, broke the stillness of the forest. Paul hoped against hope that Catrina was asleep. She sat by his side, her arm touching his sleeve, her weight thrown against him at such times as the sleigh bumped over a fallen tree or some inequality of the ground.

"Paul," said the woman at his side quite suddenly, breaking the silence of the great forest where they had grown to life and sorrow almost side by side.

"Yes."
"I want to know how this all came about. It is not my father's doing. There is something quick and practical and wise which suggests you and Herr Steinmetz. I suspect that you have done this—you and he—for our happiness."

"No," answered Paul. "It was mere accident. Your father heard of our trouble in Kiev. You know him—always impulsive and reckless. He never thinks of the danger. He came to help us."

Catrina smiled wanly.
"But it is for our happiness, is it not, Paul? You know that it is. That is why you have done it. I have not had time yet to realize what I am doing, all that is going to happen. But if it is your doing I think I shall be content to abide by the result."

"It is not my doing," replied Paul, who did not like her wistful tone. "It is the outcome of circumstances. Circumstances have been ruling us all lately. We seem to have no time to consider, but only to do that which seems best for the moment."

"And it is best that I should go to America with my father?" Her voice was composed and quiet. In the dim light he could not see her white lips; indeed he never looked.

"It seems so to me, undoubtedly," he said. "In doing this, so far as we can see at present, it seems certain that you are saving your father from Siberia."

Catrina nodded. "As you put it," she said, "it is clearly my duty. There is a sort of consolation in that, however painful it may be at the time. I suppose it is consolatory to look back and think that at all events one did one's duty."

"I don't know," answered Paul simply. "I suppose so."
"Would father have gone alone?" she asked, with a very human thrill of hope in her voice.

"No," answered Paul steadily; "I think not. But you can ask him."
They had never been so distant as they were at this moment—so cold, such mere acquaintances. And they had played together in one nursery.

"Of course, if that is the case," said the girl, "my duty is quite clear." Paul did not answer at once.

"I am sure of it," he said.
And there the question ended. Catrina Lanovitch, who had never been ruled by those about her, shaped her whole life unquestioningly upon an opinion.

They did not speak for some time, and then it was the girl who broke the silence.

"I have a confession to make and a favor to ask," she said bluntly.

Paul's attitude denoted attention, but he said nothing.

"It is about the Baron de Chauville," she said.

"Ah!"

"I am a coward," she went on. "I did not know it before. It is rather humiliating. I have been trying for some weeks to tell you something, but I am horribly afraid of it. I am afraid you will despise me. I have been a fool—worse, perhaps. I never knew that Claude de Chauville was the sort of person he is. I allowed him to find out things about me which he never should have known—my own private affairs, I mean. Then I became frightened, and he tried to make use of me. I think he makes use of everybody. You know what he is."

"Yes," answered Paul, "I know."

"He hates you," she went on. "I do not want to make mischief, but I suppose he wanted to marry the princess. His vanity was wounded because she preferred you, and he wanted to be avenged upon you. Wounds to the vanity never heal. I do not know how he did it, Paul, but he made me help him in his schemes. I could have prevented you from going to the bear hunt, for I

inspected him then. I could have prevented my mother from inviting him to Thors. I could have put a thousand difficulties in his way, but I did not. I helped him. I told him about the people and who were the worst—who had been influenced by the nihilists and who would not work. I allowed him to stay on here and carry out his plan. All this trouble among the peasants is his handiwork. He has organized a regular rising against you. He is horribly clever. He left us yesterday, but I am convinced that he is in the neighborhood still."

She stopped and reflected. There was something wanting in the story which she could not supply. It was a motive. A half confession is almost an impossibility. When we speak of ourselves it must be all or nothing—preferably nothing.

"I do not know why I did it," she said. "It was a sort of period I went through. I cannot explain. That is the confession."

He gave a little laugh.
"If none of us had worse than that upon our consciences," he answered, "there would be little harm in the world. De Chauville's schemes have only hurried on a crisis which was foreordained. The progress of humanity cannot be stayed. They have tried to stay it in this country. They will go on trying until the crash comes. What is the favor you have to ask?"

"You must leave Osterno," she urged earnestly; "it is unsafe to delay even a few hours. M. de Chauville said there would be no danger. I believed him then, but I do not now. Besides, I know the peasants. They are hard to rouse, but once excited they are uncontrollable. They are afraid of nothing. You must get away tonight."

Paul made no answer.

She turned slowly in her seat and looked into his face by the light of the waning moon.

"Do you mean that you will not go?" He met her glance with his grave, slow smile.

"There is no question of going," he answered. "You must know that."

She did not attempt to persuade. Perhaps there was something in his voice which she as a Russian understood—a ring of that which we call pigheadedness in others.

"It must be splendid to be a man," she said suddenly in a ringing voice. "One feeling in me made me ask you the favor, while another was a sense of gladness at your certain refusal. I wish I was a man. I envy you. You do not know how I envy you, Paul."

"If it is danger you want, you will have more than I in the next week," he answered. "Steinmetz and I knew that you were the only woman in Russia who could get your father safely out of the country. That is why I came for you."

The girl did not answer at once. They were driving on the road again now, and the sleigh was running smoothly.

"I suppose," she said reflectively at length, "that the secret of the enormous influence you exercise over all who come in contact with you is that you drag the best out of every one—the best that is in them."

Paul did not answer.

"What is that light?" she asked suddenly, laying her hand on the thick fur of his sleeve. She was not nervous, but very watchful. "There—straight in front!"

"It is the sleigh," replied Paul, "with your father and Steinmetz. I arranged that they should meet us at the crossroads. You must be at the Volga before daylight. Send the horses on to Tver. I have given you Minna and The Warrior. They can do the journey with one hour's rest, but you must drive them."

Catrina had swayed forward against the bar of the apron in a strange way, for the road was quite smooth. She placed her gloved hands on the bar and held herself upright with a peculiar effort.

"What?" said Paul. For she had made an inarticulate sound.
"Nothing," she answered. Then, after a pause, "I did not know that we were to go so soon. That was all."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE large drawing room was brilliantly lighted. Another weary day had dragged to its close. It was the Tuesday evening, the last Tuesday in March.

The starosta had not been near the castle all day. Steinmetz and Paul had never lost sight of the ladies since breakfast time. They had not ventured out of doors. There was in the atmosphere a sense of foreboding—the stillness of a crisis. Etta had been defiant and silent—a dangerous humor—all day. Maggie had watched Paul's face with steadfast, quiet eyes full of courage, but she knew now that there was danger.

The conversation at breakfast and luncheon had been maintained by Steinmetz—always collected and a little humorous. It was now dinner time. The whole castle was brilliantly lighted, as if for a great assembly of guests.

Maggie was in the drawing room alone. She was leaning one hand and arm on the mantelpiece, looking thoughtfully into the fire. The rustle of silk made her turn her head. It was Etta, beautifully dressed, with a white face and eyes dull with suspense.

"I think it is warmer tonight," said Maggie, urged by a sudden necessity of speech, hampered by a sudden chill at the heart.

"Yes," answered Etta, and she shivered.

For a moment there was a little silence, and Etta looked at the clock. It was ten minutes to 7.

The door opened, and Steinmetz came in. Etta's face hardened; her lips closed with a snap. Steinmetz looked at her and at Maggie. For once he seemed to have no pleasantries ready for use. He walked toward a table

where some books and newspapers lay in pleasant profusion. He was standing there when Paul came into the room. The prince glanced at Maggie. He saw where his wife stood, but he did not look at her.

Steinmetz was writing something on half a sheet of note paper in pencil. He pushed it across the table toward Paul, who drew it nearer to him.

"Are you armed?" were the written words.

Paul crushed the paper in the hollow of his hand and threw it into the fire, where it burned away. He also glanced at the clock. It was five minutes to 7.

Suddenly the door was thrown open, and a manservant rushed in, pale, confused, nervous stricken. He was a giant footman in the gorgeous livery of the Alexis.

"Excellency," he stammered in Russian, "the castle is surrounded—they will kill us—they will burn us out!"

He stopped, abashed before Paul's pointing finger and stony face.

"Leave the room!" said Paul. "You forget yourself."

Through the open doorway to which Paul pointed peered the ashen faces of other servants huddled together like sheep.

"Leave the room!" repeated Paul, and the man obeyed him, walking to the door unsteadily, with quivering chin. On the threshold he paused. Paul stood pointing to the door. He had a poise of the head, some sudden awakening of the blood that had coursed in the veins of hereditary potentates. Maggie looked at him. She had never known him like this. She had known the man; she had never encountered the prince.

The big clock over the castle boomed out the hour, and at the same instant there arose a roar like the voice of the surf on a Malabar shore. There was a crashing of glass almost in the room itself. Already Steinmetz was drawing the curtains closer over the windows in order to prevent the light from filtering through the interstices of the closed shutters.

"Only stones," he said to Paul, with his grim smile; "it might have been bullets."

As if in corroboration of his suggestion the sharp ring of more than one firearm rang out above the dull roar of many voices.

Steinmetz crossed the room to where Etta was standing, white lipped, by the fire. Her clenched hand was gripping Maggie's wrist. She was half hidden behind her cousin. Maggie was looking at Paul. Etta was obviously conscious of Steinmetz's gaze and approach.

"I asked you before to tell me all you knew," he said. "You refused. Will you do it now?"

Etta met his glance for a moment, shrugged her shoulders and turned her back on him. Paul was standing in the open doorway with his back turned toward them—alone. The palace had never looked so vast as it did at that moment—brilliantly lighted, gorgeous, empty.

Through the hail of blows on the stout doors, the rattle of stones at the windows, the prince could hear yells of execration and the wild laughter that is bred of destruction. He turned and entered the room. His face was gray and terrible.

"They have no chance," he said, "of effecting an entrance by force. The lower windows are barred. They have no ladders. Steinmetz and I have seen to that. We have been expecting this for some days."

He turned toward Steinmetz as if seeking confirmation. The din was increasing. When the German spoke he had to shout.

"We can beat them back if we like. We can shoot them down from the windows. But"—he paused, shrugged his shoulders and laughed—"what will you! This prince will not shoot his father's serfs."

"We must leave you," went on Paul. "We must beware of treachery. Whatever happens, we shall not leave the house. If the worst comes, we make our last stand in this room. Whatever happens, stay here till we come."

He left the room, followed by Steinmetz. There were only three doors in the impregnable stone walls—the great entrance, a side door for use in times of deep snow and the small concealed entrance by which the starosta was in the habit of reaching his masters.

For a moment the two men stood at the head of the stairs listening to the wild commotion. They were turning to descend the state stairs when a piercing shriek, immediately drowned by a yell of triumph, broke the silence of the interior of the castle. There was a momentary stillness, followed by another shriek.

"They are in!" said Steinmetz. "The side door!"

And the two men looked at each other with wide eyes full of knowledge.

As they ran to the foot of the broad staircase the tramp of scuffling feet, the roar of angry voices, came through the passages from the back of curtained doorways. The servants' quarters seemed to be pandemonium. The sounds approached.

"Halfway up!" said Paul, and they ran halfway up the broad staircase side by side. There they stood and waited.

In a moment the balize doors were burst open, and a scuffling mass of men and women poured into the hall, a very sewer of humanity.

A yell of execration signaled their recognition of the prince.

"They are mad!" said Steinmetz as the crowd surged forward toward the stairs with waving arms and the dull gleam of steel, with wild faces turned upward, wild mouths breathing hatred and murder.

"It is a chance—it may stop them!" said Steinmetz.

His arm was outstretched steadily. A loud report, a little puff of smoke shooting upward to the gilded ceiling,

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1890—February, March, April, May, June, August and December.

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