

## Chapter XXXI

The sun had come out from behind the pear-tree that had shaded the wagon, and even through the branches that Ustenka had fixed up it scorched the faces of the sleeping girls. Maryanka woke up and began arranging the kerchief on her head. Looking about her, beyond the pear-tree she noticed their lodger, who with his gun on his shoulder stood talking to her father. She nudged Ustenka and smilingly pointed him out to her.

'I went yesterday and didn't find a single one,' Olenin was saying as he looked about uneasily, not seeing Maryanka through the branches.

'Ah, you should go out there in that direction, go right as by compasses, there in a disused vineyard denominated as the Waste, hares are always to be found,' said the cornet, having at once changed his manner of speech.

'A fine thing to go looking for hares in these busy times! You had better come and help us, and do some work with the girls,' the old woman said merrily. 'Now then, girls, up with you!' she cried.

Maryanka and Ustenka under the cart were whispering and could hardly restrain their laughter.

Since it had become known that Olenin had given a horse worth fifty rubles to Lukashka, his hosts had become more amiable and the cornet in particular saw with pleasure his daughter's growing intimacy with Olenin. 'But I don't know how to do the work,' replied Olenin, trying not to look through the green branches under the wagon where he had now noticed Maryanka's blue smock and red kerchief.

'Come, I'll give you some peaches,' said the old woman.

'It's only according to the ancient Cossack hospitality. It's her old woman's silliness,' said the cornet, explaining and apparently correcting his wife's words. 'In Russia, I expect, it's not so much peaches as pineapple jam and preserves you have been accustomed to eat at your pleasure.'

'So you say hares are to be found in the disused vineyard?' asked Olenin. 'I will go there,' and throwing a hasty glance through the green branches he raised his cap and disappeared between the regular rows of green vines.

The sun had already sunk behind the fence of the vineyards, and its broken rays glittered through the translucent leaves when Olenin returned to his host's vineyard. The wind was falling and a cool freshness was beginning to spread around. By some instinct Olenin recognized from afar Maryanka's blue smock among the rows of vine, and, picking grapes on his way, he approached her. His highly excited dog

also now and then seized a low-hanging cluster of grapes in his slobbering mouth. Maryanka, her face flushed, her sleeves rolled up, and her kerchief down below her chin, was rapidly cutting the heavy clusters and laying them in a basket. Without letting go of the vine she had hold of, she stopped to smile pleasantly at him and resumed her work. Olenin drew near and threw his gun behind his back to have his hands free. 'Where are your people? May God aid you! Are you alone?' he meant to say but did not say, and only raised his cap in silence.

He was ill at ease alone with Maryanka, but as if purposely to torment himself he went up to her.

'You'll be shooting the women with your gun like that,' said Maryanka.

'No, I shan't shoot them.'

They were both silent.

Then after a pause she said: 'You should help me.'

He took out his knife and began silently to cut off the clusters. He reached from under the leaves low down a thick bunch weighing about three pounds, the grapes of which grew so close that they flattened each other for want of space. He showed it to Maryanka.

'Must they all be cut? Isn't this one too green?'

'Give it here.'

Their hands touched. Olenin took her hand, and she looked at him smiling.

'Are you going to be married soon?' he asked.

She did not answer, but turned away with a stern look.

'Do you love Lukashka?'

'What's that to you?'

'I envy him!'

'Very likely!' 'No really. You are so beautiful!'

And he suddenly felt terribly ashamed of having said it, so commonplace did the words seem to him. He flushed, lost control of himself, and seized both her hands.

'Whatever I am, I'm not for you. Why do you make fun of me?' replied Maryanka, but her look showed how certainly she knew he was not making fun.

'Making fun? If you only knew how I--'

The words sounded still more commonplace, they accorded still less with what he felt, but yet he continued, 'I don't know what I would not do for you--'

'Leave me alone, you pitch!'

But her face, her shining eyes, her swelling bosom, her shapely legs, said something quite different. It seemed to him that she understood how petty were all things he had said, but that she was superior to such considerations. It seemed to him she had long known all he wished and was not able to tell her, but wanted to hear how he would say it.

'And how can she help knowing,' he thought, 'since I only want to tell her all that she herself is? But she does not wish to understand, does not wish to reply.'

'Hallo!' suddenly came Ustenka's high voice from behind the vine at no great distance, followed by her shrill laugh. 'Come and help me, Dmitri Andreich. I am all alone,' she cried, thrusting her round, naive little face through the vines.

Olenin did not answer nor move from his place.

Maryanka went on cutting and continually looked up at Olenin. He was about to say something, but stopped, shrugged his shoulders and, having

jerked up his gun, walked out of the vineyard with rapid strides.