

would begin to moan at night! The rustling of the leaves, the prolonged roar of the rocking trees was like some great waterfall. From our soft bed, clasped in my mother's arms, I listened to the fierce din. From time to time it ceased; then, through the silence, came the sound of whistling, of shots, of the trampling of horses and of men.

"I sighed with terror. 'Mother, supposing robbers should attack us.' 'Hush! It is unlucky to speak of such things.' 'You know, mother, Zidra is in Vigla Forest.' When I first mentioned this name my mother trembled and started back, but quickly coming forward she said hastily and with unusual anxiety: 'Who told you this?' 'Cousin Gushu, mother. Gushu's father, mother, saw a host of vultures over Vigla Forest circling round.'

"My mother repeated in a puzzled way: 'Vultures circling round----' Then, after thinking a moment, she said to herself: 'That is it; that is where he halted and had his food--the vultures are attracted by the smell.'

"My father, arriving a few days later, said the same thing, while he added that some shepherds had also seen Zidra. My mother was delicate, her features bore the melancholy expression of some hidden sorrow. She looked wan and remained staring into space. 'Eh? What?' said my father sternly. 'Why should I be afraid of Zidra?'

"He closed the conversation. But into our house there crept an unexplained disquietude--something intangible, blowing like an icy breath that made my mother shudder. How could I understand then? Time alone has given me the explanation of it all. And to-day when I think of the spot where this dark mystery unfolded itself old scenes and things emerge from oblivion and stand vividly before me. I see the yard of our house with the door opening into the wood, the staircase leading into the bedroom; here is the hearth and along the walls are the great wooden cupboards. Sitting upon the corner-seat by the fire my mother spun at her wheel--often she would start to spin but seemed as though she could not. She would constantly stop, her thoughts were elsewhere. And if I asked her anything, she would nod her head without listening to me. Only when, amid the loud rustle of the trees, I would mention Zidra she would turn quickly, her eyes wide open, and say with a shiver: 'Zidra?' 'Yes, mother.'

"And when night fell she would try the doors one after the other. She would walk up and down, a pine-torch in her hand, passing through visions of horror, and with her went the smoking flame which rose and fell as it struggled with the shadows, moving upon the ceilings and floors and on the walls of the room where the sofa was, where it lit up for a second the hanging weapons: an old musket, two scimitars, some pistols.

"Sometimes there was a pleasant silence over everything. The wood slept, the country, too, was asleep. Then, in the light of the little icon-lamp, could be heard the gentle hum of the spinning-wheel, murmuring like a golden beetle in a fairy-tale, lulling me till I slept.

"During one of these nights--the wheel stopped and I heard my mother saying: 'Tuesday at Custur, Wednesday at Lehova, Thursday--Thursday----' She knew where my father usually stayed and was calculating.

"Becoming confused she began again from the beginning: 'Tuesday at Custur, Wednesday at Lehova, Thursday--Thursday on the road.' And she rose. She went to the lamp to pour in oil that it might burn till the daylight. In the meantime a noise came from the yard and was repeated more loudly. 'Mother, some one is knocking!' 'Who could be knocking?' she murmured.

"After a moment of indecision she went downstairs. Unintelligible words followed--a man's voice, the door was shaken. My mother began to speak gently, inaudibly. Soon everything was silent again. By my side I could hear my mother's breath, coming short and with difficulty,