

life in this place. They had been alone with their adopted child, with Magdalena; Roman, their boy, had been roaming through the world for the last ten years.

Old Vladimir puffed away at his pipe as he stroked his beard; the warmth of the afternoon had made him lay aside his blue jacket. The old wife was choosing her flowers. A gentle breeze, laden with fragrance, came from the garden, from the trees heavy with fruit, and from the gay-coloured flowers. Shafts of light penetrated through the leafy times, little patches of white light came from above, and played over the bright grass, green as the tree-frog. From time to time the quivering foliage sent a melodious rustle into the peaceful balcony.

At intervals the soft notes of a song floated through the open window.

Suddenly a resounding noise broke the stillness of the day. What was it? A carriage. The old man started, put down his pipe, and rose. The old woman put her head, wrapped in a white shawl, out over the railings. The rumbling vehicle, an ugly Jew upon the box, drew nearer, and pulled up outside the door of the old house. A strong, broad-shouldered young man descended, a big bundle in his right hand, a case in his left.

"Roman! Roman!" cried the old lady in a feeble voice. She tried to rise but fell softly back beside the flowers.

"There, there, old lady, it is Roman," murmured the old man gaily, as he went down the stairs.

"Mr. Roman!" cried a gentle voice, and Magdalena's fair head appeared at the window.

Roman had let fall the bundle and thrown himself into his father's arms.

"Yes, old lady, it is Roman!" murmured Vladimir Savicky, with tears in his eyes. He embraced his son, and pressed him to his heart. "Yes, old lady, it is Roman!" That was all he could find to say.

"Mother," cried the young man, "I have not seen you for ten years."

The old mother cried silently, her son strained her to his breast, while the old man wandered round murmuring tearfully into his beard:

"Yes, yes, old lady, it is our Roman."

As Roman Savicky straightened his strong frame and turned round, he saw a white face with blue eyes in the doorway. He stood transfixed with astonishment; the girl watched him, smiling shyly.

"Ha! ha!" laughed old Savicky, "how now? Do you not know each other? Ah! Kiss each other, you have known Magdalena ever since she was a child."

The young people approached each other in silence, the girl offered her cheek with eyelids lowered, and Roman kissed her.

"I did not recognize her," said Roman, "she has grown so big."

His mother laughed softly. "You, too, Roman, you have grown much bigger--and handsome."

"Naturally our Roman is handsome," said the old man, "our own Roman, old lady."

Again the mother kissed her son. Roman seated himself upon a chair in the veranda, the old man placed himself on his right, and the mother on the left; they watched him, feasting their eyes upon him.

"My darling! my darling!" he said to the old woman, "it is long since I have seen you."