

Three days later the mistress came to the workshop; she walked about here and there, and after a while she looked at the vats and took out a skin.

"Who turned this vat?"

"I did," replied Sandu.

"I thought as much! Now you--just come and look at your work! That's how you turned it; that's what the solution is like; that's the kind of work you get paid for!"

Sandu went up to the vat feeling as though he had been struck on the head. The solution was yellow, the skins were yellow and creased as usual, and he could not understand what fault the mistress had to find.

"I told him so," said Iotza, interfering in the conversation; and as he opened the door to take out a bundle of bark, he added: "But he knows everything, and doesn't need advice from anyone."

"Of course," scolded the mistress, "you did not have time to turn the skins; you stood talking, and took no heed of your work. What was Ana looking for here the day before yesterday?"

"Ana--Ana came to tell me to put away the sandals in the box."

"And you could not do that much without being told? You are the kind of man one must tell everything to, otherwise there would not be much use in your work!"

For some time Sandu stayed alone in the workshop; he felt as though he could not move. His mistress's words rang continually in his ears, and he felt numbed by their harshness.

The apprentice had come to call him to dinner, but he had not gone. It seemed to him they had all heard what the mistress said, and would have stared at him.

Iotza and the other man returned from dinner and found him in the workshop, his hand resting on the vat.

"Why, when you had turned the skins, didn't you come to dinner, or have you been talking to Ana?" sneered Iotza.

Sandu heard his voice, but he did not take in what he said. He looked at him with great sad eyes, and not knowing what to do went outside.

Sandu rose at daybreak the following day, but he could not have told if he had slept, or whether his thoughts had tormented him all night. He left the workshop without having done anything, he went to the pits, and took the skins out with the pincers to try whether they were ready to dress, then he returned to the workshop and was still quite unsettled.

He went to dinner with the other men; he followed them; had anyone asked him whither he was going he could not have told them. They were alone, and all quite silent, and just this silence was painful to Sandu. He would have liked to hear conversation, a great deal of talking. They were about to rise from the table when the mistress arrived. Everything seemed to turn black before Sandu's eyes.

After exchanging a few words, Iotza said:

"Mistress, you better let me turn the skins in those two vats----"

"Yes, you turn them, just like Sandu did."

The blood rushed to his head as Sandu dropped his knife and spilt a piece of lard upon the table.