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christening, no wedding or funeral, could go on without her. The course of her life was so even, her days were so busy and happy, that she desired no change – she would have been content to live thus forever.

This even course of her life was disturbed by a letter. Grandmother often received letters from her children, but none had ever come before, fraught with such a momentous question for her. It was from her daughter in Vienna, who told her mother that her husband had obtained service in the household of a certain princess, whose estates were but a few miles distant from the village where Grandmother lived; and that he was to be at home with his family during the summer only, while the princess lived in the country, and therefore it was their earnest desire that Grandmother should come to live with them. Indeed, no excuse would be accepted, as both she and the children had set their hearts upon it and were eagerly looking forward to her arrival.

Upon reading this letter Grandmother burst into tears. She did not know what to do. She loved her daughter, and her heart yearned toward her grandchildren whom she had not seen; on the other hand, the good people of the village were very dear to her, and it was hard to break away from all the old associations. But blood is thicker than water. After a lot of thought, her maternal instincts triumphed over her old customs, and she decided to go. The old cottage, with all it contained, was given over into the care of Bětka with these words: “I don’t know how I shall like it there; and perhaps, after all, I shall die here among you.”

A few days after this a wagon stood at the door of the cottage, the driver placed upon it Grandmother’s large flowered chest; her eiderdowns tied in a sheet; the spinning wheel, a piece of furniture she found indispensable;



a basket, containing four topknotted chickens; and a bag with a pair of particoloured kittens. Last, but not least, came Grandmother herself, her eyes red from weeping. It was no wonder that she wept; for around her stood the villagers, who had come to bid her farewell, and followed by their blessing she rode slowly to her new home.

What bright anticipation, what rejoicing at the Old Bleachery, – for thus the people called the isolated house that had been assigned to Grandmother’s daughter, Mrs Prošek, as her home on the estates of the princess. Every few moments the children ran out to the road to see if she was coming; and every passer-by heard the wondrous news that Grandma was coming. The children kept

Mr Beyer often brought the children various crystals, and told them about the caves in the mountains where such specimens were found; he brought them moss as fragrant as violets; he loved to describe to them the beauties of Rybrcouľ's garden, into which he had wandered once, when he was lost during a fearful snow storm.

As long as Mr Beyer was with them, the boys did not leave his side. They went with him to the dam, watching the floating of the logs, and took a ride upon the raft. When he was getting ready to leave, they could scarcely restrain their tears; then with Grandmother they accompanied him part of the way, helping to carry the generous luncheon with which Mrs Prošek provided him. "Next year, God willing, we shall see each other again. Farewell!" Thus they parted, each wending his way homeward. For several days nothing else was spoken of but Mr Beyer, the wonders and terrors of the Giant Mountains, and the happy time when he would come again.



Chapter 4

Besides the holidays, Sundays were looked forward to with great pleasure; for then the children could lie abed as long as they pleased, Grandmother, who called them, being at the early mass in the village. Mrs Prošek attended high mass, as did her husband when he was with them; and when the weather was fine, the children went with them to meet Grandmother. As soon as she was in sight, they ran to meet her and shouted as though they had not seen her for a year. On Sundays she did not appear to them the same as on week days. Her face was

"It is the Princess coming up to us!" again cried the children in a chorus.

"What are you talking about? How could a horse climb up here?" said Grandmother. "Oh, but look! Orlando is climbing like a cat!" exclaimed Jan.

"Hush, I do not want to see it. Their Lordships have strange amusements," said Grandmother, as she held the children so they would not lean too far out of the window.

Presently, the Princess was up the hill. She dismounted, threw her long skirt across her arm, and entered the arbour. Grandmother arose quickly and welcomed her.

"Is this Prošek's family?" she asked, studying the children's faces.

"Yes, your Grace," replied Grandmother.

"And are you their Grandmother?"

"Yes your Grace, I am their mother's mother."

"I am sure you must be happy in having such healthy grandchildren. I suppose you are good, obedient children?" continued the lady turning to the children, whose eyes were fixed upon her. At her question they looked down and whispered: "Yes, ma'am!"

"Hm, it will pass;" said Grandmother, "though sometimes – but we were no better."

The Princess smiled. Seeing a basket of strawberries on the bench, she asked where they had gathered them.

Grandmother at once spoke to Barunka: "Go, my child, offer the fruit to the Princess. They are fresh, the children gathered them on our way here; they may taste good to your Grace. When I was young, I was very fond of strawberries, but I have not tasted them since the death of my child."

"And why?" asked the Princess, taking the basket from Barunka.



"Oh, your Grace, that is a custom among us. When a mother loses a child, she eats neither strawberries nor cherries till the Nativity of St John the Baptist. It is said that at that time the Virgin goes about heaven giving this fruit to the little children. If a mother has not been self-denying, and has eaten of this fruit, when the Virgin comes to the child of such a one she says: 'Poor child, there isn't much left for you; your mother ate your share.' For this reason mothers abstain from eating this fruit before St John's, and if they can do it till St John's they can do it after," added Grandmother.

the house; Vorša has been scrubbing and cleaning from early morning; Bětko is scalding and cleaning the poultry; Mrs Prošek is baking kolaches and Grandmother, now seeing to the baking, now to the poultry, is wanted everywhere. Barunka begs her to call Jan outside, because he won't leave them alone but when he goes out, Bětko and Vorša complain that he is in their way. Vilém wants her to listen to his story, and Adélka pulls at her apron, begging for a kolach, and in the yard the chickens are impatient for their supper.

"For pity's sake, I cannot attend to everything at once!" exclaimed the poor, distracted old lady.

And now Vorša gives the alarm: "Mr Prošek is coming!" There is a rush to hide what must yet remain a secret; Mrs Prošek locks up the sweetmeats, and Grandmother gives strict orders to the children not to say anything.

The father enters the yard, and the children run to meet him; but when he says good evening and asks them about their mother, they are embarrassed, fearing to speak, lest they should divulge some secret. But Adélka, who is "Papa's pet," goes to him, and when he takes her up in his arms, she whispers: "Mama and Grandma are baking kolaches; it will be your name day tomorrow."

"Just you wait, you'll get in trouble for telling!" exclaim the boys as they turn to tell their mother.

Adélka turns red; for a few moments she sits frightened and finally begins to cry.

"No need to cry, my dear," says her father soothingly; "I know it's my name day tomorrow, and that mother would be baking kolaches."

Adélka wipes away her tears with her sleeve; still she looks with some fear at her mother, who is coming with the boys. She, however, makes everything all right, and



tells the boys that Adélka has given nothing away that she ought not. But the secret is too much for the children, so that the father hearing does not hear, and seeing does not see. At supper, Barunka constantly has to wink at them, and nudge them for fear they will give everything away, and afterwards Bětko calls them "tell-tales."

Finally the work is finished, and everything is in readiness for the morrow; even the smell of the baking is gone. The servants have gone to sleep, and only Grandmother's footstep is heard in the house. She shuts up the cats, puts out the last spark in the stove, and recollecting that there was a fire in the bake-oven outside too and that there may

children estranged from me. Therefore, you, too, must love your country as you love your mother; work for her as dutiful children, and the prophecy you fear will never be fulfilled. I cannot hope to see you grown up, but I believe you will remember my words," she added, with a voice trembling with emotion.

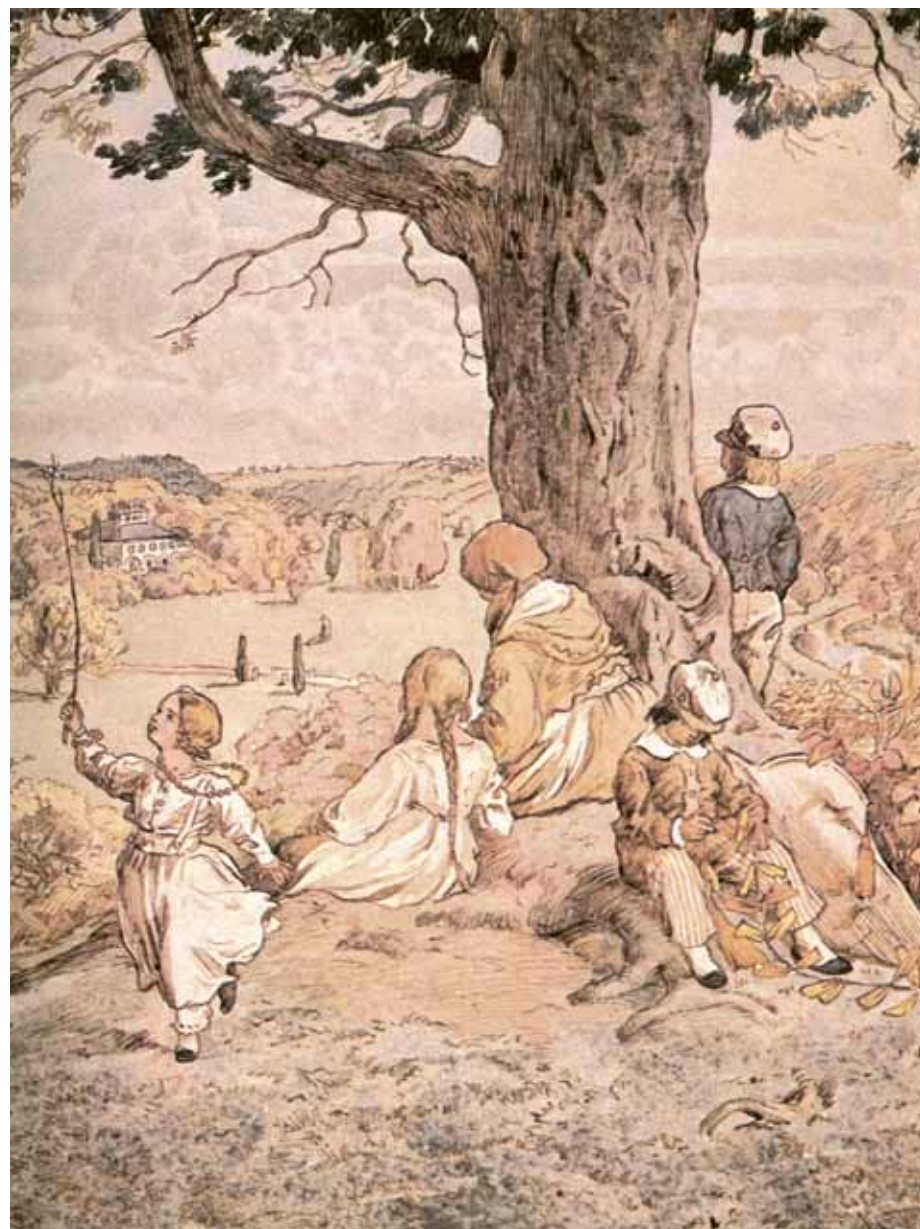
"I shall never forget them," said Barunka, hiding her face in Grandmother's lap.

The boys stood silent; they did not understand their grandmother's words as Barunka did. Adélka, clinging close to her asked with a voice broken by sobs: "You are not going to die, are you!"

"My dear child, everything in the world is only for a time, and some day God will call me," she replied, pressing the little one to her bosom. They were silent for some time; Grandmother was lost in thought, and the children did not know what to say. The silence was broken by the rustling of wings, and when they raised their eyes, they saw a flock of birds sailing in the air above them.

"These are wild geese," said Grandmother; "they always fly in small skeins consisting of one family only, and their way of flying is different from that of other birds. Observe! Two fly in the front, two behind, and the rest go in single file, either longways or crossways; at most they form a semicircle. Jackdaws, crows and swallows fly in large flocks. Several fly at the front, these seek a place of rest on their journey. Behind them and to the sides fly the guards to protect the females and the young birds in time of danger; for they often meet an unfriendly flock and then a battle may be fought."

"But, Grandma, how can they fight a battle when they have no hands in which to hold swords and guns?" asked Vilém.



“Then, let us remain here, I am quite comfortable,” said the Countess, taking the refreshments Grandmother brought. She did not wait for Grandmother to urge her to eat, but took some bread and a glass of cream. She knew that if she accepted nothing, Grandmother would feel hurt. Then she opened the album and showed Grandmother what she had sketched.

“Oh, dear Lord!” exclaimed Grandmother, “here we have the whole country above the dam; the meadows, the hillside, the woods, and here is Viktorka, too!”

“She suits this lonely region well. I met her on the hillside; she looked dreadfully run-down. Cannot anything be done for her?” asked the Countess in a voice full of pity.

“Oh, your Grace, her body could be helped, but her trouble is not there. Her mind is wandering; what she does, she does as in a dream. Perhaps it is a mercy that God has taken away the memory of her sorrow, which must have been heavy indeed. Should her reason return, she might lose her own soul in despair, as – well, God will forgive her: if she sinned, she has suffered enough for it,” said Grandmother, turning over another leaf. A new cause for wonder. “Good Lord! Why this is the Old Bleachery, the yard, the linden – here am I and the children, and the dogs – everything! Well, well, fancy seeing such wonders in my old age! What would our folks say!” exclaimed Grandmother, more and more astonished.

“I never forget people that once were dear to me,” said the Countess, “but I usually paint them so as to retain a clear image of their faces. It is the same with places in which I have spent happy days. I love to transfer them to paper, so that I may have a pleasant remembrance of them. This vale here is most charming. If you would

