MARKO VOVCHOK

Karmelyuk

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A TALE

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MARKO VOVCHOK
(1833-1907)

Marko Vovchok (Maria Vilinska-Markovich) debuted on the Ukrainian literary scene in 1858 with the collection of *Stories from the Life of Common People* followed in 1859 by the short novel *Finishing School Graduate.* Both were highly acclaimed by the Ukrainian and Russian progressives and democratically-minded critics. Marko Vovchok, who wrote both in Ukrainian and Russian, is the author of many stories and tales which made a significant contribution to Ukrainian and Russian literature. During her lifetime, this outstanding Ukrainian fiction writer gained wide recognition abroad due to the numerous translations of her works into European languages. She was also active as a translator from the French, German, English, Danish and other languages.

Following revolutionary and democratic trends in literature, Marko Vovchok used her powerful talent to condemn serfdom and raise her voice in the defence of human dignity. Marko Vovchok's realistic writings, based on her profound knowledge of the life of Ukrainian peasantry and of Ukrainian folklore, show her deep feelings for the oppressed and underprivileged and assert the ideals of humanism and social justice.

The most successful of Marko Vovchok's tales was *Karmelyuk* (1863), written in traditional Ukrainian folklore style and based on historical events of the last century. The name of Karmelyuk, who took from the rich to give to the poor, was widely popular with the masses, who always helped and supported him. With great mastery Marko Vovchok portrayed the legendary character of a national hero, noble and courageous, who boldly stood up for his oppressed countrymen.

I

Have you been to the Ukraine? Do you know the Ukraine?

If you have been there and do know the country, you will remember. Otherwise, try to imagine those whitewashed houses which everywhere dot the cherry orchards, and how lovely — how absolutely lovely it is there in springtime, when all the orchards are in blossom and the nightingales trill. In fact, there are so many of those birds singing then, that a person couldn't probably count them all. Once, when I was travelling there, I happened to spend a night in a village, in one of those houses standing in a cherry orchard. We came late at night and went to bed right away. The sun set, and before long voices died away, and the whole village lapsed into quiet.

It was very still all about. I could hear only leaves stirring in the trees outside the window, and the water murmuring in the river, over at the mill. Also, not far away, a woman was softly lulling a baby to sleep — and my eyelids became heavy. I dozed off and dreamed that the fast-flowing river, which had glittered so brightly as we were driving past, was now drawing nearer and nearer, and that the trees which grew outside were rustling right over my bed. The unseen baby being lulled to sleep assumed the image of a lively little boy, now overcome with drowsiness, and she who was rocking him took the appearance of a thoughtful, slender young woman. It was then that a nightingale warbled somewhere in the cherry trees just outside, then another a little way off, and yet another until I couldn't really tell how many of them were there, trilling as though calling to one another. They went on like this for

a while, and then suddenly began singing all at once, drowning out all the other noises. The rustle of the leaves, the murmur of the water, and the lullaby could be heard no more. I was suddenly wide awake, the nightingales having chased away all my drowsiness and dreams. If I now closed my eyes, their singing only seemed to be, if anything, louder and clearer.

I felt quite tired, and the drowsiness soon returned, getting worse all the time. But no matter how tired and drowsy I may have been, I still couldn't fall asleep again because of all that singing. Finally I thought it would be better to get up and sit beside the window for a while. Even now I can still visualize most vividly that narrow street, the little white houses with their dark windows, and, beyond a low wattle fence, cherry trees covered with radiant white flowers. The sickle of a horned new moon was shining faintly, the sky was glowing with stars, and I can still almost feel all that freshness, fragrance and warmth. And then there was that singing, resounding and reverberating all about until dawn. That night the nightingales didn't let me catch a wink of sleep until daybreak.

Years ago, there was one such village in the Ukraine. It was small, with about twenty houses in all, and the people who lived in it were rather poor. In one of the houses, which stood near the fields on the edge of the village, there lived a widow who had a son, an only child. Ivan Karmelyuk — that was his name. He was such a good-looking lad, so brave and bright, that to find another just like him, as they say, one would have had to search all over this large world in broad daylight and bright sunshine, carrying a blazing torch, as well. Swimming straight across the most terrible rapids and whirlpools, plunging deep into the most impenetrable woods, climbing the tallest trees, descending to the very bottom of the steepest ravines — it all came as natural to him as drinking water comes natural to you and me. Also, wherever he was sent, he could be counted on to find

the way, and whatever he began doing, he was sure to get it done. If a friend asked him for something, he would fetch it from the bottom of the sea, rather than turn down a friend's request. And if some humble poor man turned to him for a favour, it seemed he would have moved heaven and earth to do whatever was asked of him. As long as he could help such people, he just didn't care if it might mean hunger and cold, troubles and hardships for him. The older the lad got, the better and more handsome he became, and at eighteen he was such an incredibly, unbelievably handsome young man that whoever saw him then for the first time stopped stunned and speechless and would never forget his face. As for his mother, she just was never able to look at him without a smile and a kiss. They lived more or less like all the other people in the village, being a little better off than some and a little poorer than others.

It was then that something went wrong with the young Karmelyuk, and trouble came his way. He suddenly became strangely sad, and became sadder with every day and every hour God sent him. What or who had first caused that sadness was more than either his mother, or his friends, or anyone else could tell.

Before, when with his companions he would speak louder and laugh more heartily than the rest in any group. But now he laughed no more and hardly ever spoke at all. More than that, his friends now saw very little of him, and whenever they chanced to come across him, he was pale and tight-mouthed. Where before he would join his friends for a stroll and a chat every evening after work, he now seemed to avoid them, slinking away all alone somewhere into the woods, or the fields, or just roaming off into the steppe.

His mother was at a total loss, not knowing what to think or do. She'd been racking her brains trying to figure out whether he might want this or that, or something else again; for if she only knew, she would have been willing and ready to give him whatever it was he did want.

But no: he didn't want anything. People wondered what was the matter with him. They began talking about it and making guesses, and word spread that it had all happened since he had begun to go to other villages where he encountered all kinds of strange people. It was believed that he might have been mixed up with some evil man: hence all that sadness and sorrow. As soon as the gossip reached his mother's ears, she went to ask him. "You go to all sorts of places, my lad," she said (he was going to country fairs, to hamlets, villages and towns, selling his own, and sometimes others' rye, grain, vegetables and fruits; and wayfaring like that was what he liked doing best). "So what kind of people do you see there?" she asked him.

"What kind of people do I see there?" Karmelyuk answered. "They're all of two kinds — rich and poor."

"And what people do you associate with?" his mother went on.

"I make friends with the poor and needy," Karmelyuk told her. "Those are friends for me!"

Naturally his mother supposed that one of the rich had harmed or hurt him, so she pressed him further. "Has somebody harmed you, my darling? Who's hurt you? Come on, tell me!" She embraced her son and held him close, waiting for him to tell her, so that she could soothe and comfort him. But he only stared back at her and said nothing. The mother became even more alarmed and anxious, not knowing what to think, and imagining all kinds of horrible things happening to him. So she continued entreating and imploring him to tell her what had happened.

"No," Karmelyuk said. "I've been neither harmed nor hurt."

"Is that really so, my dear, my jewel, my treasure? Is it true that nobody's hurt you?"

"It's true," he said.

"Then what's happened to you? What's bothering you? Is there something you want?"

So then Karmelyuk told her. "Wherever I go," he said, "whichever way I look, I see poor people who work hard but stay poor. That's what torments my soul! That's what rends my heart!"

His mother tried to reassure and comfort him. "You see, that's the way it's been in this world for as long as anyone can remember," she told him. "And for all we know, that's the way it's going to be. It seems it just can't be helped." She went on soothing and persuading him as best she could, and where she was lacking in words, she made up in tenderness and caresses. But nothing could console him, nothing could set his mind at rest.

One evening in spring — it was one of those wonderful evenings when spring songs come naturally to one's lips — the Karmelyuk widow lay in her house, brooding and wondering what kind of misfortune had come upon her Ivan. The sun had already set, and stars were shimmering in the window. The sound of girls' voices singing spring songs could be heard from afar. A faint fragrance of flowers, not yet in full bloom, was in the air; and the nightingales were just beginning to sing. Then she heard soft steps; the door opened and Karmelyuk came into the house. He looked about but failed to see his mother, and went and sat by the window. Perhaps it was just that faint evening light which added pallor to his face, but it seemed to his mother that he was terribly pale and wan, and her heart was gripped with such pity for her dear child that she was speechless, unable to utter a word. She didn't speak nor stir, and just lay there watching him. He looked through the window for some time and then began to sing. It was quite something, that song he sang! Full of sadness and sorrow, it was the kind of song that could only come from the bottom of a pure heart.

Oh, the days come and go,
The hours are winging,

Not for me happiness,
But bitter woe bringing!

In misfortune I was born,
In misfortune I shall die,
Oh, my mother gave me birth
When misfortune was nigh.

A young man, it would seem,
Should not know any sorrow —
Yet drown dead in a stream
From grief, on the morrow.

My poor head is so pain-wracked
That I close tight my eyes;
Don't know why, for what reason
Upon me grief lies!

Pauper people! All forsaken!
I see you everywhere;
Your torments thoughts waken —
Tears with you I share.

Spring of my life, that joys unroll,
You scatter gifts round,
But for my unhappy soul —
Never a one is found.

I see their eyes everywhere,
Their faces grown pale,
Begging hands of the bowed with care —
Hands wearied, grown frail.

And among fragrant flowers,
'Neath streaming gold sunlight,
And among bright leafy bowers
'Neath the silvery moonlight —

Daytime or night, or evenfall,
Whatever the hour!
Nought consoles me at all —
Death from grief overpowers. *

He finished his song and remained silent. It was only then that the old woman came to her senses. "Ivan," she asked. "Just where did you learn this song?"

On hearing her voice, Karmelyuk started, but then he realized it was his mother. "It just came to me," he said. And it was really something to hear him sing those songs he composed himself! By God, they were simply enchanting! There were some who happened to overhear him while he was singing and learned them from him. Only those songs weren't intended for joy or merry-making, and they made those who learned or simply heard them bow their heads and start thinking.

II

One day Karmelyuk went off to a mill which was in another village about twenty *versts* ** away. He left early at dawn and drove for a while across the fields. The sky was crystal clear, and the weather warm and wonderful. The fields spread out like green velvet, and the dew-drops glistened everywhere. The sun was rising, and larks were singing in the sky. It had rained that night, so dust hardly rose from the road at all. The fields appeared boundless in their blissful beauty, and the air was so fresh that he couldn't breathe his fill of it. He sang as he drove, sometimes just humming to himself, and sometimes raising his voice until his song reverberated all over the fields. But

* Here and elsewhere poems translated by Gladys Evans.

** Unit of distance equal to 0.6 mile.

even on this untroubled cloudless morning, he was singing the same melancholy and inquiring songs, almost like asking for guidance, consolation and peace of mind. For as his gaze wandered all about those blooming fields, he must have visualized the same miserable figures of the poor.

He soon reached a large forest through which the road ran. Old oaks, huge and mighty, stood motionless and silent. Scattered amongst them were snowball trees and wild rose bushes, and the ground was carpeted with thick grass and all kinds of herbs.

As Karmelyuk drove through that forest, singing, he saw a young girl picking herbs at the edge of the road. She was crying bitterly, and was so desperate and in such distress that she hardly turned her head at the sound of his song. As soon as Karmelyuk saw this, he jumped from his waggon and approached her. "Good morning," he said.

"Good morning," the girl replied, and as she lifted her sorrowful eyes to him, they dried up at once. For never in her life, not even in a dream, had she seen such a handsome man as the man now standing before her. She didn't even hear him ask, "Why are you crying, young lady?" Waiting for her to answer, he stared fixedly at her, as though what he saw could somehow give him a clue. And he saw that she was a poor girl, deeply embittered by life. Her milk-white shoulders could be seen through a threadbare blouse, her skirt was faded and patched; there was no colour in her young face, and her rosy lips were obviously not accustomed to smiling. Her eyes were sad and sunken, and the tears which had stopped rolling at the sight of him were still trembling on her cheeks. There she stood holding a bunch of herbs.

"Why are you crying, young lady?" Karmelyuk asked again. This time the girl heard his question, but even so she made no attempts to answer and only turned her eyes away, staring into the forest.

"Who are you, young lady? Where do you come from?" he went on.

"I'm a servant working for the Knishes over at the village of Lany," the girl said.

"They must be bad folks, those Knishes, eh?" he said.

She didn't speak and just resumed picking her herbs. Karmelyuk went along, picking the same herbs and giving them to her, and asking her about her life and all. But as soon as he began saying that it must be pretty tough and joyless to live as hired help in somebody else's home, the girl burst out crying again, bitter tears streaming down her fair face. Karmelyuk felt such pity for the girl that he thought he could even die for her. "Come on, stop crying!" he urged her.

"I wish I could," she said. "But the tears just flow anyway." And she shed tears while standing there for quite a while, as if there was something sweet in crying herself out like that. Finally she said, "It's time for me to go. My mistress is waiting for the herbs."

Two final tears rolled down her face, her rosy lips parted in a smile which was sad but also charming, and her lovely clear eyes looked up at him, candidly. "Goodbye," she said.

But it seemed to Karmelyuk that he'd sooner die than part with her. So he told her, "Come on, get onto the waggon, and I'll take you to Lany, as I'm also going that way." He looked around for his waggon and saw that it was quite far off, his oxen having turned off the road to graze. He ran over to them, drove them back onto the road, helped the girl onto the waggon, got on next to her, and off they went.

Both were silent and thoughtful as they drove through the green forest. They felt that they had suddenly found themselves in an earthly paradise, where a fleeting bliss had engulfed them. The girl's face flushed with lively colour, and her lips parted slightly, as if her heart were beating faster. It seemed to them that they reached the

village in no time at all, as though they were a couple of fast-flying birds. They left the forest behind and caught sight of Lany, a big and prosperous-looking village. A manor house built of white stone and surrounded with shady lanes and gay-coloured flower-beds stood like a palace on a hill, rising above the entire village. It was a luxurious building, and it was all that luxury which caught Karmelyuk's eye. At the sight of it, his handsome face clouded. The girl happened to be looking at him at that very moment, and her bright eyes dimmed. "Do you know this building?" she asked softly.

"It's the first time I've ever seen it," Karmelyuk said. "But I've seen many like it everywhere."

They entered the village and crossed three streets. Here the girl jumped off the waggon, thanked him and said farewell. She turned round the corner and vanished.

Karmelyuk started off again. And as he drove on, he constantly glanced back at the village, wishing the girl hadn't left him, and promising himself that he would see her again soon. He was thinking of her still when he came to the mill, and went to question the miller about the Knishes, trying to find out how they were placed and what sort of people they were. But the miller was a very taciturn man, quite tall and with very long moustaches. He didn't like to talk, and liked answering questions even less; so Karmelyuk would have never learned anything at all had it not been for the miller's daughter. For the miller's daughter did like to talk and liked answering questions even more, but best of all she liked asking them. So she started by asking Karmelyuk all sorts of questions, but got precious little out of him. For he simply ignored her questions and just kept on asking his own, not unlike a newborn baby which keeps turning its eyes and stretching out its hands to the light, ignoring everything else. Seeing this, the miller's daughter stopped asking questions and began to talk. She was small and lively like a bird, but no bird

could have done as much chirping in an hour as she did then. Before long, Karmelyuk learned from her that the Knishes were rather rich, having seven pairs of oxen and two cows; that they had a good harvest of wheat the year before and were probably going to have one again that year; that their daughter had married a boy who was also from a rich family, so that she now wore *ochipoks* * embroidered with gold; that the old Knishes had a servant girl by the name of Marusya, an orphan, unmarried and no relatives; and that for Marusya, the job meant long hours and little pay.

The miller's daughter would probably have chattered on and on had Karmelyuk put in a word of his own every now and then. But he sat there like a mute, so that in the end she must have become bored with such a taciturn guest, because she cut short her prattle, picked up her needlework, and went and sat at a distance from him, striking up a song. The song rang out merrily, her work went on rapidly, and the old miller, standing gloomily in the doorway of his mill, watched it all and thought to himself, "There's probably nothing as gay and carefree in this world as those silly young girls. And nothing could be as frivolous. Isn't it funny, the way that vain creature keeps looking into the water, as if she can't see enough of herself?"

His daughter did cast frequent glances at the water which mirrored her dark-skinned, rosy-cheeked bright-eyed face. But then it was probably not only her own face she was admiring, for along with it, the water also reflected the entire grass-covered slope where she was sitting, the old oak trees the miller was so proud of, and the young man who was so deeply immersed in thought that he seemed unaware of the whole world around him and of everything that was in it. So it was not necessarily her own

* Cap-like headware worn by Ukrainian married women. Now out of fashion.

face that the miller's daughter kept glancing at. But, as we said already, the miller was a gloomy man, whom nothing could move. Years ago, having buried his wife, he had come across seven mirrors among her things, and from that time had been convinced that every female, no matter how plain or humble-looking, used at least seven mirrors to look at herself; that conviction was as unshakable as if it had been nailed to him. So the miller's daughter... Well, we'd rather leave the miller's daughter to herself now, because we aren't really interested in what she may have done or sung after that. The miller called Karmelyuk, they loaded up the waggon with flour, Karmelyuk paid, and left for home.

All he was able to think about on his way back was the servant girl. When he went through the village of Lany, he drove as slowly as though he were carrying somebody very ill, his eyes darting here and there all about him. However, she was nowhere to be seen, and he sighed for the rest of the way until he pulled up at his house. He simply couldn't oust the girl from his mind. He spent a day alone with his thoughts, and discovered that it was difficult but sweet as well. He spent another, only to find that it had become even more difficult and sweeter. Early in the third day he could stand it no longer. His head burned, his heart throbbed, and his entire body ached. He somehow managed to endure it until noon, then got out a waggon, harnessed a horse to it and drove to Lany.

He was hardly aware of what he was doing as he flew across the fields and sped through the forest. He just kept whipping the horse, as it seemed to him that the fields were running away from him, getting broader and longer, that the forest had never been thicker, and would never end.

He eventually did reach Lany, however. When he got there, it was a quiet afternoon, and the sun was already low in the sky. Most people weren't yet back from work,

so the village was deserted, except for some children playing and fooling around in the streets, and a couple of servant girls going towards the river for water.

Karmelyuk told himself that she, too, would sooner or later come to the river, and, turning his horse in that direction, went to wait for her on the bank. And when she appeared with the pails in her hands, the mere sight of her took his breath away so that he couldn't even say "Oh!" And when she saw him, a flush spread across her face, as if it had suddenly been enveloped by flames. There was nobody on the bank except the two of them.

"Will you marry me, my love?" Karmelyuk asked her. And she told him simply, "I'm yours."

They sat down side by side on the low grassy river bank, and when the stars appeared in the sky, they found them still sitting here together. That night, Marusya the servant girl did not even hear her mistress as she nagged and scolded her, reproaching her for being late; and her heart became impervious to bitterness, throbbing with the newly-discovered sweet ecstasy of love. And after everybody had gone to bed, Marusya sat beside the window and stared at the stars twinkling in the cloudless sky. Karmelyuk was meanwhile slowly driving home, and he, too, was staring at the bright stars in the clear sky. Only those who are very much in love here on earth can gaze up at the sky like that.

"I'm going to marry," Karmelyuk announced to his mother. "Her name's Marusya and she's a servant."

His mother tried to persuade him to change his mind. "Don't marry this Marusya, my dear," she pleaded. "Why does it have to be a servant? Better look around for somebody rich."

"Mother!" Karmelyuk cried out, trembling and shaking all over. "Are you not my mother?"

His face and reaction frightened the old woman, and she gave in. "All right," she said. "Go ahead and marry

Marusya, my darling. If she's so dear to you, she'll make a good daughter-in-law to me as well."

This is how Karmelyuk came to marry Marusya the servant girl.

III

For a year after the wedding, Karmelyuk forgot his affliction completely. There was no trace left of his sadness, his wife blossomed like a rose, and they got on like a pair of lovebirds. A daughter was born to them, all was well in their household, and the Karmelyuk widow would often say that, thank God, she couldn't really think of a better life for the young family and herself.

Then, Karmelyuk's melancholy suddenly returned. He again became sad and sullen. He again took to staying away from home and wandering about alone. His pallor and frequent sighing returned.

But why did it engulf him again? Where did it come from? Wasn't he loved and happy? Didn't he have every reason to be satisfied with life? What did he yearn for? What else could he possibly want?

One evening, they all sat together after work. All the noises had already died down, the sun had sunk behind the woods, and the first star was about to come out. When people tired by the day's work sit like this, resting, engrossed in thought, both the good and the bad things of their lives suddenly become clearer; they come to better realize their own happiness or ill luck. This is the way they sat together and thought that, apparently, their good fortune left practically nothing to be desired. The little girl didn't even ask for anything to play with, and seemed content just to sit quietly among them, her rosy lips smiling and her eyes shining warmly. Indeed, what more could they want?

Then suddenly some thought troubled and worried Karmelyuk. It also seemed to frighten him, as if blotting out his vision. He looked dismayed, and his whole appearance changed abruptly. He started for the door, saying, "It seems to be stuffy here. I'd better go for a walk." His old mother was worried and asked if he was feeling unwell. "No, Mother, I'm all right," he reassured her. His loving wife gave him an inquiring look, and he just hugged her in reply.

He came back home late that night, when the moon and the stars were shining bright in the sky, and everybody in the village had long gone to sleep. His mother and his daughter were both asleep. But not his wife. She stood in the doorway of their house, waiting and looking out for him. She met him there and pressed herself close, as though asking what she could do to ease his pain — live or die, be happy or suffer.

"My dear Marusya!" he said, clutching her to his heart. "I can't bear to see people poor and unhappy! I must change it all! I wish I could make things better for them!"

And from that night on he kept thinking, brooding, and grieving.

His mother rushed here, there, and everywhere, looking for a cure, asking everybody for advice, and never without tears in her eyes. Again and again, she ran to see a healer woman and a doctor about her son, who, she kept telling them, was languishing and simply wasting away. The poor old woman exhausted herself completely and was beside herself with fear and anxiety.

Karmelyuk's young wife didn't go to a healer or a doctor, sought no advice, and did no complaining. Nobody knew what was in her heart or her mind, for she kept it to herself and wouldn't tell. But the colour went out of her face, she sang no more, and her pretty eyes brimmed with sadness.

If there were those who thought that something had gone awry between Karmelyuk and his wife, it simply wasn't true. Anyone who wasn't blind could easily see that their love was as strong as ever and that their mutual affection and trust were just as before. Their farm was doing quite nicely as well. So people in the village kept telling one another that Karmelyuk was really a happy man, if ever there was one. What more he might desire was something which left everybody puzzled. Hadn't God given him everything to make him satisfied? Well, really! What else could one possibly want? Didn't he realize how lucky he was? It must have been good luck that had spoiled him, and there he now was, making a fool of himself and trying to fool others. Some would even say as much in as many words straight to his face. Karmelyuk wouldn't bother to reply, though; he spent whole days just walking about, hardly ever uttering a word, grieving and brooding. But now and then, his voice would suddenly ring out, singing a song which sounded like a warning...

People say that I am happy — it calls forth my
laughter,
They don't know how my tears fall, and often so
bitter.
And wherever I wander, the rich I find in power —
Spending time in great luxury, each day, night and
hour.
While the poor and unhappy are all doomed to
hard labour,
To injustice, for ages the poor man's close neighbour!
O my youth, my joyful heart, and the strength
of my arm!
Tell me how to right the wrongs of this world
without charm.
O my young years, O my sweet years, infinitely
young,

If you're given me for nothing, let my death song be sung.

There were those among the villagers who trembled at the sound of this song, stopped in their tracks, and stood, as if waiting to state their case before a fair judge, as if in anticipation of a long-awaited yet unexpected deliverance. There were many cases when an unfortunate labourer, driving cattle which weren't his own and singing his old bitter song which said that "the fate of a young landless poor peasant is the worst in the world", stopped immediately the moment he heard Karmelyuk's; and when he came back to his master's for the night, he was strangely thoughtful, seemed not to hear when berated, or to care when insulted, and left his supper untouched. And on the following day, he seemed sick and unfit for his job or any other work, and refused the master's food; but his eyes shone with new intensity and vigour, as though he were suddenly rejuvenated and revitalized.

There must have also been quite a few cases when a wealthy man happened to hear Karmelyuk's song and stopped singing his own, funny and frivolous, turned his astonished eyes all about him, and hurried to make sure of his treasures, looking as concerned as that virtuous rich man everybody has heard about. And perhaps there were also a few men who after hearing him gave up considerable riches willingly and without regret.

It was then that Karmelyuk suddenly disappeared from sight, and was not to be found either at home or anywhere else in the village. No trace of him was discovered either the next day, or the day after that, or a whole week later. He just vanished into thin air without as much as a word to anyone.

His old mother was driven almost insane with grief, anxiety and fear, searching for him here, there, and everywhere, as if he were a needle in a haystack. Marusya just

sat in the house, looking like somebody dying on a cross. Their little daughter kept calling him and asking, "Where's Daddy?"

"What shall we do, Marusya?" the Karmelyuk widow asked her daughter-in-law. "Is there anything we can do? Where are we to look for him?"

"We'll just wait," Marusya said.

"Wait for him? But he may not even be alive!"

This is what Marusya then told the old woman: "The night that he went away," she said, "I saw him go, and asked him, 'What shall we do, sweetheart?' And he told me, 'Don't look or enquire for me — just wait, and I'll come back myself!'"

"Oh, good!" the Karmelyuk widow said. "All right, we'll just wait then!" She was so delighted, as though Ivan were actually expected at any moment; she even peered through the window and then went to stand in the doorway, looking in every direction. However, they spent many more days waiting for their Ivan, but he failed to appear.

Once — it was a holiday and the weather was lovely — the Karmelyuk widow sat on the *pryzba* * outside her house, her eyes fixed on the road running away into the fields. Marusya was sitting beside her, holding her daughter in her arms. The little girl was chirping, "Mommy, are you deaf and dumb?" She was toying with her mother's necklace and poking her tiny fingers into Marusya's lips and ears. "You've turned deaf and dumb, Mother!" she teased Marusya. "Deaf and dumb!" Every now and again, Marusya smiled back, pressing the girl to her bosom.

A neighbour came round and greeted them. "Have you heard of the robberies over in the Black Forest?" he

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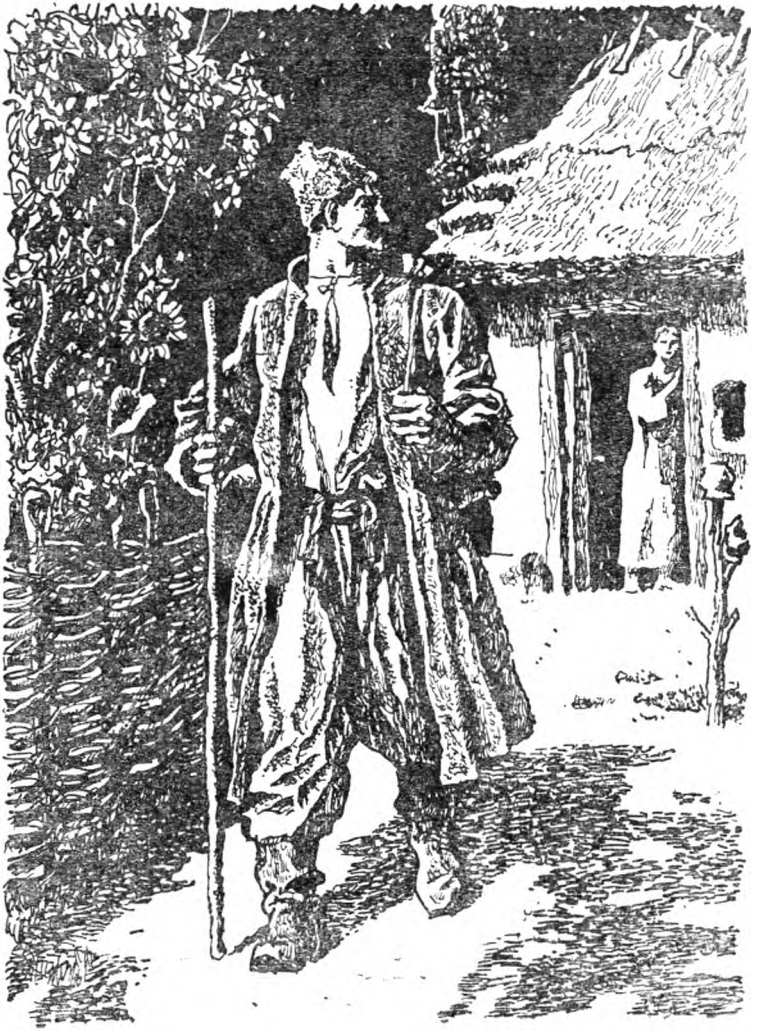
* Low bench-like foundation structure running along the outer wall of a house.



asked. "They say nobody can pass through there now, whether on foot or on horseback."

Karmelyuk's mother started when the neighbour began "Have you heard...?" but, hearing the story was about the Black Forest, she stopped listening. The Black Forest was far away, in another *povit*, * and she decided that her son had no conceivable reason for being there. Somehow, it didn't occur to her that he had no apparent reason to remain out of sight — whether within their *povit* or outside it. And then again, it wasn't quite clear what made her so sure he couldn't be as far away as the Black Forest. In any case, she paid no more attention to what the neighbour was saying and turned her eyes back to the road.

But Marusya's beautiful sad eyes were riveted to the man's face, and she was all ears.

"A few storekeepers and some nobles have been held up over there," he went on. "Only there's a strange thing about it all."

"What strange thing?" asked Marusya.

"The strange thing is," the neighbour said sitting down next to her, "that they don't kill or harm anyhody! If it's somebody rich, they just take all he has and let him go. But if they see a man is poor and moneyless, he goes through scot-free — they don't touch him with a finger. They say there was a poor fellow driving through there who came across those highwaymen. Well, he just laughed when he saw them. 'I'm not afraid of you, folks,' he told them. 'Robbery is nothing to a poor man, and even his life has got a price that's not too high. If you're going to kill me, go ahead, but if you aren't let me go, because I've no time to hang about. I have to hurry or my master's bound to give me hell!' Then their leader stepped forward, so they say, and tossed him a purse full of money, saying, 'You

* Administrative unit in tsarist Russia and in the USSR until 1929.

may go on, friend.' And then he and his men disappeared in the woods. The fellow was quite bewildered, having had such a miraculous thing happen to him. His brains were still a little bit numb when he came home bringing a purse packed with money — pure silver, all of it!"

Karmelyuk's wife didn't say anything at all this, but turned white as a sheet and kissed her daughter, who had also pricked up her ears, listening, as she sat in her mother's lap.

IV

As one day followed another, every new day and every passing hour brought more and more news and rumours about the robbers in the Black Forest.

Those robbers were definitely strange and unusual; and their robberies were also strange and unusual. Whenever a rich man fell into their hands, he was forced to part with his money; whenever a poor man encountered them, he was given money. But nobody was killed or harmed. As well, they had a leader who was out of the ordinary and mysterious. It was rumoured that he was a man of such unbelievable, incredible, unsurpassed beauty, that neither words nor pen could describe him. Furthermore, it was claimed that human eyes were not able to gaze on his beauty, it being as blinding as the bright sun.

They say that once a particularly greedy old lady travelled through those parts, carrying her hoarded treasure with her — her greed was such that she never parted with her wealth day or night. As she drove through the Black Forest, she was stopped by the robbers. They circled her carriage, told the coachmen and servants to clear out for the moment, and demanded her money. But the woman just let out a terrible crazy scream which echoed throughout the dark forest, clung to her riches as if with steel claws,

and wouldn't let go. They tried to wrest them away by force; but her old fingers just crackled but wouldn't release their grip, her eyes glittering wildly in the moonlight like those of a savage hungry she-wolf. Then the leader himself emerged from the forest to speak to her. "Give up your riches!" he ordered. "You've lived amidst luxury and gold long enough — now let others enjoy some of it!" The old lady lifted her eyes — and her treasures fell from her hands. And down she fell too, unconscious, struck with his enchanting beauty as if by a thunderbolt, her heart strained by her greed and her strength consumed by his beauty.

On another occasion, the Black Forest robbers stopped a young girl and her brother. The brother — he was no coward — quickly glanced round, only to see that dark woods stood like a wall on all sides and that they were surrounded by tall strong men. So he knew at once that they were really in a difficult spot; but he decided to try and fight his way through just the same. "Sit still!" he told his sister. "Don't be afraid!" Then, turning to the robbers, he called, "Let us pass, please!" "You're a rich man, so let's have your money first!" they shouted back. His sister was frightened to death. "I've just no money for your kind," he retorted. "Give it up, or we'll take it by force," they threatened, drawing closer. The sister cried out and burst into tears, covering her face with her hands. And then, amidst all the din, shouting and yelling, she suddenly heard a voice reassuring her. "Stop crying, young lady!" the voice was saying. "You've nothing to fear." She took her hands from her face to see who was standing before her — and she would never forget his wondrous beauty as long as she lived. Her fear and terror vanished; and she was enveloped by such calm that it would have made no difference to her if she were to live or to die. She folded her arms, and just stared and listened.

The robbers took her brother's money and let them con-

tinue on their journey. The same voice which had urged the girl to stop crying and not be afraid spoke to them again. "Remember!" the leader said. "Hunger and cold kill many poor people in this world!"

Nobody even touched the girl's rich necklace of gold coins — she herself took it off and cast it at the leader's feet. "Thank you, young lady!" he said.

From that time things began to lose their colour and fade for the girl, until everything and everybody had turned meaningless and colourless in her eyes. "I'm going to become a nun," she announced to her father and mother. Before long, she took her vows.

Her brother, without as much as a word to his father, mother, friends, or anyone else, gathered up all his possessions he could carry, and, leaving all the rest behind, abandoned his quiet life and fled from home to join the band in the Black Forest.

V

When the news that none other than Karmelyuk was the leader of the band in the Black Forest spread about his native village, it caused quite a stir among old and young, good and bad alike. The men appeared concerned, while the women were visibly worried and troubled.

The story also reached Karmelyuk's mother and wife. The widow was in tears as she told her daughter-in-law: "Wicked and shameless — that's what people are! Isn't it horrible, how they're lying? They're slandering my dear son! It simply can't be true! I don't believe it! I'd sooner die than believe it. What do you say, Marusya? What about you?"

"I'll just keep living and loving him," Marusya said. "And so will I!" prattled her little daughter who stood beside her, listening.

Days went by. Then there was a night — a lovely night when the moon and stars were shining bright in a cloudless sky, the orchards were in bloom, the houses looked peaceful and dreamy, and the nightingales were singing. The Karmelyuk's daughter was sleeping soundly, breathing evenly. Worn down by anxiety and sorrow, the widow was also asleep, but her sleep was troubled; she was continually sighing, crying out and sobbing. Sleep had overcome the frail old woman; but it failed to bring her peace.

Karmelyuk's wife wasn't asleep, though. She had spent many sleepless nights and would most likely spend many more; for she was young and too vigorous for the lack of sleep to tell on her, and her anxiety grew by the day and by the hour. So she stayed awake, thinking about the man she loved. Suddenly, she heard the door being opened cautiously — ever so cautiously — and saw him step inside; the next thing she knew he was in her arms. And then she couldn't tell whether everything suddenly burst into light or dimmed to darkness before her eyes, or whether it was ecstasy or agony — only when she came to her senses, she was out in the orchard where she could feel the fragrance of the flowers and saw the bright moon and brilliant stars. For quite a long time she wasn't aware or conscious of anything except that he was there with her and that she was in his arms. She looked at him and slowly found herself again. Then they began to talk, softly and gently, and spent the rest of that night talking.

The moon had disappeared from the sky, the stars had faded away, the nightingales had fallen silent, the sky had started to colour in the east and the morning breeze was already brushing the leaves in the trees, when Karmelyuk embraced his wife, kissing her goodbye. They walked together across the fields down to a valley outside the village where three black horses were grazing and two of Karmelyuk's comrades were waiting for him, puffing away at their pipes. There Karmelyuk parted with Marusya, and

his comrades heard him tell her, "I'll be back!" Then the three of them jumped into their saddles and galloped off, the horses' hooves raising sparks, until they disappeared from sight.

Marusya walked back home. Both at their house and at the neighbours', everybody was still asleep, and all was quiet. Only the sky was glowing brighter and the leaves in the trees were fluttering faster.

As time went on, the band of robbers in the Black Forest grew stronger and stronger with every passing hour and with every new day. Also, with every passing hour and with every new day, the well-to-do and the titled grew increasingly concerned and alarmed. Finally, they decided to have the leader captured by might and main, no matter how. So they hired detectives and informers, offering them lavish fees and promising high rewards, only asking in return that they "get that man". Before long, detectives and spies swarmed all over, in search of trails and traces.

More time went by, and the leader was still at large. More than once the news spread that he had been captured; and crowds of people would then gather to have a look, driven by the desire to make sure for themselves, attracted by the heady atmosphere, aroused by disbelief, genuine interest or just common curiosity. However, the news proved to be false every time. It was true, though, that a suspicious-looking man had been detained in the forest, but that was either some poor devil, with nothing to do with the band, whom want and need had forced to take to robbery, or even a harmless, innocent traveller seized by mistake. As rumours had it, the leader enchanted people and could turn away glances and touch the heart; no living soul could hear his voice, meet his eyes or see his beautiful face and remain unmoved and unimpressed. He was said to charm and captivate everyone, and it was even claimed that several detectives had actually tracked him down but

had then fallen under his spell and let him go, becoming totally unfit for similar jobs for the rest of their lives.

It takes all sorts to make a world, though; there are always people who can't be charmed by any charm or deceived by any deceit. It was such men who now joined the hunt and went to trace and pursue him as tirelessly and incessantly as he escaped from them — by day and by night, from dawn to dusk, through thick woods and across boundless steppes, down in deep valleys and high in the mountains...

VI

One dark night, when everybody was asleep, Karmelyuk's wife waited under a cherry tree in her orchard. She stood motionless, like a statue, until she spotted his tall figure approaching from the valley and dashed towards him — like a soul flying to Paradise.

Karmelyuk was breathing hard, weary and exhausted. Embracing Marusya, he could not hold her for long in his benumbed hands. He spoke with effort.

"They're hunting me like a wild beast, Marusya," he said. "I've been on the run for three straight days and four nights — never once stopped... I've had to disband the company also..."

"Oh, my darling," Marusya said. "They were here yesterday, asking about you, but we all told them we knew nothing. Yesterday — "she paused. "What's this?" she gasped, as something clanged and banged near by. Then suddenly, the lights went on in the house, and there were loud voices inside, clamouring and shouting. The next thing they knew, more voices rang out in the orchard, all about them, and men fell on them from all sides.

"Hold him! Seize him! We've got him! We're holding him!" Shouts resounded in the quiet of the night.

Karmelyuk was overpowered. He quickly turned to his wife. "Marusya!" he whispered. "Just tell them you don't know anything! Do you hear?"

"All right," Marusya whispered back.

Karmelyuk's mother came running, unable to believe her eyes. She was inconsolable, seeing him seized, and pleaded with his captors to release her son. His little daughter also awoke and rushed to her father as she was — wearing only a nightshirt, her hair dishevelled — and clutched at him with her tiny hands.

They dragged everybody away from Karmelyuk, flung him into a carriage and drove off. The whole village had turned out to watch him be taken away, people thronging and buzzing like a swarm of bees. Karmelyuk's wife walked after the carriage with her daughter in her arms. His old mother was unable to walk; she kept fainting while several sympathetic young men who had been deeply moved by the entire scene got a horse and waggon ready for her.

Karmelyuk was brought in irons to a big town and thrown into a sombre stone cell. "Karmelyuk's had it!" shouted the rich. "His day of reckoning has come!" The poor talked one to another in hushed voices. Young women and girls wept; older people crossed themselves, saying, "Lord, have mercy upon us!"

Karmelyuk's wife and daughter followed him to the town, walking all the way. The widow was brought in the waggon. Karmelyuk was put on trial which dragged on for quite a long time.

Whoever then happened to walk or ride across the square past the lifeless-looking jail would see at all hours an elderly woman whose final remaining strength seemed to be fast ebbing away. She sat on a large stone, weeping. If spoken to, she would tell about her misfortune, wailing over it. There one could also see a young woman, sitting still and silent, whose lack of any colour in her face seemed to suggest the loss of all that was dear. At her side

was a little girl whom nobody ever saw merry or playful and who was never seen in a nearby street, where as she must have known, sweets and toys were sold — never! She just sat quietly beside her mother, sometimes questioning her softly about something or just speaking to her, sometimes snuggling up against the older woman who wept as she hugged her with her feeble aged hands. It was as though they lived there — around that large grey stone about which nobody knew who and why had put it there on the square outside the prison. It was there that they ate their lunch and supper. It seems they would have slept there as well, but since the town rules didn't allow it, every night they had to return to a hut where they had found shelter, and slept there. Every night their last glances and thoughts were directed to the dark windows of the jail; every morning their first thoughts were about the jail, and they couldn't wait to again see that forbidding sight.

As time went on, nothing was made less burdensome for them and nothing changed, except that the weather became chillier, as the autumn cold set in, and there was frost in the mornings and at nights. People wrapped themselves up in sheepskin coats and lit stoves; the little girl now ran faster and faster to the hut every evening and back to the stone outside the jail every morning, and the old woman couldn't walk a single step without support from her daughter-in-law.

They were all fairly certain about the verdict, and only waited for the trial to end. Finally, the day came. It was bright and crisp and the snow was falling lightly when the prison door was flung open and convicts began coming out in paris, their chains jangling. A small crowd had gathered in the square, a couple of women were crying, looking out for their loved ones among the shackled pairs. There were so many reckless, daring souls among these convicts!

Karmelyuk also came out. Those convicts who had somebody to say goodbye to, were allowed to do so. Karme-

lyuk's mother sank to the ground the moment she saw him; his wife and daughter rushed to his side, ready to follow him all the way. Having said goodbye to his mother, Karmelyuk then began to say goodbye to his wife and daughter, telling them something in a low voice. Blood rushed to the young woman's face as she listened, as if his words had hurt her deeply, and their daughter cried out, "We aren't going to leave you, Daddy!" two or three times, and then flung her little arms round her shackled father, bursting into tears.

Meanwhile, shouts rang out in the crowd: "Karmelyuk! Karmelyuk! It's Karmelyuk! Where's he? There he is!" And the crowd heaved and swayed, like a billowing sea wave.

The convicts were ordered to march and they did so. The crowd followed them as far as the highway outside the town, getting larger and larger all the time, and the shouts "Karmelyuk! Karmelyuk!" becoming louder and louder. From all sides, people were throwing coins to the convicts and shouting to them, "God be with you!" Karmelyuk's mother was helped along; his wife and daughter walked at his side. Then, everybody was ordered to turn back.

"I'll die... I'll die soon!" Karmelyuk's mother gasped out, breathless. The little girl kissed and caressed her father. "I wish we could go with you!" she cried out.

"We'll do as you say," his loyal and faithful wife told him.

"Let's hope for the better!" Karmelyuk said.

"Start! Get a move on!" And they went.

They marched further and further on. Soon the dull jangling of their chains could be heard no more. Their figures could barely be seen. Then they disappeared altogether; where they were last seen there were now only trees, sharply outlined against the bright sky.

Karmelyuk's mother was led back to the town, and Marusya carried the sobbing girl; the crowd trudging along,

talking and offering words of sympathy and advice. Before the day was done, Karmelyuk's family set off by waggon back to their native village. Each night, the lights burned again in Karmelyuk's house, and all in it grieved, but their thoughts were with him every step of his long journey to an unknown destination.

VII

A year passed. Karmelyuk's old mother died, as she had foretold, and by that spring her grave was already overgrown with tall thick grass. Living in the house were his wife and daughter. Once, shortly after Karmelyuk's arrest, a kindly neighbour had asked the little girl, patting her on the head: "What are you and your mother doing, my dear?" "Waiting," the girl had replied. Which was precisely the answer. For Karmelyuk had told them to stay at home and wait. "It will be easier to escape and make my way back home on my own," he had said. Marusya had agreed to everything. "We'll do what you want," she had told him. Their daughter had since grown up and learned to watch her words, and nobody ever heard from her again that they were waiting for Karmelyuk — but they were. They waited for him every day, every night, every hour. They waited for him before sunrise and at daybreak, by day and by night, from dawn to dusk. They spent hours, days, weeks and months just waiting for him. Their days were filled with work and the usual bustle and chores, but they were also filled with hope and waiting. Their evenings were set aside for rest, but they, likewise, were filled with hope and waiting. During the day, a neighbour might sometimes drop in, and then they would be momentarily overwhelmed with chattering, the din, and the daily routine. But in the evening, when all around them had lapsed into calm silence, the mother and daughter lit the lamp, as

though expecting visitors, and just sat there, silently. The daughter would not play with her toys; from time to time she would speak softly with her mother, and sometimes she would also sing her father's songs in her tender voice. She tried really hard to sing them well — so hard that her little face burned, her heart beat faster, and her whole body trembled. Her mother's eyes were fixed on her, her hands stretched out towards her; and Marusya took her daughter in her arms and held her close, the girl's tiny arms entwined round her mother's neck. They sat together like this for a very, very long time — often well into the night.

And in the dead of night they would still sit there. Towards daybreak, with the lamp dying away, the girl, still not in bed, would finally doze off by her mother's side. And then the young woman would bury her face in her hands, overcome with the agony of despair.

And as time went on and on, they never ceased waiting.

One night they were sitting in the house, the lamp burning as always, and were thinking the same thoughts and cherishing the same hopes. And as she had so often done before, the little girl said to her mother, hopefully, "Perhaps tonight..."

Then the door opened and he whom they had been waiting for so long stood before them. Oh, God! Glory to God!

In the morning, when the sun had risen in the clear sky and the village stirred back to life, filling the day with its constant din, Marusya left the house to start her work, as she usually did at that hour. She looked all around, and it seemed to her that all had changed overnight. And suddenly she burst into tears. But it was not sorrow that made her weep, because when her daughter scurried to her side, she smiled gently to her and gave her a loving look, her pretty eyes shining with utter joy.

Shortly afterwards Karmelyuk's wife sold the house, bid farewell to all, and left the village, taking her daughter with her. She had told some of the villagers that she in-

tended to move to town, perhaps as far as Kiev, but, as a matter of fact, nobody seemed to know exactly where she had gone to, nor where she might have settled. To be sure, somebody was said to have seen them in a remote, out-of-the-way village where Marusya apparently worked to earn her living. It was also rumoured that she was doing odd jobs in town. All who had known her were sorry for this quiet young woman and her child, recalling their former good fortune and talking over their present misfortune which had struck them so hard, leaving them practically ruined and no longer able to live as well as they used to.

Other people now lived in the Karmelyuk house, managing things in their own way: some of the old trees were cut down in the orchard and new ones planted, and different flowers were sown in the garden in spring.

That same spring word spread that the robbers were back in the forest. It seemed they were Karmelyuk's men, just as before, as Karmelyuk had escaped, returned and reorganized his band. The news cheered up the poor, and many a humble man suddenly bore himself proudly, despite his ragged clothes. There were also many others, their faces long creased with cares and shrivelled up with want, who now smiled cheerfully, their eyes beaming and sparkling. The rich, on the other hand, were again frightened and nervous; they busily began to form their committees and councils, urging courts to take action, tossing money about and bribing judges. They demanded that Karmelyuk be recaptured, exiled farther, and guarded more closely. So the police resumed their search, and detectives again set forth to track Karmelyuk down. But it was a far more difficult job for them now, because the robbers were now far more numerous, and were to be found in practically all the major forests and ravines, not just in one *povit.*

VIII

Quite close to a little, out-of-the-way village and not too far from town, there was a large forest, dense and dark. If somebody talkative had happened to walk along those gloomy, lonely paths, he would probably say that he often encountered a young woman with a little girl. Both carried baskets, and if asked where they were going, they would tell they were picking berries or gathering mushrooms to sell. And as they said, they could often be seen at the market-place in town, selling berries or mushrooms. The forest was believed to be a safe place, as nobody had ever heard of any robberies occurring there.

Reaching the forest, the woman and the child plunged straight in its depths, almost instantly disappearing from view, like a pair of snakes sliding through a hedgerow. Then they walked quickly on, never pausing, following along those paths and trails in a way only they themselves knew, until they reached a small meadow deep in the thick of the forest, and sat down to catch their breath.

There, in the heart of the forest, it was still as a church. Ancient trees seemed to be leaning on younger ones; their thick, mighty arms resting on supple young crowns, bending them down by their weight. Here and there a winding young branch threaded its way up through that maze, then reached higher and higher, twisting and turning from side to side, as though it feared that somehow its growth might be halted. The ground beneath was covered with all kinds of shrubs. Only tiny patches of sunlight sifted through from above, and flowers grew there in the cool shade. Snowball-trees and elders blossomed with flowers that were at least twice as big as anywhere else; wild roses — usually a flaming red — were paler and more luxuriant, and had a softer fragrance.

The woman and the girl paused there, listening carefully. At first, they would hear nothing — not even a bird in flight,

not even a breath of wind. The impenetrable forest remained still and quiet, dark and fresh.

And thus it would be until the dried branches cracked softly somewhere not far away. Then the two — the woman and the girl — would pick up their heads and smile. Soon a man would appear. He would be pale, out of breath, exhausted, hungry and covered with dust; but to them he was still as beautiful as the Sun. Here they met, here he had his respite and ate his meals, here he listened to words of love and sympathy, here his wife told him about everything she had heard, seen and thought; here he enjoyed hearing his daughter's prattle. The girl occasionally brought him some sweets; he thanked her heartily and smiled at her gently. Here sometimes he laid his tired head on his wife's lap and slept, while the girl kept watch. She was rather expert at it, never raising false alarms, but always giving a timely warning if something seemed wrong.

They had little time to spend together and when it was spent, they took leave of each other as they loved — with exceeding pain and sorrow, yet at the same time with even greater faith and hope. The man strode off into the forest; the woman and child returned to town. They waited three days and three nights before venturing into the forest again. In the meantime, the woman went out to her work, leaving the girl alone at home. They rented a small hut which stood clinging to a hillside by the river, almost outside the town.

The woman was off at her work all day long. The girl, though still quite young, wasn't idle either; she would offer to fetch water for the old woman next door or to weed her garden. "What a smart little girl!" the neighbour would say every evening patting the girl on the head and giving her a small coin or two. And before she retired for the night, she would always offer the girl some work for the next day as well. The girl then went over to the river, to a place where she could see the forest, and would sit there, thinking and

remembering, and sometimes also singing a song — the song her father had taught her as he held her in his arms, back there in the green forest.

Though I'm back from Siberia, no future is mine!
Wear no shackles, just the same I in slavery do pine!
I am shadowed day and night, all the hours have eyes,
I have nowhere to go — Oh, from sorrow I'll die!
I've collected daring fellows — what is that, after all?
And they lurk by the highroads where the stage-
coaches crawl.
Whether travellers come or not — it's no matter, wait
they must!
Oh, it looks like Karmelyuk will die a dog's death in
the dust!
They call me a highway robber, and say that
I murder —
But I don't kill anyone, for my soul is my preserver.
What I take from the rich, I give out to the oppressed,
While I do good that way, no commandment I've
transgressed.
I've a wife and a daughter — but when do I see them?
When I think of their sorrows, flow my tears faster
then.
I would have gone to their village — but my splendor
is known —
Should I turn up anywhere, into jail I'll be thrown.
Oh, my heart's wrung with sorrow — but where can
I flee?
It's a wide world, full of beauty. But there's no place
for me!
On an early Sunday morning, all the bells ring in
chorus,
But they hunt down Karmelyuk, like a beast of the
forest.

Let them hunt me, try to catch me, let them keep on the chase —
May the whole world remember Karmelyuk's name and face.

Her mother would then come down the road leading from the town. Here they would meet and walk back home side by side, talking affectionately, whether remembering, or encouraging each other, or sharing their sorrow...

IX

Meanwhile, Karmelyuk's enemies remained vigilant. The agents and detectives were ordered to bear arms and to be prepared to shoot if he couldn't be captured alive. Day after day, Marusya and her daughter watched every face, fearing to read the terrible news written on it, and listened anxiously to every word, expecting to hear the worst. Many were those days before the news flashed throughout the town: Karmelyuk had been wounded and captured, and would shortly be brought in!

He was escorted back to town to be again confined to a sombre cell, to be put in stronger and heavier irons, to face more enraged judges, to hear a harsher sentence, and to be banished to a more remote destination. Again, as before, people gathered in crowds, first to meet him, and then to watch him leave; talking excitedly and sympathizing with him. It was then that his wife and daughter reappeared. They walked after him — just as they had the first time. "We'll do what you want," Marusya told him — just as she had once told him before. The girl wept again, kissing him, and, as before, he told them to hope for the better. The convicts were again ordered to march, and so they

did. And then he again was gone, and, as before, there were only trees, sharply outlined against a bright sky...

He was driven on and on, and they again stayed behind, working harder and harder... and waiting. Then they, too, were gone.

Marusya and her daughter were last seen when it was finally rumoured that Karmelyuk had again escaped and had returned. The rumour faded away, but since that time neither Karmelyuk, nor Marusya, nor their daughter have ever been seen again.

Where did they go? How did they end their days? No one knows, even now.

They came and went, just as so many things come and go — good and evil, love and hatred, strength and glory. But sometimes a living memory lingers.

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