

CALL OF THE LAND

BY

HONORE EWACH



THE CALL OF THE LAND

A SHORT STORY OF LIFE IN CANADA

BY

HONORE EWACH



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*“With reverence, I dedicate this story
to my father and mother, and all the other
pioneer farmers.”*

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PREFACE

Honore Ewach's *The Call of the Land* is finally being published in English thanks to the Trident Press that had the short novel translated and prepared for publication. Thus far there are not many novels dealing with pioneer life of the Ukrainian settlers in Manitoba. The closest may be Gus Romaniuk's autobiographical presentation of his pioneer experiences. Honore Ewach, however, is one who added the product of his creative mind to some halfdozen writers who wrote about rural Manitoba. Among those were Robert Stead, Nellie McLung, Phillip Grove, Gloria Goodman Salverson and Gabrielle Roy. Most of these wrote in English, but Gabrielle Roy wrote in French; Honore Ewach wrote in Ukrainian. This translated edition is yet another gem to be added to the collection of Manitoba literature.

Ewach's major work in literature is this short novel which has autobiographical content when the writer presents us with life of the Ukrainian settlers on the Eastern Slopes of the Duck Mountains; it seems that from these slopes the author calls to the people on the plains and in all Canada to tell them about the life that was - the life of the Ukrainian homesteaders. The story takes place in Garland, Manitoba, one of the attractive areas in the Province.

The author in making his novelette a truly Canadian creation does not forget to express his intense love for the subjugated Ukrainian people and his hope in the country becoming free and independent.

Honore Ewach came to Canada with his parents when he was nine years old. Though he started school in his native village, he seems to have been influenced and inspired by the teachers in the Garland rural school he attended. The first of these was a lady of Anglo-Saxon origin who gave him a start in creative writing. Then there were the pioneer teachers of Ukrainian origin, and finally the educators in the P. Mohyla Institute where he received a fine background in Ukrainian literature and history; and was consequently better able to understand the Ukrainian settlers and their neighbors.

Nature did not endow Honore Ewach with robust physique, but it did bestow on him gifts of understanding, compassion, love of nature and determination. He deprecated any master-slave relationship in society. The C.N.R. line passing through Garland appears to

divide the Society in which he lived in two specific groups: the of toilers, like the sunburst lassie who brought berries for sale, the black porter and the Duck Mountain trapper Jean La Rue but above all, Andrew Klym the Garland settler. On the other side we see the forest ranger, the other petty officials and the man of great power, the train conductor, holding to his gold watch and on its dictates is able to add the iron monster to the list of servants: his clear voice calls out, "All Aboard!" and the train moves away restoring the countryside to the control of the toilers.

Alone Ewach could not have become one of the few descendants of Manitoba pioneer settlers to earn a meagre livelihood as a writer. He, therefore, always recognized the help he received from the Scottish lady school teacher, his kind and helpful sister and brother-in-law, Klym, and above all, the P. Mohyla Institute. All these received his thanks by making it possible for them to see the publication of *The Call of the Land*. He thanked his parents by dedicating the book to their memory.

Michael Ewanchuk

A WORD ABOUT TRANSLATOR...

Roy Serwylo was born in Winnipeg in 1953. He was a former English teacher, then worked as a research assistant for the Manitoba Association of School Trustees. During summer vacation he worked as a co-ordinator of and instructor in the creative writing program at the Banff School of Fine Arts, under well known Canadian writer W. O. Mitchell.

He is also a writer, and in 1982 published a novel *Accordian Lessons*. Other short fiction has been published in *Nebula*, *Pierian Spring*, *Prairie Fire*, *Freefall*, and Ukrainian Canadian Student's Union paper — *Student / Etudiant*. Currently Mr. Serwylo is living in Australia.

CHAPTER ONE

It was Sunday, and old Klym had gone out to look at the fields. He walked slowly and gazed at his land, a narrow ribbon stretching between the railroad on one side, and the marsh on the other. The fields of green wheat caressed his eyes.

Klym was content. The breeze gently cooled his face; the soft grass fondled his bare feet. It seemed to Klym that he grew stronger as the energy of the warm earth rushed up through his feet.

In the old country Andrew Klym had been a peasant, and had owned very little land. So he had come with his wife and children to Canada, where free land, much of it even wooded, was being given out to anyone who wanted it. He settled on a farm about thirty miles northwest of Dauphin, in the district between Lake Winnipegosis and the Duck Mountains. At first, Klym rejoiced at having as much wooded land as an old country landlord. But as he began to clear the land for cultivation, he quickly realized he would have to work hard to win every inch of soil from the forest. Nevertheless, he cleared himself a small patch of land in a few months, ploughed it in the fall, and seeded it in the spring. Now it was lovely just to watch the wind comb the green fleece of wheat. Klym smiled with satisfaction.

As Klym walked back towards the house he heard the dog begin to bark. His eyes followed Collie up to a wagon loaded with people, that was coming down the road near the edge of the field. When Collie raised his bushy tail high in the air, and started to yap playfully, it was easy to guess that familiar company was approaching.

“Hello Collie, hello! Ha!... bark at Uncle Metro? You don't recognize me?” Uncle Metro teased Collie, who was already eagerly sniffing Bill, the visitors' shaggy-haired mongrel. Collie wagged his tail with delight, and glanced briefly at Uncle Metro when he called him. He then quickly chased after Bill, who had started to run to the house.

Mrs. Klym came outside as the wagonload of people arrived. Uncle Metro and a swarthy young man were perched high on a wooden seat at the front of the wagon. Between them sat Nastunia, Uncle Metro's young daughter. The springs of the seat sagged under Uncle Metro. He had put on so much weight, ever since he had thrown away his shoemaker's last in the old country, and had begun

tending a few pigs on his farm in Canada. Metro's wife sat behind the seat, on the hay, covered by a coarse blanket. With her in the back were Klym's nearest neighbours, cousin Yakym Skakun and his wife. The feet of three school-age boys dangled from the end of the wagon. Two boys were Skakun's, and the other, Uncle Metro's.

"Glory to Jesus Christ!" exclaimed Uncle Metro, lifting his wide-brimmed straw hat (the kind American cowboys wear) high over his head as he drove through the open gates into the yard.

"Eternal Glory!" replied Klym, standing by the gates. "You've done well, to visit us. It's rather sad here without any neighbours close by..."

Malanka, Klym's daughter, peered out through the open door. She saw the tawny youth sitting on the wagon and quickly ducked back into the house, her heart pounding and her face flushed. Malanka hurriedly began to straighten up the house, spreading an embroidered cloth over the table, and tidying up the dishes in the kitchen. After fluffing up the large, old country pillows on the bed, she took a final quick glance in the little mirror and ran up to the window, wondering why the guests lingered outside for so long.

Malanka was overjoyed when she saw the visitors, but her main delight was not in seeing *all* of them. It was that deeply tanned young man who sat with Nastunia and Uncle Metro — he was the source of her joy. The young man was Marko Kozak, and Malanka had known him since the beginning of last winter. With another fellow he had stayed then at Uncle Metro's, and had cut and sold firewood. Malanka had even danced a few times with him, and when he had left for Winnipeg in the spring, had he not written to her every week? And the letters he wrote!

"Hey, where's Malanka?" Uncle Metro asked cheerfully, after unhitching the horses. "Or perhaps we only came to look at the old ladies? Show me at least one rosy face; I've grown tired of looking at these faded cheeks of my Paraska day after day... Well... it's not so much me," Uncle Metro continued to tease in his booming voice, "as this young lad here. He'd like to see some rosy cheeks, hey?... What do you say, Marko?"

Marko didn't reply to Uncle Metro's banter but just smiled good-naturedly, stealing furtive glances at the window, then at the door.

"Ha! ha!" chuckled Uncle Metro, as he began to reminisce. "When I was still a young man, there wasn't the kind of girl there is now. What's a girl nowadays? Ah!... A cobweb!... Puff on her and

the breeze would knock her down. There was a time when girls weren't like that. Wherever a girl went the ground beneath her would tremble. Her face! — like a guelder rose; her skirt — like fire! When she laughed — then even the nightingale would listen. And, when the army let me go home for the holidays, and the girls saw my blue uniform, they'd swarm about me like bees! But I'd just stand as if I didn't see them, and mutter to myself in German, 'eins, zwei, drei', as though I had totally forgotten how to speak our own language. Finally, when I would wink at one, and laugh and flirt with them all, then they'd make a commotion through the entire village. Ah yes, the girls loved me... But, some evil spirit blinded me in the end, for you can see what kind of beauty shackled me. Yet, there were lovely girls... very lovely girls... as beautiful as *pysanky*."

Uncle Metro would have kept on boasting and teasing his wife had she not begun to scold him. This wasn't the first time he had embarrassed Paraska by poking fun at her.

"Whoa! Keep quiet already, mister. Think about what you're saying! How anyone can brag like that! When your tongue itches, praise your colt, or your pups."

"Yes, yes, okay! That's good that you remembered the pups. I'm telling you, the pups that Fanny had, they're like little *publichky*. They haven't opened their eyes yet and already they're trying to yelp. Not only that, but they already know how to bite. Bill's two years old, and he's from Fanny too. Look at him there, running around with Collie! Oh, they're rascals, the two of them. They'll trample your wheat! Hey! Come here! Collie! Bill! Get out of there! My, your wheat has grown! Let the good Lord keep it that way!" exclaimed Uncle Metro as he admired the green fields. "Mine'll never be like that. Cousin Andrew! Let's take a closer look at that crop."

"You can expect a good harvest," said the quiet Skakun, and went with Uncle Metro, Klym, and Marko to inspect the wheat.

Malanka's delight disappeared when she saw Marko walk with his host to the fields, especially since he hadn't even greeted her. Her heart ached at Marko's apparent indifference to her. When Mrs. Klym and her two neighbours entered the house and started discussing domestic and women's affairs, Malanka went outside. At the same time, Katerina, Malanka's married sister, also left her house, a few steps from her father's home. Her three year-old daughter, Olenka, scampered off with Nastunia and Klym's youngest girl, Oksana, to see if the wild strawberries had ripened yet in the ditch by the railroad.

Katerina was Klym's oldest daughter. She had now lived away from her parents for two years, in a small house with a flat, sloping roof. Each summer her husband would ride out to Ontario to work, and return home only for the winter. Neither Katerina nor Petro wanted to live like that, but there was not much choice. Petro Moroz wanted to earn some money to build up his farm.

"I couldn't come outside when the guests arrived because I hadn't changed. Who's that guy who came with Uncle Metro; it's Marko isn't it?" asked Katerina, catching sight of the men on the path as they approached the end of the field. She joined Malanka on the bench beside the house, where they chattered excitedly in the shade until the men returned from their stroll.

"Hi there! My little girls, hello!" Uncle Metro greeted Katerina and Malanka. "But I guess I can't see too well anymore! These aren't young girls, but ladies. And such a lovely couple at that!" he smiled and winked at Malanka. "And how's Petro, Katerina? Will he come to help your father cut the hay?"

"Perhaps he'll come, but he still doesn't know for sure. It's an expensive trip from Ontario. Though not long ago he asked in a letter if the hay was tall enough yet, so maybe he will come."

"Ah, your Petro is good for nothing," laughed Uncle Metro. "If I had the choice, I'd even walk home, just to have a look at a beauty like you, Katerina... By God!... The hay right now is still little, but here hays grows as if yeast was used. Don't worry, there'll be hay this summer, yes sir, there'll be hay! And oh, what kind of hay!... And how's Olenka?"

"Olenka is a big girl already," Katerina answered. She went with Nastunia and Oksana someplace to look for strawberries, though it's still a bit early for them."

Soon Marko Kozak and Yakym Skakun, who had both remained a bit behind, arrived. Skakun suggested they sit in the shade, on the grass behind the house.

"Now there's a good idea," agreed Uncle Marko, "I'll spread a blanket on the lawn, and we can stretch out and be nice and comfortable." As he stepped up to the wagon, and, from the bottom, pulled out the straw-covered blanket, Marko Kozak greeted Katerina and Malanka, warmly clasping their hands.

"We'd love to have you join us, Marko, but the two of us hardly fit on the bench. So why don't you just sit there on that block of

wood, where we can see you better,” grinned Katerina. “There, now tell us, what’s the city like these days?”

“Oh, it’s much nicer on the farm now,” answered Marko, seating himself on the thick block. “The city’s too hot and dusty in the summer. Here it’s so lovely, green everywhere, as if it was decorated with green leaves. And it’s not just the summers here; on the farm the winters too are so much more beautiful.”

“You really don’t like the city?” Katerina asked, surprised. “That’s strange. We’d have moved to the city a long time ago if Petro felt about it the way I do. There’s so few people here; it’s depressing. You’re always working, from sunrise until late at night, yet there’s never a trace of your work. But in the city there’s lots of people, and all kinds of things to see. No, I don’t like the farm,” sighed Katerina. “I want to live in the city.”

“Well, if you want to go to the city so badly, then why suffer here? I’m sure you could easily persuade Petro,” Marko suggested, only half-seriously.

“Listen,” whispered Katerina, mischievously squinting her eyes, “if you want to know a secret. But don’t tell anyone! I’ve already convinced Petro to move to the city next spring. We’re moving to Winnipeg, and we’re taking Malanka with us too. It’ll be easy for her to find a job in a restaurant. Who wouldn’t hire such a beautiful girl?”

“That’s just what I planned to do,” grinned Marko. But when he saw Malanka suddenly become embarrassed he quickly changed the subject. “Though while we’re sitting here and talking, we haven’t even noticed it’s getting cloudy in the west. It looks like rain.”

“Oh, you’re right! It is getting cloudy. I think you’re right about the rain, too. You’ll have to excuse me while I just pop into the house for a second, and see what conclusions the older ladies have reached. Maybe someday I’ll be able to use some of their advice,” smiled Katerina, and went into the house.

The reason for Katerina’s departure was obvious, but after she left, Malanka didn’t know what to do with herself. She was almost frightened to be left alone with the man she loved. She didn’t know what to say, or even how to look up at him.

“You know, I didn’t think your sister wanted to move to the city so badly,” Marko said quietly. “I just wonder how long she’d like it. When I’m in the city I feel like I’m in a foreign country. I love to work in the fields. My father worked the land, and that’s what I have to do.

I want to become as good a farmer as Uncle Metro — and I will! I'll earn some money, enough to get started with, and then I'll settle on a farm, someplace around here."

Marko's voice softened as he spoke, as if he wanted to finally tell Malanka something, but was afraid to mention it. At last he overcame his uneasiness and faintly asked: "Malanka, will you wait for me until spring?"

Malanka thought she would faint from her sudden joy and excitement. The blood began to throb in her head when she heard those words, and she barely managed to whisper: "I'll wait."



CHAPTER TWO

Like a soldier, only with a scythe over his shoulder instead of musket, Klym marched down to the swampy meadow. Gazing at the green stretch of hay, he placed the scythe on the grass, and rolled up his pants. He spit into his hands, rubbed them together, then picked up the scythe and waded barefoot into the shallow water. After crossing himself, Klym finally gripped the handle tightly, and began his strong, rhythmic swinging.

It was obvious Klym loved his work. Skilfully handling the scythe, like an artisan he moved, ignoring the water through which he waded. He cut the hay with great, broad strokes, twisting his upper body only slightly. Farther and farther he pushed, leaving behind him a straight, wide swath.

The water in the meadow glittered upon Klym's bare skin, rejoicing that the hot, bright sun caressed it with its warm rays. Klym finished the first swath, and, a soldier once again, swung the scythe over his shoulder and waded back to begin the next row. After the second swath came the third, and then the fourth, Klym happier after each, pleased that so many swaths already lay behind him. When he stopped to sharpen the blade with the whetstone, he gazed over the rows of fallen grass, a cossack general gazing at the field after a victorious battle. Then once more he spit into his palms, and with broad strokes, began cutting the grass.

Suddenly he heard his wife's voice call out from behind him.

"Hey Andrew! Hey! How much grass have you cut already? It looks like enough for two or three haystacks." She was standing among the small willow trees between the field and the meadow. "Watch out for your feet, and don't stay in the water too long! It may be warm, but you'll get that rheumatism!"

When Klym heard his wife's cheerful voice he immediately straightened up from his slight stoop. He felt something warm in his soul; he was glad someone had seen him at the work he loved. Klym was pleased to be seen at his craft, especially by the woman with whom he had lived for over twenty years. He swung the scythe skilfully a few more times, and then turned to his wife.

"But you see, Maria, I was just trying out the scythe. It's old, but it still cuts like a razor. If it doesn't break it'll still last a few more years."

Klym inspected his scythe with satisfaction. It was still from the old country, and he valued it more than the readily available scythes in the stores around town. That scythe was precious to Klym, and after the haying season he would always wrap it carefully in a linen rag, just like a mother would wrap her child in a diaper, and hide in a dry spot in the attic.

“Well old-timer, it’s a good start. Just watch out for yourself. The water’s cold under the grass, and it’ll bother you. Don’t stay in there too long,” she warned him. I’m going to pull out some beets for the borscht,” and with those words Klym’s wife disappeared behind the willow bushes.

Klym cut several more swaths, then wiped off the wet blade with a clump of grass, and waded out of the water onto the ground.

“It looks like a good year for hay,” Klym thought out loud. He took an old piece of glass out of his pocket, and sat down on a log. “But it’s still a bit early to start mowing. Another week. Then, with Petro, we’ll really get to work.” He bent down and picked up a long stick, and with the glass started to smooth it out into another scythe handle. “In the meantime, the patches of grass in the willows will have to be cut. If the weather and everything else is good, and the meadow dries up, then we can mow as much hay as we want.”

After he finished the handle, Klym rose from the log and stretched himself out. He gazed with admiration at the green fields spread out far in front of him, right up to the forest. His eyes shone with intense joy at the scene.

CHAPTER THREE

In the second half of July, Malanka received a letter from Marko. Part of it read: "I'd be extremely unlucky if I didn't have you, my own little star, to think about. A few days ago I got a letter from Ukraine, a very sad letter. My father has died. In the spring he caught a cold and it led to inflammation. Now my mother and three sisters are left in my hands. I'll help them as much as I can..."

Malanka kept on reading, until she came to where Marko wrote that he had accepted that fate, and had overcome some of his grief. She felt somewhat relieved, for she had also felt a great sorrow in his suffering.

"Yet still another hardship seems to approach," Malanka read on. "Not long ago the Austrian arch-duke, Ferdinand, was shot in Sarajevo, and it might cause a war. But, the clouds of war can still break up, and let's at least hope for that... How are you father and mother, and the rest of the family? Good-bye dear Malanka, until we see each other again."

"But nothing may come of these rumors of war," Malanka cheered herself. "I wish Marko wouldn't worry so much."

The possibility of war did not concern Malanka. She considered herself fortunate, for she was now sure that Marko loved her. When she went to pick raspberries with Oksana, Marko still did not leave her thoughts. She even imagined that he peeked at her from a raspberry bush. Even though Malanka was skilful, and could easily gather a pailful of raspberries or blueberries in a day, today was different, and work did not go smoothly. Oksana herself was surprised to see her sister so often stand motionless by a raspberry bush, and stare up into the sky.

CHAPTER FOUR

Soon Petro Moroz, Klym's son-in-law, returned home. With all the fine weather, the hay meadow had dried quickly and they could now start mowing. Wearing their rubber boots, they began vigorously, every day covering more and more of the meadow with the cut hay, working from the early morning to late at night. Although Petro moved his arm more than he did his body, his swaths still didn't come out as evenly as his father's-in-law. Nevertheless, Petro was also a very good mower.

While the two men worked the scythes, the rest of the family raked the dry, cut hay into stacks. Even Malanka, who picked the raspberries with Oksana or Katerina early in the morning, when the dew could still be seen, would help Maksym rake the hay in the afternoon. Maksym would soon be fifteen years old, and so was eager to try out his father's or Petro's scythe. And right after lunch he usually did, before anyone returned to the meadow.

After a week of good weather, there was a short, but sudden, and heavy rainfall. Sleety rain followed before the unraked fields of hay could dry out, and except for a few short breaks, it rained continuously for several days. Petro couldn't afford to wait for the return of sunny weather, and once more left for work in Ontario. He had to leave, for he could easily lose his job in the sawmill if the foreman decided to hire another worker in his place.

The rain stopped, but they had to wait over a week before they could start work on the hay again. And although the water still splattered from under the wagon wheels, Klym and his children began carrying the hay and piling it into stacks.

For three days, harnessed to the wagon with the wide rack, the oxen trod between the stacks of hay. Klym pitched the hay onto the wagon, while on the rack Malanka and Maksym spread and tramped down the hay. Katerina followed the wagon, raking together the remaining bits of hay in the places where the piles had stood.

Towards evening, on the third day, Klym finally began to top off the last stack. As he threw the remaining hay out of the wagon and onto the pile, he told his daughters they could go to the house.

"Well, girls," Klym addressed Malanka and Katerina from the top of the stack, "now you can go and do what you want. There's a bit

of work left, but Maksym and I'll finish it up... C'mon Maksym, lean those long poplar poles against both sides of the stack, and I'll tie them up top here with a straw band. That'll protect the stack from any storms."

By the time father and son had finished their work, it was dark outside. They went to the well and washed themselves at the trough that sat there. It felt so pleasant to wash from themselves the dust from the hay, mixed with their sweat, and to feel the cool water trickle over their skin. They washed, and rejoiced at the thought that they would soon finish supper, and stretch out comfortably on their beds. Their tired hands begged for a rest.



CHAPTER FIVE

The sun was already what seemed to be about ten feet over the top of the distant trees, and the passenger train was soon to arrive. Though no smoke was yet visible over the trees, on the railway platform stood twenty or thirty people waiting for the train, frequently glancing towards the south.

A number of boys swarmed around the platform, milling about here and there, a few playing together while others ran around. Every one of them was barefooted. Most had straw hats on their heads, the rest of their dress consisting of a shirt tucked into their pants, and an apron reaching up to their necks. Only three or four young men, and few older farmers, sat on the edge of the platform, smoking and talking amongst themselves, their feet on the steel steps. On the platform behind the men, the young girls and women stood in a long row. Their wooden pails, filled with blueberries, were placed in front of them. None of these sun-burnt people were leaving. A few of them probably awaited the arrival of someone, but all of them had reason to look for the train, for the train was that magical window through which they could get at least a glimpse of the distant world.

Just as the people heard the first rumble of the far-off train, Malanka approached the store. She walked along the street, between the piles of short blocks of wood. Hidden by the wood piles, she stopped, put down her pail of blueberries, and began to straighten the hat she was wearing. She wiped the perspiration from her hands and face with a handkerchief, and brushed some blades of grass from her dress. She then picked up her pail, stepped out from among the piles and with quick steps went up to the railway platform.

“My! You’re late today, Malanka!” shouted Ada Brown, the daughter of the local foreman of the railroad workers. “Aren’t you tired, carrying such a big pail of berries?”

Ada Brown spoke Ukrainian well, so well, in fact, that none would suspect she was English. From an early age she had grown up in the area, and playing with the village girls she soon learned their language and customs, so that she indeed became one of the Ukrainian girls.

“Well, what can I do?” Malanka answered. “This pail’s heavy for me, but I have to carry it. I need the money.”

Malanka placed her blueberries on the platform and stood beside the other girls. From time to time she spoke with her friends, Sofia and Ada, and would look to the south to see if the train was coming. A cloud of smoke was visible over the forest, and in a few minutes the train appeared on the horizon, the small cloud foaming above the locomotive. A loud whistle stretched through the air to signify that the train was only one mile from the station. Some women now bent over to level out the berries at the top of the pail. All the girls began to fix up their hair and the hats on their heads.

Meanwhile, one-eyed Pavlo, the town's post-master, stood in an official and dignified pose at the southern edge of the platform, holding his mail bag in his arms. He tried standing like a soldier, forgetting that his body no longer had that youthful slenderness, and that his back was bent into an arch. When the train stopped, Pavlo handed in his bag at the mail car, and in exchange received three mail-bags. They were full of parcels and catalogues, mainly from the mail-order house in Winnipeg, and letters.

The train employees, and some of the passengers, got off the train and approached the women to buy blueberries. Nobody did any bargaining. The girls and women accepted whatever they were paid. But there was no need to bargain, for the railway employees usually paid well. They would often pay a dollar for a pail of berries, sometimes a dollar and a quarter, or even a dollar and a half.

A Negro porter, with a hearty white smile, stepped up to Malanka, and put a dollar and a quarter in her hand. For some reason Malanka felt afraid, looking at the black as night face of the Negro. But his large warm smile set her at ease. She took the money, happy that she had sold her berries for a good price. Sometimes she would get only a dollar for the pail — a dollar for a whole day's work!

The sun hid behind the tops of the trees as the group of people began to move away from the railway booth towards the large store, which also housed the post office. Like bees at their hive at night, the crowd shoved their way through the doors of the store.

The large building was made out of boards, and was just two hundred steps from the railway tracks. Above the door appeared the words: "*A Kaplan, General Merchant*," while a bit lower was written: "*Post Office*." "The steps in front of the store led up to a raised wooden platform, where a number of empty wooden boxes stood. A few old farmers, who were no longer interested in such sights as a train, sat on the boxes. They sat quietly, and puffed on their pipes.

Inside, the store was spacious. Half the population of the entire district could be fit easily into it. On the shelves of one wall stood items of food, while on shelves of the other wall lay ready-to-wear clothes and rolls of various fabrics. The pick-axes, spades, steel forks, axes, and other implements of the farmer were in a wire mesh enclosure. Near the trapdoor were some benches where the old farmers and their wives would sit. The post office was found in the rear of the store, behind a wooden partition. It was like a large wooden cage, with a small glassless window, through which the postman gave out letters. The window was closed up with a small board, and only the steady, monotonous thumping of someone stamping came from behind it.

Malanka stood in the store with her girl friends and watched the people. She spotted Uncle Metro sitting comfortably on a empty, upside-down barrel. He was laughing and exchanging jokes with the farmers who sat and stood beside him.

The postmaster then began to call out the surname of those who had received letters or other packets. The people would come up to the window and leave with their mail. The girls impatiently tore open their envelopes as soon as they got them. Malanka soon started to feel a bit jealous when her friends received so many letters. She had even given up the hope of getting one today when the postmaster shouted out: "Malanka Klym!" Malanka's hands trembled with excitement as she picked up the letter. She quickly glanced at the writing on the envelope and immediately recognized Marko's hand writing. Once she understood that the letter was from him, the person she continually thought of, day and night, her heart felt at ease, and full of pleasure.

"Aha, you got a letter too," said Sofia Melnyk, holding a letter in her hands and slowly crumpling it. "Well, perhaps your letter is better than mine. Mine isn't from the person I expected. It wasn't Vasyl who sent the letter. It was Nicholas. And you know how it is with Nicholas... the games he plays... He may even write to you."

Listening to the amusing chatter of a talkative Sofia, Malanka left the store and began the journey homeward. She was happy that Sofia did all the talking, because her heart was filled to the brim with a strange, radiating warmth which can change an everyday life into a life in paradise. She wanted to remain silent, in order to feel fully this ecstasy which Marko's letter had brought her.

CHAPTER SIX

September had already passed, but just like in summer, the girls still went out to meet the passenger trains, though now they had no blueberries for sale. There was another reason why they came to the store every night when the train arrived. Now they were interested in a pair of young teachers who had begun teaching in two local schools during the last half of August.

But not only the girls gawked at the teachers as they stood by themselves, a bundle of magazines in their hands. The farmers also stared at them, because they believed that teachers knew everything about the war. They would get the information from newspapers that came all the way from New York, from America. The farmers were deeply interested in finding out what the American papers wrote about the war, but none were bold enough to approach the two teachers.

“But they know all the facts about the war. Just look what a pile of papers that teacher has! He looks just like a *pahn*,” Anton Harysym said in a half-whisper to his neighbour, Vasyl Buryak. “We’ll have to tell trustee Shewchuk to ask our teacher, that *pahn*, about the war.”

“Yeh, yeh, all we need is someone to ask them,” nudged Vasyl Buryak, though he showed no desire to approach the pair.

Anatole Nazarko was one of the teachers, and at the glance, one would guess he was about twenty-five years old. He was tall and slender, with black hair. He acted exactly like a gentleman, and delicacy and meditation were revealed in his face. The girls were greatly impressed with Nazarko’s good looks, but they also thought him unapproachable. Not one of them could imagine that slender and curly-haired teacher turning his attention towards her. So the girls did more staring at the other teacher, Yurko Genyk.

Yurko Genyk was also tall, but round-faced, resembling a wrestler. The features of his face were more plump than Nazarko’s, but health and strength beamed from his red, swarthy face. He smiled almost endlessly, his eyes roving continually among the girls. They felt his eyes on them, and it gave them a pleasant feeling. So the strongly built Genyk fell more into their favour than the slender Nazarko.

Nazarko taught two miles from the post office. He lived alone in a shanty near the school, to where Uncle Metro, his nearest neighbour, delivered all sorts of farm provisions. Genyk taught seven miles from the post office, at a school near the Duck Mountains. But though the post office was far from his place, it didn't bother him. Occasionally he would come by wagon with his neighbours; but usually he came by bicycle.

Malanka also watched the teachers. Genyk's strong build, and his happy face, pleased her. But she didn't like the way he would always wave his hands around during the endless conversations with his friends. It seemed to her that Genyk talked so loudly and waved his hands on purpose, to gain attention. Nazarko, with his gentle voice and intelligent appearance fell quickly into greater favour with Malanka.

Malanka again picked up a letter which sang to her about Marko's love. She became very happy after reading the letter, and her heart pounded so wildly that she could see only Marko in front of her wherever she turned. When she left the store with Sofia Melnyk, she no longer gazed at the teachers. She rejoiced that M a r k o would soon return once more to Uncle Metro, for the winter.

The next day Malanka bustled about like a bird, singing as she helped her mother clean up the house. Mrs. Klym watched Malanka, and smiled to herself. She too was happy. She was glad that her daughter had met such a fine person. She couldn't even begin to imagine a better son-in-law than Marko.

CHAPTER SEVEN

It was the third week of September, and the leaves on the trees began to turn different shades of red and yellow.

The first days of Canadian autumn are wrapped in a sad beauty. Though everywhere you look there are fresh, green leaves, at night the frost quickly pounces on them, and like an artist, paints them with a many-colored beauty. Over here could still be seen the last few green leaves, while there, the yellowed leaves would rustle with a rough murmur. There, lower down, the leaves have already turned red. It's not long before one falls in love with this multi-coloured portrait of the Canadian forest. But in a few days, from the north, the turbulent wind howls and whistles, ripping off with a reckless hand all the beautiful leaves from the trees. Another week or so passes, and then only the bony branches can be seen, reaching out, like parched hands, pleading for mercy to the bluish, wintry skies.

Only the dark green woods of pine and spruce, fir and larch, remain ever unchanged. They are lovely, with a beauty that is simple and demure. The spruce trees, the pines and firs, all stand like a group of nuns, gathered together for prayer. Through them is recollected that beauty which is eternal, unchangeable.

Malanka and Maksym felt deepest this autumnal beauty. Under the influence of this time of year, there were huge changes in Malanka's soul, instilling in her a devout love. There was a great identity between Malanka's feeling, and the autumnal beauty — beauty in the embrace of sorrow. Maksym also felt a pleasant pain in the changing autumn. In all its youthfulness his gentle and sensitive soul, like a sponge in water, drew in the entire splendour.

CHAPTER EIGHT

One night, in the beginning of October, there was a light snowfall. Not much fell, but before the sun rose very high, any existing tracks were already covered by the snow. That snowfall was a warning for old Klym to prepare to face winter.

But soon the bright and sunny days again returned — “Baba’s Summer”, or as it is called in Canada, Indian Summer. The Indian Summer lasted just over two weeks, every day being sunny and mild. There was frost at night, turning into a silvery mist in the morning, glistening with the rising sun. And everyday, when the sun rose over the tops of the trees, it was warm.

Day after day it was clear and warm, though not as bright as in the spring and summer. The skies were often hazy with the autumn mists, a very thin mesh, tinted gray-yellow. The farmers rooted out and burned the useless trees, and burned out the unmown meadows. Where it was dry, not only the faded grass was burned, but also the dry trees and the moss under the grass.

The Indian Summer was generally very mild. It was the time when a person would stop for a moment in his work, holding a shovel or an axe in his hands, and gaze dreamily over the tops of the trees, gaining hope from some unseen presence.

For the Indians, Indian Summer was once indeed a summer for them, a time of intense labour. It was the time when they celebrated the harvest of their wild corn, and prepared the supplies of dried buffalo meat for winter. It was appropriate to call this short period of autumnal preparation Indian Summer, since it was when the Indians did their main preparations. Even Klym’s wife was satisfied with the name, though she had always previously called it Baba’s Summer. She still well remembered crushing the hemp and flax with the brake in the old country during this time of year. The rattle could be heard from early morning to late at night. But in Canada Klym’s wife didn’t miss just the clatter of the brake, but also the “spun yarn of the Blessed Mother,” the floating spider webs that could be seen everywhere in the fall, as if they were hanging from heaven. The villagers claimed that not only did they grind flax and hemp at home, but that the Blessed Virgin Mary did so in heaven too. The Holy Mother of God set an example for all women, crushing the flax to make yarn,

from which she could sew a white linen shirt for her blessed Son. And of course, some of that yarn would fall out of the brake and float down to earth.

“That’s a pretty story,” thought Maria, plaiting onions into a wreath so they could be hung easily on pegs. She smiled happily, imagining the Virgin Mary at Her work.

While Klym’s wife was stringing the onions, her husband was busy shovelling sand outside, around the bottom of the walls of the house. He chinked the cracks with sod so that the cold couldn’t squeeze into the living-room of their home, and after finishing the house, he began to plug the cracks in the barn walls.

The preparation of house and barn for winter complete, Klym took his axe and hoe, and went into the forest on the other side of the railroad tracks. It was possible to work the soil there only a small piece at a time. Day after day, from sunrise to sunset, Klym would first dig up the roots of the stumps with his hoe, and then finally uproot the stumps themselves. And as the sun approached the blue hills in the west, he rolled all the stumps together, into one large pile.

Towards the end of October, Klym would have continued clearing the stumps, but when he woke up one morning, he saw that all the ground was covered with snow, several inches deep. And it was still falling — at first in fluffy damp flakes, but soon becoming smaller, dancing madly on the wings of a turbulent north wind.

Malanka’s heart throbbed with delight when she saw the snow. For her, the snowfall was a message, telling her that Marko was on the road again, to Uncle Metro’s, his home for the winter.

CHAPTER NINE

Anatole Nazarko was extremely active and enthusiastic in his work. Not only did he accept the responsibility of teaching the children at school, but also of enlightening the older folks in the district. Once the snow had fallen and remained on the ground, Nazarko established Sunday classes, primarily for the teaching of the English language. Evening classes, several days a week, were considered first, but the idea was dropped after consulting with the older students. The farmers would find it difficult to meet on weekday evenings, especially since the school was quite far away. The students unanimously agreed that the lessons should be every Sunday afternoon, from three o'clock to five.

From the very beginning Nazarko received considerable encouragement for his new project. Over twenty adult pupils signed up the first Sunday, the number growing to forty the next week. Even some of the older farmers and their wives were among the students. It appeared that everyone in the district wanted to learn English.

Nazarko taught his adult students to read and write in English, as well as to speak it. But learning a foreign language wasn't easy for all the grown-up folk, and some would undoubtedly have quit coming to the Sunday school had not Nazarko also formed a choir and begun teaching Ukrainian songs. Ukrainians love to sing, and the people who were not really eager students of language, were nonetheless attracted by the choir.

While the choir listened, Nazarko would play a few times, on his violin, the melody of every new song he was to teach. When it was their turn to sing, no one had any trouble getting started.

Malanka liked music and singing very much, and could listen for hours, enraptured, as the teacher played his violin. She would listen with all her soul, raised on the wings of ecstasy, and momentarily forget her entire surroundings. At such moments as these, because Nazarko could play so beautifully, and because Marko wanted so to allure Malanka to himself with music, jealousy would awaken within Marko.

As she responded to the music, Nazarko could sense Malanka's soul. It was like a harp stroked gently with the fingers. He frequently paid greater attention to her than the other girls, and she was pleased

that such a handsome and educated man would notice an ordinary farm girl. Malanka was grateful to the teacher for all his small praises about her progress in the choir and in the English language. Frankly, she adored him, for raising her up to the skies with his enchanting violin playing.



CHAPTER TEN

It was the day Uncle Metro had looked forward to. He was riding out with Marko near the Duck Mountains to hunt elk, or moose, as he learned to call them in Canada. The horses already ran at a trot, yet he still urged them on. A great impatience, a desire to fire at some thing always overcame Uncle Metro when, under his arm or in his hands, he held his old, old rifle, manufactured by Schneider.

Though Canadian elk could be hunted only in late fall, and then only with permission from the proper authorities, all the people in the district knew that Dmytro Baran (which was Uncle Metro's real name), enjoyed moose meat during every part of the year. Even the local forest ranger, in charge of wildlife hunting and forest conservation, knew that. But he acted as if he didn't. He was Jack Bjarnson, an Icelander with a jolly and cordial disposition — a man who loved fooling around and who, like Uncle Metro, had a supple tongue for telling jokes. Bjarnson knew the poverty these farmers of the forest lived in, and so ignored people like Uncle Metro, who would hunt moose illegally, and who would give the meat to the poorest farmers in the area. Yet, it was one thing for Uncle Metro to hunt illegally, and another to go out during the season. Now that hunting was allowed, he purposely assumed a pose befitting a renowned marksman. For in the entire district perhaps only one other man, Jean LaRue, who lived alone near the Duck Mountains, could shoot like Uncle Metro.

Riding out of the hunt, Uncle Metro felt he was marching off to war. Two rifles lay under the hay on the sled behind him: his own Schneider, and a Winchester belonging to Marko. There were also several cardboard packages of bullets, two long knives, a large box filled with a variety of food, and a pair of axes.

Both hunters were well dressed for the cold, with several pairs of thick woollen socks on their feet. Over these were what Ukrainian in Canada called moccasins, tall boots with upper legs of horse skin. They wore warm coats of sheepskin, while fur ear flaps, sewn to black, cloth hats, protected their ears. White linen rags sewn to both hats distinguished the hunters from the moose, for there were occasional incidents of a hunter being shot, mistaken in the bushes for an animal.

Uncle Metro was happy to wear a white ensignia on his hat. He imagined he was a general, rewarded with an emblem by the emperor. He knew that all the people would point their fingers at him and exclaim: "There! Look at him! Uncle Metro is on the prowl!"

The sun had not yet reached noon when Uncle Metro guided his sled into the yard of Kerelo Dumka. Dumka, who lived at the foot of the mountains, was an old friend of Uncle Metro's and so Uncle Metro felt right at home there. Kerelo and Marko helped Uncle Metro unharness the horses, and chased them into the barn. The food supplies, rifles, and bullets were then carried into the house. Soon, after a delicious meal prepared by the sprightly Mrs. Dumka, and after some good conversation, Uncle Metro and Marko set off into the forest.

It was interesting to watch Uncle Metro. He didn't clumsily forge ahead, but marched proudly, with the steps of a soldier, his antique Schneider resting against his shoulder. And though this rifleman was pot-bellied, he nonetheless kicked his feet out in front of him, as if he was some robust fellow who had survived more than one war. Indeed, throughout the entire hunt Uncle Metro considered himself a soldier.

The two of them walked further and further into the forest, rarely finding any moose tracks in the snow. Those they did find were too old. After an hour of walking the hunters split up, each going a different way. It wasn't worthwhile for two men to remain together on a moose hunt. Tracks could be spotted much sooner with each man following a separate path.

Deeper and deeper they wandered into the dark of the forest. A murky covering of clouds dragged across the sky as the drawn-out, northerly wind whistled sorrowfully in the tree tops. Soon the sound of the wind quietened, and the snow began to fall, sparsely at first, but then a great deal, like blossoms in an orchard, blown from cherry trees during a storm.

Uncle Metro studied the sky and shook his head. It was a shame to return to Kerelo's house empty handed, but there was no other choice. Snow would cover any tracks, and in a snow storm a moose couldn't be seen from very far, let alone approached. It was too easy to get lost during the storm, especially when the sun could no longer be seen.

Uncle Metro started back towards Dumka's but he felt uneasy. He was worried about Marko, unsure if the boy would decide to do the same, and return home before it was completely dark.

“If he hasn’t gone back like I’ve done,” thought Uncle Metro, “then he might get lost. Even my own tracks are almost covered...”

Uncle Metro’s worries were justified. Marko did not immediately consider returning, though the snow had fallen for two hours already. And when he finally did start to follow his track back, he became bored zig-zagging around, following his footprints, and so set off in what he thought was a shorter route to Kerelo Dumka’s house. But his decision was unwise, and he quickly became uncertain where to go. The more Marko thought about being lost, the more intensely the world began to spin in front of his eyes. He was frightened at the thought of wandering far into the forest by night, and perishing there from the cold.

Just as his spirit began to be squeezed by the loss of hope, he came out into a clearing. Looking around, Marko saw that it lay beside the road, but he still didn’t know the direction to Dumka’s place. The choices were unclear: he had to pick one way, and Marko randomly turned to the left. After walking for about an hour, Marko suddenly saw a small ray of light near the road. He went up to it, and saw before him a small house. No other buildings were in sight.

The door opened, and Marko recognized the huge figure of Jean LaRue. LaRue was a hermit, living alone in the forest, always either hunting or preparing the animal skins for sale. He was a tall, wide-shouldered giant. His face was a dark copper colour, like an Indian’s, and a glance at him showed him to be over thirty years old. Only occasionally was he seen in the store, just getting provisions. Even there he still preferred to sit alone, on some old wooden box, and endlessly chew his tobacco. But people always noticed Jean LaRue, especially because of his strange kind of moose skin jacket, with tiny skin fringes dangling all around it. If he did speak, it was usually to Brown, the railroad foreman, since he spoke in English, or to Uncle Metro, since he was the most famous marksman in the area.

Marko Kozak entered LaRue’s house, and in painstaking English explained to Jean how he had been hunting with Uncle Metro, and had become lost in the woods. Jean’s face immediately brightened at the mention of Uncle Metro. He became hospitable, telling Marko to sit down, and he would prepare a meal for him. Jean had already finished his supper and had no more food ready, but he started to fry fresh moose meat for his guest. Marko, however, only wanted to drink some tea, and leave right away, so that Uncle Metro wouldn’t worry about him.

LaRue advised Marko to continue following the road in the direction he had been going, and within an hour and a half, or two, he

would come to Kerelo Dumka's house. Marko quickly set off, and in a short time heard several shots far off in front of him. He was sure Uncle Metro was firing to inform him where to go. In order to lessen Uncle Metro's anxiety, Marko also fired three times. In the distance the sound of a shot again spread out, followed by silence. Recognizing Marko's answer, Uncle Metro had gone into the house, no longer troubled.

Marko finally struggled through the snow drifts to Dumka's house. As he crossed threshold his nostrils were delightfully tickled by the aroma of fried meat and potatoes. However, later in the evening Uncle Metro began to admonish Marko for his unreasonable action, and warned him to always return home the minute a snow storm would start up.

"Only a man who has lived a long time in the woods can take care of himself in the winter, especially during a blizzard. You see, Marko, near the ground the tree trunks have a darker and moss-covered bark on their northern side. But to notice this you have to have the true eye of a man who's spent some time in the forest," Uncle Metro instructed. "But I could still tell which way to go besides that. Before we first set off into the woods I noticed that the wind was from the north, and here in Canada, in the winter, the direction of the wind doesn't change suddenly. So even the wind can help you to guess which way to go.

"Ah yes, I've learned lots of things about the Canadian forest," Uncle Metro added in a drawl. He then became quiet, and eased into deep, dream-like thought.

It stopped snowing after midnight, and the next day was silent and bright. An ideal day for hunting was granted them.

"Well, on a day like this, it's a pleasure to go hunting. We'll now see only the fresh tracks in the snow," Uncle Metro smiled, ploughing through the deep drifts. "But today we'll stay together, at least 'til noon."

But before noon, Uncle Metro discovered fresh moose tracks. After an hour or more of walking, they came upon a rather large meadow amidst a poplar bluff. Here Uncle Metro immediately noticed the lattice of fresh tracks. In some spots the snow was even scratched away by the mooses' hooves, and the alkaline earth could be seen.

"Aha! See that? Uncle Metro said in a half whisper. "there's salt here. The moose gather here to lick it from the ground under the

snow. We'd be smart to get out of here as soon as we can. We'll hide in the bushes, south of this salt-marsh. There the wind can't carry our scent to this spot. It's pretty easy for moose to smell out a man."

Around noon Marko and Uncle Metro bit a few times into a half-frozen sandwich, and began to chew silently, sheltered from the wind on the south side of the marsh. Within an hour, seven moose approached the frozen marsh. It was wonderful to watch these antlered creatures of the Canadian forest. They were beautiful animals. Marko, and even Uncle Metro felt sorry at the thought of shooting them, but what could be done? The meat was needed.

Together two shots rang out from the thicket. At the right side of the herd a large moose bolted forward, and then instantly toppled to the snow. Uncle Metro's bullet had pierced his heart. Another moose at the left jumped up, and limping, began to hobble after the rest of the herd. But he too didn't escape far, stumbling to the ground before he could reach the woods. The second moose fell from Marko's bullet, but had to be shot once more to be killed.

On the fourth day of the hunt Uncle Metro bagged one more, and then began preparing for the trip home. They kept a moose for themselves, and gave one to Klym. A half was left for Kerelo Dumka, and the other half was given to Vasyl Rauk, the poorest farmer in the district. Vasyl, his wife, and their six children couldn't thank Uncle Metro enough for his generous gift. He had to leave as quickly as he could, for Uncle Metro was unable to endure all their thanks.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Malanka had become extremely troubled when Uncle Metro and Marko had gone on their hunt. All sorts of thoughts raced through her mind, for she had heard of many unfortunate accidents taking place on moose hunts. She heard that one man had shot another, thinking he was an animal crawling out of the bush. She also heard of a man who got lost during a hunt, and some years later only his skeleton was found. Then there was the person who came across a lightly frozen bog in the forest, got stuck, and froze there. Just a hat remained to attest to his misfortune. People had searched the bog in the summer, where the hat had been seen, and found his bones, and a rifle beside them. Malanka worried that these kinds of things might happen to Marko.

But on the fifth day Uncle Metro brought the moose to Klym's and Marko came with him. Malanka's fears were destroyed, and when Marko smiled and talked kindly to her, her joy was boundless. Impulsively Malanka ran into the house and kissed Oksana three times. Surprised, she gave Malanka a puzzled look, and caused her to blush. But after a moment Oksana smiled too, for she then understood her sister's happiness.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Maksym had missed a few days of school, and Nazarko asked Oksana what was wrong with him. She told him that her brother had caught a severe cold, and was lying sick in bed. The next evening Nazarko, along with Uncle Metro, visited Klym. He bid everyone "Good Health" upon entering their home, and firmly shook their hands, even the small Oksana's, who sat on old Klym's knees.

"We greet you... We greet our guests," Klym repeated to the teacher and Uncle Metro.

"Well, Maksym, and how are you today?" Nazarko asked.

"I'm a bit better now, thanks," replied Maksym in a faint voice.

Nazarko sat by the bed, and instructed Maksym to do everything the doctor prescribed, for to do otherwise could be harmful.

"Don't forget, there is no need to get out of bed before it's time. Only then, when you're feeling healthy, can you get up. In the meantime just rest, and don't worry about a thing. Everything will turn out for the best. But you have to be cheerful! Don't think about your sickness at all; just sincerely wish to be healthy again. Remember, we are upheld by the fact that we think about ourselves. He who is sick should be totally convinced that he'll be healthy again. As much as you possibly can, you must not surrender to the illness. Whoever fights against illness, and has faith that he will recover, he usually does recover quickly. To take that attitude — that's the best medicine!" advised Nazarko.

Uncle Metro had begun to tell of the times in his life he had caught a cold, and the way he had cured himself with the prescriptions of the village quacks. But now was a time when the war held everyone's interest, and the men's conversation soon led to it. Nazarko commanded most of the discussion, surprising everyone with the amount of knowledge he possessed.

Malanka had listened intently when Nazarko spoke to Maksym, and also when he talked about the war. She sat quietly in a corner near the stove, and was happy that the teacher would look at her from time to time.

"Well, it's quite late already. We should start heading down the road, Mr. Baran," Nazarko turned to Uncle Metro. He felt rather uncomfortable calling him Uncle Metro, though everyone in the

entire district called him that. "Oh, I'm glad that I remembered. Maksym, I brought you an interesting book. But read only a bit a time, and don't tire yourself. And a book for you too, Mr. Klym. But perhaps I should warn you also," the teacher smiled. "Don't try to swallow the entire book at once with your eyes!"

The Klym family enjoyed Nazarko's company, and after this first evening, he became a frequent guest in their home.



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

One night after supper Petro Moroz, his brother Oleksa, and Olenka paid a visit to Klym's place. When they entered the house they saw that "Doctor" Vooytyk was doing some of his conjuring. With great interest Maksym, Oksana, and Malanka watched as he held an egg over a glass of water. The egg white was going through strange changes in the water that sat in front of the "Doctor." It leaked slowly from a hole in the shell, and dripped onto a little cross, made of two long bristles from a broom. The cross rested on the rim of the glass. Weird forms began to take shape in the centre of the water, and "Doctor" Vooytyk was using them to tell Malanka's fortune.

"Well, and how are you nowadays, Petro?" the "Doctor" asked. "And is this your brother? I'm teaching Maksym how to tell fortunes; how to recognize what will be," he said, rather disconcerted. He glanced at Oleksa to see if he was laughing at him.

Petro smiled. "I wouldn't want to know what's to happen to me. If I knew that, then I probably wouldn't have the desire to do anything anymore. If I knew I would find a lot of money, or that I'd die in spring, do you thing I'd want to crawl through the snow to cut trees to sell? You see what I mean? I just don't want to know what's going to happen to me."

"Yes, but it's interesting to know the future," Malanka spoke up, so that "Doctor" Vooytyk would not get discouraged. "I'm one who wants to know what awaits me."

"Doctor" Vooytyk was indeed an interesting old man. His eighty-third year had already passed, yet he was still strong as an oak. He was of a tall and slender build, not at all stooped, and still had all the hair of a young recruit. Vooytyk remained so spirited that it wasn't rare for him to call the young boys to run against him in a race. He had served in the Austrian army for some twelve years, marching all over the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, taking part in the war against the Italians and the Prussians. It was during that time that he learned, among other things, the art of herb-healing and fortune-telling. And this knowledge was coming in handy in his old age, giving him the opportunity to make enough money for his daily bread. Whenever some woman in the district became ill, they would immediately send for "Doctor" Vooytyk. He would first bathe her a few times in the

warm water of cooked herbs. Then he would knead her stomach with his hands, or place to it a cupping glass filled with coals, or conjure with an egg. And the woman would get better. (Mainly because of the warm baths and the rub-down).

Because of his tricks, his jokes, and his fortune-telling, "Doctor" Vooytyk was welcomed by the Klyms and their children. In fact, the "Doctor" was generally in the favour of all the women and children of the district.

Yet old Klym didn't like to talk much with "Doctor" Vooytyk. The "Doctor" loved to brag about his exploits as a soldier, about the young girls' hearts he had won. Vooytyk loved the army for itself; for Klym, it was only a training school for life. He would rather discuss what he had learned from the experiences he had gained in the army.

Vooytyk overheard the men discussing the war, and like an old army horse, quickly pricked up his ears. The word "war" acted upon him like a battle trumpet upon an army horse, and when "cannons" were mentioned, then Vooytyk had to throw in his own words.

"But I tell you, Germany couldn't have entered France so easily if it wasn't for the Austrian cannons. I know the Prussians fight well, but the best forces" — "Doctor" Vooytyk heatedly exclaimed, — "those, the Austrians have!"

The man talked about the war until sometime past ten, mentioning whatever came to their minds. Even Oleksa frequently made comments, always turning to Malanka. But he found no encouragement there, for she was busy reading a book.

"It has to be a very good story," thought Oleksa, "if she doesn't once raise her eyes."

Soon after the "Doctor" had gone home, both brothers got up to leave. In his arms Petro took the sleeping Olenka, for she had fallen asleep over an hour ago.

"And how's the work in the forest, boys?" Klym asked. "Is it worth going there tomorrow?"

"I think we cut something like two cords of wood today," replied Petro. "And tomorrow morning we'll cut a path to it so you can get through with your sled fairly early. We'll be waiting there."

"Oleksa is now more used to such work. Tomorrow we buy him moccasins and a warm hat with ear-flaps. He almost froze his ears off today in that summer cap. He had to wrap his scarf around his head. But soon he'll be just like a real lumberjack," Petro joked, and slapped his brother on the back.

Before Oleksa walked out of the house he glanced once more at the corner where Malanka was sitting. As she watched the departing brothers she smiled for some reason, likely just happy at the thought of something pleasant she had read. But Oleksa took Malanka's smile as an encouraging sign, and he became glad. He went outside and looked happily at the starry heavens. The stars also seemed to smile at him.



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The next morning Klym put the collars on his oxen, Jack and Jim. He harnessed them to his Canadian bob-sled, which had a scaffold made of short blocks of wood around its sides. He climbed up on the front sled, took the reins in his hands, and yelled out: "Gid-deeup Jack! Giddeup Jim!" The oxen slowly mowed ahead, Petro and Oleksa following on foot in the tracks made in the snow.

Oleksa was surprised when he first saw the bob-sled in Klym's yard. But after seeing it in motion, rising up in the air like a serpent over snow-covered logs, and sinking down again into holes, he quickly understood that the short, double sled, freely joined in the middle, was ideal for travelling over untrodden paths.

Within a few minutes all three of them had thrown a cord of logs, all cut to the same length, onto the scaffold on the sled, and once more the sled began to crawl, snake-like, out of the forest. Klym returned in the afternoon, to deliver still another cord of wood to the railway station. The storekeeper bought the wood for fuel, paying Klym not with money, but with receipts. These Klym could later exchange for what was needed at home, or else pay off the debts he had run up in the summer.

In the evening Petro went to the store with Oleksa, to buy him some things that he needed. With his receipts from the wood, he purchased a pair of horseskin moccasins, two pairs of heavy woolen socks, gloves which had a strong, outer skin and warm, inner gloves of wool, as well as a warm sweater and a black hat with fur ear-flaps.

"The hat — well, it's good, but there's still one thing missing," Oleksa smiled. "A fur nose-schild should be sewn on the front, to protect the nose. It's easy to freeze the tip of my nose off in this place... Hoo boy! It's cold here in Canada."

"You know, if you really want such a nose guard, we can easily make you one. I'll tell my Katerina today, and she'll do it for you. It can even be big enough for your whole face — we'll just poke holes for your eyes," Petro laughed.

"But, Oleksa," Marko Kozak joined in, "I would advise you not to fuss so much over your nose. You see, we also have noses, but they're already hardened by this Canadian cold. You too, you'll freeze your nose a few times, the skin will peel at the tip, and then when a new skin grows, it'll be as strong as the skin of your new

moccasins. At first the Canadian frost, along with the north wind, burns oh-so-well in the face and nose. But when you're well burned, then it leaves you in peace. See how the cold has already burned us? I look like a real Indian now. And look at Jean LaRue sitting there. Isn't he almost identical to an Indian? Yes sir, you'll look the same in two or three weeks. A face like that can endure sixty times as much frost."

"I see, Marko, that for the longest time already, LaRue has become very likeable to you. It seems you would enjoy living in the forest, just like him. All you have to do now is find yourself a nice Indian maiden, and join the Indians," Petro joked.

"Well, an Indian maiden is one thing, but if some good woman could be found on the farms, then be sure, Petro, that I wouldn't turn out to be just any old farmer." Marko ended seriously. "I love to work with the earth so much."

It was the second day of woodcutting, and they went out to continue their winter reaping in the forest.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Even though it was very cold during the Christmas holidays, the carollers still went singing, gathering donations for the local church. For all the people in the district continued to celebrate the holidays the way they had in the old country. In every house there was *deedukh* on the floor, and this sheaf of straw, symbolizing the souls of the departed ancestors, also stood on a bench in the corner. On the table were the twelve supper dishes, and, of course, carols were sung.

When the New Year came, early in the morning Maksym took a handful of seeds and went back into the house, scattering the grains and chanting:

“Grow and bring forth, rye wheat and all grains!
Good Luck and Good Health, for the New Year,
So that you’ll have, more crops than last year:
A shirt to the ground, and flax to the knee;
So that your head, feels no agony!”

“Thank you, Maksym” his surprised mother smiled, “thank you. You reminded me of the old country. Here’s twenty-five cents. Go to Petro’s now, too. They’ll also rejoice when they see how you sow.”

Everyone in Petro’s house was indeed pleased when Maksym came to sow for the New Year, greeting everyone with the New Year’s salutation. He received a quarter from Petro as well, while Oleksa threw in as much from himself.

When Epiphany had passed, so did the mood of the Christmas holidays. Now came the final meat-eating days before Lent, and soon the wedding season would begin.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

There was a dance in the hall one Saturday in February. For that night the billiard tables were removed, which left nothing attractive in the hall except the girls' faces. Overhead there was no real ceiling, the rafters being visible. But no one looked up — the people were interested only in each other.

By nine o'clock the hall was crammed full of people. The older folks sat on benches by the walls while the young people stood in groups and chatted gaily. The fiddler was tuning his violin, so the young men and women got ready to dance. A dulcimer player was also there, to accompany the fiddler, and he too tried out his instrument, hitting the strings of his dulcimer up and down with his fingers.

When they started to play a little *kozachok*, no one had to be told to dance. A mixture of Ukrainian, English, German, and French dances followed. Marko dance a waltz with Malanka, and under the sounds of the dreamy music it was splendid to dance and dream the nicest things about his love. When Marko bent his head to Malanka's and whispered in her ear: "Malanya, You're the sweetest of all the girls... You look so lovely tonight...", Malanka thought she wasn't dancing, but flying, just like a bird.

The dance ended at midnight, and Malanka went home with her sister's family. The entire evening was like a beautiful dream, but now in the faces of those leaving the freezing wind blew, and her dream quickly disappeared. She gazed up at the starry sky and saw something there from another dream. In a half circle, towards the north, glimmered narrow rays of the Northern Lights, and the sky was completely showered with thousands of bright stars. Malanka thought that even the stars had heard Marko: "You're the sweetest girl of them all!"

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Next Saturday night the pool hall was again full. People sat on long benches, made of wide boards, on both sides of a narrow aisle, which was left open to allow a path through the centre of the hall. But even through that aisle it was still difficult to squeeze near the stage at the rear of the hall. Every so often the people glanced at the curtain, sewn from flour sacks, in front of them. Never before had they seen a presentation on this quickly handmade stage, and they expected to see some real marvel.

Behind the curtain Nazarko had considerable difficulty with his amateurs, painting faces and putting on moustaches. He had to check everything, and take care of some problem everywhere. Time flew like a bullet, and the people were becoming impatient. But at a quarter past nine, someone's hand quickly pulled the curtain aside.

And indeed, the events on stage appeared as a real wonder to the audience, carrying them back to the old country for a few hours. From time to time heavy sighs could be heard among the women as they grieved at the unseen fate of Nataalka. And among the men there was only the sound of laughter when Voznay began to woo Nataalka, and talked in his comical language.

Malanka's singing, in the role of Nataalka, was adored by the people. And even though Marko played the thankless role of Voznay, his successful imitation of the odd language of the old order, of a small village official, gladdened the hearts of the audience. But the people stared with most surprise at Ada Brown's performance as Terpelyha. She played an old country woman so accurately! All were astonished that she could learn the Ukrainian language, and understand a Ukrainian's soul so well, for everyone knew she was an English girl, who had only grown up among Ukrainians. Volodko Honchar, who played the role of Nataalka's fiancé, Petro, was the most surprised. It was no wonder that Ada actually looked like some kind of celestial creature to Volodko — for in reality he loved her. On stage, however, he had to be Malanka's lover.

Old Mrs. Brown couldn't watch her daughter enough, though she only occasionally understood what Ada was saying. Her heart was filled with joy. After the show the women clustered about her, and began to praise her daughter, who they considered to be one of them.

Gladness also beamed from Mrs. Klym's face when she saw Malanka in a Ukrainian maiden's costume, and listened to her sing. She felt that all the people were thinking: "So this is the Klym's lovely daughter!" And it wasn't without good reason that the mother thought that, for the people really were amazed at the beauty and voice of Malanka.

When Malanka came out from the wings after the show, her friends crowded about her and commended her on her fine acting. Even some young men overcame their shyness and approached her: "My, but you acted well on stage, Malanka!" Nazarko himself stepped up to her, and sincerely shaking her hand, loudly proclaimed so that all could hear: "You played your role very well indeed, Miss Klym!" A red blush covered Malanka's face after such a sincere outburst. Afterwards, Nazarko also had complimentary words for Ada Brown, and thanked all his amateur performers for their effort in making the show come off in the best way possible.

Marko Kozak was also pleased with Malanka's success, but when he heard the teacher's words of praise directed towards her, his heart began to ache. It wasn't until a few hours later that he understood why. What jabbed Marko painfully in the heart, weren't Nazarko's words, but the tender and trembling note in his voice, and the radiance of his eyes.

A few boys piled the benches by the wall in quick hand after the presentation, and the dance began. The older folks went home after the first few dances, leaving only the young people, with the young farmers and their wives.

Both teachers stayed for the beginning of the dance, and to show the people that they weren't too proud to mix with them, decided to have a few dances, though mainly with the older women.

Mrs. Brown was considerably surprised when Nazarko asked her to dance.

"Mother has finally lived to see it — a dance with Mr. Nazarko." Ada commented to Volodko, her dancing partner. "She'll think about this event every day."

Genyk first danced with Malanka. The teachers then missed the next couple of dances, until the musicians played a *kozachok*. Genyk approached the elderly wife of one of the school trustees, while Nazarko now asked Malanka to dance with him. Judging by the way he acted towards her during the dance, by watching his motions and his eyes, Malanka knew that Nazarko was in love with her. She

experienced the very peak of joy, that such an educated and handsome gentleman could love her.

Malanka was pleased that Nazarko looked at her with adoration, but not for an instant did she stop loving Marko. Yet how could Marko know her secret thoughts? He only understood her sigh of pleasure, and the fact that the teacher loved her. Malanka's smile stuck a sharp knife into his heart.

Marko didn't condemn Malanka for her newly found fortune, but he was greatly hurt as he watched his lucky dream disappear. Despair surrounded Marko's heart, and though no one had yet seen him so despondent, he tried to appear jovial. Yet no matter how happy and witty he tried to be, Malanka noticed that sorrow hid beneath his laughter. She could read it in his sullen looking eyes.

Marko danced with Malanka, but so differently, and so insolently from the earlier times, that at first she could only glance at him in surprise. Towards the end she gained courage and asked: "What's the matter with you today, Marko? You're not your usual self! I'm getting frightened of you..."

"There's nothing wrong with me," Marko replied impudently. "I've just become a bit mischievous for some reason, and felt like running loose..."

Marko's answer calmed Malanka a bit, enough to prevent her from losing her feeling of good fortune. She continued to feel extremely lucky, even when at home she lay down to sleep, just as the dawn began to draw close.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

It was Sunday, and Marko had just finished supper. "Uncle, I've decided to sign up for the Canadian army."

Everyone stared at Marko Kozak, not knowing whether he was joking or telling the truth. But what he spoke was obviously the truth, for to overcome his own emotion Marko had to cry out his thoughts, a thing he had never done before.

"C'mon, what's in the army for you?" Uncle Metro tried to change Marko's words into a jest. "Now, if the army would accept me, well, then by God, I would throw my Schneider over my shoulder and speed off to war. And there, riflemen like me would come in handy... Yes sir, I'd shower the enemy over and over, beat them soundly with my Schneider!"

"No, Uncle, I'm not kidding," Marko spoke again. "I really want to join the army. To make it easier to sign up I'll tell the army officials that I'm a Ukrainian from the Russian part of Ukraine. The authorities here are hostile towards people from Austria because they don't know the difference between a real Austrian and a Ukrainian. I'm leaving for Winnipeg Tuesday morning."

When Uncle Metro's wife realized that Marko was serious, she began to weep deeply, as if for her own son. Nastunia, when she saw her mother, started crying too. But Uncle Metro, who was always so talkative, sat silently. He stared at Marko, and sadly wrung his hands. Only Roman Fedyk, Marko's friend who also worked in the forest, rose and went over to Marko. He clapped him on the shoulder, and congratulated him.

"You're doing the right thing, Marko. That's the road for both of us! For the past few months I've felt like a nobody, I belonged nowhere. I'm ashamed to stare a wolf in the eyes. Not long ago Jean LaRue's brother was here in his soldier uniform. I couldn't face him — would you believe it? It seemed his eyes were questioning me: 'Well, why are you hiding, turning your back? Why aren't you in the army?' So, Marko, I'll follow your footsteps."

At these words the sobs of Metro's wife became louder. She felt the sorrow more, being a woman, thinking of such fine boys, who a few months later could be lying in the dank earth in some distant place like France. She tried to persuade them both to forget about the army. But Uncle Metro remained silent. It was a shame to send such

young men, as tall and healthy as oaks, to war, but war was war, and the young men should not be cowards.

On Monday there was such a terrible storm that it was impossible to even stick your nose outside, so no one knew that Marko was packing. On Tuesday, before sunrise, he left by train for Winnipeg.

Metro's wife couldn't see the God-created world for several days because of her tears. She wept as if for the dead, and Nastunia joined her. Nor was Uncle Metro himself. He was silent and deep in thought, and gazed off into the distance.

More than a week passed before he could once again begin to laugh.



CHAPTER NINETEEN

A few days after Marko's departure Malanka received a short letter from him.

"Dear Malanya! Things have turned out for the best. Forgive me if I have hurt you, because I wish you only the best. I think this the way it had to happen, for your own good. I've already signed up for the Canadian army. In a few weeks we'll leave for England, for training, and after several months there, off to the front in France. You'll always be the most beautiful memory in my heart. Yours truly, Marko."

The words of Marko's letter so dazed her that Malanka almost fainted. She quickly ran out of the store, letting the cool breeze fan her. As she walked, the wind seemed to waken her from some frightening dream, and the tears washed her face. She wiped her cheeks with her handkerchief from time to time, before the cold wind could freeze the tears.

"Marko has really surprised me," thought Malanka, walking on. "I don't have anything against his joining the army, but why didn't he at least come to say goodbye? How have I made him mad? I can't understand why he hurried off so strangely, or why he wrote such a cold, short letter."

At home Malanka showed the letter to her sister. "Tell me what it means, Katya," she pleaded through her tears. "What does he mean by this: 'Things have turned out for the best?'"

"Well, there's nothing here that doesn't speak for itself," Katerina began, solemnly, and somewhat heartlessly. "Don't you understand yet what this letter means? Marko left so quickly because he's positive that he has lost you. No, Malanka, don't pity yourself. Marko will make a good soldier, and, well, not all soldiers are lost at war. When he lasts to the end then be sure that he'll come back here to find out about you. But I think by that time there'll no longer be a Malanka *Klym*. And unless he recognizes his old time friend when he sees the wife of Nazarko..." Katerina spoke slowly with emphasis, though she knew her words cut Malanka's heart like a knife.

"Katerina! Why are you saying these things? Have you lost your senses?" Malanka cried out to her sister. "What has the teacher to do with me?"

“First calm down, Malanka, and hear out what I have to say. You obviously haven’t realized that all the people around here are talking about how Nazarko has fallen in love with you, and is thinking of asking you to marry him. They started talking about it from the first few days he visited Maksym, when he was sick. And you know these people — they’re only human. They know just one reason why Nazarko came here so much — the rest, they suspect it without any evidence. Are you totally blind?” asked Katerina, putting her arm around her sister. “Can’t you see how Nazarko’s eyes follow you — lovestruck?”

“I really didn’t think they could gossip so much about me. What do they want from me?” wept Malanka.

“You’ve no reason to cry, Malanya,” Katerina tried to comfort her. “The people aren’t talking ill of you. They’re just saying that the teacher likes you, and there’s nothing wrong with that. If I was still a young girl, and Nazarko admired me, I would consider that the greatest honour — and I’d accept him right away. Really, I believe Nazarko is such a good man that, well, there’s not such another to be found. Marko is handsome, and good, but he just doesn’t have that education that Nazarko has. You yourself told me that you like educated people, and would still go to school yourself if you had the chance. And I’m sure you’d be a good teacher, too. Look at me — I’m different from you. I’m not very interested in books. I love life itself — to cook, or sew, or buy something at the store. I like to be among people, but you and Maksym — well, you’re different. You’re like our Uncle Ivan, who wanted to be a great actor in the theatre. And though he had the talent, there wasn’t anyone to take an interest in him, to introduce him to the right people. I’m more like Dad. I like to know a lot too, but only things that’ll come in handy,” Katerina seemed to flatter herself somewhat. “There’re not all pleasant, the things I know, but what can I say? That’s the way it is. Isn’t that right, Malanka?”

“It’s true, what you say, very true. But sometimes this truth of yours is pretty bitter,” Malanka said, half-understandingly, for she felt that her heart was slowly being eased.

“Well, I’m just saying what I believe. It can’t be helped. I’ve been like this since I was little girl. But you know that I never wished you any harm. I wanted to bend the skies for you.”

“But what do you think I should do now?” asked the innocent Malanka.

“I know you won’t like what I’m going to tell you, but you

yourself will know that I'm speaking the truth. The best you can do is... is to accept the teacher when he courts you," Katerina uttered, staring directly into her sister's eyes. "I'm sure that he wants you."

"Oh, you speak without any mercy! You're horrible!" Malanka shouted, covering her ears with her hands.

"Before I finish telling you what's on my mind, I'll tell you something else that may not please you. You like both Nazarko and Marko, but you're scared to admit it, even to yourself. You love Marko because he's handsome and strong, cheerful, honest, and frank. But then Nazarko comes along. And men like Nazarko appeared to you perhaps only in dreams. Where can you find his equal: tall, slender, curly-haired, lively, educated and intelligent? And even making good money. Is it so strange that you were pleased when Nazarko turned his attention towards you? You rejoiced at that! You've loved him for several weeks already, only you don't want to openly admit it to yourself. You just weren't sure whether Nazarko really loved you, and that's why you didn't want to leave Marko. But Marko's not blind! He saw where he stood. That's why he stepped out of your road to fortune, because he wishes you luck." Katerina spoke sincerely and openly, yet couldn't avoid beating Malanka with her words.

"Get away! Get away from me!" shrieked Malanka, pushing her sister away. "Satan himself is speaking through you!"

"C'mon Malanka, c'mon, quiet down! Wait a few weeks. You'll calm down, and like a smart girl you won't shove Nazarko away from you. Marko will find himself enough girls in France," Katerina ended, unaware of the mockery in her words.

"The devil really is speaking through you!" Malanka shouted in pain, and ran out of Katerina's house.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Week after week passed since Marko had left, and Malanka still suffered, silently. Whether standing or sitting she could often be seen wrapped in grieved thought. Frequently she would stop during her work and stand for a moment in unmoving contemplation, and stare somewhere beyond the boundaries of this world. Her face would become pale, and though they gazed off into a dreamland, only her eyes would shine like before. Her mother understood the great sorrow and grief her daughter was experiencing, and so never mentioned the sudden departure of Marko in consideration of Malanka's suffering.

Lent had come and gone. Maksym was no longer sick, and had returned to school. And so even though he no longer had a good excuse, the teacher still was a frequent guest at the Klym's. He came now as a well celebrated and desired visitor. Nazarko came no less than once every two weeks, usually on a Sunday evening, every time with a bundle of magazines for Klym, and books for Malanka. He could have handed the books and periodicals over to Maksym to deliver, but Nazarko didn't want to forfeit the only chances he had of meeting and conversing, at least a bit, with the girl he loved. And even though Malanka had grown pale and grieved, Nazarko didn't notice it, for he saw her with the eyes of a lover. He still knew nothing of the love between Marko Kozak and Malanka. Had he known, he would not have stood in the path of two young lovers, no matter how much his heart ached. His nature simply would not have allowed it.

Malanka did not understand her feeling as well before as she did now. It was pleasant to frequently meet and talk with the intelligent and well mannered teacher. But it was Marko, and not Nazarko, that she loved completely, with a passionate and vital force. Her meetings with Nazarko were nice, but it was Marko who was necessary to her life, who was her own sun and wind.

Her sister Katerina had a very perceptive eye, but though she knew much about the practical things in life, she couldn't understand the depths of Malanka's soul. She knew Malanka turned her attention a great deal towards the teacher, and for Katerina this could only be a sign that she was in love with him. For after all, did Malanka not know Nazarko was a more learned man than Marko; that he would

have a better career which would allow her to live more comfortably? Katerina wished only good things for her sister, so as often as she could, she encouraged her to accept the teacher. Yet the more attempts she made at creating a romance between Malanka and Nazarko, the further she pushed her away from him. In time, Malanka became secretive about her feelings, and no longer bared her soul to Katerina. She closed her heart, and let no one in.

Malanka was a very smart girl, and within several months she could easily understand books written in everyday English. As for Ukrainian books, she had already read a few times Shevchenko's *Kobzar*, which Nazarko had given to her as a gift. The beauty of the language and thought of the great Ukrainian poet made a powerful impression upon her. From the Bible she often read the story of "Ruth", and the "Song of Songs", while from the English books she liked the most the collection of poems by the great Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore. That, too, was a present from Nazarko. Malanka had no problems understanding the language of Tagore's poems for it had such a lightness and ease to it. Tagore's poetry was straightforward, very pure and imagistic, and it went hand in hand with his profound thoughts on the question of life. Tagore's thoughts sunk deeply into Malanka's soul, like a heavy seed in rich black soil.

At every reading of Tagore's poetry, Malanka's soul became tranquil, and in place of grief came a sort of secret joy. And so in time the grief in her heart diminished. Each day it became clearer and clearer that the great sorrow she felt for Marko had its roots in self-love. She became ashamed, for she now knew it was herself she pitied the most.

With the impressions gained from the books, and under the influence of her great sorrow, Malanka very quickly developed from a common farm maid into a rather intelligent girl. In inverse proportion, her love of people and of the world increased day by day as her self-love and the grief for Marko, induced by her self-love, diminished. The more love she gave to others, the more content she felt with her own life.

During this period something extraordinary happened to Malanka one night. She couldn't fall asleep for the longest time, wondering what a certain Tagore poem could have possibly meant. She was fascinated by Tagore's image, where he imagined a person as a musical instrument in the hands of the greatest Musician — the one who unceasingly creates variety in life. The more she meditated upon that idea, of being a violin in the hands of the Supreme Violinist, the

more positive she became that the force of that artistic Creator was the same one found within herself. And at once, under the influence of such a thought, she was frightened to feel that she no longer had a body, but that she was just an unseen force existing everywhere at the same time. Malanka felt as she had never felt before — so free and light, so fortunate! No longer was she sure that there ever was a time in the life of the world when she herself did not exist. She loved life in its entirety, without bonds, and her joy was like the rays of the sun. She knew that she too was one with those bright beams.

The infinite bliss did not fill Malanka's soul for long. Perhaps a few minutes. But those few moments seemed an eternity, and when they passed, it just all felt like a strange dream-vision. Yet Malanka was completely convinced that it wasn't a dream; it was reality, and after such immense joy there was left in her heart a limitless love of life, of people, and of the world. She loved life as she saw it, and there was now no room for grief in her heart. Malanka could feel Marko in the depths of her heart, and she and he would always be together in her soul. The feeling was so strange that Malanka could not tell anyone about it. Had she tried to explain, she could not have made it clearly understood, and people would have thought her a bit confused due to her great distress.

Mrs. Klym experienced a great surprise when she saw her daughter in the morning. A strange happiness seemed to radiate from Malanka's face, and sorrow and grief were no longer apparent in her speech, motions, or appearance. Malanka's movements around the house were lively, while her speech was gentle, and on her face — a smile. At first her mother meant to ask her what had happened, but she restrained herself in time.

"A funny change has come over Malanka," thought Mrs. Klym, as she stood by the stove and watched her daughter. "But I guess it's just time that finally did it. Time heals the deepest wounds. Malanka's finally come to terms with her fate. I'm glad she's happy again."

Malanka didn't worry about the time she had spent in deep melancholy, for she understood that such an experience was necessary. She actually rejoiced in all that she had gone through, and was happy that she was alive. Life itself was pure joy, and Malanka wanted to share it with everyone she met. And though Marko was far away, she was with him through her soul, and she was convinced that her path would still cross his. It wasn't necessary to mourn for him.

Katerina took heart in her sister's cheerfulness. She assumed that Malanka was finally reconciled with her fate, and was now ready

to accept Nazarko's love. Every time she glanced at Malanka's happy face, she grinned slyly.

Although he did gaze at her through love's blind eyes, even Nazarko noticed the strange difference in Malanka. Now he had good reason to consider Malanka's joy as a sign of love towards him, for she became more gentle and more sincere than before. She showed still more gratitude to the teacher for all his expressions of kindness, and, of course, for his books.

Malanka could see no reason to sever her ties of friendship with the teacher. She knew that neither she nor Nazarko were guilty of causing Marko's flight to the war, and she no longer blamed Marko for his sudden move. Though she couldn't explain why she was happy Marko had left, she nonetheless was glad, and thought of him as an heroic soldier. Deep within her soul Malanka felt that things had indeed turned out for the best, both for her and for Marko, though she still had not considered what the future held for her. Both of them still had things to learn before they could come together again to share a single life. That's if they were in fact fated to be together... Perhaps they had to be separated... for ever...

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

As soon as the single young men, and newlywed farmers heard the cries of the flocks of wild geese flying northward above them, they too began to prepare for their own journey. Except it was in the exactly opposite direction. Before the last remains of the snow melted, the young men set off from their homes, southward, in pursuit of earnings. Even those men just married in winter bid farewell to their young brides and started down the road. They hoped to find work with the well-to-do farmers near Dauphin and Neepawa, Brandon and Portage La Prairie, or with the railroad. Only the old folks remained on the farm, and the occasional middle-aged farmer — those who already had some land under cultivation, and didn't need to depend on their calloused hands to earn money working for the railroad, or on someone else's wealthy farm.

Roman Fedyk and Oleksa Moroz left for Winnipeg along with the other labourers and farmers. Petro Moroz was still preparing for the trip to the city, and he was finally taking Katerina with him. In the meantime, he helped his father-in-law root out bits of the forest, this time on the other side of the railroad tracks.

Hard labour, sweat on the brow, was needed to get every span of earth from those Manitoba forests. There weren't any half rotten stumps there either, but strong, healthy trees. Giant poplars had to be uprooted, and only near the tracks were there brushwood and a patch of older, singed stumps.

From time to time Mrs. Klym also came there, if only for a minute and helped them pile at least the broken branches and small stumps. With a word or two she encouraged her husband and son-in-law to win the soil from the forest. Mrs. Klym loved to watch the piece of field grow larger as the forest receded little by little. She looked at the patch of land which was already cleared of trees, and imagined the green spikes of grain waving there in the soft breath of the wind. Maria Klym loved the land, and knew its worth.

Malanka also came occasionally to help throw the stumps and branches into piles. She saw how much energy was needed to culti-

vate only a small bit of land, yet the work didn't frighten her. Without that labour she knew there wouldn't be any land; and without the soil there would be nothing to live from.

Sunny days soon appeared, and the sun also shone in Malanka's soul. She felt that through his thoughts, Marko was always with her.

"Let be what will be. I'm sure everything will turn out all right," Malanka cheered herself.



CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

It was a warm, bright day when Klym went out, the seedbag hanging from his shoulder. He walked the length of the field, then returned, scattering the fruitful seed over the black, tilled soil.

Klym loved to work in the field more than anything else. He loved to walk along the black furrows, where the heat glimmered as it seeped out of the warmed earth, and sow the seeds evenly with his right hand. On his feet were his winter moccasins, and he treaded comfortably over the tillage, not sinking in the soft earth as he did with his old country shoes made of bast.

Since it was a Saturday, Maksym helped his father with the seeding. He placed sacks of wheat about the field and would bring Klym a new supply whenever his father's seed-bag grew empty. After his father finished seeding his land, Maksym hitched the oxen to the harrow and began to finish harrowing the sown field. He liked to work with the earth too, and although a cloud of dust rose behind the harrow, he whistled gaily, yelling "Geddecup" at the oxen from time to time.

The sun was already high when the field was completely sown and harrowed. Mrs. Klym came out of the house, placed her hands on her hips, and for a long, long time gazed at the field. There was fondness in her eyes, like a mother watching her firstborn child, who sleeps quietly, and smiles. With such a smile of good fortune on her lips she walked back into the house. She prepared supper, hurrying about in the kitchen, still smiling over her sown field, a long ribbon stretching between the marsh and the railroad.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Malanka couldn't understand the lightness and joy she felt. But as she sat on the bench by the house and gazed up at the star-seeded heavens, she at once became frightened, and filled with awe. The dark, blue, infinite space, showered with bright stars, seemed to exist entirely within her being. She could intensely feel Marko himself in the very depths of her soul. The sensation elated Malanka.

It was late when Malanka rose from the bench and went to sleep. When she got up in the morning her entire body was trembling excitedly with a mysterious joy. Every part of her body sensed some important event, but she had no idea what had taken place.

It was not a long wait for the news. Monday evening Maksym returned from the post office with a letter for Malanka. A quick glance at the writing on the envelope caused Malanka's heart to beat much faster.

Malanka took the envelope in her hands and immediately stepped towards the door. There she stopped suddenly. She had forgotten that Katerina was no longer in the house with the flat, slopping roof, but now living in Winnipeg. Malanka quietly returned to the table, unsealed the letter, and began to read.

"Dear Malanya! It seems as if a kind of irresistible force made me write to you exactly on the anniversary of that day — the day I asked you to wait for me until the spring. Spring has already passed, and nothing has come of my plans. I was going to be a farmer, but instead I'm a soldier. I'm satisfied with my decision — it would have been awkward for me to look you in the eyes, especially since I left without even saying good-bye. I should have explained to you before I left about the uncontrollable urge which grew in me to take part in the war, and also how I felt you no longer needed me.

"In a few days our division leaves for England. Before they send us to the front in France we still have to train for a few months there. And to be truthful, we're all getting impatient. Right now we want to go to the front as soon as possible, but when we get a whiff of the gunpowder at the front, then perhaps we'll think differently. But before I go, I'd like to bare my soul to you, my dear Malanya. Who knows? — maybe I won't be able to see you again. You know what can happen in a war.

“You’ll probably find it strange to know that I didn’t feel any obligation to you when I left the farm. I was sure that Nazarko had fallen in love with you and would propose before the end of winter. After all, he’s a very intelligent and fine man. He’s finished higher schools — I’m not his equal. I was positive that he would make you happy, so I decided to step out of his way. But believe me, dear Malanya, I didn’t leave because of that, because I had lost all hope for you. No, I would have joined the army even if Nazarko wasn’t around. I just would have begged you to wait for me until I came back from the war. But, as I found out from my friend Roman Fedyk, what I had expected hasn’t happened, even up to now. And Uncle Metro wrote me too, saying that you’re still single and aren’t even considering getting married. This cheered me very much, very much, and my hopes began to rise again. But really, what kind of hope can I have now?... No one knows how long the war will last, and I can’t know what awaits me in the war. So, would you laugh if I again asked you to wait for me — to wait until the war ends? At any rate, that’s what I am asking you, my little star. If it’s possible, wait for me until the end of the war. Rest assured that I’ll be thinking about you every minute of my life, and that when I come out of this war in one piece, then for sure I’ll come back to you.

“Wish your father and mother all the best from me, and the same to Maksym and Oksana, too. Katerina can be found someplace here in the city, but I haven’t had the chance to look her up. Good-bye Malanya, until we see each other again. You can expect another letter from me soon. Sincerely yours, Marko.”

“Now I know why I felt so strange last night,” thought Malanka, “why that pleasant feeling came over me. And now I also know what I must do. I must wait, no matter how long, for my heart belongs only to him.” She imagined Marko stood somewhere near her. “Yes, my love, I will wait for you.”

Mrs. Klym could guess who the letter was from by just watching her daughter. After having read it, Malanka sat at the table and stared off into the distance. A smile formed on her lips, and her mother was happy. She left her in peace, not bothering to ask about the letter.

“She’s not at all like Katerina,” thought Mrs. Klym. “It’s not easy to understand her. Katerina’s like other girls—but not Malanka. If Katya had the choice between Marko and the teacher, she would have accepted his love and left Marko a long time ago. It’s true that Marko is a very nice man, but the teacher could stuff him behind his

belt with his looks and intelligence. If I had the choice I'd have chosen Nazarko myself. But I won't intrude into the affairs of my daughter's heart; she knows herself what's best, who she loves more. Well, and that's not bad either! Now that she's decided to wait for Marko, she'll stay with us for a long time still. And that's just what I want. Being without the helper like her, is like being without a pair of hands! And there's nothing like the pleasure of having a nice girl around the house. Katerina is gone, and if Malanka leaves soon after her, it would be so sad around here. So I don't have to worry too much about Malanka... Now it's Maksym we have to think about. Nazarko says that he's learning very quickly. He's finished the eighth class already, and should go to school in the city. The teacher's happy about that! But how can we afford to send him to school? We ourselves can barely exist here on the farm. He would need money for clothes, and books, and other things. Perhaps we could sell some of the cattle, and Petro would certainly agree to let Maksym stay with him... We'll manage somehow," Mrs. Klym cheered herself, long into the night. "And someday, when Maksym learns some profession, he'll pay back his debts to Petro. It'll work out, somehow."

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Harvest time came again, but Petro was no longer there to help Klym cut the hay. Also, more hay was needed now than last winter, for Petro had left his cows as a gift for his father-in-law, plus three calves were born in the spring. Maksym was still too young to be able to mow the hay like a grown-up man, yet from him came unexpected help.

“You know what we’ll do to cut a lot of hay this year, Dad? We’ll borrow a mower from Skakun and cut hay like all the English farmers do,” Maksym suggested, trying to help his father. “With a mower we’ll cut more hay in two days than we would with the scythe in two weeks.”

“That’s not bad advice, Maksym,” Klym spoke, surprised, and gazing curiously at his son, “but what do we know about a mower? That’s a machine! — and be what may, a mower won’t cut by itself. You have to know how to use it. How else could you work it?”

“No, Dad, a mower actually does cut by itself. You just lower the lever and it moves right away. The oxen pull the machine while it hums and cuts. Just yell ‘Giddeup’ to the oxen; they move, the mower rattles, and behind it is left a hayfield covered with hay... I know everything about the mower already. Skakun’s boys showed me how to harvest with their machine, and there’s really nothing much to learn. A small child can cut with it,” the son further encouraged his father.

“Well, how about the rake? Could you operate a rake as well?”

“Why not? The rake is even easier than the mower. In a short time, you yourself would learn to use the mower and rake,” Maksym answered happily, noticing that his father already accepted his advice.

Revealing his agreement with Maksym’s suggestion, Klym laughed. “If it’s really so easy to operate those machines, then it’s possible that I’ll become such a farmer, and do everything with machines.”

Skakun had already begun harvest work, so Klym and his son went there for a few days. By helping him gather his hay, they were allowed to use his mower and rake.

One morning, just as the sun rose, Maksym was found sitting on the mover, yelling ‘Giddeup’ at the oxen from time to time. Behind

him stretched a long, wide strip of mown field. From earliest morning to noon the mower would rattle like a machine gun, and cover the field with cut grass. The stalks of hay fell like green-uniformed soldiers under machinegun fire. Klym couldn't believe his eyes. That a machine could cut so much hay in half a day!

"Well, Dad, in the afternoon it's your turn to start cutting," Maksym smiled during lunch, winking mischievously. "I had my exam before noon, and now it's your turn to learn to use the mower, and take the test."

"Ah, I'll make a poor student, Maksym. I'm old, and I don't believe I can learn to cut as well with a mower as I do with a scythe." Klym sighed sadly and thought of his youthful years. "Yes, Maksym, if your age could only return to me!"

"You're not old yet, Dad. And anyways, anyone can manage to sit on a mower, and every so often raise and lower a lever. But not everyone can master cutting with a scythe like you have, Dad! I would want to be able to swing that blade with the command that you do," Maksym said. He wanted to persuade his father that it was really more productive harvesting with machines than with scythe and rake.

At Maksym's words old Klym's doubts melted completely. His son praised him, yet at the same time convinced him of the extraordinary powers that a machine could give a person.

"Well, if that's the way it's to be, so be it. If we're to use the machine then let's get going. I'll try my hand at it. C'mon, let's go! The oxen have finished eating. They're already rested."

They brought out the oxen, put the traces on them and hitched them up. Klym sat on the seat of the mower while his son showed him how to operate the lever.

"Now, Dad, you can move the mower. I'll walk in your tracks behind you for a few times, and if you miss anything just nod your head at me right away. I'll help you. Now get going!"

"Giddeup Jack! Giddeup Jim!" Klym shouted out to the animals, as he lowered the lever. They slowly moved forward and the machine once again clacked across the hayfield. Everything went smoothly, without any problems, and Klym began to feel a certain joy, as if his younger years had returned. A mower — such an easy way of cutting hay!

Klym stopped the oxen to give them a moment's rest. "Could anyone cut better than you?" Maksym smiled. "I don't think I need to follow you anymore."

Klym couldn't hold back his little chuckles. He felt proud that he was no longer, so to speak, an ordinary peasant, but a real farmer, one who even knew how to use a machine on the farm. "Now I can laugh at myself, at the fear I had when I saw this thing. I didn't think it could be so easy to operate. A small child could cut with a mower. I think I'm going to fall headlong in love with this machine — with the mower, the rake, and maybe even the binder!"

"That's the way it is, Dad! We won't be scared now of the binder. Uncle Metro's boys have already told me everything about it, and showed me how to work it. I think this summer we'll be harvesting the wheat with the binder, hey Dad? What do you say?" Maksym addressed his father with such enthusiasm that Klym immediately, and respectfully, turned to answer his question.

"Well, I never thought about it, that someday we'd reap the grain with a binder," Klym declared truthfully, "but it's worthwhile considering it. There's just one problem we might have — it's pretty far to Uncle Metro's. But then again, the road is good, and there shouldn't be much difficulty in towing the binder here."

By the sound of Klym's voice, it was evident that he already agreed with the idea: he would harvest the grain this summer with a binder. Maksym just smiled at his father's answer. He knew what his father was like. It was as if he had given his consent to use the machine.

The mower clattered ahead, leaving the wide strips of mown field behind it. Mrs. Klym soon came out to see how the work was coming along. Her breath was taken away when she saw Klym sitting on the mower, cutting wide swaths effortlessly. She couldn't believe her eyes.

"My, my! A miracle has happened!" Mrs. Klym blurted out. "I could never imagine that. To think I'd ever see you on the seat of such a machine! And it mows as if the devil was its mother, that machine! But maybe it doesn't know yet who's sitting on it," she added playfully.

"There's nothing to be surprised at Maria! The mower cuts by itself. You only need to lower this lever, shout 'Giddecup', and it works by itself." Klym laughed, squinting his eyes as he slid the lever up and down while the oxen took a rest.

When Klym later sat on the rake, he plainly resembled a small boy who had just acquired an interesting toy. He was so interested in the two machines that he became an adherent of all kinds of machines. After supper Klym couldn't stop talking about machinery,

how it was such a tremendous help in a person's work. He was now taking an especial interest in a machine which Maksym had read about, one that could rip out tree stumps.

"What do you think, Maksym? That machine for clearing stumps would be pretty useful to us. If a man could clear, say, at least half of his land into a field, he'd live like an old country *pahn*." Klym slammed his fist on the table in an effort to convince himself more forcibly. "I'm going to buy myself a machine like that!" he said in a stern voice.

"I'm not so old yet. They'd still hire me anywhere for work. As soon as we finish with the grain I'll go and look for work. I'll get a job someplace, for a rich farmer, or maybe with the railway."

"Oh Andrew, don't say things like that anymore," Mrs. Klym objected. "You're too old now to look for work. And it doesn't suit you to go to town to work for wages."

"What's that to me? — if it suits me or not!? I need the money! And I'm telling you that I can still earn it with these hands. I'm going to buy that machine for clearing," Klym declared, assuring himself completely. "And some other machinery too!"

"Well, now that you're so determined to buy yourself this stump-clearer," Mrs. Klym spoke up, taking advantage of Klym's decision to go out and earn some extra money, "perhaps you can now think about what the teacher tells us. He advises us to send Maksym to school in the city after the holidays are over. Maksym can stay at Katerina's, but he'll still need extra money for clothes, books, and other things."

"Maksym?!... Does he really want to go to school in the city?" Klym turned to his son. "What do you have to say about this, Maksym? I hoped you'd remain on the farm after me."

Maksym hesitated a moment, for he didn't want to be the cause of his father's pain. His mother again spoke up and eased him from his uncomfortable situation.

"What can we do, Andrew? Maksym likes to learn, and read books, and the teacher says he is doing very well," Klym's wife smiled, casting proud glances at her son. "So why should we worry about what will happen to the farm. Once we have the land it won't run away from us. We still have two children. Maybe one of them will stay on the farm."

"Yes, Dad, I want to continue on with school," Maksym blushed slightly. "But I'll earn my own money for clothes and books. I think a

farmer who is well-off would hire me even now for work. Some of my friends have already gone to work.”

“No, Maksym, I won’t let you go hiring yourself out for money. You’re still too young. You’ll live at Katerina’s, and we’ll manage somehow to buy you all that you’ll need,” Mrs. Klym said.

“Well, if that’s the way it’s to be,” Klym spoke, looking sadly at his son, “then I’ll go and get a job right after the harvest. I’ll help you, Maksym, even though it means I have to forget about that new machine for awhile. I can always buy it later. If you want to learn, son, then learn, because an education is your biggest fortune. I like to read newspapers and books myself. But I was already married before I was taught to read by my neighbour, and I’m very grateful to him for opening my eyes. Blindness — that’s what it was like until that time.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

On a Sunday afternoon at the beginning of August, Malanka stood in the garden, admiring her flowers. Nazarko came by on his bicycle, and when he spotted Malanka, went over to her. Good luck, he thought, was crawling right into his hands.

“God Bless you!” Nazarko cried out, almost directly into Malanka’s ear, as she bent over a flower.

Malanka jumped up, for she hadn’t noticed the teacher’s arrival. Her face had a red flush because of the unexpected surprise. But after she had overcome the initial astonishment she returned his greeting, and began to show Nazarko her two rows of flowers.

“Do you know that almost all of these flowers came from the seeds that Maksym brought with him when we came here to Canada? It’s funny that such a small boy had a mind to bring flower seeds with him.” Malanka praised her brother for she knew the teacher took an interest in him. “He was going to pack a large parcel of books, too, but the day we left we somehow forgot about them. Such weeping!—when Maksym later searched around and realized that the books were left at home in an empty house! But he did manage to take with him some soldiers to play with, and a few dolls for Oksana.”

“Indeed, Maksym is not an ordinary boy. Someday, perhaps, he will become a great man. But for that to happen it’s necessary to continue sending him to school,” said the teacher. He realized that it was time to give that some thought, since classes in secondary schools would be starting at the beginning of next month. “Maksym has written very commendable exams, which allow him to attend high school. It would be a shame to stop his education now. I could help him with his ninth grade lessons; but at our school there isn’t all the advantages and equipment of schools in the city. And I wouldn’t have enough time to help him as much as would be necessary.”

“We’ve already found a way out for Maksym,” Malanka said excitedly. “he’s going to stay at my sister Katerina’s in Winnipeg, and go to school there.”

Nazarko was delighted with the news. “That’s excellent! I’m sure he’ll learn very well in the city too.” Nazarko now began to speak in an excited, trembling voice as he suddenly changed the subject of his conversation.

“Miss Klym, you know yourself how easy it is for me to get acquainted with the men around here. But it’s very hard for me to get to know the girls. To put it plainly, I just don’t know how to approach and talk to the girls.”

Malanka blushed again at Nazarko’s shaky voice and sudden change of topic. To hide her excitement she leaned over the flowers, as if to admire their fragrance. She had an idea of what was on the teacher’s mind.

“Yet, I can get along so easily with you, as if you were my own sister. Somehow it’s so easy for me that I always want to be in your company. I’d want it so that we could always be together... You know, Miss Klym, how greatly I respect you, and...” Nazarko hesitated for a moment. He couldn’t finish what he had started to say, for Malanka purposely interrupted him.

“Yes, ...yes, I know what you want to say,” Malanka talked quickly, not wanting Nazarko to say what he felt, not letting him become crushed. “You want to be convinced that I’m your friend. Well, I’m telling you the truth — never yet in my life have I had such a friend like you. You’re always so good to me... Those books you gave me to read uncovered an entirely new world before my eyes. The world became so beautiful and happy for me! Now I see everything in a new light. I can see the meaning, the value and beauty in things that before seemed only ugly to me. Everything has its worth and meaning, and for this beauty in life I thank you. It was you who opened up this new world. Oh, how I’d like to repay you in someday! If it wasn’t for you — there’d be a great emptiness in my life now. I don’t know what I’d do if I didn’t have such a good friend. And though I think about one man who is also my friend, and who maybe one day will be closer to me than a friend, I’m sure that no one can show me as much beauty in life as you have. You’ll always remain a dear friend to me.”

To overcome her anxiety and excitement Malanka spoke quickly, not allowing Nazarko a word, even though she herself was running out of breath. But it was a deep emotion and pity that finally overcame Malanka, and tears began to trickle from her eyes as she started sobbing.

Nazarko was moved, and didn’t know how to comfort the girl. “Miss Klym... young Miss Klym... don’t cry. I’m very sorry if I said anything to offend you. Yes... yes, we will remain friends forever.”

Nazarko understood the reason for Malanka’s emotion, but he did not feel hurt. Even though she had given her heart to someone else, he knew that she desired him as a sincere and faithful friend. He

accepted his fate. His only concern now was how to quiet Malanka, for Nazarko already knew what he had to do with himself.

“I’m so very grateful to you for understanding me, and not being angry. The man I gave my heart to came before I knew you. Please forgive me,” Malanka cried through her tears. “I’m sorry I can’t show my gratitude in another way.”

Nazarko now felt as if some terrible weight pressed his soul. There was a sorrowful ache in his heart, but he tried to part with the intense emotion. He knew for certain that Malanka could never become his bride. He was grateful at least for her kindness.

“Here are some books for you to read,” Nazarko spoke abruptly, handing Malanka a package of books. “Read them and keep them. I don’t need them anymore.”

“How can I repay you?” Malanka stuck a forget-me-not in the button-hole of Nazarko’s jacket. “Accept this flower of thanks from me instead.”

“I have to go now. We’re having a meeting at the school today,” Nazarko said, as he started to leave.

“Don’t forget to drop in to see us some time,” Malanka reminded him.

“Good, very good.” Nazarko sat on his bicycle. “I’ll always remain your friend.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Nazarko went to the school meeting after his visit with Malanka, and surprised everyone. Instead of agreeing to teach after the summer vacation, he asked the school trustees to look for another teacher. It wasn't a question of dissatisfaction with the pay, he told them, nor anything else. Nazarko explained that he was happy with the job, and would have been delighted to remain among them several more years. But the circumstances were such that he felt he had to leave for some further place. Yet it wasn't easy, for a person the people liked, to dispose of their questions so readily with evasive answers. When they began talking, when they all tried to persuade him to stay and teach in the fall, Nazarko had to confess what his intentions were.

"How gratefull I am to you all, that you ask me to continue teaching here among you. And I would be very happy to stay, but I can't. I'm determined to join the Canadian army. Someone will replace me here. My place is there... far away... at the front."

Uncle Metro almost wept out loud when he heard these words. He went up to the teacher, embraced him like a son, and kissed him.

"I bless you, like my own son," Uncle Metro sobbed. "Pity, such a pity, young boys like you, in the very bloom... But I'd join up myself if at least ten years could fall from my back..."

All the people saw Nazarko off to the war, as if indeed he was their own son.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

Marko sent letters to Malanka usually every week, and she replied to each one. When she began reading the letter dated the fourth of October, 1917, she cried.

“Dear Malanya! I’m in the hospital again, but that doesn’t bother me. A bullet just scratched my right leg a bit. We made an attack, and a shower of bullets from machine-guns poured on us. It’s lucky the bullet only scratched my leg, and didn’t catch the bone. Last fall the wounds in my left leg were more serious, as I already told you. This one should heal much faster than the first ones. They’ll soon send me to the front again. I’ll be happy to get out of this place as quickly as I can. There’s so much suffering here, every-where you look. The hospitals are crowded with just the remains of those who not long ago were young men, full of life... The luckiest of us all... now... is Anatole Nazarko. He no longer suffers. I just found out that Nazarko was killed this month in the counterattack by the Canadians. It’s a pity he doesn’t rest in his native land in that eternal sleep, instead of here in France. But, then again, the field of battle — that’s a soldier’s native land. Yesterday they brought a wounded soldier here who was under Nazarko’s command. He says that Nazarko would have already been a second lieutenant, but he saw Nazarko fall, fatally wounded with a bullet in the head. ‘Let the earth be of feathers for him!’ But he’s probably more lucky than those that remain, the ones that started out a strong, healthy boys.

“I met Nazarko only once, in France, as I once mentioned, when our regiment had a rest behind the front line. I almost tripped over him. I was walking around the outskirts of a small, half-ruined village. I was walking, looking at the orchard covered with white blossoms, when Pow! — here lies a soldier in front of me, on his back. I thought he was dead! I looked once more and immediately recognized Nazarko. I spoke to him in Ukrainian and he jumped up quickly from the ground and stared at me, so astonished! Finally, after a minute or two, he cried out: ‘Marko!’ He recognized me after all. He was so happy to see me, as if I was his own brother. We sat on the grass and talked for about an hour. There’s so many things you want to tell a friend. We talked mainly about the Russian Revolution; Nazarko told me that the Ukrainians in Kiev had elected their own parliament, the Central *Rada*, and that Professor Hrushevsky

was the President. We both rejoiced at that: Ukrainians had lived to see their own free state! I only then realized why there was so much happiness in Nazarko's eyes — it was the resurrection of Ukraine! No wonder, at the end, he proclaimed with such significance: 'Now I could die peacefully, in bliss.' He's fortunate to have at least awaited the resurrection of Ukraine.

"There's quite a lot of Ukrainians in the Canadian army, but almost all of them are hiding under assumed names. That's because it's hard for Ukrainians to join this army, especially if they come from the part of Ukraine under Austria. I also met many Ukrainians in the Russian army, in the divisions Russia sent to help in France. Just when I had to leave I met up with Ukrainian soldiers in Russian uniforms in Paris and Nice. They were beside themselves with joy when they heard the special news that was born out of the Russian Revolution — that Ukraine finally had its very own government.

"I feel quite well nowadays and can even write by myself. But it seems I would feel still better if it wasn't so cloudy outside. The heavens have been drawn over with clouds for a few days now. They hang up there like a tin ceiling, and a continuous, tearful rain pours from them. Ah, how I want to see the sun! I think just the sun itself would heal me completely.

"I think about you, my beloved Malanya, every moment of my life. As soon as the war ends I'm going to fly with bird's wings straight to you. So, Malanya, until that beautiful reunion, good-bye! Say hello to your father and mother, and Oksana. And don't forget Maksym and Katerina. Yours truly, Marko."

"Mother, mother!" Malanka sobbed. "Nazarko is gone!... Nazarko died from a bullet... and Marko is wounded!"

"Let the earth be of feathers for Nazarko. Let him rest with God. So young, so handsome and educated, and now he's dead... Death doesn't sort out his victims... Is Marko seriously hurt?" Mrs. Klym asked through her tears.

"No, mother, he says the bullet only scratched his leg."

"Praise the Lord... if only it would stop at that," Mrs. Klym sighed heavily, crossing herself. "Oh, I'm sorry, so sorry for Nazarko... I pity him so much, as if he was my own son."

"Our tears are no longer needed for people like Nazarko," old Klym spoke up, his face wet with tears. "Nazarko died for Canada. Because we have accepted Canada as our second home we have to be prepared to defend her — and to die for her. Nazarko's death will not

pass in vain. He strenghtened our believe in Canada with his blood,” Klym pronounced, in a halting, emotional voice. He then kept silent, as if a strong hand squeezed him by the throat.

When the news of Nazarko’s death had spread around the district, there wasn’t a single house where people did not weep, as if for their own brother, or son.



CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

It was Armistice Day, November 11, 1918, and the people in Canada, and the other countries which took part in the war against the central states of Europe, experienced an immense sense of joy. But there weren't any celebrations in "Doctor" Vooytyk's little shanty: Vooytyk heard of Austria's defeat when he was at the store, and his body suddenly felt the entire weight of his eighty-seven years. To hide from the people the feebleness of his old age, he immediately trudged home from the store, and crawled into his bed.

As long as there was fighting, "Doctor" Vooytyk had lived and breathed war. Towards the end he had placed all his hope in the Austrian cannons. But when they failed to lead Austria to victory, and the war ended, nothing remained to further support his hopes.

Fortunately, Kozma Semkiw dropped by Vooytyk's house a day after the Armistice holiday. He found the "Doctor" lying in bed, barely alive. The house was very chilly inside, for since the previous day Vooytyk was unable to get up from his bed and start a fire in the stove. Vooytyk lay in bed, very weak, and his face, not long ago a healthy red color, had changed greatly in the day. It had yellowed, and blackened, and was covered with hundreds of fine wrinkles.

"Vooytyk, what's the matter with you?" Kozma asked, taking the old-timer's hand.

"Ah, my good neighbour! It's over for me..." the old Austrian veteran murmured, almost inaudibly. "My days are numbered. Take me to the hospital, for I don't think I can get around any longer, and there's no one here to look after me..."

Kozma Semkiw did as the "Doctor" wished, and drove him to the hospital in the neighbouring village.

For the first few weeks Vooytyk lived a first class life, resting completely. Because there wasn't any place where he could lay his old head, they kept him in the hospital, and occasionally assigned him various small jobs. He often helped the nurses to clean up.

That fall many people died of influenza, but "Doctor" Vooytyk, who daily came in contact with the sick, didn't get infected. From day to day he would grope about the hospital. Once a happy and jocular old man, he was now aged, sad and quiet. In his soldier's heart there was only a cold emptiness. He had no more faith in the Austrian forces.

It was Maksym, when he returned from the city for his vacation in the summer of 1919, who brought the last glimmer of hope for Vooytyk. Maksym had driven to the neighbouring village to visit one of his school friends, and dropped in to the hospital to visit Vooytyk. The “Doctor” was like family to Maksym. The amount of war news Maksym had read to the old man before he had left for the city school! And the stories Vooytyk could recall! They were both happy to see each other again. The old-timer was even more glad when he found out Maksym had already graduated, and was now a teacher —just as Nazarko had once been.

“And how are you now, Mr. Vooytyk?” Maksym asked. He blushed faintly, for he had almost said “Mr. Doctor Vooytyk.”

“Ah, I no longer feel as well as I once did... But what’s there to live for? I’m just suffering. Emperor Franz Joseph was my age, and he’s dead. And the second Austrian Kaiser is gone... It should be about time for me to start wandering on that far journey,” complained the old man.

“Don’t talk like that, Mr. Vooytyk! People live to be a hundred years old, and some even more,” Maksym tried to cheer the old timer. “Who knows, maybe you’ll live to see another Austrian Emperor. There’s a duke from Hamburg in the Ukrainian army, and he might become the Emperor of Ukraine. And if he becomes the Emperor of Ukraine, he can help Austria too.”

“Really, Maksym? Can that happen?” Vooytyk asked in an excited voice. “Tell me the truth.”

Maksym assured Vooytyk once more. Immediately the old man changed, in Maksym’s eyes, into the happy and dashing “Doctor” Vooytyk the people had always known. The wrinkled face seemed to clear up, and the half-dazed eyes again sparkled. The old man became so excited by Maksym’s encouraging words that he stood up and began to pace nervously about the room.

“Well, Maksym, I thank you very much, that you didn’t forget me. You are now already a ‘professor’, but you don’t forget us poor folk. Oh! I didn’t feel this good since last fall!” Vooytyk said, his voice trembling with excitement. “Wish your father and mother the best from me. And someday, when you come home again, drop in to see me. God bless you on your new path! I think you’ll be a worthy replacement for Nazarko — his soul rest in the kingdom of Heaven!”

Maksym clasped the old man’s hand firmly. “Until we meet again, Mr. Vooytyk.” He left with quick steps, not wanting to show

the tears which glistened in his eyes. Maksym knew that this was the last time he would ever see the veteran follower of Franz Joseph.

That day Vooytyk amazed all the nurses and patients in the hospital with his joyful appearance, his nimble gait, and his cheerful voice. They found it strange — a miracle — that such a bent and wrinkled, sad old man could suddenly seem to grow erect, straighten out his slouch and smile happily as he walked briskly everywhere. They could only believe a miracle had taken place before their eyes.

“Doctor” Vooytyk smiled to himself as he walked around the hospital, cheering the sick. But though he talked a lot, he never betrayed with even a word what had brought him so much happiness. He was afraid that something was waiting, with the sole intent of stealing from him this moment of joy which now so warmed his heart, if he should only make the slightest mention of it.

The next day, as a nurse came to his room to check why he lay in bed for so long, the smile of fortune still shone on “Doctor” Vooytyk’s face. But the smile was similar to those flowers frost paints on windows as winter nears. When the nurse touched the hands of the old man, a shudder passed through her, for they were already cold, like ice.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Maksym began teaching in the same school where, a few years earlier, Nazarko had taught. Nazarko still remained the best teacher in the memory of the local folks, and Maksym agreed. He tried to follow in the footsteps of his dear teacher, both in school; and in spreading learning throughout the district.

In October Maksym organized a drama club, and began to put on plays. In this manner money was collected for books for the local reading-room, which was temporarily lodged in the school. The money would also allow a permanent building to be constructed to house the reading-room. Later on, Maksym started a choir, as well as English language classes.

Old Klym now had something to be happy about. He was delighted that his son has become a teacher, especially one that everybody loved and respected. But Klym was at this time also deeply concerned. He was building a new house, and continued to work at it, but he wondered who the house would be for. Maksym had become a teacher, and Klym didn't know what to think about Oksana, since she was already attending secondary school in Winnipeg. Only Malanka remained at home, and her destiny was uncertain.

As the Canadian soldiers returned home, Marko Kozak was not among them. He wasn't back yet, but neither was he one of those who slept with eternal dreams in the fields of Flanders. The last letter Malanka received was from Romania. Since then, month after month had passed with no other word.

In that letter Marko had said that he would try to get to Ukraine. Whether he had been successful, no one knew. There were only scanty tid-bits of news about a relentless war still raging in Ukraine. Malanka had no other choice; she could only wait patiently, and try not to fall into despair.

Since Klym placed all his hope in Malanka, he too was justifiably concerned. He was cheered only by the fact that his daughter was so resolute, even though chances of Marko's return remained very small. The laughing and joking "Doc" Vooytyk was no longer around to brighten Klym up with his wit and pranks, but what hurt Klym, and the entire district, even more, was the absence of Uncle Metro.

CHAPTER THIRTY

Once Uncle Metro became convinced that moose no longer roamed in the area, a strange kind of sadness was born within him. He found it boring to just sit on the farm, even though he was one of the wealthiest farmers in the district. Every so often he would take down his beloved Schneider rifle from its peg and practice shooting at targets, though he really needed no practice. But for a real marksman, what was the value of shooting like that, "at God's window?"

Uncle Metro's melancholy had finally grown too great, and had begun to pain his soul. So he sold his farm, moved to the nearest town, and once again took up boot-making. Because he had been a boot-maker in the old country, no one was amazed at his ability. Uncle Metro had always said that a cobbler was drawn to boot-making like a drunk to a glass.

Uncle Metro's first love had been the cobbler's awl. But it was his Schneider which later captured his heart and, well, an awl is nothing compared to a rifle. It can belong only to the boot-makers small cell of a room, while the rifle belongs to the unbound freedom of the forest. It was one thing for Uncle Metro to be a boot-maker before he had tasted the liberty of the Canadian forests as a hunter. But it was a completely different thing to return to the awl after that taste. Finding himself huddled on cobbler's stool, Uncle Metro felt like an eagle in a cage. And it wasn't only because he found himself in this place on a small stool. It was those objects that were found so near: the awl, a hammer, thread, and needles. They were an insult to the Schneider! Such fine trifles were a disgrace in the company of the noble Schneider rifle. The gun was already well-worn, and scratched all over, yet it wasn't just any old veteran, but likely one that had been through many battles. It's possible it was used in the times when "Doc" Vooytyk still fought.

Uncle Metro knew it wasn't right to keep such a fine weapon among the chores of a boot-maker, but he couldn't part with it. He would work on boots and gaze occasionally at his friend of various adventures, and smile thoughtfully. He cheered himself the way a prisoner cheers himself at the sight of a prisoner friend. Captivity was easier when divided among two, and that thought brought him at least a little comfort.

How frequently people now caught Uncle Metro sunk deeply in daydreams! He usually sat on his cobbler's stool, yearning for his past experiences with his Schneider in the forests, and planned and planned, without end, how to again obtain that freedom.



CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

Another year had passed. It was 1920, and summer again.

From the blue heaven above the sun poured its bountiful gilt beams on the golden spikes of wheat. Like old men, the ripe blades of wheat swayed their heavy heads under the gentle puffs of the breeze, saying among themselves: "Ah yes, yes, the relentless reaper already nears us..." The sun shed its golden abundance upon Malanka's hair also, as she walked along the field, together, with a tall, suntanned young man.

Marko walked slowly through the grass path, feeling the warmth of Malanka's hand in his, telling her about everything he had lived through in five years of war. He gazed lovingly, first at the sweet girl, then at the ripe heads of wheat nodding in the fields.

"When the war ended in France they brought us back to England," Marko explained. "And from there they were to take us back to Canada. I waited calmly for my term to leave, but I began thinking over a lot of things. And you know, somehow I became ashamed, that I could return to Canada without another thought, just when Ukraine was waging a vigorous battle for her life. So I planned to go to the war in Ukraine at all costs, and though I had a lot of terrible problems getting out of the army, and even more getting to Ukraine, somehow, in the end, I overcame all of them. I joined the Ukrainian army just when they were marching on Kiev. But there were too many enemies, and we couldn't beat them all. The most terrible foe seemed to be typhus. And it was typhus that conquered us. God, it's hard to recall those painful experiences! So many of the finest flowers of the Ukrainian nation died so that Ukraine could live.

"But, Marko, didn't you have the urge to remain there, in Ukraine?" Malanka asked, looking inquiringly into the eyes of fine young man who had seen so much grief.

"No, I couldn't stay there, Malanya," Marko answered, emotionally. He held her hand and caressed the heavy, ripe, golden heads of wheat with his other hand. "I heard two voices in the depths of my soul, which called me back here to Canada. I heard the voice of your heart, and the voice of the free Canadian soil. The land was almost pleading to become fields covered with golden wheat."

