The Girl is a Treasure

by Rose_2925

Summary

~Andrei couldn't stop staring, she was so beautiful, so full of life. She had managed to rekindle a spark in his soul, a flame he thought had died long ago. He was suddenly a breath away from her face, and upon impulse, he kissed her. She started at first, young and inexperienced as she was, but gradually her mouth relaxed under his, her lips melding with his own.~

So I made the mistake of watching the BBC adaptation of War & Peace, and Episode 3 made me so happy, Andrei and Natasha dancing, Andrei finally looking something other than flat out depressed--and then episode 4 went and happened >:( This is a short fanfic for those (apparently few) that shipped Andrei and Natasha

*note*I have not read the actual book or watched the last episode, and will be drawing on lines from the show.
He loves me, I'm sure of it

"Come on!" Natasha shouted, as she ran down the snowy hill, pulling Andrei with her. She lost her footing in the fresh powder and landed flat on her back in the snow, Andrei falling to his knees beside her. Giddy, she laughed as the snowflakes tickled her upturned face. She looked up at Andrei, who was so handsome when he laughed, she thought.

Andrei couldn't stop staring, she was so beautiful, so full of life. She had managed to rekindle a spark in his soul, a flame he thought had died long ago. He was suddenly a breath away from her face, and upon impulse, he kissed her. She started at first, young and inexperienced as she was, but gradually her mouth relaxed under his, her lips melding with his own. The fire grew within him and he pulled back, aware of the chaperones making their way more carefully down the hill. He smiled—which he seemed to do a lot as of late, especially when he was around Natasha and helped her to her feet. They dusted the snow from their jackets and continued on their walk.

~

"Natasha? Are you listening to me?" her mother asked, impatiently. "What?" Natasha asked, snapping out of her daydream. "I asked if you wanted to come visit Anna Mikhailovna with me, she said Boris is courting a new young lady and wants to tell me all about it." Her mother said, for the second time, looking sympathetically at her daughters clouded face. "No, I, I don't want to miss him if he calls" Natasha said, biting her lip. It had been a week since she'd last seen him, when they'd kissed in the snow bank. Her mother smiled kindly, "Did you receive any word from him indicating that he would?"
"Well no, not exactly, but just incase I think I should stay. He said he would come again soon but it's been ages!" Natasha said, impatiently, as she sat down on the arm chair near the window. She had waited so long to find someone she really loved, waiting any longer felt like agony. "Prince Andrei is an important man my darling, you must be patient." She patted her daughter comfortingly on the shoulder and left to get ready.

The servants were getting ready to return to the country, Moscow was still expensive and now that the ball was long since over they had no reason to stay. Natasha felt like a bird in a cage indoors, so she put on her coat and fur hat and had her horse readied for her, hoping a ride would clear her head. It was a crisp, clear day and the sharp winter sun shone through the bare tree tops. After a time, her horse was good and warmed up, she was about to turn towards home when she heard hoofbeats in the distance. Could he finally be here? She was not in her best dress, she must change before she received him! She urged her horse home, taking a short cut to the back entrance.

In her rooms she searched through her closet for one of her favourite dresses, pale blue with purple and yellow floral embroidery. She heard a knock at her door, thinking it was one of her maids letting her know of a visitor she said brusquely, "Yes, yes come in!" Looking down as she buttoned up the front of her dress, she heard a quiet throat clearing that did not sound like her maid, "Who is i--- Andrei!" He stood in the doorway to her chambers, modestly averting his eyes. "Yes, I'm terribly sorry, I know this is untoward but I was let in and left in the foyer, a rather busy servant girl told me I could find you in this part of the house." He looked up to meet her eyes and the corner of his mouth quirked slightly. "Perhaps I should not distract you from dressing." Natasha looked down and realized she had stopped before finishing all the buttons, her corset and the top of her breasts peeking out from the front of her dress. She blushed furiously and turned around, clumsily trying to button them. What must he think of her now? "Oh I'm- yes...er, no-just a moment." After what seemed like an eternity but was, actually, a mere minute, Natasha turned around, somewhat more composed, but
still flushed from the incident. "The house staff are packing, but leaving you unattended is inexcusable, I shall send for tea and see that the right people are reprimanded" she said, hoping she sounded mature and capable. Natasha walked out of the sitting room then rushed to find the kitchen maid for tea, Oh how she hoped she hadn't ruined everything!

Andrei made pleasant conversation and complimented her on the sweets served with the tea. He remembered having these at his own home as a child and said so, which earned a warm smile from her. She was pleased, she knew so little about his past.
"I must ask, where is the rest of your family? Have they left you all alone here?"

Natasha was very much enjoying the time alone with Andrei and did not wish her loud, boisterous family to return anytime soon. "Mother has gone to visit Anna Mikhailovna. Father, Nikolai, Sonya and Piotyr will pick them up on their way back from town, they should be returning soon” she said, hoping he couldn't detect the slight note of disappointment in her tone.

Andrei did notice and smiled to himself, for he too enjoyed spending time alone with Natasha, scandalous as it was. However, her family needed to be present for him to achieve the goal he had in mind. "Oh excellent, I should like to discuss something with Count Rostova.” He saw Natasha's eyes widen, heard her sharp intake of breath. He felt the smile spreading across his face, as he prepared to ask her what he had longed to since he first met her, since they had danced at the ball, since they had kissed. He took a seat on the couch beside her.
"I know it is custom to first ask your father, but since he is not yet here..” he paused, swallowing, "Natasha, I have known for sometime now, I must confess, ever since I first lay eyes on you, I loved you. You make me feel alive, as I never was- I know you must think me too old for you, but I swear your laugh, your smile makes me feel like a boy. Is there any chance, you might love me back? He had been focusing on his hands as he asked her the last question and now looked up, prepared for the worst.

Natasha blinked. Did he ask if she loved him? She let out a breath she didn't realize she was holding in and reached to squeeze his hand. "Of course! And you're not!" She shook her head, "You're not too old, I've waited my whole life for you, I love you!" She smiled at him, feeling as if her face might break in two. He reached his hand towards her face, "I--Natasha will you-" Her family chose this moment to burst in, laughing and talking loudly. They stopped in their tracks when the saw the scene before them. Andrei pulled his hand back and rose to his feet, inclining his head to the Rostovas. Count Rostova bowed his head in return smiling at his daughter, "Prince Andrei, I am so sorry we weren't home to receive you, I trust my Natalya tended to you?" Andrei looked back at Natasha, then to her father "Yes, but actually I came to see you Count Rostova. Might we have a word in private?"
"Are you sure they'll like me?" Natasha asked for the third time. They were going to meet Andrei's family for the first time since getting engaged and Natasha had heard Andrei's father was fearsome indeed. "Of course they will like you, how could anyone not?" Andrei squeezed her arm reassuringly. Trying to distract herself Natasha peered out the window. "Oh!" She exclaimed, as a grand building came into view, "Oh Andrei is that it? Are we here already?"

Across the carriage Nikolai discreetly rolled his eyes. He was their chaperone for the trip, mother was all too pleased to send him away from Sonya. The three hour ride in the carriage had certainly felt long enough, sitting across from his sister and the prince making lovesick faces at each other. "Quite large for a country estate" Nikolai observed. Andrei turned to his soon-to-be brother in law, "Yes well this is my father's escape from the city- we have another smaller property nearby. I hope to make our home, that is if Natasha finds no fault in it."

"Oh I'm sure it will be just as lovely!" she said, turned to beam up at him. Nikolai shifted in his seat, he couldn't be out of the confines of the carriage soon enough. They pulled up to the front of the looming ivory building, a uniformed footman coming to open the door for them. Natasha stepped out first, taking a proffered hand, Andrei stepping out behind her. "*Athicus! It's good to be back, nice to see you're still with us!" Andrei said genially, clapping the aging servant on the arm. Athicus, for his part, was trying unsuccessfully not to look as shocked as he felt- was this the same Prince he had served for most of his life?

Nikolai had to admit, it was a sizeable estate his sister was marrying into. The more time he spent with Andrei, especially around his sister, the more he grudgingly had to admit maybe the man wasn't so cold and awful as he thought.

They walked in the grand front doors and Nikolai noted the rich, multicoloured tapestries hanging from the walls. Their entrance was greeted by a high pitched squeal, as a small child hurtled towards them. "Paapaaa!" he exclaimed, wrapping his arms around Andrei's legs. Andrei started from the impact and smiled down, picking the little boy up in his arms. "Well, this is certainly the most exuberant welcome we'll receive from any member of my family" he said, ruffling the boy's brown hair. "Natasha, Nikolai, this is my own little Nikolai. Nikolai, these are our guests, Natasha and Nikolai- he's got the same name as you!" he said, as the small boy looked shyly at the newcomers. He put him down on the floor and Natasha bent to hold out her hand. "I'm very pleased to meet you Nikolai, your father's told me all about you." Nikolai grasped her hand and looked back up at his father. "Are you and Papa friends?" he asked. Natasha smiled up at Andrei, "Yes we are, we're very good friends" She straightened, as Nikolai inspected this man who had the same name as him. He reached out to touch the shiny black boots, but was scooped up by his father at the last minute. "Where is everyone Niko? Where is your Auntie Marya?"

"Andrei? Is that you?" Marya called. She had finally disentangled herself from her attempt at
needlepoint and ran after her nephew. She stopped as she saw the group coming through the doorway. A handsome blonde man and woman, those must be the Rostovs and beside them a man who looked very much like her brother-only...she had never seen such a happy, content look on Andrei's face, not since he was a young boy. He turned, seeing her there and gently placed him on the ground before striding over and in two steps, embracing her. "Marya! It's so good to see you!" he said, holding her tightly. As he pulled away he noticed the shocked expression on her face. He laughed "What is it dear sister? Have a horn growing out of my forehead?" Her eyes grew wider still- had he made a joke? This woman must truly have worked magic, if he was indeed still her brother. She tried to compose her face, "No, No Of course not I just...It's very good to see you in such high spirits brother." She smiled and they turned to face their guests. "Natasha, Nikolai, may I present to you my dear sister Marya." Natasha stepped forward and grasped Marya's hands in her own, "It's wonderful to finally meet you Princess. I hope we can become friends!"

Mary had been searching her face for any trace of falsity or deceit-but her smile was warm and genuine. Marya smiled back as best she could, this was all so strange. "Princess" Nikolai had stepped forward and bowed over her hand, pressing his lips against the back of her hand. He raised his head and met her inquisitive hazel eyes. "Yes, yes you two are both most welcome here- please you must call me Marya, I believe we are soon to be family." She looked back to see Andrei watching Natasha, again with love in his eyes. She looked back to find Nikolai still looking at her-how strange, she thought, few men let their gaze linger on her for longer than a moment. She smiled at him and took back her hand, "Shall we take tea and a bit to eat? The cooks are preparing a feast for supper but you must all be hungry from your journey here." She linked Natasha's arm in hers, as a gesture of friendship-and saw Andrei's smile grow - and led them into the sitting room.

"Oh but surely you have silly tales of Andrei as a boy!" Natasha said setting down her teacup and saucer. Marya thought for a second-would she dare tell the story of the lamb? Perhaps that would be the true test of how much Andrei had been affected by Natasha-he had always been scrupulously private with those outside his family. "Well " she said hesitantly, picking up a spice cookie, "there was this one occasion that comes to mind. It was a very cold spring, I was perhaps 8, and Andrei 6. A lamb was born very early and the mother rejected it." She looked over at Andrei, who gave her a small smile and inclined his head. As Marya opened her mouth to continue, her father burst into the room. "And the very next morning we found him, asleep in the barn, having tried to nurse it with a sack full of cows milk" he finished. "Where he got such a strange notion I cannot fathom- strange child."

Andrei stood up, bringing Natasha to stand beside him. "Father, may I introduce you to Natasha Rostova and her brother, Nikolai. Nikolai too, stood out of respect at the Princes' entrance, and bowed. Natasha curtsied, "Its an honour to--" "So this is the woman you wish to remarry?" Prince Bolkonsky interrupted, in his usual blunt fashion. He openly looked her up and down. "Well she certainly is a pretty young thing. hmm. Yes, yes I can see- I still have two fine eyes in my head." He turned his hawks gaze to Nikolai "and you're an officer I see. Well you seem to be making something of yourself."

He turned and walked towards his study, "I've business to attend to, I'll see you all at supper." And with that, he shut the heavy door behind him.

During the meal Andrei talked animatedly about his time in St.Petersburg, bringing Natasha into conversation as much as possible. Marya paused in watching Andrei and looked across the table at Nikolai, who was similarly watching his sister. She smiled at him, "I think we are both seeing the same thing in their faces-it is obvious they make each other happy." He looked back at her, his brow slightly furrowed, "Yes. Yes I suppose they do."

After everyone was well fed, they retired to the salon, where they blazing fireplace illuminated their
faces. "Marya you must play for our guests- she's quite skilled on the piano", Andrei said, making Marya blush. "Oh, you flatter me overmuch Andrei!" she protested.

"Hmmpf. It's true you aren't half bad at the piano, go on and play Marya- give us something to keep us all from falling asleep."

With that note of encouragement from her father Marya got up and settled on the piano bench. "What do you wish to hear father?" she asked, looking comfortable at performing for an audience. Natasha saw her discomfort and tried to put her at ease, standing up and walking over to the piano. "Something I can sing along with" she said, smiling at Marya and sorting through the sheet music with her. They decided on one and Marya began to play, a lilting, melancholy tune. Natasha's voice was entrancing, and Andrei was startled out of his reverie when his father leaned in and said, unusually quietly, "So that's the one hmm?" Andrei hadn't noticed him moving from his armchair to sit on the couch beside him "I beg your pardon, Father?"

"That pretty young thing you can't take your eyes off. I told you boy, I'm not blind yet I can see it as clear as day. You've decided she's the one for you."

Andrei was somewhat confused, the way the firelight was illuminating Natasha's face was distracting. "Well of course, father- I did write some time ago telling you we were engaged."

"Yes but you forget my dear boy- this is the second woman you've proposed marriage to and I must admit you seem quite taken with this one; your boy and your sister Marya as well."

"And you father" Andrei asked, the corner of his mouth quirking. "Well" he said, looking at the two girls at the piano, "I suppose she would bring some life to this place and your sister." Andrei smiled to himself, that was high praise coming from his father.

"YES. Yes alright then, I suppose I shall have to give my consent to this marriage" he said loudly, getting up from the couch. Marya and Natasha paused in their song at the interruption. He shuffled over towards them, finally holding out his hands to Natasha, who reached out in response and was surprised by the older gentlemans' strong grip. He raised them to his face and kissed each formally. "So you wish to marry my son and join this family, do you?" he asked. Natasha looked at Andrei over his shoulder and smiled, nodding vigorously. "Well then, so be it! Good luck to you both!"

Chapter End Notes

*I tried to hear the name he called the servant in the first ep when he said he was looking old but couldn't really make it out, so this is what I heard haha*
Hello all! I know its been a year since I posted this fanfic and I must admit I kind of lost my inspiration to write it-- but I have since rewatched the show and seen all your kind comments and I am happy to announce the writing wheels are once again turning ;) I will try and do the characters and the story justice, so please be patient and bear with me-- More Andrei/Natasha is coming!
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Ookay! So I worked very hard to squeeze in this wee chapter ;) Enjoy!

Prince Bolkonsky turned to his son once more. “However” he said, and the smile that had stretched across Andrei’s face started to shrink. Leave it to his father to ruin such a happy moment. The prince continued “ I cannot help but notice that though your spirit may have been ..revived.. you have never fully recovered, physically, from your injury at Austerlitz. I cannot, as your father, allow you to marry in such condition.”

“Father I’m really—“ Andrei began to protest, but the Prince was not finished.

“Ah ah ah- You know what I’m saying is true. This girl doesn't wish to spend her first years of married life as a nursemaid!”

“Sir I—” Natasha attempted, but the prince went on.

“You, my boy, will go to Switzerland to clear up some of my business matters and take one of those cures I’m always hearing so much about- so you can marry with a clear mind and a clear bill of health.”

Andrei was annoyed that his father had not chosen to speak to him about this in private-but he did always care little about social decorum and hurting people’s feelings. He suspected this was as much about his health as it was about protecting his family’s fortune—putting a delay on the wedding to test the strength of Natasha’s feelings, and perhaps his own for that matter. The wily old fox..he sighed, “yes father, of course you are right” he said, wincing inwardly at the confused, hurt look in Natasha’s eyes. He met her gaze with what he hoped was warmth and reassurance. “We’ll discuss it more tomorrow.”

“Mnhmm” the Prince grunted in agreement. “I think that’s enough for one day, Goodnight all!” and with that, made his exit.

An unhappy silence was left in his wake and Nikolai, who had been watching the interaction with a keen eye, cleared his throat. “Anyone for a drink?”

Natasha felt too warm… was it the fire? Maybe it was the drink..drinks? Had she had too many? She nuzzled her head again the couch, ready to fall back asleep..when she realized the couch was much too firm and angular. She opened her eyes to see the staircase slowly moving by as she was carried up the stairs. She turned her head quickly and glanced it against a mans jaw.

“Oof, watch it there” came the quiet voice that Natasha instantly recognized as Andrei’s. She was suddenly very aware of his strong grip on her shoulders and under her knees. Her head felt heavy and she once again rested it on his shoulder. “Wha, What are you doing?” she asked inanely. When he responded, she could hear the smile in his voice. “It would hardly be right to leave you asleep on the couch.” Asleep? Had she fallen asleep in front of everyone? Heavens..she squeezed her eyes shut. “Why didn’t you wake me?”

They reached the landing and Andrei turned right, down the guest corridor. “I tried” he said, again sounding slightly amused.
“Oh” Natasha said, at a loss for words.

“Would it be alright if I put you down now?” Andrei asked gently, having stopped in front of her door.

“Why...oh! Erm yes, of course..” Natasha mumbled as Andrei slowly lowered her feet to the ground. He held her shoulders to steady her and looked down at her face. “Are you alright now?” he asked, searching her face for any sign of distress. Natasha stared back, he really did have the most lovely eyes..little flecks of green in them..Oh! Why couldn’t she focus, he had asked her a question. “No” she said firmly, having remembered what was troubling her before..well before the brandy.

“Why is your father sending you away?” she asked, feeling her mouth turn into a pout.

This was exactly what Andrei had been afraid of—now she was doubting him. “It’s not as it seems!” he said, scrambling to reassure her. “My dear I’m afraid my father is right— I never completely healed when I came back. You see, there is a town in Switzerland that is famous for its health treatments. I never bothered to seek it out before, I felt I deserved to suffer, for the pain I had caused others...caused Lise..” he dropped his head in shame. Natasha lifted his chin with her finger, seeking his gaze. “But Andrei”, she said, “you have so many people that care for you, so much to live for.”

He met her eyes and let her see just how deep his emotions ran “I do now.”

What Natasha saw moved her and it seemed natural to put her arms around his neck, dragging his mouth down to hers and fitting her mouth against his.

~2 hours earlier~

“I’ll take one” Andrei said, moving to the liquor cabinet and fixing drinks for the four of them. Marya resumed her playing and Natasha wandered over, taking two of the glasses. She looked at Andrei, the question in her eyes- what did this mean for them? What would happen now? Andrei leaned in close “We’ll talk about it tomorrow, after I’ve spoken to my father in private.” He smiled at her warmly and, checking that no one was watching, softly pressed a kiss to her cheek.

A few drinks later and Natasha was asleep on his shoulder. Andrei felt guilty—he probably shouldn’t have made the drinks so strong, but it was a force of habit, using the alcohol to numb the emptiness that had threatened to unravel him. On the other hand, he did enjoy having her so close to him, he could study her face at his leisure. Thankfully the appointed chaperone, Nikolai, was busy talking animatedly with Marya, the drinks seeming to have loosened their awkwardness. Andrei smiled, seeing his sister looking so carefree—how he hated the concerned look that so often wrinkled her brow.

He cleared his throat “ I’m going to take Natasha up to her room, it’s been a long day.”

That finally turned Nikolai’s head and he narrowed his eyes at Andrei. Andrei put his hands up in mock surrender.

“She’s fast asleep, I’m just going to leave her on her bed and ask for a maid to come attend her.” That seemed to placate him, so Andrei reached over and gently shook Natasha’s shoulder. “Natasha? I think its time you retired for the night” she murmured something in her sleep but did not awaken. Andrei turned to Nikolai, who nodded his head for him to proceed.

He was halfway up the stairs when he felt her stir. He hoped she would not think him too improper, waking up in her arms. She started, knocking her head on his jaw as she realized where she was. “Watch it there” he said, not wanting her to hurt herself. He explained he was only seeing her up to her room, as she had fallen asleep. He smiled at the embarrassment in her voice and enjoyed the warmth of holding her against his chest. All too soon, he reached her room and, trying to keep the regret from his voice, asked if he could put her down. As he had predicted, she was a little unsteady, so it was only proper-really- for him to hold on to her shoulders. She had woken enough to ask him
about his father's statement and he had tried his best to assure her, to explain. It would only be temporary and that now he had a real reason to seek out treatment—her. Then, to his surprise and delight, she kissed him.
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

It's been so so long but I've decided to give this fic another go! Your reviews are all so lovely, thank you for being so patient! *rewatches the bbc series* here we go!

As the kiss deepened in intensity the two walked slowly backwards, until Andrei found himself trapped between Natasha and the hard press of the door. The heady combination of the length of her body pressed against his and the strength of the drinks were wreaking havoc on his self-control. He tried desperately to quiet the voices in his head that reminded him just how long it had been since he'd been with a woman. No, NO he was a gentleman and would behave as such. Regretfully, he pulled back from the kiss and gently pushed Natasha back. "As lovely as this is, it is late and we have both had, I think, too much to drink. I shall ring for a maid to attend to you." Natasha looked up at him with a pleading expression but he held firm in his resolve. They would be together soon enough.

Natasha frowned, "But Andrei why must we wait? Why does your father with for us to wait so very long?" He traced her cheekbone with his thumb, smiling. "Papa is a most peculiar man, but I promise, I will talk to him in the morning and sort things out." She closed her eyes and leaned into his touch, then raised her hand to cover a yawn. "Mmm, perhaps you are right, it is terribly late and I have behaved most unladylike."

He pressed her hand to his mouth "I was hardly complaining" he released it and stepped back towards the door. "Goodnight my Natalia" he said softly, before opening the door and leaving the room. After he closed it he let out a sigh, thinking that his self-control was indeed going to be tested if his father insisted on along engagement.

Downstairs, Nikolai had forgotten his chaperone duties, for he too had indulged in one too many drinks and found the Princess exceedingly interesting. While girls like his dear sister and Sonya only wanted to talk about dresses and music and frivolous things, the Princess seemed just as happy to talk about affairs of state, about the war, about proper literature. He had heard that she was religiously devout, somewhat of a dour old maid, but that description hardly fit the animated young woman that had captured his attention. Marya was wearing her cross, and her usual dark colours, but her cheeks were flushed and she was in fine form tonight. So often left with only her disapproving father, young nephew and his flighty french governess, Marya was enjoying discussing things of importance with her new acquaintance, Nikolai Rostov. She had been shocked at first, at Andrei's letter; of all the things she would have expected him to write to her about (and he did not write often, or lengthy letters) that he was thinking of remarrying was a close last. Then again, perhaps she should have seen it as a foretelling of shocks to come, for she was surprised again at the physical transformation that her brother had undergone. His face had life in it again, he was smiling more than she could ever remember and everyone could plainly see the cause of it: Natasha. She had initially been suspicious (something she credited with being raised by her father) but couldn't help but like the young woman. She wasn't sure when she had started thinking of herself as old, at 26 she was certainly no spring chick, but neither was she an old maid--no matter what her father said.

After only a slightly awkward dinner they had all retired to the sitting room and its roaring fire. Her father had made a bit of a scene on his way to bed, but the drinks they had all shared after his departure made things seem much calmer. Nikolai had been engaging her in a debate about one of her favourite books when her brother had interrupted, asking Nikolai for permission to bring his sister up
to her room. The poor girl had fallen asleep on the couch and Marya squinted at the grand clock, wondering just how late it was. When she turned back her brother had gone, and Nikolai was looking at her most peculiarly. "What is it?" she asked, smiling. "They seem...good together" he said, almost regretfully.

She tilted her head to the side "You say it as if that's a bad thing." He smirked "Not a bad thing no, but I'm her older brother. It's my job to be protective, make sure that she marries a good man." Marya smiled at his sense of brotherly duty, "I know it may seem biased coming from me, but I can assure you, my brother is a very good man. He's not been himself since Lise died." She swallowed, the loss still sharp years later. "But I think he's done wandering around like a ghost. This evening, being here with you all...I think he might finally be happy again. All thanks to your sister."

Nikolai digested the words thoughtfully. Or as thoughtfully as he could given the late hour and drink. He had, of course, been critical of Andrei and his intentions, but could find no fault with the man. He had been honourably discharged—wounded at Austerlitz—and had lost his wife in childbirth. Obviously life for the Prince had not been especially easy, or without its sorrows. He nodded, "I think she is happy too-- though Natasha so often is. Sometime's I envy the ease with which she is happy. All is good and pure in her mind."

He paused, a flicker of his memories from battles crossing his face.

Marya saw it and waited a beat, before quietly prompting "and you?" Nikolai looked back at her and shrugged, "I'm in the Tsar's army." Marya had spent time nursing soldiers that had come back with wounds, including her brother. She knew better than most that not all wounds were physical. She placed a hand on his forearm and squeezed gently. "I'm afraid it has gotten rather late, shall we do our sibling duty and make sure everyone is in their room tonight?"

His eyes narrowed slightly, but she could see his expression was still good-humoured. "I believe you are right Princess, it has been a very long but enjoyable day. I will see that my sister is well and then retire to my chambers." He took her hand and softly pressed his lips against it. "Goodnight"

Marya waited until he had left the room before she let out a short breath. It seemed that Andrei was not the only one enjoying the company of a Rostov.

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The next morning at the breakfast table there were more than a few thick heads. The elder Prince Bolkonsky did his best to make as much noise as possible, letting his cutlery clatter on to his plate and speaking maybe a little bit louder than was necessary. Privately, he was entertained by the young people, having spent many mornings of his youth in a similar state. Strong coffee was drank in great quantities, but not much food was eaten and eventually the ladies excused themselves from the table. Andrei asked to speak to his father in private and the two went in to his office, closing the door firmly behind them. His father smirked at him, "It was a long night eh?"

Andrei blinked, "Ah yes father I’m afraid it was. We all had a great deal to discuss." His father looked at him knowingly, "and a great deal to drink, I'd wager."

Andrei ducked his head, but stayed silent. "Father I wanted to discuss what you said last night, what did you mean?"

The Prince sat down at his old desk and folded his hands in front of him. "I'm not saying I don't approve of the match my boy, but don't think it's escaped me how young that girl is. Lovely, but very young. I simply want to give you both some time to make sure this is what you want."

"But father it--" "Don't interrupt me, I'm nearly finished." His tone brooked no opposition so Andrei waited. "I know
you'll think I'm being mean spirited, in making you wait, but in the end it will prove that she's serious and teach her a bit of patience. I will say it is 6 months but in reality I think we can announce it in a month or two. Those Swiss treatments don't take that long." He paused, giving Andrei a chance to speak, "Well?"

Andrei wasn't sure. "I don't know Papa, it seems like a cruel trick."

His father smiled "I wouldn't worry too much, she seems rather devoted."

At that moment there was a sharp rapping on the door and Natasha peered around the side of the door. "Andrei? Prince Bolkonsky? I do hate to interrupt but I'm afraid Nikolai doesn't seem at all well."

End Notes

So this just needed to be written (at 1:30am of course) but I'd really love to continue the story, and feedback is always appreciated :)

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!