

## War and Peace - Vol I Part one Sec VIII

Excerpt From: "War and Peace." by Leo Tolstoy, Richard Pevear & Larissa Volokhonsky Translation.

### VIII

Silence ensued. The countess looked at the guest with a pleasant smile, without concealing, however, that she would not be upset in the least now if the guest got up and left. The guest's daughter was already smoothing her dress, looking questioningly at her mother, when suddenly from the neighboring room came the sound of several men's and women's feet running to the door, the crash of a tripped-over and fallen chair, and a thirteen-year-old girl ran in, bundling something in her short muslin skirt, and stopped in the middle of the room. It was obvious that she had run so far inadvertently, miscalculating the distance. At the same moment a student in a raspberry-colored collar, an officer of the guards, a fifteen-year-old girl, and a fat, red-cheeked boy in a child's jacket appeared in the doorway.

The count jumped up and, swaying, spread his arms wide around the running girl.

"Ah, here she is!" he shouted, laughing. "The name-day girl! "

"Ma chère, il y a un temps pour tout,"\* said the countess, feigning sternness. "You always spoil her, Élie," she added to her husband.

"Bonjour, ma chère, je vous félicite," said the guest. "Quelle délicieuse enfant!" she added, turning to the mother.

The dark-eyed, big-mouthed, not beautiful, but lively girl, with her child's bare shoulders popping out of her bodice from running fast, with her black ringlets all thrown back, her thin, bare arms, her little legs in lace-trimmed knickers and low shoes, was at that sweet age when a girl is no longer a child, but the child is not yet a young lady. Wriggling out of her father's arms, she ran to her mother and, paying no attention to her stern remark, buried her flushed face in her mother's lace mantilla and laughed. She laughed at something, talking fitfully about the doll she took out from under her skirt.

"You see? ... My doll ... Mimi ... You see ..."

And Natasha could say no more (everything seemed funny to her). She fell on her mother and burst into such loud and ringing laughter that everyone else, even the prim guest, laughed involuntarily.

"Well, off you go, off you go, you and that ugly thing!" said the mother, pushing her daughter away with feigned gruffness. "This is my younger one," she turned to her guest.

Natasha, tearing her face momentarily from her mother's lace wrap, looked up at her through tears of laughter and hid her face again.

Introduction of Natasha

## War and Peace - Vol I Part one Sec VIII

The guest, forced to admire the family scene, found it necessary to take some part in it.

“Tell me, my dear,” she said, addressing Natasha, “what is this Mimi to you? Your daughter, it must be?”

Natasha did not like the tone of condescension to childish talk in which the guest addressed her. She made no reply and gave the guest a serious look.

Meanwhile all this younger generation—Boris, the officer, son of Princess Anna Mikhailovna; Nikolai, the student, the count’s eldest son; Sonya, the count’s fifteen-year-old niece; and little Petrusha, the youngest son—all settled themselves in the drawing room and obviously tried to keep within the limits of propriety the animation and gaiety which their every feature still breathed. It was clear that there in the back rooms, from which they had all come running so precipitously, the talk was merrier than the talk here about town gossip, the weather, and the comtesse Apraksine. They glanced at each other from time to time and could barely hold back their laughter.

The two young men, the student and the officer, friends from childhood, were of the same age and both handsome, but they did not resemble each other. Boris was a tall, blond youth with the regular, fine features of a calm and handsome face. Nikolai was a curly-haired young man, not very tall, and with an open expression of the face. On his upper lip a little black hair had already appeared, and his whole face expressed impetuosity and rapturousness. Nikolai blushed as soon as he came into the drawing room. One could see that he was searching for something to say and could not find it. Boris, on the other hand, got his bearings at once and told calmly, jokingly, how he had known this Mimi, the doll, when she was still a young girl, with an unspoiled nose, how she had grown old in the five years he remembered, and how her head had gotten cracked across the entire skull. Having said this, he glanced at Natasha. Natasha turned away from him, glanced at her younger brother, who, with his eyes shut tight, was shaking with soundless laughter, and, unable to hold herself back any longer, jumped down and ran out of the room as fast as her quick feet would carry her. Boris did not laugh.

“I believe you also wanted to go, maman? Do you need a carriage?” he said, turning to his mother with a smile.

“Yes, go, go, tell them to make ready,” she said, smiling.

Boris quietly went to the door and followed Natasha out; the fat boy angrily ran after them, as if vexed at the disturbance that had interfered with his pursuits.