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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE SECRET WITNESS \*\*\*

## *The* SECRET WITNESS

BY GEORGE GIBBS

AUTHOR OF "PARADISE GARDEN," "THE YELLOW DOVE," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE BREHM

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TO MY FRIEND  
MAJOR R. TAIT MCKENZIE, R.A.M.C.



**"Your veil—quick," he stammered breathlessly.**

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["Your veil—quick," he stammered breathlessly.](#)

["It is too late," she murmured. "They would see us."](#)

["Who are you?" she asked.](#)

[His Excellency rose and bowed over her hand—](#)

["Be quiet. People are watching you," said Goritz sternly.](#)

["Thank you," she said simply. "I believe you."](#)

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## THE SECRET WITNESS

### CHAPTER I

#### JUNE 12, 1914

The Countess Marishka was fleet of foot. She was straight and slender and she set a pace for Renwick along the tortuous paths in the rose gardens of the Archduke which soon had her pursuer gasping. She ran like a boy, her dark hair falling about her ears, her draperies like Nike's in the wind, her cheeks and eyes glowing, a pretty quarry indeed and well worthy of so arduous a pursuit. For Renwick was not to be denied and as the girl turned into the path which led to the thatched arbor, he saw that she was breathing hard and the half-timorous laugh she threw over her shoulder at him only spurred him on to new endeavor. He reached the hedge as she disappeared, but his instinct was unerring and he leaped through the swaying branches just in time to see the hem of her skirt in the foliage on the other side and plunging through caught her in his arms just as she sank, laughing breathlessly, to the spangled shadows of the turf beyond.

"Marishka," he cried joyously, "did you mean it?"

But she wouldn't reply.

"You said that if I caught you——"

"The race— isn't always—to the swift—" she protested falteringly in her pretty broken English.

"Your promise——"

"I made no promise."

"You'll make it now, the one I've waited for—for weeks—Marishka. Lift up your head."

"No, no," she stammered.

"Then I——"

Renwick caught her in his arms again and turned her chin upward. Her eyes were closed, but as their lips met her figure relaxed in his arms and her head sank upon his shoulder.

"You run very fast, Herr Renwick," she whispered.

"You'll marry me, Marishka?"

"Who shall say?" she evaded.

"Your own lips. You've given them to me——"

"No, no. You have taken them——"

"It is all the same. They are mine." And Renwick took them again.

"Oh," she gasped, "you are so persistent—you English. You always wish to have your own way."

He laughed happily.

"Would you have me otherwise? My way and your way, Marishka, they go together. You wish it so, do you not?"

She was silent a while, the wild spirit in her slowly submissive, and at last a smile moved her lips, her dark eyes were upturned to his and she murmured a little proudly:

"It is a saying among the women of the House of Strahni that where the lips are given the heart must follow."

"Your heart, Marishka! Mine, for many weeks. I know it. It is the lips which have followed."

"What matters it now, beloved," she sighed, "since you have them both?"

Renwick smiled.

"Nothing. I only wondered why you've kept me dangling so long."

She was silent a moment.

"I—I have been afraid."

"Of what?"

"I do not know. It is the Tzigane in my blood which reads into the future——"

She paused and he laughed gayly.

"Because I am a foreigner——"

"I have not always loved the English. I have thought them cold, different from my people."

He kissed her again.

"And I could let you believe me that!"

She laughed. "Oh, no.... But you have shown me enough." And, pushing him gently away, "I am convinced, *mon ami*...."

"As if you couldn't have read it in my eyes——"

"Alas! One reads—and one runs——"

"You couldn't escape me. It was written."

"Yes," she said dreamily, "I believe that now." And then, "But if anything should come between us——"

"What, Marishka?" he smiled.

"I don't know. I have always thought that love would not come to me without bitterness."

"What bitterness, *liebchen*?"

She settled softly closer to him and shrugged lightly. "How should I know?"

He smiled at her proudly and caught her brown hand to his lips.

"You are dyed in the illusions of your race,—mystery—fatalism. They become you well. But here among the roses of Konopisht there is no room in my heart or yours for anything but happiness. See how they nod to each other in the sunlight, Marishka. Like us, they love and are loved. June comes to Bohemia but once a year—or to us. Let us bloom in the sunlight like them—happy—happy—"

"Blood red, the roses," she said pensively. "The white ones please me better. But they are so few. The Archduke likes the red ones best. What is the verse?"

"I sometimes think that never blows so red  
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled."

"What matter Cæsar or Kaiser to us, Marishka? Our own kingdom—"

"Yes, yes," she sighed. "And I am happy in it. You know it, *nicht wahr?*"

Silence, except for the drowsy hum of the bees and the songs of the birds. No fatalism is long proof against the call of love and June. Marishka was content that her flight had ended in capture and sat dreamily gazing at the white clouds floating overhead while she listened to the voice at her ear, replying to it in monosyllables, the language of acquiescence and content. The moments passed. Konopisht was no longer a garden. Enchanted their bower and even the red roses forgotten.

Suddenly the girl started upright to her knees, and peered wide-eyed through an opening in the foliage.

"What is it, Marishka?"

She put a finger to her lips in token of silence, and Renwick followed her gaze down the graveled path which led toward the arbor. As under-secretary of the British Embassy in Vienna, he had been trained to guard his emotions against surprises, but the sight of the three figures which were approaching them down the path left him bereft for the moment of all initiative. In the center walked the Archduke, pulling deliberately at his heavy dark mustaches while he listened to the figure upon his right, a man of medium stature, who wore a hunting suit and a jäger hat with a feather in it. He carried his left hand, concealing a defect of his arm, in the pocket of his shooting jacket, while with his free right hand he swung an ebony cane. His mustaches were turned straight upward from the corners of his mouth and the aggressive chin shot outward as he glanced right and left, talking meanwhile with his companions. The third figure was very tall, topping even the Archduke, who was by no means small of stature, by at least six inches; his hair, or as much of it as could be seen beneath the soft hat, was gray, and a long beard, almost white in the patches at either side of the chin, descended in two long points half of the way to his waist.

Renwick recognized the visitors at once, and turned toward his startled companion, his own mind as to the propriety of his situation at once made up.

"Marishka," he whispered, "we must go."

"It is too late," she murmured. "They would see us."



**"It is too late," she murmured. "They would see us."**

---

"And what does that matter?"

"I forgot," she breathed helplessly. "I was told I was not to come today into the rose garden. I wondered why. Sh——! Sit still. Crouch lower. Perhaps they will pass on and then——"

Renwick obeyed somewhat dubiously and sank, scarcely daring to breathe, beneath the thick foliage beside the arbor which concealed his companion. She seized his hand and he felt her fingers trembling in his own, but he pressed them gently—aware that the tremors of the girl's fingers as the footsteps approached the arbor were being unpleasantly communicated to his own. The breach of hospitality to the household of the Archduke, upon whose land he was, was as nothing beside the breach of etiquette to the Empire by his Chief. Renwick's nerves were good but he trembled with Marishka. The friendship of nations depended upon the security of his concealment—more than that—and less than that—his own fate and the girl's. And so Renwick crouched beside her and silently prayed in English, a language he thought more fitted to the desperate nature of his desires, that the three figures would pass on to another part of the garden, that they, the luckless lovers, might flee to the abandoned tennis court in innocence and peace.

But Renwick's prayers were not to be answered. Had he known at the moment how deeply the two of them were to be enmeshed in the skein of Europe's destiny he would have risen and faced the anger of his host, or, risking detection, incontinently fled. But Marishka's hand clasped his own, and lucklessly, he waited.

The three men reached the gate of the arbor, the smaller one entering first, the giant with the gray beard, at a gesture from their host, following, and they all sat in chairs around the small iron table. Renwick was paralyzed with fear and Marishka's chill fingers seemed frozen to his. There had been rumors in the chancellories of Europe of this visit to Konopisht to see the most wonderful rose garden in Bohemia in mid-June, but Renwick knew, as did every other diplomat in Vienna, that the visit to the roses of Konopisht was a mere subterfuge. If there had been any doubt in the Englishman's mind as to the real nature of the visit, the grave expressions upon the faces of the men in the arbor would speedily have set him right. The Archduke opened a cigarette case and offered it to his companions who helped themselves with some deliberation.

"A wonderful rose garden, truly, my friend," said the man in the jäger hat with a smile which broke the grave lines of his face into pleasant wrinkles. "I will give your gardener twice what you offer him to come to me."

The Archduke showed his white teeth in a smile. "*Majestät* has but to request——"

"A jest, my friend. It would be unmannerly. It is Her Highness that I would also rob, for roses, after all, are more a woman's pleasure than a man's."

"The Duchess spends many hours here——"

"The *Arch* Duchess," corrected the other vehemently.

The Archduke shrugged. "She will always hold that rank in my heart," he said quietly.

"And with me and my House," said the other quickly.

"It is a pity that my own family should not be of the same mind."

"It matters nothing," said the other. "Nothing. You shall see."

The Archduke examined the ash of his cigarette, but said nothing.

"You must realize, my great and good friend," continued the man in the hunting suit, "that I did not come to Konopisht only to see your roses."

The Archduke nodded attentively.

"The fortunes of your family are linked to mine by ties deeper than those of blood,—a community of interest and of fortune which involves the welfare, happiness and progress of many millions of people. The history of civilization in Europe has reached a new page, one which must be written by those who have in keeping the Divine destiny of the Germanic race. It is not a time to falter before the graveness of our responsibility and the magnitude of our undertakings. I spoke of these things at Eckartsau. I think you understand."

The Archduke nodded gravely.

"I will not shirk any responsibility. I hesitated once. That hour has passed. Sophie—Maximilian—Ernest——"

"They must have their heritage."

The man in the jäger hat got up and paced impatiently the length of the arbor, at one moment within three yards of the terrified lovers in the foliage.

"Are we alone, your Highness?" he asked of the Archduke.

"I gave orders that no one should enter the rose garden at any time this afternoon," replied his host.

"It is well." He sent a quick glance toward the tall man who had risen. "You understand, Admiral, *nicht wahr?*"

A guttural sound came from the old man's throat.

"The destinies of Europe, *meine Herren*," he went on.

"*Majestät* may speak on," said the Archduke coolly, "without fear of eavesdroppers."

Renwick, crouched beneath the foliage, was incapable of motion. All his will power was used in the effort to control his breathing, and reduce his body to absolute inertness. But as the moments passed, and the men in the arbor gave no sign of suspicion he gained confidence, all his professional instincts aroused at the import of this secrecy and the magnificence of the impending revelations. He was England, waiting, alert, on guard, for the safety and peace of Europe. He did not dare to look at Marishka, for fear of the slightest motion or sound which might betray them. Only their hands clasped, though by this time neither of them was conscious of the contact.

"At Eckartsau, my brother," went on the smaller man, "you and I came to an understanding. Maximilian and Ernest are growing toward manhood. And what is that manhood to be? Habsburg blood flows in their veins as it flows in you, the Heir Presumptive, but the Family Law debars them. Not even the Este estates can pass to your children. They will become pensioners upon the bounty of those who hate their mother."

"Impossible!" whispered the Archduke tensely. "It must not be. I will find a way——"

"Listen, Franz, my brother. A magnificent horizon spreads before you. Look at it. Part of the Duchy of Posen, the ancient Kingdom of Poland with Lithuania and the Ukraine, the Poland of the Jagellons, stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Yours. And after you, Maximilian's. For Ernest, Bohemia, Hungary, the Southern Slav lands of Austria, Serbia, the Slav coast of the Eastern Adriatic and Saloniki;—two Empires in one. And the states of those who have despised Sophie Chotek——" he paused expressively and snapped his jaws, "the Austrian Erbländer will come into the Confederated German Empire." He paused again and then went on more quietly, "Between us two a close and perpetual military and economic alliance, to be the arbiters of Europe under the Divine will, dominating the West and commanding the road to the East." He paused and took a fresh cigarette from the box on the table.

"It is what I have dreamed," murmured the deep voice of the Archduke. "And yet it is no dream, but reality. Fate plays into my hands. At no time have we been in a better position."

It was the turn of the Archduke to walk the floor of the arbor with long strides, his hands behind him, his gaze bent before him.

"Yes, civilization, progress—all material things. But the Church—you forget, *Majestät*, that your people and mine are of different faiths. Some assurance I must have that there will be no question——"

"Willingly," said the other, rising. "Do not my people serve God as they choose? For you, if you like, the Holy Roman Empire reconstituted with you as its titular head, the sovereignty of central Europe intact—all the half formulated experiments of the West, at the point of the sword. This is your mission—and mine!"

The two men faced each other, eye to eye, but the smaller dominated.

"A pact, my brother," said the man in the hunting-suit, extending his hand.

The Archduke hesitated but a moment longer, and then thrust forward. The hands clasped, while beside the two, the tall man stood like a Viking, his great head bent forward, his forked beard wagging over the table.

"A pact," repeated the Archduke, "which only Death may disrupt."

They stood thus in a long moment of tension. It was he they called *Majestät* who first relaxed.

"Death?" he smiled. "Who knows? God defends the Empire. It lives on in my sons and yours."

"Amen!" said the Archduke solemnly.

"For the present," continued the other quietly, "silence! I shall advise you. You can rely upon Von Hoetzendorf?"

"Utterly. In two weeks I shall attend the grand maneuvers at Savajevo."

"Oh, yes, of course. You shall hear from me." He took a few steps toward the door of the arbor. "It does not do to stay here too long. We must join the others. Berchtold, you said, is coming?"

The Archduke nodded with a frown, and followed with the Admiral into the garden. The sun had declined and the warm glow of late afternoon fell upon the roses, dyeing them with a deeper red. But along the crimson alleys the three men walked calmly, the smaller one still gesturing with his ebony cane. Presently the sound of their footsteps upon the gravel diminished and in a moment they disappeared beyond the hedge by the greenhouses.

Renwick in his place of concealment trembled again. The reaction had come. He drew a long

breath, moved his stiffened limbs and glanced at his companion. Her face was like wax, pale as death and as colorless. Her fingers in his were ice-cold. Her eyes, dark with bewilderment, sought his blankly like those of a somnambulist. Renwick rose stiffly to his knees and peered through the bushes.

"They have gone," he muttered.

"The Archduke!" she gasped. "You heard?"

He nodded.

"Have we dreamed? I cannot believe——"

Renwick was thinking quickly. Marishka—their position—his duty—a way of escape—one thought crowded another in his mind. He glanced about through the foliage behind them and then rose to his feet.

"I must get back to Vienna, at once," he said hoarsely.

Marishka stood beside him, clinging to his arm.

"And I—I know not what to do. I could not look Her Highness in the face. But I too must go to Vienna. I am not versed in politics, but the secret that we share is terrible. It oppresses me. Austria—my country!"

She hid her face in her hands and stood silent a moment, in the throes of a struggle, still trembling violently. At the touch of Renwick's fingers upon her arm, she straightened, lowered her hands, her face now quite composed.

"I too must leave here at once," she said quietly. "I have an allegiance stronger than my duty to Sophie Chotek. I am going——"

"Where?" he asked.

"To Schönbrunn."

"But Marishka, have you thought——?"

"I pray that you will waste no words. As you love me, Hugh, you will do what I ask and be silent."

"What can I do?"

"Go with me to Vienna tonight."

"That would be most imprudent. Your reputation——"

"I care nothing. Will you accompany me?"

Renwick shrugged. "Of course."

"Then do as I bid you. I will show you a way out to a small gate from the garden by which you can reach the public road. Go to your Inn. Make arrangements for an automobile. I will join you tonight." She peered in all directions through the foliage and then led the way through the bushes in a direction opposite to that by which they had come. Renwick followed silently, his mind turbulent. What was his duty? And where did it conflict with Marishka's mad plan? What would his Ambassador have wished him to do? And in what could he serve England best? He must have time to think. For the present at least Marishka should have her way. Indeed, had he wished, he saw no means of dissuading her. He would go with her to Vienna, make a clean breast of things to his Chief, before Marishka could carry out her plan. After that the matter would be out of his hands.

The girl descended some steps to a narrow gate in the hedge. Here Renwick paused a moment to clasp her in his arms.

"Belovèd," she whispered, "not now. Go. Follow the path to the wall. You must climb it. Let no one see you descend. Au revoir. God be with you."

And she was gone.

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## CHAPTER II

### COURT SECRETS

Hugh Renwick lay flat upon the coping of the wall for a moment peering up and down the road until sure at last that the way was clear, when he let himself down and walked rapidly in the direction of the village. The events of the last hour were of a nature to disturb the equanimity of an existence less well ordered than his. The winning of the Countess Marishka, an achievement upon which he had set his whole soul for many uncertain weeks in which hope and fear had fought a daily battle in his heart—that in itself had been enough to convince him that the gods looked upon him with favor—but this other *coup de foudre!* Whatever the means by which his

information had been obtained, the mere possession of it and the revelation of it to his Ambassador was a diplomatic achievement of the highest importance. There had long been rumors of an *entente* between Archduke and Kaiser, but *this!* He rubbed his eyes to make sure that he was awake.

Hugh Renwick was merely the average Englishman of good family and wealth, who because of his education in a German university had found the offer of the post of Vienna singularly attractive. He had filled his position with circumspection, if not with brilliancy, and had made himself sufficiently popular in court circles to be sure that if not a triumphant success in the drudgery of the office, he was at least not altogether a social failure. Good looking, wealthy, talented though he was, it was something indeed to have won Marishka Strahni, who, apart from her high position in Vienna and the success of a season, was, as he well knew, the finest girl in all Austria. Even yet he doubted his good fortune. He had come to Konopisht, where the girl was visiting the Duchess of Hohenberg, who had been a childhood friend of her mother's. As everyone in Vienna knew, Sophie Chotek was ineligible for the high position she occupied as consort of the Heir Presumptive. Though a member of an ancient Bohemian family, that of Chotek and Wognin, the law of the Habsburg's that archdukes may marry only those of equal rank, forbade that the Duchess of Hohenberg and her children should share the position of husband and father. She had been snubbed upon all the occasions of her appearance at court functions, and had at last retired to the Archduke's estates at Konopisht, where she led the secluded life of the *ebenburtige*, still chafing, rumor had it, and more than ever jealous and ambitious for the future of the children.

Upon the occasion of a previous visit of the Countess Marishka to Konopisht, Renwick had spent a week end at the castle, but he thanked his stars that he was now stopping at the village inn. It would have been difficult to go through the formality of leave-taking with the shadow of this impending tragedy to Europe hanging over him. He pitied Marishka from the bottom of his heart for he had seen the beginnings of the struggle between her devotion to the Duchess and her duty to her sovereign. But he knew enough of her quality to be sure that she would carry out her plan at whatever the cost to her own feelings.

As Renwick approached the gates which led into the Castle grounds, he had an actual sense of the consequence of the Archduke's guests in the appearance of soldiery and police which were to be seen in every direction, and while he waited in the village road two automobiles came out of the gate and dashed past him in the direction of the railroad station, in the foremost of which he recognized Archduke Franz and his guests of the rose garden.

"The roses of Konopisht," he muttered, thinking of Marishka's fatalism. "Were they symbols, those innocent red blossoms?" And then with an inward smile, "Marishka! What bitterness could the roses of Konopisht bring between Marishka and him?"

A sense of the grave importance of his mission came over Renwick with a rush. He looked at his watch. Six o'clock. It would have been hazardous to use the wire to reach the Embassy even had he possessed a code. He knew enough of the activities of the Austrian secret service to be sure that in spite of his entrée at the Castle, his presence at Konopisht at this time might be marked. He sauntered down the street with an air of composure he was far from feeling. There was nothing for it but to obey Marishka's injunctions and wait, upon his guard against surprises, but ready to go to any extreme to reach Vienna and the Embassy with a sound skin. He found the owner of a motor car, and telling the man that he was traveling by night, he paid its owner in advance and engaged it to be at a certain place by nightfall, promising a further payment if the matter were kept secret. Then he went to the inn, took supper, and lighting his pipe, paced the cobbles and waited.

As the summer dusk fell slowly upon the streets of the little village, Renwick found himself a prey to renewed apprehensions as to Marishka. Had her presence and his in the rose garden been discovered by one of the Archduke's retainers? And was she now a prisoner in the castle where a few hours ago she had been so free a guest? She was clever, as he knew, but the burden of her secret had marked its shadows upon her face. What excuse would she offer the Duchess for her sudden departure? The girl was dear to him, dearer than anything in the world but England, and the thought of making a choice between her safety and the performance of his duty was bitterly painful to him. Eight o'clock passed—nine. He had gone inside the house again, for the actions of any stranger in Konopisht were sure to be conspicuous and he felt himself already an object of notice. But at last unable to bear the suspense inactive, he went out, crossed the road and stood, his teeth clenched upon his extinguished pipe, his gaze upon the road which led to the gates of the Park.

There she came to him, out of the darkness. At the touch of her fingers he started, for he had not been expecting her from this direction, but the sound of her voice fell like the balm of her presence upon his spirit.

"Thank God," he gasped. "Marishka, I was afraid——"

"I came as soon as I could," she whispered rapidly in English. "It was difficult. I could make no excuses for leaving. I pleaded fatigue and went to my room. And when the opportunity offered, stole out through the garden."

"And your absence will not be discovered——?"

"Not until tomorrow—when, please the Holy Virgin, I shall be at Schönbrunn."

He took her in his arms and kissed her warmly, but he felt the restraint in her caress.

"Hugh, beloved, let us wait upon duty for our own happiness. I cannot rest until I have told our dreadful secret. You have a motor car?"

"Come," he said. And taking her small valise with his own, he led the way to the spot where the machine was awaiting them. Marishka gave directions and in a few moments they were off. The danger of detection, once beyond the village, was slight, and their purpose to reach the railroad at Budweis and take a late train to Vienna was not difficult of accomplishment. The machine was none too good, but the road for the main part was excellent. Renwick's arm was about the girl, and they sat discussing their plans for the immediate future.

"You have no fear for what you are about to do?" he asked.

"What should I fear?" she said lightly. "I am only doing my duty."

"There will be difficulties, will there not?"

"Perhaps. But I shall succeed. Prince Montenuovo, the High Chamberlain of the Court will listen to me."

"But you will not tell him all."

"Not unless it is necessary. You, Hugh, will take me to him."

Renwick was silent for a moment.

"Marishka," he said at last, "we share a terrible duty, yours to Austria, and mine to England——"

"But mine—is it not the greater?" she pleaded. "You must not speak, Hugh, until I have given you permission."

Renwick folded his arms and gazed stolidly into the darkness.

"I must tell what I know to Sir Herbert," he said firmly. "You must not ask me to be silent."

He noticed the change in her voice as she replied, "Is my happiness so slight a thing that you can refuse the first request I make of you?"

He caught her hand to his lips.

"Marishka, you know——"

"My first request——"

"There is nothing in the world that I would not do for you. You would think little of me if I did not do my duty."

"And of your duty to me——? Is that nothing?"

Renwick smiled into the darkness. Had he been told six months ago that he would be bandying the interests of England against the plans of a pretty woman he would have laughed the idea to scorn.

"What do you wish me to do, Marishka?" he asked gently.

With a swift impulse, she threw her arms about his neck, whispering in his ear.

"O Hugh, I cannot bear that there should be a difference between us, today, the first of our *fiançailles*. It will perhaps make no great difference that you should tell what we have heard, for your country, thank the Holy Virgin, is at friendship with mine. If you would but wait until I give you permission."

"And if something happened to me in the meanwhile——?"

"Nothing can happen. No one at Konopisht can know. I am sure of that—sure."

Perhaps the moment of danger that had threatened their happiness had made each more considerate, and the two great secrets that they possessed, their own and the other more terrible one had strengthened the bond between them.

"I will wait until you have been to Schönbrunn," he decided.

"Until I give you permission," she insisted.

He kissed her. She believed it to be a promise and the tight pressure of her hand rewarded him. In that moment of *rapprochement*, the destinies of nations seemed a matter of little moment to them.

"You will marry me soon, Marishka?" he murmured.

"Perhaps," she whispered gently.

Morning brought the pair in a *fiacre* into the Schottenring, Marishka weary but resolute, Renwick somewhat dubious as to their appearance at this early hour alone in the streets of Vienna. But at his suggestion that they drive first to the house of Marishka's aunt and guardian, Baroness

Racowitz, where some excuse could be made for the girl's unexpected visit, Marishka only shook her head and gave the town address of Prince Montenuovo, who, as she knew, was still in residence, the Emperor not being expected at Ischl until the middle of July. Nor would she permit Renwick to accompany her within the house, and so he sat alone in the humble *fiacre* for what seemed an interminable time, until a man in livery came down the steps and gave him a note in Marishka's hand.

"I have succeeded in getting an audience. Go to the Embassy and await word from me. Silence."

And so at last he drove away to his hotel, sure at least that for the present he had done his duty to Marishka. But this was no boy-and-girl matter. The lives of nations, perhaps, hung upon his decision. In a weak moment he had promised Marishka an impossible thing. He did not know what danger hung over him. If anything happened to him England might never know until it was too late. The vision of Marishka's pale face haunted him, but he decided to take no further chances, and locking himself in his own rooms, he wrote a long statement, in which he accurately recounted his experience in the garden the day before. This letter written, sealed, addressed, and given to a trusted servant to be delivered into the hands of the Ambassador at a given time, Renwick breathed a sigh of relief, then bathed, dressed, and waited.

It was not until some days later that he heard in detail of Marishka's visit to the Emperor. The High Chamberlain, aware of the visit of the Countess Strahni to Konopisht, and convinced of her earnestness and anxiety, had acted immediately. The Emperor fortunately was not ailing and the audience was obtained without difficulty. Franz Joseph at eighty-four, and burdened with more sorrows than those that fall to the lot of the average man, still found interest in the complaints and petitions of his subjects and had audience on certain days at Schönbrunn. It was this intimate touch with his people, kept through many years, which endeared him to his subjects, and stories of his paternal kindness were thus continually sent the length and breadth of the nation.

Marishka was shown into an antechamber in the Emperor's private suite where for what seemed an interminable time she sat and waited. At length her sponsor appeared and conducted her along a short corridor past several rooms to a white door which the Prince opened, and then stood aside as Marishka entered.

"The Countess Strahni," he announced.

Marishka, a little bewildered and frightened, advanced uncertainly, her eyes dazzled by the brilliant sunlight which streamed in at the south. As she hesitated, a voice near the furthest window spoke reassuringly.

"Come in, child," it said. "I am here."

She advanced with trembling knees, aware of an old man in a military blouse sitting in a large chair beyond a desk. The infirmities of age and suffering had bowed his shoulders and to Marishka the Emperor seemed smaller than when she had seen him last, smaller and very much older. There was a stillness about his person, a quality of resignation and quiescence that was almost statuesque. But his whiskers and mustache, carefully groomed, were brushed upward and outward from the rather heavy lip and chin, and had a military cut which comported well with the dignity of his appearance. His eyes, the right one much smaller than the left, were light gray in color, and as her own gaze caught them, very grave and kindly, like his voice, which as he spoke gave her every encouragement to be at her ease.

"You will pardon the infirmities of an old man and forgive me for not rising," he said gently. "Will you be seated, here, before me, where I may look at you?"

There was a pathetic touch of his old gallantry in the gesture which accompanied the words, and a bright flash of his eyes as Marishka came forward into the light and stood before him. Even today the Emperor was not immune from the charms of feminine beauty. Marishka did as she was bidden, sitting upon the edge of her chair before the old man, gazing at him again, without words to begin.

"His Highness has told me that you have something of importance to communicate," said the Emperor with a smile. "Your grandfather once did me a service. If there is anything that I may do —"

The quiet voice paused and she was conscious of the gaze of the gray eyes upon her in gentle inquiry.

"It is nothing that I want, Sire," she murmured haltingly. "It is something of the utmost importance that has occurred—at Konopisht—which I thought it necessary that you should know—something of the gravest moment to the State—to Austria—and to—to Your Majesty."

She paused breathless, finding speech difficult.

She saw his eyebrows upraised slightly and then contracted, while his gaze upon her grew concentrated.

"You may speak freely, child. There is no one here who hasn't the interests of my country at heart."

Marishka glanced around swiftly, her pulses throbbing. Prince Montenuovo stood beside the

desk, immovable.

"Your Majesty," she almost whispered, "my information is of such a character——"

She paused again and felt the old man's gaze upon her in deeper interest and curiosity. There was a silence, but if he had had a momentary doubt of her, it was speedily dispelled, for his rather weary lips parted in a smile, as he turned to his Chamberlain. "If Your Highness will be pleased to await my call——"

Prince Montenuovo with a bow withdrew.

"Now, child," said the Emperor, bending slightly forward in his chair, "will you not tell me freely what has bothered you?"

"Your Majesty," said Marishka, plunging breathlessly into her subject, "I was stopping at Konopisht at the castle of the Archduke Franz. The Duchess of Hohenberg, formerly the Countess Chotek, was a friend of my mother's, and for many years our families have been intimate."

She saw the slight contraction of the heavy brows at the mention of Sophie Chotek's name, but she went on rapidly:

"Sire, when you know how long our families have been friendly, how kind Her Highness has been to me since the death of my father and mother, you will understand that what I am about to say—to reveal—is very painful to me. I could not speak, Sire, even now, unless the welfare of Austria and of Your Majesty were not more important to me than any personal considerations whatever."

As she paused painfully again, he encouraged her with a smile.

"Go on, child," he said.

"I was at the tennis court, playing with"—she paused and blushed prettily—"with a friend. The game finished, we—we went into the garden and sat upon the lawn in the shade of some foliage where it was cool. I did not know, Sire, nor did my companion, of the presence of royalty at Konopisht, and did not remember that I had been told not to go into the rose garden until it was too late."

"Too late?" he asked keenly.

"We were interested, talking, and not until the sound of footsteps upon the graveled walk near the arbor, did I realize how grave a violation of the hospitality of the Archduke had been committed. I should have fled, but, Sire, I could not. I was frightened. And so we stayed, hidden in the foliage by the arbor."

"So!" he broke in, his voice speaking the word with a rising inflection of intense interest. "It is well that you have come. I, too, know something of the visitors to the roses of Konopisht. The talk was not all of roses, *nicht wahr?*" he said quietly, with a little bitterness.

"No, Sire. The talk was not all of roses," said Marishka.

"Go on, then," he continued. "Spare me no word of what you heard or saw. Nothing."

And Marishka, composing herself with an effort, obeyed the command.

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## CHAPTER III

### THE HABSBURG RAVEN

The Emperor heard her through until the end, with a word here, a sudden question there, the gravity of the girl's disclosures searing more painfully the deeply bitten lines at eye and brow. But he did not flinch. It seemed that grief and pain had already done their worst to that frail body. For whatever this Habsburg's failings, fear was not one of them. There was resolution too in the clenching of the freckled fist upon the chair arm and in his footsteps as he started up from his chair and walked the length of the room. Bowed though his shoulders were with the weight of his years, he was still a figure to respect—a personality. Marishka watched furtively, waiting for him to speak again as he strode back and forth, but his brows were deeply tangled in thought and his shoulders were more bent than ever. It almost seemed that he had forgotten her presence.

But at last he turned toward where Marishka, who had risen and was still standing, was awaiting his pleasure. He came straight toward her and extended his fingers. She sank to her knees to kiss them, but he caught her by the hand and restrained her.

"You have done well, Countess Strahni," he said quietly. "The men of your House have always been brave soldiers and good citizens, the women comely and loyal, and you, my child, have today done much to continue the honorable traditions of your family. Austria is, for you, as she is for us all, the Mother, whom God blesses in the loyalty of her children. As for those"—and his brows clouded—"who follow the devices of their own hearts, those who consider neither the family law nor the human law——" He paused, turned and sank into his chair, leaning forward again intently as the new thought struck him. "Who was your companion, Countess?"

Marishka flushed a little but said quietly,

"A gentleman—an Englishman——"

"So!" again the rising inflection, followed this time by a slight frown. "An Englishman!"

"A friend of mine, Sire," she went on with an access of dignity. "Herr Renwick, an attaché of the British Embassy——"

"Ah, I understand. He has told?"

"He has given me his promise to reveal nothing until I had been at Schönbrunn and then only with my permission."

"I see," said the Emperor with a frown. "He is discreet?"

"He has a reputation for discretion, Sire; I think he may be trusted."

"So," said the Emperor. "Where is he now?"

"I was to communicate with him later."

"Giving him permission to speak?"

"Yes, Sire."

"It is a pity," he muttered, as though meditating aloud. "We have washed enough linen in public. And this——" He turned abruptly toward her. "You have influence with this Herr Renwick?" he asked keenly.

Marishka was painfully embarrassed.

"A little, Sire, I think."

"You have served Austria well today, Countess Strahni. You can serve her again if you can prevent this Herr Renwick from communicating with Sir Herbert Southgate.... This is no concern of England's."

"I will do what I can, Sire. But the matter, it seemed, was of grave importance to Herr Renwick. He is an able diplomat and most intelligent."

The Emperor regarded her almost wistfully.

"It would be a pity," he said, "if Herr Renwick should be discredited at the Austrian court——"

"It would ruin him, Sire," said Marishka apprehensively; "if he tells what he knows, he would only be doing his duty."

"He must not tell, child," said the Emperor gravely. "This is Austria's secret and her sorrow. You realize that, do you not?"

Marishka bowed her head, painfully.

"Yes, Sire."

"You will promise me to do what you can?"

She looked into the face of this tired old man and a great pity for him swept over her.

"I will, Sire. I will ask him not to tell—demand it of him even if——"

She paused and hid her face in her hands, unable to say more, trying to hide the true nature of the sacrifice he was asking of her.

The Emperor understood and laid a kindly hand upon her shoulder.

"I understand, my daughter. I pray that no bitterness may come between you, on account of this. Responsibility comes to you early, and yet you cannot—must not shirk it."

"And if he refuses——?" she pleaded.

The wrinkled face broke into a smile, the gray eyes were bright in admiration.

"I am sure," he said gallantly, "that Herr Renwick could refuse you nothing. Were I younger——" He paused with a sigh and smiled again. "I am not sure even now that I am not a trifle jealous of this discreet Englishman of yours." And, then, aware of her intense embarrassment, "But I am sure that you will succeed."

"I shall try, Sire," she murmured.

And still he seemed loath to let her go, walking toward the window where he stood in the sunlight looking down upon the lovely gardens beneath him.

"Perhaps you did not know, Countess, that this visit to the roses of Konopisht has caused us some concern here in Vienna. Berchtold, who went yesterday to Konopisht, will, of course, discover nothing. The Duchess of Hohenberg is a very clever woman. You know her as a friend. If her loyalty to her friends is as sincere as her ambitions for her children, then you can surely have no

cause for complaint. Friendship begets friendship, but those who love Austria may not serve other gods—or goddesses. You have considered these things, and however difficult the task—have chosen?"

"It has been bitter, Sire. I can never go back to Konopisht."

"I am sorry. A terrible lesson awaits Sophie Chotek. I have been sorely tried. As for the Archduke Franz—a reckoning—a reckoning——"

She saw the old man pause and start a pace back from the window, toward which he stared, wide-eyed and immovable. There, upon the sill of the window, a black bird had suddenly appeared and hopped awkwardly to and fro. It seemed perfectly at home, and not in the least frightened, peering into the room with its head cocked upon one side, a baleful purplish glitter in its eye.

In a flash Marishka remembered the legend which connects every misfortune of the House of Habsburg with the appearance of this bird of ill omen: the flight of ravens at Olmütz, the raven of the ill-fated Maximilian at Miramar, the raven of the Archduchess Maria Christina on the eve of her departure for her future kingdom of Spain, the raven which came to the Empress Elizabeth on the afternoon before the day of her assassination,—all these incidents so closely connected with the royal figure before her, passed quickly across her mind as they must have crossed that of the Emperor. He sank into his chair and she followed his gaze through the window again. The somber bird had gone.

Marishka stood in silence, not daring to move, aware of the terrible undercurrent of thought which must be racking the mind of her sovereign, this man of sorrows, who stood upon the brink of the grave and peace, and yet who must still live and suffer until the curse of the Countess Karolyi should be utterly fulfilled.

"Sire," she muttered after a moment, "can I——"

He stirred, and raised a pallid face to hers. It was quite composed now, but marked with a sadness inexpressible.

"You may leave me now, child. I am a little tired. If you will touch the bell upon the table——"

He paused as she did so, and a servant entered.

"You will tell Prince Montenuovo that the audience is concluded," he said.

Marishka fell upon her knees before him, and touched his fingers to her lips.

"May God bless Your Majesty," she murmured half-hysterically, scarcely knowing what she said, "and give you peace."

She was aware of his smile as she arose.

"Go, Countess," he said, "you have done well. Keep this secret at whatever the cost to yourself. Those who love Austria must now be prepared to suffer for her. My blessing, child."

She obeyed the gesture of his hand and followed the High Chamberlain into the outer corridor.

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Marishka's first thought, upon emerging from the palace, was that she must find Hugh Renwick at once. A new idea of her duty had been born in her. The importance of keeping this secret of theirs from England had not seemed as obvious before her visit to Schönbrunn. The thought of her lover's possible refusal of her request now seemed appalling. As she remembered his sober face last night in the automobile, when this topic had caused her a moment of unhappiness, it seemed that his refusal to accede to her request was more than possible. She had liked Hugh Renwick because he was strong, honest, reliable, serious,—qualities she had not found abundant among the younger men of the ancient families of her country. She loved him now because, against many obstacles, he had at last carried her heart by storm. But she realized that the very qualities she had most admired in him were the very ones that would make her present task most difficult.

He had given his word not to reveal the secret to his Ambassador without her permission. That was his promise, given, she knew, grudgingly, and only because he felt for the moment that her duty took precedence over his own. But was it, after all, merely a question of precedence? And would he, now that he had kept his promise so far, insist upon doing his manifest duty to his own country? Fears assailed her that she might not be able to prevail. His love for her was untried. How far might she rely upon it in this inevitable conflict between them? And if he refused her!

The motor car of the Prince carried her to the apartments of the Baroness Racowitz, where, after a rapidly thought-out explanation of her sudden visit which seemed satisfactory, she wrote a note to Hugh Renwick, asking him to come at once to her, addressing it to his apartments in the Strohgassee and telling the servant if he was not at home to take it to the Embassy. This note dispatched, her mind somewhat more at ease, she joined the Baroness at luncheon.

Baroness Racowitz, her father's sister, was a woman of liberal views. Educated in England, she had absorbed some of the democratic spirit of the West, and so looked with favor upon the suit of

the young Englishman who had won his way into Marishka's heart. Today, however, in spite of the confession which trembled upon her lips, Marishka remained silent. And the mere fact that she did not speak added conviction of the danger which threatened her happiness and Hugh Renwick's.

As the afternoon waned she grew apprehensive, and it was not until evening that he came. His appearance did little to reassure her.

"Your note did not reach me until a few moments ago," he began soberly. "I went upon a mission to the ministry which has kept me all day."

"I have been worried," she began nervously. "I went to Schönbrunn this morning——"

"I know it," he broke in quickly. "Otway, of the Embassy, saw you leaving in the Prince's car."

Something in his tone, in the avidity with which he had seized upon her phrase, warned her of the truth.

"Oh, Hugh," she cried, "you have already told!"

His voice sank a note lower, and its very earnestness seemed to make the barrier between them the greater. "This morning when I left you, I wrote a complete statement of what happened at Konopisht, and gave it to a servant with instructions to deliver it at the Embassy at a certain hour. When I tell you that I was bidden to the Ministry this afternoon, closely questioned and detained in violation of all precedent, you will understand that from my own point of view, I acted wisely."

"You mean——"

"I mean that larger forces than yours and mine have taken control of the situation."

"Then your message has been delivered?"

"Yes."

"Oh, I cannot believe it of you——" she said, staring at him in anguish.

He smiled gently.

"I have only done my duty——"

"Your duty!" she said bitterly. "And what of your duty to me? You promised——"

"Merely," he put in quickly, "that I would wait until you had been to Schönbrunn."

"No, no, you promised," she said, with rising anger. "It was my secret—not yours. I have never given you permission to reveal it."

"Nor having been to Schönbrunn would have given it now, Marishka," he said firmly.

"And knowing this, you use subterfuge, an unmanly recantation—break your promised word——"

"I have broken no promise, Marishka, listen——"

"Nothing that you can say——"

She rose, her face hidden in her hands. "Oh, you have done me a damage—irreparable! I too have promised——"

"The Emperor!"

"My sovereign—he asked this secrecy of me and you—the man I——"

"Marishka, I love you," he pleaded, trying to take her hand. "Anything but this! Can't you understand? I would have betrayed my trust. The situation you placed me in was impossible. Great mischief is brewing in Europe. Could I sit idly by and let my country be in ignorance of it? God knows what is to happen, but whatever comes your country and mine can have no quarrel—any more than you and I can have. England is strong. No nation in Europe can endure without her friendship. Can't you see? I have done Austria no wrong—a service, rather, Marishka; and you——"

"You can do me no further service, Herr Renwick," she said coldly, rising.

He was on his feet too, his face pale, regarding her steadily.

"I cannot believe that you are willing to blame me for doing my duty. Love can only exist in an atmosphere of respect, Marishka. Could you have cared for me if I had been willing to seek your favor at the expense of my own honor? Could you? Think."

"Those who can thrive politically upon the misfortunes of my country are my country's enemies—and mine," she said coldly.

"I have done your country no harm—nor you. Listen, Marishka," he pleaded tensely. "Look at me. I love you, dear, with all my heart and soul, I love you. You cannot forget what happened to us yesterday. I will not give you up——"

"You must—I pray that you will leave me, Herr Renwick," and she moved past him toward a door.

Renwick straightened. Whatever hopes he had had in his heart that Marishka might forgive him for acting without her consent, her action left no doubt as to her present intentions. The bitterness the girl's fatalism had predicted yesterday had fallen upon them quickly. But he would not despair. As the girl was yet to learn, Renwick was not one who despaired easily. But his years of service had given him discretion.

"I cannot believe that you are quite in earnest," he said quietly. "I will call upon you again when you have had time to weigh my action impartially——"

"I shall not be at home to you."

"Nevertheless," he said coolly, "I shall come."

Her shoulders moved disdainfully. "It should be enough that I——"

"Marishka," he broke in again and came toward her, "at least give me a chance to speak to you again—tomorrow——"

The curtains beside her parted abruptly as she fled, leaving Renwick staring helplessly at the embroidered hangings.

He stood awkwardly for a moment, like a figure suddenly frozen, and then dropping his arms to his sides turned and sought his hat and stick. For the present at least there seemed nothing else to do. He descended the stairs, a deeply puzzled frown upon his brows, and went out into the darkness of the street.

Courts and camps, they say, are the best schools, and Renwick had not lived his thirty years in vain. He had known since last night what he must do in England's service, and he had also known what havoc that service must work in Marishka's mind. He had foreseen the inquietude of the Austrian government at his possession of this state secret, and had known that his relations with Marishka must be put in jeopardy. He knew that she must request his silence, that he must refuse her, and that no woman's pride, put to the test, could brook such a refusal. Like Marishka, he had had a brief hope that this love might survive the ordeal put upon it, but he had not been long in discovering that the Emperor's request to Marishka had made his action seem unpardonable. And yet he had known as he knew now, that no other course had been open to him. Since Marishka's early visit to the Palace, an undercurrent of events had moved swiftly. The fact that he had received a note from Baron Lichtevelde asking him to call at the Ministry, the interview between them full of allusions on the Baron's part which showed a complete knowledge of the situation; a veiled request, a veiled threat, to both of which Renwick had appeared oblivious. These, and an uncomfortable sense that he was being detained, had at last made Renwick open his lips. The information of which he was possessed, he had told the Baron, was in the hands of those who would at the proper time place it before the British Ambassador. The firmness of his attitude had brought the interview, apparently pleasant and quite unofficial, to a sudden ending, and Renwick had left the Ministry, aware that his own official position in Vienna had suddenly become precarious.

His statement was now at the Embassy, and its astounding contents had been read by his Chief. He made his way thither, somewhat dubious as to the thrill of his achievement, aware of a shadow about him, the ghost of yesterday's joy, which made all success save the intimate personal one that he most craved, flat, stale, and unprofitable. In the darkness of the street he was aware, too, that he was being observed and followed, but he went boldly toward his destination, sure that as a member of the staff of the British Embassy, his person at least partook of the official immunity of his Chief.

But there were other forces arrayed against him with which he had not reckoned. At a deserted and unlighted corner he found his progress blocked by two figures who attempted to engage him in a conversation. Now thoroughly awake to a personal danger which no official immunity could minimize, he was at once upon his guard, moving quickly into the middle of the street. The two men followed him, and another whom he had not seen came upon him from the rear. He dodged the blow of a stick which caught him a stinging blow upon the forearm, but he sprang aside, striking a furious blow full in the face of one of his antagonists and leaping out of harm's way as the third came on; and then, finding discretion the better part of valor, took to his heels, emerging into the Ringstrasse some moments later, with no greater damage than a bruised arm and the loss of his breath and hat.

The Embassy in the Metternichgasse fortunately was not far away, and he reached the building without further mishap, now fully aware of the desperateness of his enemies, whom he did not doubt were employed by those whose interests in his secret were more important even than those of the Austrian government. Who? It was obvious. There were other agencies at work, which drew their information from high sources with which they had little in common. A little bewildered by the rapid march of events, but now certain of the web of intrigue and hostility of which he was the center, Renwick entered the office of the Embassy, breathing a sigh of relief that he was again for the present safe within its familiar portals.

The Ambassador was at his desk in his private office, and Renwick went in to him immediately, the grave faces of his Chief and Captain Otway, the military attaché, assuring him that his information had already been received and discussed.

"Ah, Renwick," said the Ambassador, rising, "glad you've come. We were beginning to fear that something had happened to you. Why, what's the matter? You're as white as a sheet——"

"Am I, sir? Oh, it's nothing. You got my message?"

The ambassador nodded and then quickly, "Give him a drink, Otway." And then as the other moved across the room to obey, "You were attacked—in the street?"

Renwick laughed. "Oh, don't bother, please. I'm quite all right—just a bit of a breather—that's all. You see—I ran for it. Safer, I thought. I could have done for the beggars, if I'd had a heavier stick, but I didn't want to make a rumpus. You see, I did well in putting the thing on paper."

"Are you hurt?"

"Merely a bruised arm. Little chap with a stick—behind me."

"Most extraordinary! I can hardly believe that the government would dare——"

"It isn't the government, sir, I'm afraid," he said, with conviction, as he took his whiskey and soda. "There are others who have more to lose than the Emperor's party by this revelation——"

"Yes, that may be so," replied the Ambassador judicially, pacing the floor. "Perhaps you're right, Renwick. But now that you're safe, we should only concern ourselves with the greater issue. Tell me again in your own words all that has happened since yesterday morning."

Renwick obeyed, and it was far into the night before he finished, while the faces of his auditors grew grave again. The security of this well ordered office, with the familiar tokens of distant peaceful England all about them, made a prosaic background for the visions which were flashing through the minds of these three Englishmen. Even now, to Renwick, as he related his experience again, the whole thing seemed incredible, and the reiterated questions of his Chief, who was a prudent man, might have shaken a less convincing witness. But Renwick had dreamed no dream, and the returning ache in his arm left no room to doubt the actuality of his experience.

"You have done England a service, Renwick," said the Ambassador at last, magnanimously. "It isn't often that such crumbs of information are offered us—in such a way. But we will take them—and digest them overnight. I want to sleep on this matter. And you—you will stay here tonight, Renwick. It will be safer. Until tomorrow, gentlemen——"

And so he dismissed them.

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## CHAPTER IV

### SECRET INFORMATION

An ambassador has been wittily described as an honest man sent to "lie" abroad for the commonwealth. He is supposed to be familiar with all the scandal and intrigue of the court to which he is accredited, to be possessed of countless incriminating secrets, and to steer his way amid the maze, disturbing no ghost or skeleton of family or government, preserving the while a calm punctilio and an exterior of fathomless simplicity. The ambassador of modern Europe is at once a Chesterfield, a Machiavelli, and a Vidocq. He must be a lamb, a lion, and a ferret. He must fly upon the wing of occasion, he must condescend to act as messenger boy to his Prime Minister, he must conduct a business office and a fashionable restaurant and successfully run a detective bureau.

Something of the ambitions of Franz Ferdinand and his wife had been known to the Right Honorable Sir Herbert Southgate; the Archduke's visit with his wife to the court of St. James was significant, and their stay at Potsdam dutifully recorded at Berlin, had shown something of the nature of the *rapprochement* between Archduke and Kaiser. The visit of the Kaiser to the Archduke's hunting lodge at Eckartzauf on the Danube, had set tongues wagging, and private information had served to warn Sir Herbert that an understanding had been brought about. The visit to the roses of Konopisht had not deceived the Ambassador, for it was known that a pact of some sort had been made, but the revelations of Mr. Renwick had been of a nature to appall.

A night of deliberation had done little to obliterate the Ambassador's grave fears for the future, and he communicated at once in code and in full with the Home Government. He lost little time upon the following day in setting in motion all the devices he possessed for obtaining secret information as to the effect of Countess Strahni's startling disclosures.

For several months the surface of the diplomatic pool had been ominously placid. Few ripples had disturbed its surface, save those occasional ones from the direction of unquiet Serbia. But the waters were seething now, stirred to their very lees by plot and counterplot. The advices received by the Ambassador were alarming. Had the attack upon Hugh Renwick failed to advise him that the military party possessed full knowledge of the Countess Strahni's disclosures, he should soon have discovered it. There was an undercurrent of intrigue in various high offices which advised him that communications of the greatest importance were passing. His own interests, of course, were best served by a studied innocence and unconcern, and his public appearances, both social

and official, gave no sign of his intimate knowledge of approaching calamity.

The first surface indication of the turmoil was a polite note from the ministry, stating that his second secretary, Hugh Renwick, was *persona non grata* to the Austrian government, and requesting his recall. This indicated a definite purpose neither to ignore nor condone, and in itself was a surprising admission of the facts. The Ambassador by note expressed his high opinion of the abilities of his secretary and requested the Ministry's reasons for their decision. They merely repeated their former request without explanations. And so the Ambassador, with a smile, which had a world of meaning, offered Renwick his passports.

But Renwick had no desire or intention to leave Vienna. He merely removed his personal belongings to his apartment and stayed. That he had ventured into deep political currents he was now sure, for though he moved with great care, he was aware of being followed and once he was shot at in a quiet street in broad daylight. He made no complaint to the authorities, but only moved with greater discretion, sure that the interests that desired his elimination were not among the Austrians. From the point of view of the Austrian government he was merely a discredited Englishman, and therefore a person of no importance. That the Countess Marishka had apparently also reached the same conclusion was evident, for though he called several times at the apartment of the Baroness Racowitz, he was not admitted.

With theories of his own as to the probable effect of the Countess Strahni's bombshell, Renwick began some investigations which he conducted with great tact and secrecy. The forthcoming visit of the Archduke Franz to Sarajevo had assumed suddenly a vital importance. One morning after a night conference with Sir Herbert he took the train for Belgrade. When he returned a few days later he was again closeted with the British Ambassador, and when night fell, he went direct to the apartment of the Baroness Racowitz, succeeding by a handsome bribe to the servant at the door in sending a note to the Countess Marishka, which read as follows—

COUNTESS MARISHKA STRAHNI,

A friend of yours is in grave danger, chiefly through your agency. I pray that you will see me, if only for a moment. In doing so you will secure for yourself an opportunity of doing a service which you can never regret.

HUGH RENWICK.

When the servant returned, some moments later, Renwick was shown into the drawing room, with the word that the Countess Strahni would see him. She appeared almost immediately, her face a little pallid, her manner restrained, her accents frigidly polite. But the dark eyes were luminous, the brows were drawn inward, and her voice trembled slightly as she spoke his name.

"Herr Renwick, I can hardly believe that you would impose so difficult a situation were it not that something of importance has occurred——"

"It has, Countess Strahni," he said gravely, then paused. "I beg that you will believe me."

She sank into a chair and motioned for him to be seated, but he remained standing, his eyes studying the fine line of her neck and shoulder as she bent forward, her gaze upon the rug. There was something almost childish in her imperiousness. He wanted to take her in his arms and hold her there as he would have done a spoiled child, and trust the issue to his strength and her weakness, but the quick tap of her slippered toe upon the carpet warned him that his mission was delicate.

"Proceed, if you please," she said after a moment.

"You may not know, but a few days after my return from Konopisht, my connection with the British Embassy ceased——"

"I have heard," she broke in quickly, in a suppressed tone; "I am sorry."

"But my interests in the political aspect of affairs were so great that I could not leave Vienna."

"At least I am not to blame for the actions of the ministry."

"Naturally. I suppose I might attribute all my misfortunes to the roses of Konopisht," he said.

She glanced up at him quickly and a little scornfully, but she swallowed nervously and her toe accelerated its tapping upon the rug.

"I beg that you will come to the point of your visit," she said quickly.

"I will," he went on easily. "The possession of State secrets has given me an interest in Austrian affairs which has created a pardonable curiosity. Fortune has favored my investigations and I have learned much here in Vienna. I have learned more in Belgrade—and in Sarajevo."

She glanced up quickly.

"Sarajevo! Why?"

"You will remember that the Archduke spoke of going there to see the maneuvers of his troops on the twenty-eighth of this month."

"Yes." Her eyes stared at him widely now. "But what——?"

She paused uncertainly, expecting him to go on. Instead he waited a moment as though seeking his words carefully.

"The Archduke plans to take the Duchess of Hohenberg to Sarajevo with him. I came here to tell you that if she goes she will be in great danger——"

"Danger!"

"Yes. There is a plot against the life of the Archduke. I thought that as a lifelong friend, you would like to know——"

"Assassination! Holy Virgin! Not that!"

She had started up from her chair and faced him, trembling violently.

"I swear to you," he said soberly, "that I have every reason for believing that in Sarajevo the lives of both will hang by a hair."

"But who——?" she stammered, her eyes wide with consternation.

She paused, the thoughts that had come first into her mind, stifled in horror.

"It is not necessary for me to say. I am merely giving my belief based on the closest study of political conditions."

A slight color had come into her cheeks.

"I am sure that you must be unduly alarmed," she said coolly. "The Archduke will be in the midst of his friends—his whole army at maneuvers!" Her lips found courage in a smile. "Why, the thing is impossible!"

Renwick leaned against the mantel, his arms folded, and went on steadily.

"The thing is not impossible, Countess Strahni. The danger to Franz Ferdinand is very real—a danger that no army of Austrian soldiers can minimize. He goes to a hostile neighborhood. He is not loved in Sarajevo. Should not this be sufficient?"

"You trouble me," she muttered, passing a hand before her eyes. "But I must know more. An Archduke must have enemies——"

"But this Archduke! Can you conceive of no reason why Franz Ferdinand should be in danger?" he asked meaningly.

She searched his face quickly, in her eyes the truth dawning.

"You mean——?"

He shrugged.

"You should know what I mean."

"I cannot believe——" she halted again.

"Countess Strahni," he went on quickly, "were I still a member of the staff of the British Embassy, I should not speak. I do not even now accuse any group or political party of participation in this plot. The Emperor at least is guiltless. Death has already done its worst to him. The matter is out of his hands. But I do know that such a plot exists. Franz Ferdinand will not return alive from Sarajevo and if the Duchess of Hohenberg accompanies him, she, too——"

"It is horrible—and I—I will have been the cause——"

She sank into her chair and buried her face in her hands.

"Perhaps now you will understand my motive in coming to you," he said softly. "I have no desire but to serve you. England has no further concern for Archduke Ferdinand. Forewarned is forearmed. His sting is already drawn. But death, like this—sudden, violent, without a chance—England has never looked with kindness upon the killing of women, Countess Strahni."

"It is horrible," she whispered. "Horrible! I cannot believe——"

"Unfortunately I can give you none of the sources of my information. But whatever my sins in your eyes, at least you will admit that I am not given to exaggeration. You may still believe that I have taken a liberty in coming to you; but the situation admits of no delay. The telegraph lines are in the hands of the Archduke's enemies. The Archduke and Duchess leave Konopisht in the morning by special train, but there is still time to reach them."

Marishka had risen, and was now pacing the floor, her hands nervously clasped before her.

"I see. I—I—understand. I—I should be grateful that you have told me. But it is all so sudden. So terrible!"

She paused before him.

"I have betrayed her," she stammered through pallid lips.

"You could do nothing else. His fortunes are hers——"

"But not this——" she whispered. "It is too ghastly!"

There was a long pause, and then, "Will you make the effort?" he asked.

"Yes."

"You must leave in an hour."

"But how——?"

She looked at Renwick and their glances met.

"I will go with you," he said coolly.

His gaze was on the dial of his watch which he had taken from his pocket and was regarding judicially. His calmness, his impudence, enraged her. She had sworn, because of his falseness, that she would never see this man again, and here he was calmly proposing a night journey into Bohemia, and she was actually listening to him.

She turned quickly toward the door and stood, one hand grasping the portière, while she turned a white face toward him.

"Thanks, Herr Renwick," she said icily, "but I go alone——"

"That is impossible. There is danger. A night journey in a train of uncertain quality——"

"I hope that you will not waste words. I thank you for what you have done, but I—I must go at once——"

Renwick took a pace toward her.

"Countess Strahni, if you will listen to me——"

But he got no farther, for he knew that her will was as strong as his own, and that forgiveness was not to be read in her eyes.

"I beg that you will excuse me, Herr Renwick. The time is short——"

He bowed gravely.

"At least, you will permit me to order you a *fiacre*——"

She nodded in assent as though to be rid of him and then turned and went up the stairs leaving Renwick to find his way out into the darkness of the street.

Marishka hurried to her room and rang for her maid. In spite of the turbulence of her thoughts, she gave her orders calmly and then prepared for the journey. The imminence of the danger to Sophie Chotek should have obsessed her to the exclusion of all personal considerations, but while she dressed she could not help thinking of the imperturbable impudence of her visitor. His kindness, his thoughtfulness, the fact that he had done her a service, and was at this very moment doing her another, gave her a sense of being in a false position, which made her most uncomfortable. And yet one could not treat with contumely a person who acted in one's interests. His calmness, his assurance enraged her. She would never see him again, of course, but she seemed to feel the need of some final words to convince him of the depth of her disdain. He was so calm, so gravely cheerful, so assured, so maddeningly considerate! She wondered now why she had not led him on to a renewed plea for forgiveness, that she might the more effectually have crushed him.

But her duty to Sophie Chotek soon drove these speculations as to the unfortunate Herr Renwick from her mind. Suppose that Sophie Chotek questioned closely as to the reasons for Marishka's sudden departure. What should she say? The Duchess was not one who could easily forgive a wrong. Her placid exterior served well to conceal a strength of purpose which had already brought her many enemies in the Royal House. That she was capable of tenderness was shown in her adoration of her children and in the many kindnesses she had shown Marishka herself, but there was, too, a strain of the Czech in her nature, which harbored grievances and was not above retaliation. Marishka's cause, as a loyal Austrian's, was just, and she had not faltered in doing what she knew to be her duty, but the thought of seeking the Duchess now that she had betrayed her, required all of her courage. She had balked an ambitious woman, stultified all her efforts to advance the fortunes of her children, and had written her husband before the House of Habsburg a traitor to his Emperor and his country. What if she had heard something and suspected? Would the Duchess even listen to a plea for her own life and safety from the lips of one who had proven an enemy, a bread and salt traitor to the Houses of Austria-Este and Chotek and Wognin?

But Marishka did not falter, and when the *fiacre* came to the door she descended quickly. The Baroness fortunately had gone upon a visit to friends in the country, but Marishka left a note with her maid which explained her absence, and departed alone for the railroad station, feeling very helpless and forlorn, but none the less determined to see her venture through to its end.

She wore a gray traveling dress and was heavily veiled, and when she reached the station, the guard showed her immediately into an unoccupied compartment. This, it seemed, was unusual, as her watch indicated that only a few moments remained before the train should leave. But she settled herself comfortably, grateful for her seclusion, whatever its cause, and closed her eyes in an effort to sleep.

The last warning words of the guards had been given and the train was already in motion when she heard a warning "Sh—" at the open window, where a head and a pair of shoulders appeared, followed immediately by an entire body which was suddenly projected through the opening and landed head first upon the floor. Marishka had risen, a scream on her lips, but something familiar in the conformation of the figure restrained her. The tangle of legs and arms took form, and a head appeared, wearing a monocle and a smile. It was the imperturbable but persistent Herr Renwick.

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## CHAPTER V

### TWO INTRUDERS

Marishka was too dismayed for a moment to trust her tongue to speech. That she was angry she knew, for she felt the blood rising to her temples, and the words that hung on her lips were bitter, cruel and unreasoning.

"It is a pity, Herr Renwick," she began quite distinctly in English, "that you have neither the good taste nor the intelligence to leave me to my own devices."

Renwick gathered up his stick and straw hat, bowed politely and seated himself opposite her. Indeed, as the train was now moving rapidly, no other course was open to him. But he wore no look of recantation. His calmness was more impudent than ever, and he even took out and reset his monocle.

"Oh, I say, Countess Strahni," he said, "that's rather rough on a chap. I had to come. It was wiser, you know."

"I care nothing for your wisdom," she said scornfully. "If it is no more firmly seated than your sense of honor, it can be of little value to you or to me."

"I'm sorry. I will try not to interfere with your comfort—"

"You—you arranged this"—as the thought came to her—"this opportunity for a tête-à-tête?"

"The Countess Strahni's conception of a tête-à-tête may differ from mine," he said with a smile.

But his coolness only inflamed her the more.

"You have taken an unpardonable liberty," she said wildly. "You have already passed the bounds of decency or consideration. You have been not only impudent but ridiculous. One service you have done me tonight. I thank you. You may do me another—by getting out at the first station."

He folded his arms and regarded her gravely.

"I regret that that is impossible."

"Why, please?"

"Because I propose to go with you to Konopisht, and to accompany you upon your return."

"You—you—!"

"One moment, please," he said quietly and with some show of spirit. "It is not necessary that you should have a further misconception of my motives or of my agility. I did not seek this—er—tête-à-tête. My servant engaged this carriage. I had not hoped to have the honor of accompanying you. Unfortunately, circumstances forced a change of plan."

"Circumstances!" she said contemptuously.

He bowed slightly. "As a discredited Englishman, I still possess, it seems, some interest for certain citizens of Austria. I only discovered the fact this evening when leaving the apartment of the Baroness."

"You were followed again?" she asked quickly, her interest in the fact mastering her animosity.

"The object of my visit to you has been guessed. I was followed—but you were followed also."

"I—?"

"Yes—to the station."

"And where—"

"Booked through to Konopisht not a foot from the back of your head in the adjoining compartment—"

And then as she straightened in alarm and regarded the cushioned seat behind her in sudden terror, "But I do not think you need be unduly alarmed. We can—"

"They are following *me!*" she whispered. "But why? Why?"

"Because of your friendship with the Duchess. Those who plan the death of the Archduke are in no humor to fail."

"Incredible! And they——" she halted again, breathless with apprehension.

"I fear, Countess Strahni, that your mission to Konopisht has now become a difficult one. That is why I thought it better to go with you. The men who are following you are moving with considerable insolence and confidence. They will carry out their orders unless circumvented."

"But how?" she whispered, her anger of a moment ago magically transmuted. "What can I do?"

He gazed out of the window at the blur of night and smiled.

"To begin with," he said politely, "they think you are alone. You see, I might help you, Countess Strahni, if you could manage to endure my presence for a few hours."

It was Renwick's innings and he made the most of them. Indeed, Marishka sat leaning forward looking at him appealingly, aware that after all here was the only prop she had to lean upon in this extremity. She did not speak. The wrong he had done her and Austria was great—unforgivable, but the merit of his service in this situation was unmistakable. Inimical as he might be to the sentiments in her heart, there was no disguising the relief his presence gave her or the confidence that radiated from his calm assurance.

"One of the men I have seen before," he said. "He has gained some celebrity in the Secret Service. You see, we must give them the slip before we get to Budweis. This train makes several stops. It ought not to be difficult."

The plural pronoun seemed quite inoffensive now, and she even uttered it—herself.

"Yes," breathlessly; "but suppose they tried to stop us?"

"Er—that would be most unfortunate," he muttered, as though to himself.

"You don't think they will, do you?" she appealed.

"I'm sure I don't know," he said thoughtfully.

For some moments he said nothing and Marishka, whose pride had come again to her rescue, gazed steadily out of the window away from him, trying to forget her dependence upon her companion, whose initiative and devotion were hourly growing more in importance. Whatever his private purposes in aiding her, and she had no reason to doubt his disinterestedness, for the present at least they had a common duty to humanity which must be performed at any costs to prejudice or pride.

At the next station a surprise awaited them. The door of their compartment was opened, a man entered and bowing most politely, quickly closed the door behind him. Marishka examined him with apprehension, noticing that he seemed more interested in the Englishman than in herself, for in the brief glance he gave Renwick, the suavity of his demeanor seemed for a brief moment to have changed.

He was a person of middle age, tall, stockily built, but withal rather jaunty in appearance, and when he smiled again he disclosed a gold tooth which seemed to Marishka for some reason inexpressibly reassuring. He rubbed his hands together and looked a great deal like a successful head-waiter in mufti. But he glanced from one to the other quickly and settled himself in a corner with an air of being very much at home, which removed the earlier impression. Renwick took the initiative at once.

"A pleasant evening," he said to the newcomer, in German.

"One might say so," replied the other, bowing calmly.

"But one doesn't?" asked Renwick. "The conditions are not so propitious as they were a while ago. A storm is brewing perhaps?"

The man examined him steadily, aware of the double meaning, but only smiled again. Renwick got up and with great deliberateness, moved the length of the aisle, and, while Marishka followed him with her gaze, seated himself directly opposite the intruder. The man made a movement with his right hand which he put into the side pocket of his coat, but as Renwick sat, he smiled again and shrugged.

"You are traveling to Budweis and beyond?" asked the Englishman.

"To Budweis and beyond," said the other coolly. "And I would advise Herr Renwick," he went on quickly, "that the hotels of Budweis are excellent."

"Ah!" That he had come out into the open suited Renwick's plans excellently. He removed his monocle and slipped it into a waistcoat pocket. "To be sure. Budweis. Unfortunately the lady whom I have the honor to accompany, visits friends at some distance in the country."

"The Countess Strahni must go to the Kaiser von Oesterreich Hotel at Budweis tonight," he said with precision. "It is near the station." And then quickly "I would also advise Herr Renwick to move at once to the other end of the compartment."

Renwick stared at him for a moment as though he had not understood his meaning and then shrugged and rose. Polite amenities had ceased. He turned half toward Marishka and then, without warning, threw himself furiously at the man.

There was a muffled discharge as the stranger attempted to draw the weapon from his pocket, but the bullet did no damage, and the Englishman's blow, fiercely struck, sent the other reeling sideways. He smiled no longer, but struggled upward gamely. Renwick had caught his pistol hand and forced him down to the floor, where he pinioned him with his weight.

The whole affair had happened so quickly that after one gasp of terror, Marishka had sat stupefied with horror. But as the struggle continued, the man on the floor began to shout lustily for help, and she sprang to the aid of the Englishman, who was choking the man by twisting his cravat.

"Your veil—quick," he stammered breathlessly. And after she had given it to him, "Now, take the revolver from his coat pocket."

She obeyed. Most of the fight was out of their antagonist, and the muzzle of the automatic, thrust beneath his nose, completed his subjugation. After they had gagged him, they bound his wrists and ankles with handkerchiefs, and then straightened and looked at each other, listening. Marishka's eyes were sparkling and the color was coming back into her cheeks.

"He—he might have killed you," she stammered in English.

"Or I him," said Renwick. "Thank the Lord, I didn't have to. Do you think they heard?"

They listened again, but there was no sound above the roar of the train.

"We'll have to get out of this—at the first stop—and run for it. I don't know where we are, but Budweis can't be far off. You still want to go on?"

"Yes, I must," she cried resolutely. "I must. Oh, God, if I failed now, I could never forgive myself."

"You see—they're determined——"

He paused, staring at the mummy upon the floor, who had raised his head. One eye was badly damaged, but the other was frowning at them comically. But neither Renwick nor Marishka felt like laughing. Renwick started suddenly toward the window and peered out, for the train was coasting and ahead of them in the distance he saw the lights of a station.

"Quickly!" he said to the girl. "There's nothing for it but to go out on the opposite side. The door is locked." He glanced at the prostrate figure. And then to Marishka, "You must follow me."

He did not wait for her answer, but opening the closed window he swung himself from the floor by a grip on the door jamb, put his feet out and lowered himself to the running board. The brakes were on now as the train approached the station, but still Marishka hesitated.

Renwick's face appeared in the aperture. "All clear," he whispered, "the tracks on this side are empty. Wait until the train stops and then step out—quickly, please."

There was no denying his command of her and of the situation, and, difficult as the feat appeared, in a moment she was sitting on the sill, her feet depending outside into the darkness, where Renwick without another word seized her in his arms and lowered her to the step beside them, thrilled by the danger of her flight, but ready to follow wherever he led.

With a grinding of brakes the train stopped, but they got down quickly, and in a moment had dodged behind a building, and listening for sounds of pursuit, made their way up the dimly lighted street of a small town. It was not yet midnight and there were signs of activity here and there. She hurried beside Renwick blindly, content as he was for the present to put as much distance as possible between themselves and the railroad station. They listened anxiously for the train to move, but there was no sound of bell or exhaust. The distant shouts seemed more ominous. Renwick only glanced behind them and hurried the pace. He led her around a corner, into a well-lighted street where an automobile, its engine running, was standing before a rather pretentious house. He ran up to it and examined it quickly.

"It's really too bad," he muttered, with a quick glance toward the house, "but our need is great," and got in, Marishka following without a word. "It's a Mercedes, thank God," he whispered. "I hope it will go."

It did, with a sputter and roar which brought a shouting figure to the door of the house, but Renwick was beyond stopping and turned blindly at the next turning and followed the street through the sleeping town into a well-traveled country road, which led straight onward toward the setting moon.

"I haven't the slightest notion where we're going," he said presently, "but we seem to be on our way."

Marishka found herself laughing nervously. She wasn't in the least amused, but the strain was telling on her.

"Nice chap—the owner of this car, to put it just there. I'll have to buy it, I suppose. No end of a good machine. I wonder if he thought to fill the tank."

Renwick ran the car up a long hill which it took with ease, and at the summit the moonlit summer landscape was visible for miles in all directions. There at a crossroad the Englishman stopped the stolen car in the shadow of a tree, got quickly out and investigated the tank.

"Plenty of petrol—enough for all night, I should say," he reported. "And now"—as he looked around him in all directions—"which way? Hanged if I know."

Marishka was scanning the valley below them eagerly. In the distance to their right a row of lights moved slowly into the night. "The train!" she said, "Budweis lies in that direction. I've often been over the road from Konopisht. If we can reach it——"

"That ought not to be difficult. Here goes." And he took the crossroad to the right.

So far all was well, but the stolen motor car was a dead weight on Renwick's conscience, and the danger of detection was still most unpleasant. If an excuse were needed for his arrest, a pretext which would hide the real secret of the mission of his pursuers, the larceny of the machine would now furnish it. He had no humor to see the inside of a village jail from which communication with the Ambassador would be difficult if not impossible. There were processes of law in Austria which suddenly became formidable to one in his position. But he drove on, keeping a lookout for sign posts, aware that the girl beside him, now that their danger was passed, had again assumed an uncompromising silence which was not too favorable an indication of the state of her mind and feelings toward him. He smiled inwardly. At least she could not rob him of the moment when on the steps of the train he had held her in his arms. He did not doubt that she was thinking of that moment also, hating him the more cordially because she was so dependent on him. Did she hate him? He stole a glance at her. She sat stiffly staring before her into the night, a frown at her brows, her lips closed in a thin line. Pride?

"Marishka," he ventured softly, "will you forgive me?"

Her figure grew more rigid.

"Herr Renwick——!" she gasped.

"I love you," he broke in. "You must know how much——"

"It is a pity that I have already gauged your capacity for devotion," she said bitterly.

"I *had* to tell, Marishka——"

"Herr Renwick, I am already much in your debt. Add to my burden, if you will, by keeping silence on a matter so painful——"

"Forgive me——"

"Never. You have betrayed me."

"I'll never give you up."

"You must. Circumstances have placed me in this false position. I am at your mercy. I beg you to be silent."

"You will marry me, some day, Marishka," he asserted cheerfully.

"Never," scornfully. "Never. The House of Strahni, Herr Renwick, holds honor high and loyalty even higher than honor——"

"There is another precept of the House of Strahni," he broke in calmly. "Their women—where they give their lips——"

"Oh, you are intolerable! I abominate you!"

"And I—I still adore you," he whispered. "I shall always adore—and serve."

"Thank God, the hour of your service nears its end," she said chokingly.

"Who knows?" he muttered.

But he made no further attempt to break through her reserve. She was too greatly in his power. And so he drove in silence, passing through the silent streets of Budweis without challenge and soon found himself upon the main highroad to Prague, over which the two had traveled less than a week ago in their hurried flight to Vienna. The moon had long since set, but when they climbed the hills along the Moldau faint gray streaks upon their right hand proclaimed the coming of the dawn. If Marishka was weary she gave no sign of it, for she sat bolt upright in her seat, her eyes wide open, staring along the thin yellow ribbon which marked their road. To the few questions as to her comfort she answered in monosyllables, and at last he made no further effort to engage her in a conversation. He felt no anger at her rebuffs—only tenderness—for in his heart he could not altogether blame her for her repudiation of him.

Broad daylight found them on the Prague highroad, not three miles from Konopisht Schloss. Here Renwick decided to desert the car and go afoot through the forest to the castle. He hid the machine in a thicket and led the way, Marishka following silently, content to trust herself to a judgment which until the present moment had seemed unerring. He glanced at her from time to time, aware of the pallor of her face and the fatigue of her movements. Once when he turned he

fancied that her lips were smiling, but when he spoke to her she answered him shortly. The wounds to her pride were deep, it seemed, but he armed himself with patience and smiled at her reassuringly as they paused at the edge of the wood.

"The Schloss is just beyond these woods, I think. Some smoke is rising yonder. We must avoid the village. I think we may reach the garden by the lower gate. And there I will await you, Countess Strahni," he finished quietly.

It seemed as though in giving her her title, that he was accepting without further plea any conditions of formality in their relations which she might impose.

She waited a long moment without moving or replying. And then she turned toward him with a smile.

"Herr Renwick," she said gently, "whatever the personal differences between us, I owe you at least a word of gratitude for all that you have done. I thank you again. But I do not wish you to wait for me. I shall not trouble you longer."

"I will wait for you," he repeated.

"It is not necessary. I shall not return."

"You might, you know," he smiled. "I don't mind waiting at all. I shall breakfast upon a cigarette."

"Oh," she cried, her temper rising again, "you are—you are impossible."

With that she turned and strode ahead, reaching the gate before him and entering.

"*Au revoir*, Countess Strahni," he called after her.

But she walked rapidly toward the rose garden without turning her head, while Renwick, after lighting his cigarette, strolled slowly after her, sure that the world was very beautiful, but that his path of love even amid the roses did not run smoothly.

He reached the hedge just in time to see a man, one of the gardeners he seemed to be, come forward along the path from the direction of the castle and stand before Marishka bowing. He saw the girl turn a glance over her shoulder, an appealing glance, and Renwick had just started to run forward when from each tree and hedge near him figures appeared which seemed to envelop him. He struck out to right and left, but they were too many. He felt a stinging blow at the back of his head, and had the curious sensation of seeing the garden path suddenly rise and smite him tremendously.

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## CHAPTER VI

### HERR WINDT

When Renwick managed again to summon his wits, he found himself lying in the dark where somebody was bathing his brows with a damp cloth. His head ached a great deal and he lay for a moment without opening his eyes, aware of soft fingers, the touch of which seemed to soothe the pain immeasurably. He opened his eyes to the semi-obscurity of a small room furnished with the cot on which he lay, a table and two chairs. It was all very comfortable and cozy, but the most agreeable object was the face of Marishka Strahni, not a foot from his own. Through eyes dimmed by pain he thought he read in her expression a divine compassion and tenderness, and quickly closed them again for fear that his eyes might have deceived him. When he opened them again he murmured her name.

"Marishka," he said gently, "you—you have forgiven me?"

But she had moved slightly away from him and was now regarding him impassively. It was too bad for his vision to have played him such a trick. It was so much pleasanter to sleep with Marishka looking at him like that.

"You have had a blow upon the head, Herr Renwick," her voice came as from a distance. "I hope you are feeling better. It was necessary for me to bathe your head with cold compresses."

Necessary! Of course. But it would have been so much pleasanter to know that she had done it because she wanted to.

"So it was *au revoir*, after all?" he smiled, struggling to a sitting posture.

"You had better lie still for a while," she said briefly.

His head was throbbing painfully, but he managed to make light of it.

"Oh, I'm quite all right, I think," he said looking around the room curiously. "Would you mind telling me what happened and where we are?"

"They struck you down and brought us here. It's one of the gardener's cottages on the estate."

"And you?"

"They were very polite but we are prisoners—for how long I don't know. I've failed, Herr Renwick——" she finished miserably.

"Perhaps it isn't too late——"

"There are men outside. They intend to keep us here for the present."

"There ought to be a way——" said Renwick, putting his feet to the ground. "I could——" He stopped abruptly, for at that moment he discovered that the captured weapon had been removed from his pocket.

"I'm afraid it's hopeless," said Marishka bitterly.

Renwick glanced at his watch. "Only eight o'clock. Even now we could——"

He rose and walked to the window, peering through a crack in the shutter, but an attack of vertigo caused him to sink into a chair. She regarded him dubiously, pride and compassion struggling, but she said nothing.

"Beastly stupid of me," he groaned. "I might have known they'd spare no detail——"

There was a knock upon the door, and at Marishka's response, a turning of the key, and a man entered. In spite of a discolored eye and a wrinkled neckband, he was not difficult to identify as their friend of the railroad train. His manner, however, was far from forbidding, for he clicked his heels, swept off his cap and smiled slowly, his gold tooth gleaming pleasantly.

"Herr Renwick is, I trust, feeling better," he said politely.

Renwick grinned up at him sheepishly.

"I congratulate Herr Windt upon his adroitness," he said. "I fear I made the mistake of underestimating his skill in divination."

"It was not inspired enough to guess that you were in the Countess Strahni's carriage," he replied. "You have quick fingers, Herr Renwick. Fortunately I was aware of your destination and knew that we should meet. All is well that ends well."

"That depends upon the point of view, Herr Windt. But I might have killed you in the railway carriage."

"That would have been an error in judgment, which would have been most unfortunate for both of us. I, too, might have shot you through my pocket, but I refrained, at some hazard to myself. I try never to exceed the necessities of a situation. Having performed my mission successfully I can now afford to be generous."

"Meaning—what, Herr Windt?"

"That I shall keep you here only so long as is absolutely necessary." He glanced at his watch and said significantly, "The Archduke's private train will leave here in half an hour."

Marishka had listened in some amazement to this conversation, but the politeness of her jailer only angered her.

"I would like to know by what authority you imprison a loyal citizen of Austria," she stormed. "Your identity seems to have made some impression upon Herr Renwick, but I would inform you that I at least am not without friends to whom you will answer for this outrage."

Herr Windt bowed low.

"I beg that Countess Strahni will reconsider that word. I have intended to act with great discretion. Herr Renwick unfortunately underestimated the forces to which he was opposed. I am sorry he has suffered injury. As for you, Countess, I beg leave to recall that those who have restrained you have treated you with every consideration."

"Who are you?" she asked angrily.

"Herr Renwick has spoken my name."

"You are a member of the secret service of the Austrian government?"

He smiled again and bowed low.

"It is the custom of those in my trade to ask questions—not to answer them. In this service, however, it will please you perhaps to know that I am not acting for the Austrian government."

"Who then?"

"I cannot reply."

"You dare not."

"Perhaps. But I am willing to admit, Countess Strahni, that the same motive which impelled you to Schönbrunn," he said significantly, "has actuated both myself and my employers."

"And that motive?"

"The safety of the Empire."

"Austria! But not complicity in this dastardly——"

At a warning sound from Renwick she paused. Herr Windt was regarding her gravely.

"I regret that I do not comprehend the Countess Strahni's meaning," he said with a bow. "It would be a source of great unhappiness to me, if in doing my duty, I had done you a harm. I am not an enemy, Countess, but a loyal compatriot. I may add that I am prepared to do what I can to protect you from the results of your unfortunate connection with a dangerous political situation."

"Protect! You!" Marishka smiled bitterly and glanced ironically around the walls of the cabin.

"I beg to assure you that I am not jesting. Herr Renwick will recall that he was attacked one night upon the streets of Vienna. He was also shot at by some person unknown. The inspiration for those assaults did not emanate from my employers."

"I suspected as much," muttered Renwick.

Marishka was examining Renwick wide-eyed.

"Shot at!" she murmured.

"The information in Herr Renwick's possession," Herr Windt went on suavely, "was more damaging to other interests than to theirs. Herr Renwick's connection with the British Embassy has terminated. He has merely the status in Austria of a traveling Englishman. But his activities are dangerous where they concern the movements of the Countess Strahni. I am performing an act of friendship to a loyal Austrian in offering her escort back to Vienna, where if she is wise she will remain quietly under my surveillance."

During this speech, of which Herr Windt delivered himself with much bowing and rubbing of his hands, Marishka remained silent, a wonder growing in her eyes.

"I fail to see how my presence here or elsewhere can interest you or others," she said as she sank upon the cot. Weariness was telling on her and the disappointment of her mission's failure. And the threat of danger that hung in his words was hardly reassuring.

"Countess Strahni may doubt my good intentions. That is her privilege. In a short time"—here he looked at his watch again—"she will be at liberty to come and go as she chooses. In the meanwhile I beg that she will listen to me and heed my warning."

He looked at her until she raised her head and signified for him to continue. "The agencies which attempted to prevent the delivery of Herr Renwick's information to the British Embassy are again at work. Herr Renwick having been"—he paused and bowed to Renwick—"if I may be permitted to say so—having been repudiated by his Ambassador and by the British government, he is politically a person of no importance—at least as far as my relations with him are concerned. Whatever he may do privately, unless it proves valuable to the interests of Austria's enemies, will pass as it has already passed—unnoticed in Austria. The case of the Countess Strahni is different \_\_\_"

He paused a moment to rub his hands together thoughtfully.

"I can not understand——"

"Within the past twenty-four hours the apartments of the Baroness Racowitz have been observed by persons not in my service. The Countess perhaps has had no unusual communications?"

Marishka started up in her chair, while Windt, watching her, smiled slowly.

"Ah, I was not mistaken——" he said.

"A request to go to the Hofburg tonight—before Herr Renwick came," she whispered, now thoroughly aroused. "I did not go. The signature was unfamiliar to me."

Herr Windt took a pace toward the window and peered forth through the slats of the blind.

"The Countess Strahni would not have reached the Hofburg," he said quietly. "She would have gone—er—elsewhere!"

"The man in the green limousine!" came suddenly in cryptic tones from the silent Renwick.

"Exactly. He followed the Countess Strahni's fiacre in motor car to the Nordwest Bahnhof."

"And you?"

"We forestalled him—that's all," he said, showing his gold tooth in a most ingratiating smile, but there was a flash in the deep set eyes which explained much to Renwick.

"There was a commotion near the booking-stall," said Renwick.

"Ah, you witnessed?"

"From a distance. I had other affairs."

"Yes. That will perhaps make my laxity with regard to Herr Renwick's sudden appearance the more pardonable," said Windt, with a professional air.

Marishka, who had listened with growing inquietude to these revelations of her danger, had risen and paced nervously the length of the room.

"But why?" she pleaded. "Who can dare to molest me in my own home or in the streets of Vienna?"

Herr Windt rubbed his injured eye gravely.

"The Countess Strahni has unfortunately become a political document, the possession of which, I may even say the suppression of which, is highly important."

Marishka sank upon the couch, and for a moment buried her face in her hands.

"But what would be gained by getting me out of the way? I have already told what I know."

Herr Windt smiled.

"As Herr Renwick would perhaps inform you, the place for an important document is the safe. If the document is harmless a desk may do. If it is incriminating, like you, Countess"—he said with a dramatic gesture—"the fire!"

Renwick by this time had risen and stood fitting his monocle into his eye.

"Astounding!" he muttered. "And yet I quite believe you."

"There seems little room to doubt." Herr Windt walked to the window and peered out again. "My men are all about this place, Herr Renwick, and yet even now I am not certain that you have not been followed."

He turned and faced Marishka with his usual bland composure. "Herr Renwick should, I think, be able to take care of himself. I beg, however, that Countess Strahni will not be unduly anxious. I shall myself go outside and take every precaution." He turned at the door and bowed. "I beg that in the meanwhile, you will come to some decision as to your immediate plans, counting upon my efforts to aid you. There is no train for Vienna until this afternoon," he said significantly. "I may add that the machine in which you came from Altensteig will be returned to its owner by one of my young men, who will explain the circumstances, and arrange a proper compensation."

With this parting shot delivered in his best professional manner, Herr Windt left the room with an air of triumphant urbanity which added not a little to the respect with which Renwick now regarded him.

Marishka sat upright on the bed staring straight before her while Renwick paced the floor frowning.

"If I could only have reached her—for a moment," said Marishka brokenly, as though thinking aloud. "She would have listened to me—she would have believed me. I would have thrown myself upon her mercy—told her all. It is horrible—a death like that—when a word might save them now—and it will be I—I who have killed them——" She started up staring at Renwick. "And you! Why do you stand there, doing nothing?" she flung at him wildly. "You learned of this thing—at Belgrade. Why couldn't you have prevented it? Given it publicity? Why don't you do something now? England has power. Why doesn't your Ambassador speak? Is he frightened? Dumb? Will he stand idly by and see this——"

"It is none of England's affair, Countess Strahni," Renwick broke in soothingly.

"Then it is of Germany's?" She halted as the new idea came to her, and walked to the small table where she sank into a chair and buried her head in her hands, trying to think.

After a while she raised her head suddenly and looked at Renwick.

"Do you believe that this man tells the truth?"

"I do. He stands high among those of his profession."

"Do you believe that agents of the German government were trying to take me prisoner—and you?"

"Herr Windt is surprisingly well informed. I am quite sure that someone is trying to shoot me," he laughed. "I believe that you were followed—by whom I don't know."

"Then how do you explain the efforts of German agents to take me, when I am acting in the interests of the Kaiser's friend and ally, the Archduke Franz?"

"You forget that this plot is a secret one. The Archduke may fear the Serbians and the Bosnians, not his own countrymen."

"Oh! Yes—of course." She was silent again, but moved her hands nervously along the table top and in a moment got up and peered through the window-blind.

"I beg that you will submit yourself to Herr Windt if not to me——" pleaded Renwick earnestly. "At least in his company you will be in no danger. I have done what I can to help you reach the

Duchess, because the secret we shared brought about this calamity. But the matter has been taken out of my hands and yours. I advise you to return this afternoon to Vienna."

She did not reply and only stood by the window, tapping at the sash with unquiet fingers.

"You are tired," he said gently. "Lie down on this bed for awhile and I will see what can be done about breakfast."

"I'm not hungry."

"You can't go without food."

"I'm not hungry," she repeated.

Renwick shrugged and walked to the other window, where he presently observed Herr Windt coming around the corner of the building. That remarkable person had thought of everything, for he carried in his hands a coffeepot and cups, while another man followed with plates and a saucepan.

He turned the key in the lock and entered, putting the coffee upon the table and rubbing his hands with a more than usual gusto.

"I am delighted to be able to inform you that the occasion for your detention has passed. Within certain bounds you are now at liberty. The train of the Archduke has just passed down the valley."

"Oh!" gasped Marishka.

"I would advise you, however, to keep within call. If Herr Renwick will give me his word of honor not to try to escape——"

"I don't quite know where I should go——"

"Very good. The wires, of course, Herr Renwick, are in the hands of Austrian officials."

Renwick nodded.

"You have won, Herr Windt. I have no plans which conflict with yours." He turned a glance toward Marishka. "Countess Strahni is very tired. I think if we were to leave her for a few hours, she would probably eat and rest——"

"By all means," said Windt with alacrity, moving toward the door. "And if Herr Renwick will follow me I think I can find another coffeepot."

Marishka did not turn from the window as they went out of the door. Her heart was heavy within her, and through the glaring summer sunlight which came in at the window and beat upon her face, she saw—Sarajevo! Sophie Chotek alighting from her train, the pomp and circumstance, the glitter of uniforms, the crowded streets through which she must pass and the crowd which seethed with unrest, along the street through which Sophie Chotek must pass...! It was too horrible. She wanted to shriek—to cry out against the infamy that was to be done, but she could only close her eyes to try and shut the vision out.

After awhile she grew calmer, and tried to think clearly. There was a pitcher and basin in the corner of the room, and so she bathed her face and hands and refreshed herself. The coffee still steamed upon the table. There was rye bread, and there were eggs in the water of the saucepan. She felt weak and dispirited, but it would not do to fail for lack of strength, and so she sat and ate and drank. The plan born of her talk with Hugh Renwick still turned over and over in her mind. Would Renwick still be able to do something to help her? Which way should she turn? If her own efforts to warn Sophie Chotek had been futile, if Hugh Renwick could not do something, and England selfishly held aloof while this horrible conspiracy which seemed to have its very tendrils hidden in the hearts of those who should have been her friends, was under way, what must she do? She felt dreadfully; alone, and fearfully guilty. Her own death or the threatened imprisonment of which Herr Windt spoke seemed slight atonements for the wrong that she had done Sophie Chotek. If she could still succeed, by using the agents of the Archduke's imperial friend and ally, in sending a warning through the German ambassador at Vienna, to Budapest or Sarajevo, the consequences to herself were immaterial. They might have her to do with as they chose; for by this sacrifice only could she atone. She did not fear death, for death to youth and health is inconceivable. She smiled incredulously as she thought again of the ominous surmises of the impossible Herr Windt. There was something of the opera bouffe about his methods which abstracted from the brilliancy of his success. To Marishka he was still the head waiter. This was the twentieth century. No political secret could justify the imprisonment or death of a woman!... She shuddered a little, as she thought of the very death that had been planned by the employers of Herr Windt—Austrians—loyal Austrians he called them, of the same blood and lineage perhaps as herself. She had not yet succeeded in wholly believing it. There was some missing reason for the actions of this secret service agent, some motive which neither she nor Hugh Renwick had yet fathomed, which would explain her detention and his. It was unbelievable that——

Marishka started at a small sound from the direction of the fireplace. It was a curious sound, a subdued metallic clink which nevertheless differentiated itself with startling clearness from among the already familiar sounds of the quiet summer morning. She started up and peered into the shadows of the hearth. There was something there, a small object—round, wrapped in paper.

She reached forward quickly, picked it up and examined it curiously then took off its covering, disclosing an Austrian coin—a *kroner*—nothing more. It was most mysterious. The thing could obviously have not come from the sky. Who?

She examined the paper closely. It seemed like a leaf torn from a note book. There was writing on it, and moving to the window she made out the script without difficulty. It was written in evident haste with a blunt pencil.

I have found a way to escape in a machine from Herr Wendt, if you will come at once. Only one man watches the cabin by the door. There is another in the orchard. Go quietly out by the window and follow the hedge to the garden wall. I will be at the gate beyond the arbor. Destroy this note.

HUGH RENWICK.

Marishka read the note twice to be sure that there was no mistake. She quickly peered through the window by the door. Yes, the man was there, smoking his pipe in the sunshine, his back against a tree, dozing. Anything were better than this interminable suspense—this horrible oppression of acknowledged failure. To be under further obligations to Herr Renwick was an added bitterness to her wounded pride, but hope had already beggared her and she could not choose. She got into coat and hat, and after another careful scrutiny of her somnolent guardian, quietly opened the shutters of the side window, stepped out into the shadow of the hedge, and made her way toward the distant garden wall.

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## CHAPTER VII

### THE GREEN LIMOUSINE

Herr Windt started up from the bench on which he had thrown himself. It was a pity there was no earlier train for Vienna. He stretched himself and yawned, for he confessed himself a trifle disappointed that there was to be, after all, no test of wits between himself and the agent of the Wilhelmstrasse who had followed the Countess Strahni to the Nordwest station in Vienna. His men had done the fellow in the motor cap no great damage, for his own instructions had been limited but definite: to save Marishka Strahni in all secrecy from coming to harm, but to prevent her at all hazards from reaching Konopisht before the Archduke and Duchess left for Sarajevo. This simple task had been accomplished with little difficulty. The agent of the Wilhelmstrasse, undoubtedly a person of small caliber, had given up his efforts, or would seek a more propitious moment, to carry it out later in Vienna. Herr Windt yawned again. His visit to Bohemia would have been indeed a delight if a secret agent of the caliber of Herr Hauptman Leo Goritz, or Ober Lieutenant Franz Scheib, could have been sent upon this delicate mission to oppose him. But there was no such luck. Herr Windt had made a careful round of village and garden while Herr Renwick remained under the eye of his men, and there had been no sign of anything suspicious to disturb the monotonous peacefulness of the quiet garden. The reaction which always followed upon success, had set in, and the famous man was now frankly bored and somewhat fidgety. He got up and paced the stone walk a few times and then gazed out to where his most trusted man, Spivak, was dozing in the sun. Everything was too quiet, too peaceful. The serenity of the landscape annoyed him. He glanced at his watch—still four hours of this infernal quiet before their train left for Vienna. He went to the door of the room into which Herr Renwick had gone to lie down and looked in. The room was empty. This was not surprising, for Herr Renwick was under parole and would have the freedom of the garden in the immediate vicinity of the two cabins. As the morning was hot he had perhaps gone out to enjoy the shade of the trees. But Herr Windt now moved with alacrity and crossed the small plot of vegetable garden which separated the two cabins, and in some haste turned the corner of the small building which sheltered the Countess Strahni.

Before the door, listening, a puzzled look upon his face was Herr Renwick.

"I have called her three times," said the Englishman quickly. "She sleeps very soundly—or else \_\_\_"

But Herr Windt did not stand upon ceremony, for he thrust past the Englishman, threw open the inner door, then returned bellowing lustily.

"Gone! The room is empty—"

"Gone!" cried Renwick.

Windt eyed him keenly.

"I have been yonder, by the trees, near your man—" protested Renwick and there seemed no doubt as to his innocence.

"Hi! Spivak! Linder! Hadwiger!" cried Windt. And as the men came running from all directions, "She is gone. What have you been at?"

"Gone?"

"By the window, idiots; did none of you see her?"

"No, Herr Windt—"

"But she could not have flown up the chimney—"

He halted abruptly, then dashed into the room again, peering into the fire place and examining the furniture, all his professional instincts keenly aroused. As he shook the bed clothing, there was a tinkle upon the floor, and a coin rolled into the farthest corner of the room. This he pounced upon like a dog upon a rat and brought it forth into the light of the window.

"A *kroner*!" he muttered. "Curious! Could she have dropped it do you suppose?"

"Perhaps. Her money was in a handbag," cried Renwick with his legs out of the window. He had already espied a possible mode of escape, and started running along in the shadow of the hedge.

"Your parole, Herr Renwick!" shouted Windt, scrambling after him.

"Come on then," cried the Englishman over his shoulder while the Austrian followed swiftly shouting orders to his assistants. "Follow me, Spivak! The Park gates, Hadwiger! Let no vehicle get out! Linder, notify Lengelbach—the telegraph!"

Renwick went fast but Herr Windt and the puffing Spivak kept at his heels as they reached the garden, crossing it at full speed toward the arbor, whither Renwick led them as though by an inspiration, through the bushes and toward the small gate beyond, which led to the door in the wall, over which a week ago he had climbed in his hurried flight with Marishka to Vienna.

Renwick was thinking rapidly. Had Marishka escaped alone—perhaps devised a plan of her own to reach Vienna from Budweis in time to come up with the party of the Archduke? Or had someone—He doubled his pace, cursing his throbbing head and his own simplicity and impotence. A trap?

"There is a door?" stammered Windt.

"In the bushes just beyond—a private one—usually locked—"

"Spivak! You hear?"

"I could not know—" panted the other.

"You should have known—"

They reached the small flight of steps that led down, and dashed along the path among the bushes toward an open gate, emerging upon the road which marked the beginnings of the village street. There were a few people in sight, an old man hobbling upon a stick, a child with a dog, two peasants in the shade of a tree eating their midday meal—and down the road to the west—a cloud of dust!

The peasants rose in alarm at the rapid approach of the three excited men, and turned as though to flee into the safety of the adjoining field, but Renwick overtook them.

"You saw a lady come out of the gate yonder?" he questioned.

"A lady, Excellency?"

"Yes, yes. A lady and perhaps a gentlemen."

"We are merely eating our dinner, Excellency. We—we have no wish to do harm to anyone."

"Idiots!" cried Windt. "A motor-car? An automobile? Did you see it? Answer—or—"

"A motor-car—Excellency?" the fellow stammered. "Yes—a motor-car."

"How long since?" snapped Windt.

"A moment only—it was here—just here—and now it is gone—"

"Where?"

"Y-yonder—" and he pointed down the road.

The three men exchanged frowning glances, but Herr Windt's were the most terrible of the three.

"You saw? Speak—What color was this car?"

"H—how should I know, Excellency? I was peacefully eating my dinner. See! It is but half finished—"

"You will never eat what remains unless you speak the truth—" he roared.

"I—I am speaking the truth—"

"What color had this car?"

"I don't understand—"

"Its color, man—the paint?"

"Oh! The paint——"

"Speak! Blockhead——"

"Excellency, I think——" he stammered in terror, "I think——"

"What—quickly——"

"I think, Excellency, that it was green."

Renwick gasped. The face of Herr Windt wore a blank look as though he had suddenly received a glacial douche.

"*Herr Gott!*" he muttered, wiping the sweat from his brow with an eloquent forefinger.

"The green limousine!" muttered Renwick.

For a moment all three men stood helplessly staring down the road toward the west, where the dustcloud was slowly settling on leaf and hedgerow, but there was a turn in the road which hid all objects beyond. Herr Windt was the first to recover his initiative.

"Clever!" he muttered. "A message! Linder should have observed——But they will not get far. Come——" And he led the way at a quick trot in the direction of the village, where they reached the telegraph office at the railway station.

While Herr Windt went inside to give his orders, Renwick sank upon a bench outside and tried to think of what had happened and what it might mean to Marishka and to him. The green limousine—a German secret agent—there could be no doubt, and he, Renwick, already warned of this possible danger to Marishka had permitted her to fall into this trap, while he had come off unscathed. His conscience assailed him bitterly. Trusting to the efficiency of Herr Windt's men he had slept—slept while Marishka was being carried off to danger—to imprisonment—or perhaps—he did not dare to think of anything worse. And Marishka must have connived at the plan for her escape! How had the message passed? And what was the lure?

As the new idea came to him he rose quickly and moved toward the door of the telegraph office. He paused for a moment to adjust his monocle and it was fortunate that he did so, for there was a crash of glass at the window just by his head, followed by a cry of alarm within the room. Renwick dodged behind a projection of the building, and peered out while Windt and Linder came rushing from the office.

"A shot?"

"Who?"

"I can't imagine. He can't have gone far."

The four men raced out, Herr Windt with automatic drawn, but when they reached the freight station which seemed to be in the direction from which the shot had come there was no one in sight. Across the railroad was a patch of dense woods.

Here Herr Windt paused.

"He was shooting at *you*, Herr Renwick," he said calmly.

"I haven't a doubt of it."

"Go forward, Linder and Spivak—search the woods—but do no shooting unless attacked." Here Windt pocketed his weapon. "I regret, Herr Renwick, that my other business is of the utmost importance. You will come with me to the telegraph office, please."

Renwick obeyed rather willingly. He was unarmed and saw no possible utility to his own cause or Marishka's in dodging around in woods which contained a person bent upon assassinating him.

"You see, Herr Renwick, the matter is not ended."

"I'm much more comfortable that it is not," replied Renwick grimly. "He shoots well."

"You must be careful," said his companion casually. "Come inside. Hadwiger will watch." And he calmly took up his interrupted duty with the telegraph officer, with an air of impassivity, which of course, was part of his professional mien, but Renwick somehow gained the idea that his own death whether by shooting, poison, or other sudden device was a matter with which Herr Windt could have the least possible concern. Renwick sank into a chair and smoked a pipe, trying to think what he could do, listening dully meanwhile to the Austrian's dictated messages to the wire, delivered rapidly and with a certain military precision.

"Stop all green motor cars traveling north on the Prague highroad—and all roads leading north. Report at once here by telegraph description of those arrested. Confirm this message by name of station." And then in quicker tones, "Send that to all telegraph stations in this district north and west of here—and quick, you understand—lose no time. When that message is sent I will give you another—for the Chief of Police at Prague." Then turning to the door as a new thought came to him he spoke to Hadwiger.

"Go to the wood on the Prague highroad where the machine is concealed and bring it here. Quick. We may need it. You see, Herr Renwick, in ten minutes all the roads into Prague will be

closed to them. Even if they reach the city they will be detained."

Renwick did not reply. He was weighing the probabilities in his own thorough English way. His head still ached, but the pipe of tobacco aided his faculties. The thought that persisted in his mind was that Marishka had escaped from Herr Windt with the sole purpose of carrying out the object of her visit to Konopisht. He remembered the sudden interest she had displayed at the mention of the possibility of her having been followed to Konopisht by an agent of the Wilhelmstrasse. England could do nothing for her, Austria her own country stood helpless, while the Military Party, which alone possibly had the power to help her, still remained in ignorance of the plot. Germany! He remembered the look that had come into her eyes as he had confirmed the opinions of Herr Windt—an opinion borne out by the attempts upon his life and her safety in Vienna. But what of the man in the green limousine? She was a human document, as Herr Windt had said, which was destined for the safe, or possibly for destruction. By what means had the man in the green car lured her from the security of the cabin? Renwick could not believe, after all that he had done for her, that she would throw herself into the hands of a stranger on the barest chance of success without at least confiding in him. A shadow had fallen between them, a shadow and an abyss which had grown darker and deeper with the hours, but that he was her enemy—political, personal—he could hardly believe she could think him that; for he had done what he could—striven earnestly to help her reach the Duchess in safety. That he had failed was through no fault of his own. He could not understand her flight—not from Windt, but from him—without a word or a sign. It was not like her—not even like the Marishka who had chosen to call him dishonorable. However much she could repudiate his political actions, there still remained between them the ties of social consanguinity, the memory of things which might have been, that no wounded pride could ever quite destroy. But to repudiate him without a word—that was not like Marishka—not even the Marishka of today and yesterday. And while he tried to solve the problem in his own way, the telegraph instrument ticked busily on. Herr Windt leaned over the desk reading the messages, repeating the names of the towns which replied.

"Beneschau—Pribram—Wrshowitz—that district is covered, Lengelbach?"

"Yes. Ah, here is something."

Windt bent forward again repeating the message aloud.

"From Beraun—Franz—Schweppenheiser—and—a—woman—says—she—is—his—wife. Small—four—cylinder—car—American—make—black—in—color —with—brass—band—on—hood. Both—man—and—woman—have—grey—hair —age—seventy-two—and——" Herr Windt broke off with an oath, "*Schafsköpfen!*" he cried. "Enough of that——" And paced the floor of the room before Renwick, glaring impatiently out of the window.

"Another," said Lengelbach, "from Bresnitz. Man—and—girl—much frightened——"

"Ah!"

"Say—they—are—running—away—to—be—married."

"Yes—the description——"

"Man—dark—age—twenty-five—girl—yellow—hair——"

"Bah!" furiously. "Enough—the next."

For an hour or more, Renwick sat helplessly and listened while the different towns including the city of Prague responded. There was no green limousine in all Bohemia. At last, his patience exhausted, he rose and knocked his pipe out.

"Herr Windt," he inquired calmly, "what reason have you for believing that they will go to Prague?"

"The roads are good. The German border lies beyond," said Windt shortly, turning away.

"Wait!" Renwick's hand clutched his arm firmly. "Is there a road running south and parallel to the highroad?"

Windt regarded him in silence for a moment and then—

"Yes, many—but most of them mere cow paths."

"An automobile could pass over them, Herr Lengelbach?"

"Yes, the roads to Brünn are not bad," said the man.

Renwick smiled grimly. "It is my belief, Herr Windt, that they have slipped through your fingers."

"No."

"You have exhausted almost every means——"

"There are other stations——"

"I would suggest that you try the country to the southward."

"Why?"

"Because that is the way that they have gone——"

"Impossible!"

"I think you forget the Countess Strahni's mission—and yours."

"She will not succeed."

His stubbornness angered Renwick, and he caught him by the arm again, and whispered a few words in his ear.

Herr Windt turned a startled glance at the Englishman. His mind had been bent upon mere machinery. When he spoke there was in his voice a note of respect.

"Ah—it is worth considering. But how? The telegraph wires are now in my possession—here in this district to Budweis—to Vienna——"

"Then why don't you use them?" asked Renwick bluntly.

Windt stood stock still a moment and then went quickly to the desk.

"Repeat that message to Budweis, to Gmund, to Altensteig and Absdorf. Also cover the Brünn road. It can do no harm," he said turning urbanely to Renwick.

"Perhaps not," said Renwick dryly, "if the harm is not already done."

Together they listened to the clicking of the telegraph instrument. Half an hour passed. Hadwiger returned with the machine. Spivak and Linder came in from their fruitless search of the woods. The suspense was unendurable. Renwick, forgetting his danger, paced the road outside until a cry from Windt brought him into the office. The others were leaning over the instrument while Windt spelled out the words, "I-g-l-a-u t-w-o s-e-v-e-n-t-e-e-n G-e-r-m-a-n o-f-f-i-c-e-r a-n-d w-i-f-e. G-r-e-e-n l-i-m-o-u-s-i-n-e p-a-s-s-e-d h-e-r-e t-e-n m-i-n-u-t-e-s a-g-o f-o-r V-i-e-n-n-a."

"*Kollosaler Halunke!*" thundered Windt, his urbanity shattered to shreds. "They have taken the other road. Here, Lengelbach, take this quick. "Hold green motor-car man and woman." Send that to every telegraph station between Brünn and Danube. Relay all messages to Budweis. I'm going there."

And turning quickly he went toward the automobile, with a sign to the others to follow. Very politely he stood aside while Renwick entered, and with one of the men climbed into the rear seat while the other two got in front, Hadwiger driving at a furious pace. For a long time they went in silence, Herr Windt sitting with folded arms, his brows tangled in thought. To acknowledge that he had been outwitted had been galling, but to let this English creature of pipe and monocle indicate, in the presence of his own underlings, the precise means of his discomfiture was bitter indeed. At last his lips mumbled vaguely.

"Still I do not understand," they said.

"A note wrapped around the coin," suggested Renwick.

"*Ach, so.* It is very probable. The simplest expedients are often the most effective. Still it is remarkable that they have slipped through."

"The green limousine goes to Vienna," said Renwick.

Herr Windt had self-respect enough for a rather cynical smile.

"And after Vienna?" he asked.

Renwick shrugged.

"That will depend upon the efficiency of the Austrian Secret Police."

"Meaning, precisely what, Herr Renwick?"

"Merely that the Wilhelmstrasse is skillful, Herr Windt," he replied.

"You mean that they will escape—here in Austria! Impossible!"

"You will need all your wits," said Renwick dryly.

The truth of the remark was soon apparent for when Herr Windt's party reached the telegraph station at Budweis, there were no reassuring messages. The green limousine had vanished into the earth.

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## CHAPTER VIII

### AN ESCAPE AND A CAPTURE

In her flight from the cabin in the Archduke's woods, the Countess Strahni crept along in the

shadow of the hedge which bordered the orchard, and reached the gate of the garden. She had seen the watcher in the orchard pacing to and fro, and, awaiting the moment when his back should be turned, she hurried swiftly on to the shelter of the garden wall, once within which, she thought that she would be safe from detection by the men of Herr Windt. She waited for a moment at the gate to be sure that the man near the cabin had not observed her, and noted, through the foliage, that he had not moved. Then summoning her courage, she crossed the garden boldly in the direction of the arbor—the fateful arbor of Austria's betrayal—and her own. In the path beyond it Hugh Renwick would be awaiting her—Renwick, the imperturbable, the persistent, the—the despicable. Yes, she was quite sure that she despised him, in spite of all his efforts on her behalf, so the thought that she was once more to be beholden to him in this hapless quest gave her a long moment of uncertainty as she reached the arbor. She paused within the structure, wondering whether, now that she had succeeded in eluding Herr Windt, it would not be better to flee into the castle, and enlist the aid of the servants in behalf of their master and mistress. She had even taken a few steps toward the tennis court, when she remembered—the telegraph in the hands of Austrian officials who had their instructions! That way was hopeless. The Archduke's chamberlain had, of course, gone south, and in the castle, beside the house-servants, there would have remained only the English governess, the children, and the housekeeper. There could be little help expected from them—only bewilderment, horror, or perhaps incredulity. She must go on to Herr Renwick, continue the impossible situation between them, hide her exasperation in a studied politeness, and trust implicitly, as she had done before, to his undoubted desire to retrieve his lost standing.

She turned into the path which led from the arbor, and hurried through into the narrow path which led to the hidden gate beyond. Just here where the foliage was thickest, and not twenty yards from the spot where she and Hugh Renwick had listened to the pact of Konopisht, a figure stood bowing. She had been so intent upon seeing the Englishman that it was a full moment before she recovered from the shock of her surprise. The man before her was tall, with good shoulders, and wore a brown Norfolk jacket and a soft hat. His eyes were dark and as he smiled they wrinkled very pleasantly at the corners.

Marishka halted and stared at him uncertainly.

"I beg your pardon," she said. "I came here to meet——" She paused, for the thought suddenly entered her head that this perhaps might be another of the men sent to detain her. But in a moment she realized her mistake. The air with which the man swept off his hat and bowed convinced her that he was a gentleman and his manner put her at once at her ease.

"Herr Renwick," he said, with a smile, "has gone on to make some arrangements for your comfort. He has asked me to conduct you to the automobile, and will join us beyond the village."

An automobile! There would still be time, perhaps, to reach Vienna before the archducal party should leave for Bosnia.

"Oh, of course," gasped Marishka thankfully.

"If you will come this way, Countess——" he said, with something of an air. He bowed, but kept his gaze fixed upon hers. There was something very remarkable about this man's eyes—she could not tell just what it was—but they held her for a second, held her motionless until the hand which held his hat gestured for her to pass on. She took the walk before him, descended the steps which led to the lower path where he hurried forward and opened the door in the wall.

Even now, no notion entered her head that this polite person was other than he represented himself to be. And the well equipped machine which stood in the road outside the wall only caused her a momentary thrill of joy at the opportunity which placed the means of their escape so readily at the hand of the now really admirable Herr Renwick. As she paused again for a moment, her companion threw open the door of the limousine, and lightly touched her elbow.

"If the Countess Strahni will enter——" he said quietly. "There is little time to lose."

Marishka obeyed and in a moment the man in the Norfolk jacket was seated beside her, the chauffeur had thrown in the gears, and the machine was moving swiftly upon its way. She sank back into the comfortable cushions with a sigh of satisfaction which did not escape her companion.

"It was fortunate that I should have been in this neighborhood," he said with a strange smile. It was not until then that she noticed the slightly thick accents with which he spoke and she glanced at his profile hurriedly. His nose was aquiline and well cut, but the suggestion of his nationality was elusive. In spite of his evident gentility, his good looks, his courtesy and his friendship with Hugh Renwick, Marishka now had her first belated instinct that all was not as it should be. The man beside her looked past the chauffeur down the road ahead, turning one or two glances over his shoulder into the cloud of dust behind them. She noticed now that the car had not gone in the direction of the village, but had reached the country road which led to the west and was moving at a high speed which seemed to take the waiting Renwick little into consideration. All the windows of the car were closed, and she had a sense of being restrained—suffocated. For a while she did not dare to give her thoughts utterance, but as the car reached the Prague highroad and turned to the right, she started and turned in alarm to the man beside her.

"You told me that Herr Renwick was waiting for us just beyond the village. Where is——?"

The question trembled and died on her lips for the eyes of the man beside her answered before it was asked.

"I regret," he said evenly, "that there is no time to wait for Herr Renwick."

"You—you have——" she stammered helplessly.

"I beg that the Countess Strahni will not be unduly disturbed."

"Where are we going? This is the road to Prague. Tell me where you are taking me. I insist——"

He smiled at her again, but did not reply.

Marishka was now really alarmed and looked out of the closed windows at the flying hedgerows in desperation, wondering what she must do and trying to think how this dreadful mishap had befallen her. Hugh Renwick—his note to her—this stranger with the remarkable eyes who always smiled! Where was the missing link—what the deduction? But it was no time in which to lose one's courage. She turned toward the man beside her who was regarding her calmly.

"Who are you?" she asked.



**"Who are you?" she asked.**

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His eyes narrowed slightly as he looked past her out of the window. Then he said politely:

"The Countess Strahni is well within her rights in asking that question. I am Captain Leo Goritz."

That meant nothing to her and she found herself repeating her question.

He deliberated a moment.

"I see no reason why I should not tell you," he said at last. "I do not desire a misconception of my personal motives—which I beg you to understand are of the highest. I am merely carrying out my orders to bring the Countess Strahni with all dispatch within the borders of the German Empire."

"You—you are——" she paused in dismay.

"Of the German Imperial Secret Service," he said quickly.

Marishka sank back into her seat breathless with apprehension, the warnings of the hated Herr Windt dinning in her ears.

"Then you sent——" She fingered the scribbled note which had not left her fingers.

"I regret, Countess, that the situation made deception necessary. One of my men in the tree above the chimney. My orders were urgent."

Marishka glanced about the machine helplessly, her thoughts, in spite of herself, recurring to Hugh Renwick, who must before long discover her absence and guess its cause. But there seemed no chance of escape. To open the door and leap forth into the road at this speed was only courting injury, and the calm appearance of Captain Leo Goritz seemed only the mask for a resoluteness of purpose with which she could not dare to cope. To cry out seemed equally futile for the road was deserted except for a few market wagons, the occupants of which were country

louts who only stared dully as they passed. But in a flash the inspiration came to her. Germany! Germany could help her carry out her purpose to warn the Duchess before she reached Sarajevo. She glanced at her companion and found that his brown eyes had turned as though by prescience to hers.

"Captain Goritz," she stammered, "I—I seem to be in your power. Whatever your authority for this—this restraint of my liberty—I submit myself——"

He showed his fine teeth in a smile.

"I regret that the Countess Strahni should have been put to this inconvenience."

She made a motion of deprecation.

"I beg that you will spare yourself meaningless civilities. I do not know the meaning of this outrage."

"The Countess Strahni is far too clever to suppose that I can believe her——" he put in quickly.

"What do you mean?"

"Merely that an intelligence which can throw central Europe into a turmoil," and he laughed pleasantly, "does itself and me too little credit."

"Oh, you know——" she gasped.

"Yes, I know."

She examined Captain Goritz with a new interest.

"But you did not know the object of my visit to Konopisht," she went on desperately.

"I confess," he said slowly, "that your sudden departure from Vienna was most mystifying——"

"I will tell you," she went on excitedly. "I came to Konopisht to warn the Archduke Franz of a plot to assassinate him when he reaches Sarajevo——"

"Ah! So that——" Captain Goritz started suddenly forward in his seat and faced her eagerly in an attitude of sudden alertness.

"A plot! Serbian?" he asked sharply.

"No—I——" Loyalty stifled her lips.

"I see." And then keenly, "Austrian—as a result of your disclosures to the Emperor?"

She eyed the man in amazement. He was omniscient.

"A plot——" she stammered. "I do not know—I came to warn them—the Archduke and Duchess, but I was prevented from doing so. They——" she gasped again—"those who plan this dastardly thing are powerful—they control the telegraph. There was no way to reach them and so I came ——"

"Herr Windt——?"

She nodded. "You know—he acts for them. He kept me in the cabin until it was too late."

"I understand——" He nodded, his brows tangled in thought. "There can be no other explanation."

"I heard. I saw—back there in the garden—Emperor and Archduke—friends. Oh, don't you understand? *He* would do something——"

Captain Goritz had sunk lower into his seat and with folded arms was gazing at the back of the man in front of them, but under his frowning brows his eyes glowed with initiative.

"What you tell me is serious, Countess——" he muttered.

"So serious that I beg you will listen to me," she went on almost hysterically. "The Duchess was my friend—I heard and I told what I heard——"

"Yes. It is a pity, Countess Strahni."

"But I did not know," she went on breathlessly, conscious only of the imminence of Sarajevo and of the power of the man beside her perhaps to aid her. "I could not know that I should be betraying her—the friend of a lifetime—to this—I did my duty as I saw it—to Austria. I am telling you this—a stranger—an enemy perhaps—because it is in your power to help—to prevent this terrible thing. Think! Think! It is your duty as well as mine—your duty to the one who shares with Franz Ferdinand the secret of the rose garden—his friend, and if God so wills—his ally. It is all so terrible—so bewildering. But you must see that I am in earnest—that I am speaking the truth."

"Yes, yes," he said abstractedly, nodding, and then was silent, while the machine went thundering northward, every moment taking them further from Marishka's goal. She watched his face anxiously for a sign. His eyes glowed somberly but he did not more or glance aside. His problem, it appeared, was as deep as hers. For an age, he sat there like a stone figure, but she had the instinct not to speak, and after a while he straightened, leaned quickly forward and threw down the window in front of them.

"What is the village before us, Karl?" he asked in quick tones.

"Beneschau, Herr Hauptmann."

"There is a road to Brünn?"

"Yes, a fair one, Herr Hauptmann."

"Take it—and faster."

That was all. Marishka knew that she had won. Captain Goritz was frowning at the dial of his watch.

"Perhaps we are too late—but we can at least try," he muttered.

"Whatever your mission with regard to me—that is unimportant—beside this other duty——"

"Yes, yes. We shall need you. If you could reach the Duchess personally——"

"She will listen. I have known her all my life."

"Good. We must succeed." And then, figuring to himself. "Brünn—one hundred kilometers—Vienna seventy more—five hours—six perhaps. They may not leave Vienna at once——"

"The German Ambassador——" she suggested.

"Of course." And then, turning suddenly toward her, his eyes intent, he said, with great seriousness: "Countess Strahni, for the moment your interests and mine are identical. The success of this project depends upon your silence——"

"Anything——!"

"One moment, please," he put in quickly. "I wish you to understand the seriousness of your position. Your security, your safety now and later, will depend upon your own actions. You have proved yourself politically dangerous to the peace—to the welfare of Europe. My mission was to bring you safely into Germany. Failing in that, I must exact absolute silence and obedience——"

"Yes——"

"You travel as my wife, the wife of a German officer going to Vienna for medical advice——"

She flinched a little, but his air of abstraction reassured her.

"Do you agree?"

"Yes."

"You have friends in Vienna. You must not see them. Have I your word?"

"I have no wish but to help you."

He examined her keenly.

"I regret that the terms of our contract must be more explicit."

"In what?"

"I exact your word of honor to remain under my orders, to make no attempt to escape, to speak no word as to my identity or your own——"

"Have I not told you that my own fate is unimportant if I succeed in reaching the Duchess of Hohenberg?"

"And after that?" he asked keenly.

"What do you mean?"

"Merely that the same conditions as to yourself shall continue to exist."

Marishka hesitated. What lay before her? It was incredible that harm could come to one of her condition at the hands of the servants of a great and Christian nation like Germany. She glanced at Captain Goritz. He was still examining her gravely, impersonally. There seemed little doubt as to the genuineness of his intentions.

"And the alternative?" she asked.

His expression changed and he looked slowly away from her at the flying landscape. "I regret that you are still oblivious to your danger. You and one other person in Europe were the witnesses to the meeting at Konopisht. His Majesty's government does not deem it expedient at this time that you should be at liberty to discuss the matter——"

"But I have already spoken——"

"That matters nothing if the witnesses are eliminated."

His tones were quiet, but there was no doubt as to his meaning and she started back from him in dismay.

"You mean that you would——"

She halted again, wordless.

"Political secrets are dangerous—their possessors a menace."

"You—you would destroy——?" she gasped.

"The evidence!" he finished.

His voice was firm, his lips compressed, and he would not look at her. But she was still incredulous. Civility such as his and violence such as he suggested were incongruous. She took refuge from her terror in a laugh.

"You are trying to—to frighten me," she stammered.

"If you are frightened, I am sorry. You are in no danger, if you will do what I ask. I shall spare no courtesy, neglect no pains for your comfort."

"Thanks. That is kind of you. You will gorge the goose that it may be the more palatable."

He gave a slight shrug.

"I am but doing my duty. In my position, Countess, one is but a piece of thinking machinery."

"Yet it has been said that even machinery has a soul."

He glanced around at her quickly, but she was looking straight before her at the narrow ribbon of road which whirled toward them. She was very handsome, this dark-haired prisoner of his, and the personal note that had fallen into her speech made their relations at once more easy and more difficult.

"I regret," he said coolly, "that my orders have been explicit. I still demand that you comply with the conditions I have imposed. Your word of honor—it is enough."

She paused for a long moment—debating her chances. She was selling her liberty—bartering it with a word—for Sophie Chotek. This was her atonement, and if she failed, her sacrifice would be in vain.

She took a surreptitious glance at the profile of Captain Goritz. A part of the great machine that the world calling Germany he might be, but she read something in his looks which gave her an idea that he might be something more than a cog between the wheels.

Some feminine instinct in her, aroused by his impassive performance of his duty, gave her new courage. Since they were at war, she would play the game using women's weapons. After all, he was a man, a mere man.

When she spoke, it was with the air of calm resolution with which one faces heavy odds.

"I am in your power," she said quietly. "I give my word of honor to do as you wish."

And as his gaze dwelt for a moment upon her face—

"I shall not break it, Captain Goritz."

"Good!" he said, with an air of satisfaction. "Now we understand each other."

Meanwhile the machine went thundering on, the man at the wheel driving with a skill which excited admiration. At times the speed of the car seemed frightful, for it swerved dangerously at the frequent turns in the road, but Marishka clung desperately to the arm-rest to save herself from being thrown into the arms of Captain Goritz, aware of her impotence, but conscious, too, of a sense of exhilaration in the wildness of their pace, which seemed at any moment likely to throw both the car and its occupants into the ditch. Her companion made no effort to resume the conversation and only sat staring forth watching the villages through which they passed, his brows deeply thoughtful.

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## CHAPTER IX

### CAPTAIN GORITZ

At Iglau, a town, as Marishka afterwards learned, inhabited largely by Germans, they stopped to replenish the petrol tank. But Captain Goritz wore a deep frown when he got into the seat with the chauffeur, who immediately started the car. They were off again.

What this action portended Marishka could not know, nor could she understand the meaning of the conversation which immediately took place between the two men. But the car still moved forward as rapidly as before, and in a moment when they skidded around a passing vehicle and dangerously near a stone wall, she found herself wishing that Captain Goritz had chosen to enter the limousine, leaving all the wits of their astonishing chauffeur for the exigencies of the road.

But as the front window was down, a tribute to the confidence her jailer now reposed in her, fragments of their conversation reached her.

"A road—away from trunk-lines. Jarmeritz, perhaps.... It should not be difficult—a Peugeot if possible, or a Mercedes—its age would tell. At any time now.... A *détour* here, I think—there is a telegraph line along the hill yonder.... It would be better in a more desolate place, in the foothills of the *Mährische-Höhe*. It is a matter of luck, Karl. We must chance it."

She saw the chauffeur nodding and putting in here and there a suggestion, while every little while she caught an allusion to herself. She had no inkling of the meaning of this extraordinary conversation nor of the way the man called Karl now slowed down as they passed other machines either going or coming, and gazed at them with a critical air, shaking his head as he passed on at redoubled speed. But the mystery was soon to be revealed to her, for on a long piece of level road which went straight through a strip of pine woods, she felt the machine leap suddenly forward and heard the comments of the men in front.

"I cannot tell at this distance. A good one, I should say, and new." And gazing through the dust before her she made out the lines of a touring-car traveling rapidly in the same direction as their own. Karl's motor horn sent a deep blast, but the fellow in front was in no mood to give him the road. He repeated it loudly, warningly, encroaching upon the rear wheels of the touring car, and at last the other car slowed down, and as the road was narrow, drew aside into a shallow ditch. But instead of putting on speed in passing, as he had done before, the chauffeur Karl merely drew up a little ahead of the other car and held out his hand as a signal to stop while Captain Goritz quickly clambered down into the road and stood just below Marishka where she could quite easily hear the conversation which followed. The people in the touring car were a chauffeur, a stout man and a small boy. Captain Goritz was bowing politely.

"Very sorry," he said, "but we are almost out of petrol."

"There is a garage a few miles beyond," said the chauffeur of the touring car.

But Goritz shook his head.

"I wish to exchange cars with you—at once, please."

The chauffeur and the stout man, who looked like a small magistrate, sat staring at Goritz as though they thought that he or they had suddenly been bereft of their senses. But Karl, who seemed to know precisely what to do, got down beside them and produced from his pocket a pistol, which he brandished in their direction. The meaning of the situation was now obvious, and the Austrians scrambled down in great alarm.

Captain Goritz smiled at their precipitous movements and his voice was reassuring as he addressed the fat man.

"I regret that we have no time to lose. I only ask you to exchange cars with me. Mine, I think, is the more valuable."

But the others seemed stricken dumb and continued to stare wide-eyed, their mouths gaping open.

"Would you mind telling me how you are equipped with oil and petrol?" asked Goritz coolly.

"The tank is full," stammered the frightened chauffeur, still eyeing Karl's weapon dubiously. But by this time the fat man had regained some of his courage.

"What is the meaning of this outrage?" he blustered.

"We go upon a matter of life and death," said Goritz sharply.

"And I——"

His remark was cut short, for at that moment a bullet from Karl's pistol went off somewhere in his general direction, and leaving the boy and the chauffeur to their fate, he fled, a frightened behemoth, into the woods.

Captain Goritz now opened the door of the limousine.

"You will get down at once, please," he said quietly to Marishka. "We will go on in the other car." And while Karl transferred a suitcase and other personal belongings, Captain Goritz scribbled something upon a card which he handed to the astonished chauffeur. "If your master ever comes back and is not satisfied with his bargain, he should present himself at this address in Vienna and the matter will be satisfactorily arranged." And then as he got into the tonneau of the car beside Marishka, "I would warn you not to follow us too closely. It would be dangerous."

Karl put in the gears and they started at once. "It would also be difficult, Herr Hauptmann," he said with a laugh, "for I have locked the switch."

"Ah, it is better so," said Goritz calmly. "And now, by Jarmeritz, I should think."

Karl nodded and, increasing the speed of the touring car, soon left the green limousine and its new owners far behind.

The precision and speed with which the exchange of automobiles had been accomplished and the

unruffled impudence of the demeanor of Captain Goritz gave Marishka a new idea of the caliber of the man upon whose mercies she had been thrown, a new idea of the lengths to which he was prepared to go in the performance of his duty. Success, the gaining of which might easily have been tragic, was by his command of the situation turned into something which seemed comically near opera-bouffe. She could not understand what it all meant and timidly she asked him.

He smiled gravely.

"Your friend, Herr Windt, will be trying to make our journey difficult for us. The green limousine was conspicuous. It was observed in Vienna. We shall be more dusty, but I hope otherwise quite as comfortable."

"You think that we may be detained?" she asked anxiously.

"We shall do our best to prevent that from happening," he replied. "The way is long and our paths must be devious, but I think we shall succeed. There are many roads to Vienna, Countess." And then, with an air of consideration, "I hope that loss of sleep is not wearing on you. Presently we shall get out and have something to eat."

"Thank you," said Marishka with a grateful glance.

She felt Captain Goritz's look upon her for a long moment after she had turned away. Marishka sighed gently. Her companion's gaze left her and he peered straight before him, frowning. All this she knew by her woman's sixth sense without even looking at him. Even a thinking machine must have its moments of aberration. In a little while, the choice of roads having been decided, he turned to her again and Marishka's eyes met his fairly.

"You have not already regretted your bargain?" he asked quietly.

"No," she replied, smiling at him. "If you succeed, I shall regret nothing. A pawn has small chance, when the fate of kings is in question."

He was silent for a moment.

"I hope that you will understand my position, Countess. It is not my wish to make war upon women—"

"But one's duty is paramount, of course," she put in quickly. "I am not squeamish, Captain Goritz, but if my—my—er—elimination is necessary to your plans, it is only fair that I should be advised of the fact in time to say my prayers."

He regarded her soberly. Was she laughing at him? Her mien was quite serious, but her tone was sprightly—even flippant.

"It would be a matter of profound regret to me, Countess Strahni," he said, with some dignity, "if any misfortune should happen to you while under my charge."

"It is so nice of you to put it that way," she smiled at him. "Under other conditions, you know, we might even have been friends."

"I would be deeply pained if you should consider me an enemy," he replied.

"*Ach! leider!*" she sighed. "A prisoner can have no choice."

He made no reply to that and sank back into his favorite position with arms folded, staring straight before him. This girl was too handsome to quibble with. Her newly discovered cheerfulness disturbed him. He had known in abundance women of courage, women of skill in dissimulation, but he remembered that when they were both beautiful and clever it was the part of wisdom to be upon one's guard.

Marishka glanced at Captain Goritz's well-shaped head in the seat beside her. It was to be war between them—war! A thinking machine! Was he? She smiled to herself. She knew that she had power. What handsome clever woman does not know it? Men had desired her—a Russian duke, an Italian prince. And an Austrian archduke even, braving the parental ire, had wished to marry her, willing even to sacrifice his princely prerogatives if she would have said the word. Hugh Renwick—She swallowed bravely.... But the sense of her power over men gave her a new courage to meet Captain Goritz with a smile upon her lips while she summoned in secret all her feminine instinct to aid her in the unequal struggle, a game needing both caution and daring, a game for high stakes—in which perhaps no quarter would be given.

As they approached the environs of Vienna, the car now moved at a reduced speed and boldly chose the main highroads. Twice they were stopped and examined. This showed that all the machinery of the telegraph was now in operation, but the touring car did not answer to the given description and Captain Goritz's air of surprise and annoyance was so genuine that there was little delay.

"Our friends of the Mährische-Höhe are fortunately still frightened or else quite satisfied with the green limousine," he laughed. "We shall go through, I think."

"Shall we be in time?" asked Marishka.

The German shrugged and looked at his watch. "We shall be in Vienna in twenty minutes."

Marishka made no comment. As their journey neared its ending she realized that she was very tired, but the incentive that, had spurred her last night and all day still gave her strength to cope with whatever was to come.

"To the Embassy," Goritz whispered, "and fast!"

He had mounted again into the seat beside the chauffeur, and so Marishka did not question him, but his back was eloquent of determination. They drove boldly into the Ringstrasse and turned rapidly into a side street. Here the machine stopped again and Captain Goritz stood at the door of the tonneau waiting for her to descend. He led the way, walking rapidly, while Marishka struggled beside him as fast as her stiffened limbs permitted.

"The Ambassador can succeed where we should fail. He must procure an interview for you. I think it may be managed unless——" He paused. "But we shall see."

Silently Marishka followed into the Metternichgasse and up the steps of the Embassy and into a lofty salon where Captain Goritz bade her wait, and disappeared. A gloomy room with dingy frescoes of impossible cupids and still more impossible roses. Roses—the *leit motif* of her tragedy! There were mirrors—many mirrors, all of which seemed to be reflecting her pallid face. She was weary and covered with dust, but not so weary as she was desperate. Why should she wait again, while Sophie Chotek was here—here in Vienna. Unable to remain seated, she rose and walked about the room, the eternal feminine impelling a rearrangement of her hat and veil at the long mirror near the upper end of the room. Beside her was a window which opened upon a small court. Opposite this window was another window from which came sound of voices. She listened. It was her privilege, for they were speaking of her.

"...I acted upon my own judgment, Excellency. There seemed nothing else to do. The Countess Strahni has given me her word of honor. She will keep it."

"But the telegraph——"

"Sealed——"

"Impossible!"

"I beg you to try it—at once."

"Ah—the telephone!"

Marishka heard the clicking of the instrument and the voice again asking for a number. Silence. And then,—"I do not understand...." A pause. "*Ach—so!*" Another click and tinkle of the bell. "*Donnerwetter*, Herr Hauptmann! You are right. They say there is a temporary derangement of the system."

Another bell sounded. A door opened and shut. Then a question in the same voice.

"Graf von Mendel, the Archduke Franz reached Vienna this afternoon with the Duchess on the way to Sarajevo. Where are they now?"

Another voice replied, "I do not know, Excellency. They were at prayers in the Capuchin Church."

"When does their train leave Vienna?"

"At six—from the Staats Bahnhof—Excellency."

"It is six o'clock now," cried the other voice in dismay. "We are too late——"

Marishka heard no more. It was enough. Too late! She had failed. Her sacrifice, her atonement,—fruitless. She sank into a chair and buried her face in her hands, trying to think. But in her head was a dull chaos of sounds, echoes of her wild ride, and her body swayed as she sat. She had never fainted, but for a moment it seemed that she lost consciousness. She found herself presently staring through her fingers at the pattern in the gray aubusson carpet—and wondering where she was. Then she heard the voices again and remembered that she must listen.

The voice of the one they called Excellency was speaking.

"*Herr Gott*, Goritz! Austria's mad archdukes! The telegraph also closed! It is unbelievable. I must send a message in code to Berlin."

"It would be delayed," said Goritz dryly.

"But something must be done——"

"If you will permit——"

"Speak."

"Excellency, this is a desperate game. I thought perhaps we should arrive in time to get a message through. But Herr Windt has wasted no time. We must suit our actions to the emergency ——"

"Of course. But how?"

"Go to Sarajevo—at once."

"But I——"

"Not you, Excellency. I shall go. A railroad book, Graf Mendel, if you please. Today is the twenty-sixth. The Archduke goes by way of Budapest. We can save several hours, I think, by way of Gratz and Agram—if there is a train tonight."

"And the Countess Strahni?"

"Your Excellency may well see her usefulness merely in telling what has happened in her efforts to reach the ear of the Duchess of Hohenberg. No word from you to Archduke Franz could be more convincing——"

"*Ja wohl*, even if I could send it——"

"And you cannot—of that I am convinced."

Another voice broke in.

"A train at eight—Excellency—by way of Oedenburg and Brück—reaching Marburg in the morning——"

"Good!"

"And from there," added Goritz, "by automobile along the new military road through Brod. We might reach Sarajevo tomorrow night—surely by Sunday morning."

"If that would not be too late."

"It is the only thing to do."

A silence. And then—

"The Countess Strahni is here?"

"Yes, Excellency."

"You will make proper preparations to leave at once—secretly—you understand. I will secure the necessary papers."

"*Zu befehl*, Excellency——"

Without waiting to hear the conclusion of the interview Marishka moved away from the window to the further end of the room, and when Goritz came some moments later she stood looking out upon the traffic of the street. Fortunately dissimulation was not difficult, as the growing darkness of the room hid her face.

"We are too late," said Captain Goritz. "The Archduke's train has gone."

"How terrible!" muttered Marishka.

"Are you prepared to go on, Countess Strahni?"

"Yes—yes, if——" she paused.

"To Sarajevo—tonight—at once?"

"Yes—at once."

She realized that she was repeating his words like a parrot, but she seemed to be speaking, moving as in a dream. Captain Goritz came closer and examined her face in the dim light of the window.

"You are tired?"

"A little——"

"I am sorry. I wish I could spare you further trouble."

"It does not matter."

Her voice was very close to tears.

He paused uncertainly for a moment.

"Countess Strahni, we leave at eight by the night train. I shall make arrangements for your comfort, a sleeping compartment. In the meanwhile you may go upstairs to a guest room of the Embassy and rest. If you will write a note asking for a valise with necessary articles of apparel, I will see that it is brought to you. A dark suit and heavy veil."

He walked to the side of the room and touched a button. "You see," he said with a smile, "I am trusting you."

"You are very kind."

"*Bitte*. You will not mention the Embassy."

"No."

A man-servant appeared.

"His Excellency wishes the Countess Strahni to occupy a room upstairs. You will inform one of the upstairs maids that everything is to be done for her comfort. You will also bring to his Excellency's office a note which Countess Strahni will write."

The man bowed, then stood aside while Marishka went out.

"At half-past seven, Countess——"

She nodded over her shoulder to where the German stood with bowed head looking after her.

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## CHAPTER X

### DIAMOND CUTS DIAMOND

Captain Leo Goritz made it a habit to neglect no detail. There was but a little more than an hour of time, but he acted swiftly. At his request the Ambassador procured money, and from the War Ministry the necessary papers, a safe conduct for an officer of the Fifteenth Army Corps, returning to his regiment at Sarajevo with his wife. Graf von Mendel attended to the secret arrangements for their departure from the Embassy and booked the passage. Captain Goritz sat at a desk in a private office, upon which was a small copper teapot above a spirit lamp. The water in the pot was steaming. A servant knocked at the door and brought him a letter.

"Ah! You followed my directions about the paper and ink?"

"As you ordered, Herr Hauptmann. And a maid is with the Countess Strahni."

"Very good. Wait outside and be prepared to take a message in an automobile."

"*Zu befehl*, Herr Hauptmann."

As the servant reached the door Goritz halted him.

"The room which the Countess Strahni has is not on the side toward the British Embassy?"

"No, Herr Hauptmann."

"Very good. You may go."

The man withdrew, closing the door gently. And Captain Goritz took the note of the Countess Strahni and held it in front of the copper teapot, moving it to and fro, the back of the envelope in the jet of steam. In a moment the flap of the envelope curled back and opened. The thing was simplicity itself. He took two slips of paper out of the envelope and read them through attentively, smiling amusedly as he did so. Then without waste of time, he put one of the notes before him, and drawing some writing paper nearer wrote steadily for ten minutes, tearing up sheet after sheet and burning each in turn. At last apparently satisfied with what he had written he put the sheet aside and burned the original note in which he had been so interested. Then he addressed several small envelopes, glancing from time to time at the other note of the Countess Strahni upon the desk in front of him. The envelopes all bore the words,

HERR HUGH RENWICK Strohgasse No. 26 Wien.

At last, critically selecting one of those he had written, he burned the others, and folding the note enclosed it in the smaller envelope, which he sealed carefully, putting it with the Countess Strahni's letter into the original and larger envelope, which he pasted anew and carefully closed. Then he rang the bell, and when the man appeared:

"You will take this note to the given address. You will explain that the note within is to be delivered tonight at eight o'clock. Then you will wait twenty minutes for a suitcase or valise and bring it here. That's all. And hasten."

"*Zu befehl*, Herr Hauptmann."

Goritz sat for a moment—just a moment of contemplation. It was merely a thread of possibility, a chance, if other expedients had failed, but thoroughly worth taking. His man Kronberg was a good shot, but he might have missed, and if so Europe was large, and Herr Renwick clever. The hook of Leo Goritz was baited with a delectable morsel—most delectable—it would have been childish not to use it. Where Marishka Strahni was, there also was the heart of Renwick—the Englishman with the nine lives—the last of which must be taken.

This duty accomplished, Goritz went to a room upstairs, bathed and dressed in the uniform which had been provided, packing a large bag with several objects besides clothing and necessities of the toilet, including two automatic pistols, and went down to the Embassy office. All this had occupied an hour. He was awaiting Marishka when, somewhat refreshed and newly attired, she descended and entered the Embassy office. His Excellency rose and bowed over her hand—

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### **His Excellency rose and bowed over her hand**

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"Captain Goritz tells me that you have consented to help us in this extraordinary affair. I wish you Godspeed, Countess Strahni, and a safe return," he added with some deliberateness.

She glanced at Captain Goritz who stood in a military attitude, but he only smiled politely and said nothing.

"I thank Your Excellency for your hospitality and protection," she said slowly. "I am sure that I shall be quite safe with Captain Goritz——"

"Ober Lieutenant Carl von Arnstorf, at your service," corrected Goritz, "of the Third Regiment, Fifteenth Army Corps."

Marishka smiled.

"And I?"

"Frau Ober Lieutenant von Arnstorf," said Goritz shortly.

"It is necessary, I suppose?"

Goritz bowed, and his Excellency added, "It simplifies matters greatly, Countess Strahni."

Marishka shrugged. It was no time for quibbling.

"The way is clear?" asked the Ambassador of von Mendel.

"Quite, Excellency. The side street has been patrolled for ten minutes."

Goritz opened a door which led to a small staircase, and he and Marishka descended and went through the kitchens to a small street or alley where a machine was awaiting them. A question—a reply from a man who had brought down their bags, and they moved slowly out of the alley into a small street.

A bath, food, and a glass of wine had restored Marishka, and she now faced the immediate future with renewed hope and courage. Apart from the belief, fostered by the careful detail of her companions arrangements, that she might still be successful in reaching the ear of the Duchess before the royal train reached Sarajevo, there was an appeal in the hazard of her venture with Captain Goritz. He was a clever man and a dangerous one, who, to gain his ends, whatever they were, would not hesitate to stoop to means beneath the dignity of honorable manhood—an intriguer, a master craftsman in the secret and recondite, a perverted gentleman, trained in a school which eliminated compassion, sentiment and all other human attributes in the attainment of its object and the consummation of its plans. And yet Marishka did not fear Captain Goritz. There is a kind of feminine courage which no man can understand, that is not physical nor even mental, born perhaps of that mysterious relation which modern philosophy calls sex antagonism—a spiritual hardihood which deals in the metaphysics of emotion and pays no tribute to any form of materiality. Captain Goritz, whatever his quality, to Marishka was merely a man. And whatever the forces at his command, her promise, the half uttered threat as to her fate—which she had refused to take seriously—she was aware that she was not defenseless. The elaborateness of the Ambassador's manner, the graces of Graf von Mendel, and Captain Goritz's now covert glances advised her that she was still armed with her woman's weapons. Marishka was young, but her two years in the life of the gayest court in Europe had sharpened her perceptions amazingly, but she knew that if beauty is a woman's letter of credit worth its face value with a man, it can also

be a dangerous liability. Captain Goritz differed from the gay idlers of the Viennese Court. The signs of interest he had given her were slight,—a courtesy perhaps a trifle too studied, a lingering glance of his curiously penetrating eyes which might even have been impelled by professional curiosity, a thoughtfulness for her comfort which might have been any woman's due, and yet Marishka did not despair.

They reached the railway station uneventfully, where she learned that men from the Embassy had followed on bicycles as a matter of precaution, and the travelers found their compartment and were safely installed. She sank into her place silently and looked out of the window into the blur of moving lights as Vienna was left behind them. Upon the seat opposite her sat the newly created officer of the Fifteenth Army Corps, Ober Lieutenant Carl von Arnstorf, looking rather smart in his borrowed plumage. The intimacy of their new situation did not frighten her, for she thought that already she had read enough of her companion's character to know that at least so far she was on safe ground. She gave him permission to smoke without his asking it, and this, it seemed, made for the beginnings of a new informality in their relations.

"There isn't the slightest reason," she said with a smile, "that you should be uncomfortable. Since you are doomed for the present to share my imprisonment——"

"Doomed?" he exclaimed civilly. "You may be sure that I don't look upon such a doom with unhappiness, Countess. Are you very tired?"

"A little. I shall sleep presently."

"Do you know," he said as he thoughtfully inhaled his cigarette, "for the first time in my rather variegated career, I find myself in a false position."

"Really! How?"

"I will explain. I have had much dealing to do with women—with women of a certain sort. It is a part of my trade. Were you unscrupulous, intriguing, you would meet your match. As it is you have me at a disadvantage."

"I?"

"I have felt it—from the first. Even a secret agent has eyes, dimensions, senses. I am a little abashed as if in the presence of phenomena. Your helplessness and innocence, your loyalty and unselfishness—you must be sure that I am not unaware of them."

Marishka laughed easily.

"You restore my faith in human kind, Captain Goritz. You'll admit that your attitude toward me has been far from reassuring."

"Countess, I beg of you——"

"The alternative to disobeying your wishes—destruction—death!" she went on, shuddering prettily.

"I am merely a cog in the great wheel of efficiency. I spoke figuratively——"

"But of course you know," she broke in quickly, with another laugh, "that I didn't believe you. I haven't really been frightened at all. How *could* I be? You're not in the least alarming. To face the alternative you imposed would take courage. I am easily frightened at a mouse. The deduction is obvious——"

He laughed and then said soberly, "It is far from my wish to frighten you. That kind of brutality has its justification, but this is not the occasion, nor you the woman."

"I was sure of it. If I hadn't been I shouldn't have come with you."

"Ah!" Goritz straightened and stared at her. "But—your promise——"

"I should have broken that and asked the first *gendarme* in the Ringstrasse to take me home. You admit that the plan would have been feasible?"

He shrugged.

"The Countess Strahni's word of honor——"

"Honor is as honor does and I am here, Captain Goritz."

"I trust that you will have no reason to regret your decision."

"That sounds like another threat."

"It isn't. I actually mean what I say. A secret agent doesn't permit himself such a luxury very often," he laughed.

"Then you're not going to murder me offhand——"

"Countess, I protest——"

"You wish my last moments to be graced with courtesy. I shall at least die like a rose—in aromatic pain."

Her irony was not lost on him. He was silent a moment, regarding her soberly.

"Countess, you are too clever to be unkind—your lips too lovely to utter words so painful. I could not do you harm—it is impossible. I pray that you will believe me."

"I am merely taking you at face value, Herr Hauptmann," she returned coolly. "You have told me that you are merely a thinking machine, or a cog in the wheel of efficiency, which plans my elimination——"

"A figure of speech. Your silence was what I meant."

"Ah, silence! Perhaps. It seems that I have already said enough."

"Quite," he smiled. "You have set Europe in a turmoil—another Helen——"

"With another Paris in your background?" she shot at him.

He smiled, lowering his gaze to the ash of his cigarette.

"You speak in riddles."

"It's your trade to solve them."

"Do not underestimate my intelligence, I understand you," he laughed. "It is a fortunate thing for me that you are not a secret agent. My occupation would be gone."

"It is a villainous occupation."

"Why?"

"Because no secret agent can be himself. It's rather a pity, because I'd like to like you."

"And don't you—a little?"

"I might if I thought that I could believe in you. If a man is not true to himself, he cannot be true to those that wish to be his friends."

He was silent for a moment.

"I think perhaps," he said quietly at last, "that you do me an injustice. I am merely the servant of my government——"

"Which, stops at no means—even death."

"I too look death in the face, Countess," he said with a slow smile. "It lurks in every byway—hangs in every bush."

"It is frightful," she sighed, "to live like that, preying upon others, and being preyed upon—when the world is so beautiful."

"The world is just what men have made it. I, too, once dreamed——" His words trailed off into silence, and he looked out of the window into the night.

"And now?" she asked.

Something in the tone of her voice made him straighten and glance at her. He had seen the same look in other women's eyes.

"And now, I dream no more, Countess Strahni," he said abruptly.

Marishka's gaze fell before his.

"I am sorry," she said.

There was another silence in which Captain Goritz took out another cigarette.

"I do not think that I quite—understand you, Countess Strahni——"

"Naturally," she broke in. "You have known me—let us see—a little less than twelve hours."

Her smile disarmed him.

"You are far from transparent, Countess," he said quizzically.

"And if I were?"

"It would probably be because you wished me to see something beyond," with a laugh.

"To one who deals in mystery and intrigue, sincerity must always be bewildering."

"H—m! I was once stabbed in the back by a woman who was too sincere."

The smile left Marishka's face. "How terrible!"

"It was. I nearly died. It was my mistake, you see."

Marishka was silent for a long moment. And then,

"I'm afraid, Captain Goritz, that the world has left you bitter."

"To the secret agent the world is neither sweet nor bitter. He has no sense of taste or of feeling. He is merely a pair of ears—a pair of eyes which nothing must escape——"

"Deaf to music—blind to beauty," sighed Marishka. "From the bottom of my heart I pity you."

Captain Goritz gazed at her for a long moment, in silence, then his eyes narrowed slightly and his voice was lowered.

"It is rather curious, Countess Strahni, that you should hold in such low esteem a profession practiced by one of your most favored friends."

"Mine?" she questioned, startled.

"Herr Renwick," he replied dryly, "is a secret agent of the Serbian government."

A gasp escaped her, and she struggled for her composure at the mention of Hugh Renwick's name.

"That is impossible."

"I beg your pardon," he said politely, "I happen to know it to be the truth."

She laughed uneasily.

"Until two weeks ago Herr Renwick was an attaché of the British Embassy," she asserted.

"Of course. But he has been also in the pay of the Serbian government—Austria's enemy."

"You are misinformed," she gasped.

"I beg your pardon. England and Serbia are on excellent terms. You will not deny that Herr Renwick has been to Belgrade in the last two weeks?"

"You—you——" she paused in consternation, aware again of this man's omniscience.

"The details had not been clear until my return to Vienna. Think for a moment. Herr Renwick visits Belgrade and Sarajevo while a plan is arranged to take the life of the Archduke Franz. It is well within the bounds of possibility——"

"Your skill in invention does you credit," she put in quickly, "but Herr Renwick has no interest in the death of the Archduke. On the contrary, he has done what he could to save him."

"You will admit that it was Renwick who gave you the information of this plot."

"Yes—but——"

"One moment. You'll also admit that he gave no authority for his information."

"But he did what he could to help me warn the Archduke."

"H—m! You did not know perhaps that it is to Serbia's interest and to Renwick's to warn the Archduke. Austria needs a pretext to make war on Serbia. Every diplomat in Europe is aware of that. If the Archduke is attacked in Sarajevo, war will be declared on Serbia within a week."

He paused a moment watching Marishka's face, intent upon its changing expressions.

"Herr Renwick is no enemy of Austria," she asserted firmly.

"If he is no enemy of Austria, how could he act for the Serbian government, which follows instructions from St. Petersburg? Herr Renwick knew of the plot against the life of the Archduke, for he told you of it. Where did he learn of it? In Sarajevo or Belgrade, where it was hatched. Who informed him? His friends of the Serbian Secret Service who live among the anarchists at Sarajevo and Belgrade."

"I do not believe you."

"You must. Serbia has done what she can to prevent this crime. His Excellency tells me that today the Serbian Minister in Vienna pleaded with the Austrian Ministry to use its efforts to have the visit of the Archduke Franz postponed. He was ignored."

He paused and flicked his cigarette out of the window, while Marishka gazed straight before her, trying to think clearly of Hugh Renwick. A Serbian spy! It was impossible. And yet every word that this man spoke hurt her cruelly. Renwick had been in Sarajevo and Belgrade, for he had told her so. He alone of all persons outside the Secret Government of Austria had been in a position to know the details of the plot and to prepare her for them. He had sought to use her in warning the Duchess, not as an agent of humanity and Christian charity, but as the emissary of the cowardly and vicious government across the border, Austria's enemy, Serbia the regicide and the degenerate, about the fate of which hung the peace of Europe. Hugh Renwick!

Her mind refused her. Fatigue and want of sleep were making her light-headed. She would not believe. She shut her eyes and by an effort of will managed to get control of her voice. "I find that I am very tired, Captain Goritz," she said quietly.

"Ah, it was very thoughtless—inconsiderate of me," he said, with sudden accents of civility. "It is very painful to believe ill of those to whom one is attached," he finished suavely.

"You are mistaken," she said slowly. "There is no attachment between Herr Renwick and me."

"A friend, let us say, then," he put in keenly, "in whom one is disappointed."

"It is nothing to me, Captain Goritz," she said, meeting his eyes bravely, "what Herr Renwick is or does."

He smiled and bowed.

"Still," he said with his exasperating pertinacity, "it is of course interesting to know the truth. It would perhaps be still more interesting to know what Herr Renwick has to say in regard to the matter."

"I do not care what Herr Renwick would have to say. I do not expect to see Herr Renwick again, Captain Goritz, in Vienna or elsewhere."

He smiled at her politely.

"But you will admit, it is not within the bounds of possibility. Herr Renwick is clever—  
indefatigable—"

Marishka started up in her seat.

"You mean?"

"Merely that Herr Renwick is not easily discouraged. I would not be in the least surprised if he followed us on to Sarajevo."

Marishka stared at her companion for a moment and then sank back in her seat.

"Oh," she gasped.

Her long sustained effort to keep pace with events had been too much for her. Her faculties failed to respond, and she closed her eyes in an attempt to obliterate all sight and sound. Dimly she heard the voice of Captain Goritz above the grinding of the brakes of the train.

"I am sorry that you are so tired, Countess Strahni. I shall now leave you to your own devices. We have reached Brück, and I shall go to another compartment. I shall arrange with the guard to see to your comfort."

The train stopped and the guard opened the door.

"Good-night, *liebchen*," he said with a smile. And as she opened her eyes in astonishment, she heard him say to the guard:

"Frau Lieutenant von Arnstorf desires to sleep. I am going to smoke with a friend in the adjoining carriage. She is not to be disturbed. You understand."

The man saluted and closed the door, and Marishka was alone. With an effort she rose and mechanically made her dispositions for sleep, thinking meanwhile of the words of Captain Goritz and feeling a dull and unhappy sense of disappointment and defeat. There was a latent cruelty under his air of civility which astonished and terrified her. And the revelations with regard to Hugh Renwick, astounding though they were, had in them just enough of a leaven of fact to make them almost if not quite credible. Hugh Renwick, the man she had chosen—a friend, a paid servant of atrocious Serbia! She could not—would not believe it. And yet this man's knowledge of European politics was simply uncanny. If his civility had disarmed her earlier in the day, if she had been able to speak lightly of the threat of her imprisonment, the fear that had always been in her heart was now a blind terror—not of the man's passions but of his lack of them. He was cold, impenetrable, impervious—a mind, a body without a soul. He haunted her. She lay on her couch and stared wide-eyed at vacancy. The sound of his voice still rang in her ears. She wondered now why the memory of it was so unpleasant to her. And then she thought she knew that it was because the magnetism of his eyes was missing. His body was a mere shell covering an intricate piece of machinery. She tried to think what it must be like to be actuated by a mind without a soul. She had pledged herself obedience to this man, trusting to her implicit faith in the ultimate goodness of every human creature to bring her through this venture safe from harm.

Vaguely, as though in dreams, she remembered that this man had thought that Hugh Renwick would follow her to Sarajevo. She had written him a note of warning telling him to leave for England at once. Would he disregard her message, discover where she had gone, and if so, would he follow? Renwick's sins, whatever they were, seemed less important in this unhappy moment of her necessity. He had failed her in a crucial hour—

She started up from her couch a smile upon her lips. Hugh Renwick was no Serbian spy. The man, Goritz, lied. Hugh Renwick and Goritz—it was not difficult to choose! One a man who let no personal suffering—not even the contempt of the woman he loved interfere with his loyalty to his country; the other, one who used a woman's loyalty as a means to an end—cruelly, relentlessly—which was the liar? Not Hugh Renwick. Weary and tortured, but still smiling, Marishka sank back upon her couch and at last, mercifully, she slept.

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# CHAPTER XI

## THE MAN IN BLACK

It was after dark when the train bearing Herr Windt and Renwick reached the Franz Josef station, the stolen machine of Altensteig having been left at Budweis with Hadwiger, who was to return it to its owner and in the name of the state to make proper arrangements for compensation. Herr Windt, sadder if no wiser, took a *fiacre* and drove off hastily, leaving Renwick to his own devices.

To the Englishman, Marishka's case seemed desperate, for though the identity of the driver of the green limousine was unknown, his cleverness in eluding the net which Herr Windt had spread for him indicated him to be an agent of the Wilhelmstrasse, a personal emissary of those near the Kaiser, who was moving with great skill, using every means of a great organization to keep Marishka's mission and identity a secret. But Renwick was not the sort of a man that gives up easily. In the back of his head an idea persisted, and he planned to follow its development for good or ill to its conclusion.

The correctness of his surmise as to the direction of Marishka's flight in the green limousine had convinced him that Vienna was not her final destination. He, too, took a *fiacre* and drove at once to the apartment of Baroness Racowitz. Marishka's guardian was away, but a fee to the Austrian maid put him in possession of the facts.

"No, Herr Renwick," she replied, "Countess Strahni did not return to the apartment, but she was in Vienna and had sent for a suitcase and clothing, which were delivered to a man who waited in an automobile."

"What sort of a man?"

"I couldn't exactly say, sir, a servant, a butler, perhaps; but there was a note for Herr Renwick."

"Ah—give it to me."

"My instructions were to deliver it at eight o'clock at Herr Renwick's residence in the Strohgasse. I have but just returned from there."

Renwick started down the steps and then turned. "There was nothing else?"

"Nothing."

"You do not know where Countess Strahni is?"

"I know nothing more than I have told you, sir."

Renwick rushed out to the waiting *fiacre*, and bade the driver go at top speed. A note from Marishka! Under different circumstances this would not perhaps have been surprising. The difference that the change in their personal relations had wrought in the last few weeks, her mood during their hurried flight to Konopisht, her desertion of him, all of these circumstances made the fact of her writing to him the more significant. She had accepted his services in the escape from Windt, because he had forced them upon her, but he could not forget that she had afterward repudiated him and fled from him without a word of explanation of her sudden decision. His own personal danger had warned him that Marishka, his companion eavesdropper, would also be in jeopardy at the hands of those unseen forces which were working in the interests of the Wilhelmstrasse. Marishka had thrown herself into their power and was perhaps at this very moment in danger. But he was soon to know the facts. At his apartment his servant handed him the note and hastily he tore it open and read.

I have gone to Sarajevo. I must do what I can, but I need you. I am a prisoner and in great personal danger if we are stopped en route. Therefore move secretly, telling no one. Go to the Hotel Europa, where I will try to communicate with you.

M. S.

Renwick read the communication through twice, and then glanced at his watch. Nine o'clock. There was no time to go to the British Embassy in the Metternichgasse, though he would have liked to know if anything had been seen of Marishka at the German Embassy which was just adjoining. But he wrote a note to Sir Herbert, then called his servant, who packed a bag while Renwick bathed and dressed. At ten he was seated in the train for Budapest—a slow train that he had taken two weeks before on his mission to Belgrade.

He had made this move on impulse, without second thought, for Marishka's message as to her destination again justified his surmises and corroborated his fears as to her perilous situation. No other thoughts save those of her danger and her need of him had entered his head, and he had moved quickly, aware that any loss of time might be fatal to his hope of helping her. But seated in his compartment of the railway carriage, he had time to consider the note in all its aspects and in its relation to the extraordinary events of the day. There were but two other occupants of the carriage, an old gentleman with a white beard, and a young Hungarian officer—a vacuous looking youth in uniform—neither of them obviously of material from which secret service agents are made. After the experience at the Konopisht railway station, Renwick had no humor to be shot at in such close quarters, where the range would necessarily be deadly. He settled his automatic

comfortably in his pocket, and after another and more reassuring inspection of his travelling companions he took out Marishka's note and examined it carefully.

The knowledge he possessed as to her situation suggested caution. An agency which could attempt to take his life would not be above forgery. Marishka's hand? There seemed no doubt of it. It was not difficult for Renwick to remember the peculiarities of her angular writing. The notes he had received from her, invitations, appointments, apologies—very often apologies, he remembered with a slow smile—dainty, faintly scented missives on gray paper which bore her crest, differed from this hurriedly written scrawl on a heavier paper which he had no means of identifying. Only upon closer inspection did he discover a hesitation in the lower curves and upward strokes of the letters which were not characteristic of the decisive Marishka.

Without being certain of its spuriousness, he came to the conclusion that because of its contents, the note was for the present to be regarded as an object for suspicion. Would Marishka—the Marishka who a few hours ago had treated him with such acidulous politeness—write, "I need you"? Could contemptuous silence be turned so quickly into urgent appeal? Her danger made such a transition a possibility, and if she was now ready to recant, all the more reason why he should obey. The one thing about the message which struck a jarring note was the request for secrecy under plea of personal danger. And if a forgery—why should his enemies speak of her personal danger? A lure! So obvious a one that only the veriest dolt could be deceived by it. The situation then resolved itself into this: He was invited to go to Sarajevo—if by Marishka, to save her from personal danger or abduction by her captor—if by the German agent, with Marishka as a lure, to be the victim of a conspiracy which planned either murder or imprisonment. And, however keen his own prescience, Renwick realized that the note had so far succeeded in its object. He was on his way.

He was too tired tonight to do the situation justice, for the blow at the back of his head had taken some of his strength, and he realized that without sleep his utility would be impaired for the morrow. And after a glance at his companions, he decided to chance it, and settling himself comfortably, he was soon heavily sleeping.

Renwick was awakened some while later by the young Hungarian officer's cursing as he stumbled over the Englishman's feet. A glance at his watch showed Renwick that he had slept four hours. It was dawn. Beside him at the further end of the seat the old man with the white beard still slept. Renwick glanced out of the window and found that the station was Vacz. They were twenty or thirty miles from the Hungarian capital. The morning was cool, and Renwick stepped down from the open door upon the platform and stretched his limbs, sniffing the air eagerly. He felt renewed, invigorated, and the ache at his head was gone. He had made no plans beyond the very necessary one of getting money at the British Consulate and taking the first train south. The difficulties in making proper connections, the probability that somewhere he must desert the railroad and beg, buy, or steal a motor car, and the ever present danger of a shot from a German agent confronted him, but in his early morning humor nothing seemed impossible. He would get through in some way and find a means of reaching Marishka! And if Marishka were already spirited away? He would find her and the green limousine chap with whom he would have a reckoning.

Impatient of the delay of the train, he took out his cigarette case and was about to smoke, when the warning of the guard was shouted, and he got into his carriage, followed by another traveler who clambered in at the last moment and sank into the seat opposite. As the train moved, the two men scanned each other in the light of the growing dawn which now vied with the flickering light of the overhead lamp in their compartment. The stranger was a very tall man in dark clothes, who gave an instant impression of long rectangularity. He had a long nose, a long upper lip which hung over a thin slit of a mouth which resembled a buttonhole slightly frayed by wear. His chin was long and square and, like his upper lip, blue, as though a stiff black beard were in constant battle with a razor. His eyes were large and regarded Renwick with a mild melancholy as he bowed the Englishman a good morning. Renwick nodded curtly. He had planned another nap and hardly relished sitting awake and staring at the sepulchral visitor. Where last night's weariness had sealed his eyes to the ever-present sense of danger, morning brought counsel of caution and alertness. The leanness of the huge intruder was of the kind that suggested endurance rather than malnutrition, a person who for all his pacific and rather gloomy exterior, could be counted on to be extremely dangerous.

In a situation where any man might prove to be his hidden enemy, Renwick was learning to be wary. And so upon his guard for any movement of hostility, he sat bolt upright and smoked his cigarette, puffing it indolently into the face of his solemn companion. Beyond the first greeting, no words passed between them, and the Englishman, more at his ease, looked out of the window at the low marshlands along the river and planned the business which brought him. Day came swiftly, and before the train reached the city the sun was up in smiling splendor, melting the pale fogbanks of the Danube valley beneath its golden glow.

At the Westbahnhof, Renwick got down, and bag in hand made his way to the railway restaurant for a cup of coffee. The keen morning air had made him hungry, and he breakfasted like a man who does not know where his next meal is coming from. It was not until he paid his check and got up from the table that he noticed his gigantic companion of the train doing likewise, but he gave the matter no thought, and getting into a waiting *fiacre* drove to the British Consulate to make some necessary arrangements, including the procuring of money for possible large expenses. The Archduke and Duchess, he discovered, had slept in their car, which had been shifted to a train

that had left for the south in the early hours of the morning. The service on the road was none too good, except that of the Orient Express, which had gone through last night, but by haste Renwick managed to catch the nine o'clock train for Belgrade, planning to get off it at Ujvidek and trust to Providence for an automobile.

He was no sooner comfortably seated in his compartment and congratulating himself upon its emptiness, which would permit of opportunity for sleep, when the door was thrown open and his tall companion of the early morning solemnly entered. Renwick did not know whether to be surprised or angry, and finished by being both, glancing at the intruder through his monocle in a manner distinctly offensive. But the tall man if aware of the Englishman's antagonism gave no sign of it, clasping his cotton umbrella with large bony hands and gazing gloomily at the passing landscape.

An accidental meeting of two travelers bound in the same direction? Perhaps. But there was too much at stake for Renwick to be willing to take chances, and yet he could not kill and throw out of the window an entire stranger who looked like the proprietor of a small confectionery shop, in mourning for a departed friend. Of course there was nothing to be done, but the man's presence irritated Renwick. As the moments went on, and the man still silently stared out of the window, Renwick's choler diminished. The fellow was quite harmless, a person from whom murder and secret missions were miles asunder. If the man of the green limousine had foreseen that Renwick would take the nine o'clock train for Budapest and had set this behemoth upon him, the man would have made an attempt upon his life this morning in the ride between Vacz and the capital. And how, since the telegraph lines were closed to the German agent, could this person have been put upon the scent? It hardly seemed possible that this was an agent of Germany. And yet as the miles flew by, the stranger's silence, immobility and unchanging expression got on Renwick's nerves. He was in no mood to do a psychopathic duel with a sphinx.

The morning dragged slowly. At Szabadka he got down for lunch and was not surprised to see his traveling companion at his elbow, eating with a deliberation which gave Renwick a momentary hope that the train might get off without him. Renwick was already in his carriage and the guard calling when the fellow stalked majestically from the eating-room munching at the remains of his *Böhmische Dalcken* and entered the carriage, still clinging to the cotton umbrella, and quite oblivious of the powdered sugar with which he was liberally besmeared. Secret agent! The man was a joke—a rectangular comedy in monosyllables.

There was no connection for Brod at Szabadka until late in the afternoon and Renwick hoped to make better time by going on to Ujvidek, a large town, somewhat sophisticated, where the buying or hiring of a machine would be a possibility. During the afternoon he took Marishka's letter from his pocket and studied it again, now quite oblivious of the creature who had curiously enough resumed the same seat opposite him. And in his concentration upon the problem of the note the man was for the moment forgotten. It was only when he glanced up quickly and quite unintentionally that he saw the gaze of his neighbor eagerly watching him. It was only a fleeting glance, but in it, it seemed, the whole character of his fellow traveler had changed. His hands still clasped the umbrella, the sugar was still smeared upon his sallow cheeks, but it seemed that his eyes had glowed with a sudden intentness. A second later when Renwick looked at him again, the man was staring dully at the passing cornfields and vineyards and he thought he had been mistaken. He would have liked to know more of this fellow, and was again tempted to try to draw him out but the recollection of his former venture dismayed him. So he relapsed into silence and lying back in his seat, one hand in his pocket, he closed his eyes and feigned slumber, watching the man through his eyelashes. For a long while nothing happened. Then at last as Renwick's breathing became regular the giant's head turned, and his eyes regarded the Englishman stealthily. Renwick did not move. But he saw his companion lean slightly forward while one hand left the umbrella handle, unbuttoned his coat and then moved very slowly behind him. That was enough for Renwick, who started upright and covered the man with his automatic. But the other had merely drawn a large and rather soiled handkerchief from a pocket of his trousers and was in the act of blowing his nose when he looked up and saw the impending blue muzzle of Renwick's weapon.

Then his jaw dropped and his eyes flew wide open.

"*Herr Gott!*" he stammered in a husky whisper. "Don't shoot!"

Whether it was the pleasure of discovering that the man had at last found his tongue or whether the innocence of his purpose was explained, Renwick found himself much relieved.

"Are you crazy?" the other was saying. "To draw a pistol upon me like that! What do you mean?"

But Renwick still held the pistol pointed in his neighbor's direction.

"I will trouble you to stand," he said quietly, "with your hands up and back toward me."

The man stared at him wide eyed but at last obeyed, lifting his huge back to its full height, and Renwick ran an investigating hand over his hip pockets. They were empty.

"Thanks," he said at last, "you may be seated." He felt a good deal of a fool but he managed an uncomfortable laugh as he returned the automatic to his pocket. "You see," he explained, "I owe you an apology——"

"Yes, sir—such an outrage upon my dignity. I do not understand——"

"Let me explain," went on Renwick, feeling more idiotic every moment; "I have an enemy who seeks my life and when you put your hand in your pocket I thought that you——"

"It is strange that a gentleman in a railway carriage may not be permitted to blow his nose without being threatened with a pistol," he said hotly.

"But you will admit, my friend, that your always being next to me in trains is at least suspicious."

"*Donnerwetter!* And why, for the same reason, should I not be suspicious of *you?*"

"I trust at least that you have no enemies who seek *your* life."

"Who knows?" he shrugged. "Every man has enemies. I will thank you, sir, to keep your pistol in your pocket."

"Willingly. And in return I may say that you may blow your nose as often as you please."

"*Danke,*" with some irony. "You are very kind. I suppose, if when reaching Ujvidek, I should happen to be going in your direction you would shoot me without further question."

"That would depend on which direction you are taking," replied Renwick, with a sense of abortive humor.

"I go to Brod—thence to Sarajevo——"

"The devil you do——!" cried Renwick in English, starting forward and staring at the man. And then more calmly in German,

"And how are you going?"

The fellow paused and looked out of the window again. "As to that—I do not know," he said slowly.

He had resumed his air of settled gloom, the dignity of which was somewhat marred by a vestige of powdered sugar upon his chin, but in spite of the low esteem in which Renwick had held him, all his former suspicions of the creature rushed over him in a moment.

"And suppose that I, too, should be going to Brod and Sarajevo?" he asked brusquely.

The stranger turned toward him a slow bovine gaze which gradually relaxed into the semblance of a smile.

"*Ach so,*" he replied blandly, "then it is just possible that we may go together."

His manner was sphinxlike again, and the Englishman eyed him curiously, feeling a strong desire to kick him in the shins. But luckily he refrained, saying coolly.

"And what means of transportation do you propose to employ? Of course you know there are no trains——"

"*Natürlich.*"

"Then how shall you travel?"

"And you, Herr Shooter, how shall you go?"

Renwick smiled indulgently.

"If I took an automobile——"

"I should be constrained to go with you."

"Constrained?"

"If you would invite me—or condescend to permit me to pay my share of the expenses."

The man's personality was slowly expanding. Second class confectioners who venture on wild goose chases were rare in Renwick's acquaintance. He was becoming interesting as well as elusive, but Renwick was in no humor for further quibbling.

"I regret that that is impossible. I go on alone," he said decisively.

"*Ach, so,*" said the other sadly. "That is too bad——" His words trailed off into a melancholy silence and he resumed his occupation of looking out of the window. The incident in so far as Renwick was concerned, was concluded.

At least he thought that. At Ujvidek, when Renwick, bag in hand, got down upon the station platform, the stranger stood beside him, fingering his cotton umbrella foolishly and looking this way and that. But when the Englishman after an inquiry of a loiterer, started in search of a garage, he found his fellow traveler at his heels, and the frown which Renwick threw over his shoulder failed utterly to deter him from his purpose—which clearly seemed to be that of continuing his journey in the Englishman's company.

When Renwick reached the garage and talked with the proprietor, a Hungarian whose German was almost negligible, the man of the cotton umbrella abandoned the doorway which he had been darkening with his shadow, and shuffled forward awkwardly.

"If you will permit me," he said solemnly. "I speak the Hungarian quite well. I should be glad to interpret your wishes."

The man's impertinence was really admirable. Renwick's desire to get forward on his long journey made him impatient of obstacles. He shrugged.

"Very well, then. Tell him I must have a machine and chauffeur to take me to Sarajevo by way of Brod. I will pay him handsomely and in advance. I must travel today and all night. I must reach Sarajevo in the morning."

"*Ach, so,*" said the stranger, and Renwick listened to the conversation that ensued, endeavoring by the light of his small knowledge of the language to make out what was said. But he was lost in the maze of consonants.

In a moment the interpreter turned with a smile.

"It is good. There is a machine. This man will drive himself. The price is two hundred *kroner* and the petrol."

"Thank you. That is very good. I must leave within half an hour."

Renwick produced money, the sight of which brought about an amazing activity on the part of the garage man. Renwick strolled to and fro outside, alternately smoking and watching the preparations for departure, while the melancholy giant stood leaning upon his umbrella in the doorway. What was he waiting for? Renwick thought that he had made his intentions sufficiently explicit. At last, his impatience getting the better of him, he stopped before the man with the umbrella.

"I am greatly obliged to you for your kindness. But you understand? I go on alone."

The man in black regarded him blandly.

"That is not a part of the arrangement," he said.

"What do you mean?"

"That I am to go with you."

"I asked you to make no such arrangement."

"It is a pity that perhaps I misunderstood."

Renwick angrily approached the garage owner and tried to make him understand, but he only proceeded with his work with greater alacrity, bowing and pointing to the man in the doorway.

"You observe," said the tall man, "that you will only complicate matters?"

Renwick glared at the other, but he returned the look with an impudent composure, and Renwick, in fear of losing his self-control, at last turned away. Nothing was to be gained by this controversy. After all, what difference did the fellow's presence make? As a source of danger he had already proved himself a negligible quantity. So Renwick with an ill grace at last acquiesced, and within an hour they were on their way, crossing the Danube and turning to their right along a rough road by the Fruska mountains.

The first accident happened before the machine reached Sarengrad, a blowout which made another tire a necessity. The second, a broken leaf of a spring, which made rapid travel hazardous. But it was not until nightfall, in the midst of a desolation of plains, that carburetor trouble of a most disturbing character developed. Renwick paced up and down, offering advice and suggestion and then swearing in all the languages he knew, but the chauffeur only shrugged and sputtered, while the tall man gurgled soothingly. An hour they remained there when Renwick's patience became exhausted, and he gave way to the suspicion which had for some time obsessed him, that the pair of them were conspiring to delay him upon his way.

He came up behind the tall man who was bending over the open hood of the car, and catching him roughly by the elbow, swung him around and faced him angrily.

"I've had about enough of this," he said. "Either that car moves in five minutes or one of you will be hurt."

He moved his hand toward his pocket to draw his weapon but his wrist was caught in midair by a grip of steel that held Renwick powerless. The Englishman was stronger than most men of his weight and made a sharp struggle to get loose, but the man in black disarmed him as he would have disarmed a child, and calmly put the pistol into his own pocket. It was not until then that his bulk had seemed so significant, and the real purpose of his presence been so apparent. There was no use in battling with this melancholy Colossus who might, if he wished, break every bone in Renwick's body.

"Herr Renwick, if it will please you to be reasonable," he said, releasing the Englishman and speaking as if soothing a spoiled child.

At the mention of his name, Renwick drew back in growing wonder.

"Who—who are you?" he asked.

"My name is Gustav Linke," he said suavely. "I have been sent to keep you from coming to harm. You see"—and he patted the pocket which contained Renwick's pistol, "it is not difficult to run into danger when one is always pulling one's pistol out."

"Who sent you?" demanded Renwick furiously.

The man in black coolly picked up his cotton umbrella which in the struggle had fallen to the ground.

"That is not a matter which need concern you."

"I insist upon knowing and in going on to Brod without delay."

The other merely shrugged.

"I regret to say that that is impossible."

"Why?"

"Because my instructions were to keep you from reaching the Bosnian border until tomorrow morning."

"You are——?"

"Herr Gustav Linke—that is all, Herr Renwick."

"An agent of——"

"The agent of Providence—let us say. Come. Be reasonable. I am sure that the trifling disorder in the carburetor may be corrected. We shall go on presently. The night is young. We shall reach Brod perhaps by daylight. What do you say? Shall we be friends?"

There was nothing else to be done. The disgusted Renwick shrugged and got into the tonneau of the machine, awaiting the pleasure of his captor. Out of the chaos of his disappointment came the one consoling thought, that whatever Linke was, he was not a German.

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## CHAPTER XII

### FLIGHT

The visions which disturbed Marishka Strahni in that dim borderland between sleep and waking persisted in her dreams. And always Goritz predominated—sometimes smiling, sometimes frowning but always cold, sinister and calculating. He made love to her and spurned her by turns, threatened her with the fate of the Duchess, whom she saw dead before her eyes, the victim of a shot in the back. There was a smoking pistol in Marishka's hand, and another figure lying near, which wore the uniform of an Austrian general—the Archduke Franz it seemed, until she moved to one side and saw that the figure had the face of Hugh Renwick. She started up from her couch, a scream on her lips—calling to Hugh——! Was she awake or was this another dream, more dreadful than the last? There followed a conflict of bewildering noises, as though night had mercifully fallen upon a chaos of disaster. She sat up and looked around her. A train.

She gasped a sigh of relief as her gaze pierced the dimness of the elusive shadows. She remembered now. Captain Goritz. But she was still alone. She lay down again, trying to keep awake in dread of the visions, but exhaustion conquered again and she slept, dreaming now of another Hugh, a tender and chivalrous lover who held her in his arms and whispered of roses.

It was daylight when she awoke. Captain Goritz was now sitting by the window smiling at her. She started up drowsily, fingering at her hair.

"You have slept well, Countess?" he asked cheerfully and without waiting for her reply. "It is well. You have probably a trying day before you."

Marishka straightened and looked out of the window past him at the sunlit morning. Could it be possible that this alert pleasant person was the Nemesis of her dreams? The world had taken on a new complexion, washed clean of terrors by the pure dews of the night.

"Thanks, Herr Hauptmann," she smiled at him. "I am quite myself again."

"That is fortunate," he said. "We are nearly at our journey's end—at least this part of it. Our train goes no further than Marburg."

"And then?"

"An automobile—a long journey."

"I am quite ready."

At Marburg they got down, and after Marishka had made a hurried toilet, they breakfasted in comfort at the Bahnhof restaurant. If Captain Goritz nourished any suspicion that they were being followed he gave no sign of it, and after breakfast, to Marishka's surprise, Karl the

chauffeur appeared miraculously and announced that their car was awaiting them.

"If I were not sure that you were Herr Lieutenant von Arnstorf," laughed Marishka, "I should say you were the fairy of the magic carpet."

"The magic carpet—*ach*, yes—if we but had one!" he said genuinely.

The motion of the automobile soothed and satisfied her. At least she was doing what she could to reach Sarajevo before the archducal party arrived, and as her companion hopefully assured her, with a fair chance of success. If Marishka could see Sophie Chotek, all her troubles would be over, for then the Wilhelmstrasse would not care to oppose the dictum of the Duchess in favor of one who whatever her political sins in Germany's eyes, had made endless sacrifices to atone.

If Marishka succeeded! But if she failed?

The morning was too wonderful for thoughts of grim deeds or the authors of them. The poisons distilled in her mind the night before were dispelled into the clear air of the mountainside, over which singing streams gushed joyously down. Birds were calling—mating; wild creatures scampered playfully in thicket and hedge; and the peaceful valleys were redolent of sweet odors.

In the long hours of the afternoon Marishka's thoughts were of Hugh Renwick. Perspective had given him a finer contour, for she had Goritz to compare him with. She loved Hugh. She knew now how much. Her happiness had been too sweet to have had such a sudden ending. She had been unkind—cruel—broken with him even when he was bending every effort to aid her. He was trying to help her now for all that she knew.... She had written him a note from the German Embassy—just a few lines which she had enclosed with the message to her maid at the apartment—warning him that he was in danger and praying that he leave the country and return to England, a kindly note which by its anxiety for his safety conveyed perhaps more of what was in her heart than she would have cared to write had she believed that she was to see him again.

What reason had Captain Goritz for believing that Hugh would follow her in this mad quest? How could Hugh be sure where she had gone and with whom? There had been a quality of the miraculous in the judgment of Captain Goritz. What if even now Hugh Renwick were near her? Her pulse went a little faster. Pride—the pride which asks in vain—for a while had been dashed low, and she had scorned him with her eyes, her voice, her mien, her gestures, all, alas! but her heart. The women of the house of Strahni—! Hugh Renwick had kissed her. And the memory of those kisses amid the red roses of the Archduke was with her now. She felt them on her lips—the touch of his firm strong fingers—the honest gaze of his gray eyes—these were the tokens she had which came to her as evidence that the readings of her heart had not been wrong. A Serbian spy—! She smiled confidently.

In a moment she stole a glance at Captain Goritz, who was bent forward studying his road map. She waited until he gave directions to the chauffeur and then spoke.

"Captain Goritz," she said carelessly, "you manage so cleverly that I am beginning to trust implicitly to your guidance and knowledge. But there is one thing that puzzles me. It must be more than a whim which makes you think that Herr Renwick will follow us to Sarajevo."

"Not *us*, Countess," he smiled; "I said *you*."

"But granting that he would follow me—which I doubt—how could he know where I have gone?"

Goritz laughed easily.

"He will find a way."

Marishka's face grew sober.

"I fear Herr Renwick's friendship cannot achieve miracles. The last he saw of me was in a hut in Bohemia. What clew could he have—? What possible—"

"Ah, Countess," Goritz broke in, "you do not realize as I have done the cleverness of the Austrian Secret Service. We have so far eluded them. We were very lucky but it cannot be long before the green limousine will be discovered, and the direction of our journey."

"But even that—"

"To a clever man like Herr Renwick—to a man whose affections are involved," he added slowly, "it would not be difficult to decide where you have gone. He knows the discomforts and dangers you have passed through to achieve your object. He will, of course, seek your apartment and read the meaning of your sending for your clothing just as easily"—he paused a moment and smiled at the back of Karl's head—"just as easily," he repeated slowly, "as though you yourself had written him a note telling him—er—exactly which train you had taken."

Marishka felt the warm color flooding her neck and brows. In writing Renwick she had broken her promise to this man not to communicate with her friends. Goritz watched her pretty distress for a moment with amusement which speedily turned to interest.

"Of course, Countess, you did *not* write to him?" he said, with sudden severity.

"I owe you an explanation, Captain Goritz—" she said timidly.

"You wrote—Countess?" evincing the most admirable surprise.

"I inclosed a few words in my note to my maid—a warning of danger and a request that Herr Renwick leave at once for England——"

And as Goritz frowned at her, "Surely there is no harm in that."

"Your word of honor——"

"I betrayed nothing of my whereabouts or plans," she pleaded.

"How can I know that you speak the truth?"

"I swear it."

Goritz shrugged lightly.

"It is, of course, a woman's privilege to change her mind. Still, you put me upon my guard. It is unfortunate. How can I be sure that you will not be sending other notes without my permission to the Europa when we reach Sarajevo?"

"The Europa——? I fail to understand."

"The Europa Hotel," he said with a curious distinctness, "where all English people stop, and where of course your friend Mr. Renwick will stop."

Marishka examined him keenly.

"Your prescience cannot be infallible."

"No. But Herr Renwick will come to Sarajevo," he repeated confidently.

He was still studying the road map and she was silent, thinking. But in a moment he raised his head and shrugged again.

"Of course it is nothing to me. As an English subject he has the protection of his Ambassador. Even if my orders demanded his arrest I should be without power to carry them out."

"It is easier to deal with the credulity of women," she said quietly.

"Countess Strahni, you make it very difficult for me—doubly difficult since I have learned how lightly you hold your promise."

"But confession absolves——"

"With me, perhaps, because I could refuse you nothing, but not with those that have sent me."

"But why should you be uneasy at the possibility of Herr Renwick following to Sarajevo?"

"I do not relish the disturbance of my plans."

She smiled a little at that.

"I think I should be a little happier if I knew just what those plans were."

He did not reply at once. Then he went on slowly, choosing his words with care.

"My sentiments of respect must by this time have told you that no harm can come to you. Last night His Excellency, the German Ambassador, informed me that I shall do a great damage to the friendship between your nation and mine, if I presume to take you across the German border without your consent. I have been much moved by his advice. He has already written to the Wilhelmstrasse in your behalf. I cannot yet absolve you from your promise since my own actions in Austria have been far from conventional. Herr Renwick, if he chooses, can make my visit to Sarajevo most unpleasant. But I see no reason, after our purpose has been achieved, why you should not be restored to your friends, even to Herr Renwick, if that is your desire," and then in a lower tone, "I can assure you, Countess Strahni, that I relinquish you to him with an ill grace."

"Herr Renwick is no Serbian spy, Captain Goritz," she said steadily.

He smiled.

"Oh, you do not believe me. Very well. You will discover it for yourself."

"How?" she asked timidly.

He looked at her with every mark of admiration, but his reply did not answer her question.

"Herr Renwick is indeed fortunate in having so loyal a friend—even though, as you say, there is nothing between you in common. I envy him the possession. I hope that he may better deserve it."

She smiled but did not speak for a moment and then, "Why is it that you so dislike a man whom you do not know—whom you—you have never seen?"

Goritz bent forward toward her, his voice lowered while his strange dark eyes gazed full into hers:

"Need I tell you?" he whispered. "You have thought me cruel, because I have done my duty, heartless—cold—a mere piece of official machinery which could balk at nothing—even the

destruction of a woman's happiness—because my allegiance to my country was greater than any personal consideration. But I am not insensible to the appeals of gentleness, not blind to beauty nor deaf to music, Countess Strahni, as you have thought. Beneath the exterior which may have seemed forbidding to you, I am only human. Last night I took advantage of your weariness and weakness in telling you, with cruel bluntness, of Herr Renwick's relations with the Serbian government. I learned what you have labored to conceal—that you care for him—that you care for one who—"

"It is not true," she broke in calmly. "I do not care for Herr Renwick."

"It would delight me to believe you," he went on with a shake of the head, "but I cannot. It has been very painful to me to see you suffer, for whatever you have done in a mistaken sense of loyalty to your country, nothing can alter the fact of your innocence, your virtue, and your dependence upon my kindness in a most trying situation. I have told you the facts about Herr Renwick because I have believed it my duty, to you and to Austria. If I have hurt you, Countess Strahni," he finished gently, "I pray that you will forgive me."

Marishka was silent, now looking straight before her down the mountain road which they were descending slowly. The voice of Captain Goritz had a sonorous quality which could not have been unpleasant to the ears of any woman. She listened to it soberly, trying to detect the tinkle of the spurious, but she was forced to admit that beyond and behind the mere phrases which might in themselves mean nothing, there was a depth of earnestness that might have proved bewildering to one less versed in the ways of the world than herself. His eyes, singularly clear and luminous, dominated and held her judgment of him in abeyance. For the moment she was able to forget her terrors of the night before, his enmity for Hugh Renwick, and the threat he had hung over her freedom. She did not dare to trust him. Too much still hung in the balance of her favor or disfavor. And yet she was forced to admit the constraint of his fervor, his kindness and courteous consideration. A woman forgives much to those who acknowledge without question the scepter of her femininity.

At last she turned toward him with a smile and gave him her hand. Nor did she withdraw it when bending low he pressed it gently to his lips. This was a game that two could play at.

"We are to be friends, then?" he asked quietly.

"Of course," she smiled at him.

Toward six of the afternoon a trifling mishap to the motor delayed them for two hours, and it was long after midnight before they reached Brod and learned that the train of the Archduke had left within the hour. This was a terrible disappointment, which seemed to menace the success of their venture. But Captain Goritz determined to go on as rapidly as possible, trusting to reach their destination before the royal party left its train, hoping that the sight of Countess Strahni by the Duchess would be sufficient to let down any official barriers which might be interposed. But an unforeseen difficulty at Brod still further delayed them, a difficulty which required all of the ingenuity of Captain Goritz to get them once more upon their way. It was three o'clock in the morning, when having made some necessary repairs to the machine, they reached the Austrian end of the great bridge across the Save. Here they were halted by an iron chain across the bridge entrance and a police officer who, it seemed, looked upon their night traveling with suspicion. Captain Goritz protested indignantly and produced his papers, which the officer inspected by the dim light of an ancient lantern held by a subordinate.

"I am sorry," he said firmly, "but no motor cars are permitted to cross into Bosnia until tomorrow morning."

"But, my friend," said Goritz with an air of outraged patience, "I am an officer of the Third Regiment of the Fifteenth Army Corps returning to Sarajevo from a leave of absence which expires at nine in the morning. It is necessary that my party goes through at once."

"I must obey orders, Herr Ober Lieutenant."

"But my papers are correct. They are signed, you will observe, by General von Hoetzendorf himself."

"I am sorry, but you cannot go through. If you choose to take up the matter with my superior officer, you will find the Kaserne in the main street near the mosque. I shall pass you only upon his visé. That is final. You will please turn your car and return to the village."

Captain Goritz gazed longingly along the pale beam of the motor lamps into the dark reaches of the bridge, and then at the shadow of the heavy chain. At last with reluctance he gave the order to turn back. There seemed no doubt that the restriction was unusual, and that the visit of the Archduke had much to do with the obstruction of traffic between Sarajevo and central Europe. The car moved slowly back through the darkened village in the direction from which they had come, while Goritz planned what was better to be done. The nearest other crossing at Kobas was twenty miles away, over the road by which they had come, and they knew that the roads upon the Bosnian side of the river were mere cow tracks. If the officer at the bridge refused to pass them, how were they to be certain that they would fare any better at the hands of his superior, probably a crusty village official who would not relish being awakened in the small hours of the morning even by a belated army officer? At the order of Captain Goritz, the chauffeur Karl backed the car into a meadow and put out the lights. Then Goritz lighted a cigarette and smoked rapidly.

"Brod is Serbian for ford. Is the passage above the bridge or below?"

"Below, Herr Hauptmann, but dangerous at this season. I should not risk it."

"Ah, I see." He paused a moment, thinking rapidly. "Is there a chain at the other end of the bridge?"

"I have never seen one, Herr Hauptmann."

"Very good. You will await me here."

And without further words he got down and disappeared into the darkness. Marishka sat trembling with uncertainty, trying to pierce the obscurity in the direction in which her companion had gone. Silence, except for the droning of the insects and the distant rushing of the river. Fifteen, twenty minutes in which Marishka sat tensely waiting, hoping, fearing she knew not what, and then silently, merely a darker shadow of the night itself, a figure appeared and silently mounted into the seat beside the waiting Karl.

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## CHAPTER XIII

### TRAGEDY

She heard a few phrases pass between them and then, without lights, the machine suddenly moved forward. The explosions of the engine, muffled though they were, seemed like rifle shots to ears newly accustomed to the silences of the night. But the speed of the motor increased rapidly, and she felt the damp of the river fog brushing her cheek. She could see nothing though she peered into the blackness eagerly. The car was rushing to destruction for all that she knew, yet Karl was driving straight and hard for the entrance of the bridge. Marishka saw the dim gleam of a lantern, heard a hoarse shout, and then the sound of shots lost in the crashing of the timbers of the bridge as they thundered over, the throttle wide, past the bridge house at Bosna-Brod upon the other side of the river, and on without pause through the village into the open road beyond. All this in darkness, which had made the venture the more terrible.

It was with relief that she heard the light laugh and even tones of Captain Goritz.

"That is well done, Karl. Your eyes are better than mine. But I have no humor for a bath in the Bosna, so we will have the lights, if you please."

"They will follow us?" stammered Marishka.

"There is a greater danger of detention at Dervent or Duboj, but I'm hoping the bridge-tender may keep silent. It was stupid of him not to guard the chain."

"You lowered it—?"

"It made a fearful racket, but the roar of the river helped."

A little further down the road, at a signal, Karl brought the car to a stop and silenced the engine, while Goritz got down into the road and listened intently, striking a match meanwhile and looking at the dial of his watch. There were no sounds in the direction from which they had come but the distant roar of the river and the whispering of the wind in the trees.

"It is half-past three, Karl. How far have we to go?"

"More than two hundred kilos—two hundred and fifty perhaps."

"Ah, so much?" and he frowned. "I wish to reach the capital by eight o'clock, Karl," he said.

"*Zu befehl*, Herr Hauptmann—if it is in the machine. I can at least try."

As Goritz got in beside Marishka, he started the engine, and they were off again. As a sign that at least the chauffeur was trying to carry out his orders, in a moment they were rushing along at a furious pace which seemed to threaten destruction to them all. In spite of an impending storm which had now, fortunately, passed, at Brod Karl had lowered the top of the car in order to make better speed in the final race for their goal, and the rush of wind seemed to make breathing difficult, but Marishka clung to the bracket at her side, trying to keep her balance as they swung around the curves, and silently praying. Conversation was impossible until the road rose from the plains of the Save into the mountains, where the speed was necessarily diminished. The car, fortunately, seemed to be a good one, for no machine unless well proven could long stand the strain of such work as Karl was giving it to do. Through Dervent they went at full speed, seeing no lights or human beings. Beyond Duboj the moon came out, and this made Karl's problems less difficult, though the road wound dangerously along the ravines of the Brod river, which tumbled from cleft to cleft, sometimes a silver thread and again a ragged cataract hundreds of feet below. There were no retaining walls, and here and there as they turned sudden and unexpected corners it almost seemed to Marishka that the rear wheels of the machine swirled out into space. She held her breath and closed her eyes from time to time, expecting the car to lose its equilibrium and go whirling over and over into the echoing gorge below them, the depth of which the shadow of the mountains opposite mercifully hid from view. But Karl had no time in which to consider the

thoughts of his passengers. He had his orders. If achievement were in the metal he intended to carry them out. The feudal castles of old Bosnia passed in stately review, Maglaj, Usora, clinging leech-like to their inaccessible peaks, grim sentinels of the vista of years, frowning at the roaring engine of modernity which sent its echoes mocking at their lonely dignity. Marishka could look, but not for long, for in a moment would come the terrible down-grade and the white, leaping road before them, which held her eyes with fearful hypnotism. Death! What right had she to pray for her own safety, when her own lips had condemned Sophie Chotek? There was still a chance that she would reach Sarajevo in time. She had no thought of sleep. Weary as she was, the imminence of disaster at first fascinated—then enthralled her. She was drunk with excitement, crying out she knew not what in admiration of Karl's skill, her fingers in imagination with his upon the wheel, her gaze, like his, keen and unerring upon the road.

Beside her Captain Goritz sat silently, smiling as he watched her.

"It is wonderful, is it not?" he said in a lull, when the machine coasted down a straight piece of road. "Fear is the master passion of life. Even I, Countess, am in love with fear." And then with a laugh, "We shall arrive in time if the tires hold. It is a good machine, a very good machine."

Dawn stole slowly across the heavens between the mountain peaks, an opal dawn, pale and luminous. Here and there objects defined themselves against the velvety surfaces of the hills, a hut by the river brink, a thread of smoke rising straight in the still air, a herdsman driving his flock in a path across the valley. But Karl, the chauffeur, drove madly on, more madly, it seemed, as the light grew better. People appeared as if by magic upon the road, with loaded vehicles bound to market—awe-stricken peasants, who leaped aside and then turned wondering.

The machine climbed a mountain from which a vista of many miles of country was spread out before them, but there was no sign of their destination. Half-past eight—nine—! The roads became crowded again, with vehicles, horsemen, footmen, and groups of soldiers, all traveling in the same direction. Sarajevo was not far distant but they went at a snail's pace, their nerves leaping in the reaction. Marishka, pallid with fatigue, sat leaning forward in her seat, dumb with anxiety. Goritz rubbed his chin thoughtfully. But he had not yet begun to despair. Suddenly the car came to a turning in the road, and the Bosnian capital was spread out at their feet. Goritz looked at his watch. It was nearly ten. If the thing they dreaded had not yet come to pass there might still be time. As they descended the hill into the valley of the Miljacka, it was apparent that the town was in holiday attire. Flags floated from many poles, and the streets and bridges were crowded with people. At the direction of Captain Goritz, Karl drove quickly to the railroad station, where a group of officials stood gesturing and talking excitedly.

"Has His Highness gone into the city?" asked Goritz of the man nearest him.

The fellow paused and turned at the sight of the Austrian uniform.

"Ah, Herr Lieutenant—you have not heard?"

"I have just come down from the hills. What is the matter?"

"A bomb has been thrown into the automobile of the Archduke——"

"He is killed?" asked Goritz, while Marishka leaned forward in horror.

"Fortunately, no. He cast the bomb into the street, but it exploded under the vehicle of his escort, killing several, they say."

"She is safe—Her Highness is safe?" questioned Marishka.

"Yes, but it was a narrow escape," said another man.

"Where is the Archduke now?" asked Goritz.

"At the Rathaus—where he is to receive a testimonial from the Burgomaster, in behalf of the city. From there they go to the Governor's palace, I think."

"Thanks," said Goritz with a gasp of relief, and gave the word to Karl to drive on toward the center of the town.

"Forewarned is forearmed," he muttered to Marishka. "They may not dare to attempt it again. I think you need have no further anxiety, Countess."

"But I must reach Her Highness. I must let her know everything."

"We shall try." And then to Karl, "Go as far as you can into the town, to Franz Josef Street."

But at the tobacco factory the crowd was so great that they could not go on, and Goritz after some directions to Karl, helped Marishka down, and they went forward through the crowd afoot, listening to its excited comments.

"Cabrinoitch——"

"A Serbian, they say. The police seized him."

"I was as near to him as you are. Stovan Kovacevik was hit by a piece of the bomb. They have taken him to the hospital."

"Colonel Merizzi—they say he is dead. And Count von Waldeck badly wounded."

Marishka shuddered. She had known them both at Konopisht. She caught Captain Goritz by the arm and forced her way to the Stadt Park, following the crowd of people and at last reaching Franz Josef Street, which was filled almost solidly with an excited, gesticulating mass of humanity.

"A Serbian plot!" they heard a man in a turban say in polyglot German. "Not Serbian nor Bosnian. We have no murderers here."

"So say I," cried another. "They will blame it upon us. Where are the police, that the streets are not even cleared."

"Why does he come here to make trouble? We do not love him, but we are an orderly people. Let him be gone."

"He was at least brave. They say after the bomb was thrown into his machine he threw it into the street."

"Brave! Yes. But he is a soldier. Why shouldn't he be brave?"

"Courage may not save him. There is something back of this. A man told me there was a bomb thrower on every street corner."

Marishka pushed forward shuddering, with Captain Goritz close behind her.

"I cannot believe it," she whispered.

"The ravings of a crowd," he muttered. "It matters nothing."

But as they neared the corner of Rudolfstrasse, there was a stir and a murmur as all heads turned to look up the street in the direction of the Carsija.

"He comes again." "The machine is returning from the Rathaus." The word flew from lip to lip with the speed of the wind. A few Austrian soldiers were riding down the street clearing the way. They were all. No police, no other soldiers. It was horrible. The sides of the machine were utterly unprotected from the people, who closed in upon it, almost brushing its wheels. Marishka pressed forward again, jostled this way and that, until she stood upon the very fringe of the crowd at the corner of the street. Captain Goritz held her by the elbow. What purpose was in her mind he could not know. But every nerve in her—every impulse urged her to go forward to the very doors of the machine and protect Sophie Chotek, if necessary with her own body, against the dangers which, as the people about her said, lurked on every corner. The machine approached very slowly. There was no cheering, and it seemed strange to Marishka that there could be no joy in the hearts of these people at the courage of their Heir Presumptive, who had faced death bravely, and now with more hardihood than prudence was facing it again. The car was open, and she could see the figures of the royal pair quite clearly, their faces very pale, the Archduke leaning forward talking with a man in uniform in the front seat opposite him, the Duchess scanning the crowd anxiously. As the machine stopped again at the street corner, Marishka rushed forward until she stood just at its front wheels, waving a hand and speaking the Duchess's name. She saw the gaze of Sophie Chotek meet hers, waver and then become fixed again in wonder, in sudden recognition, and incomprehension. Words formed on the girl's lips and she called,

"It is I—Marishka Strahni, Duchess—I must speak——"

She got no further. Out of the mass of people just at her elbow the figure of a man emerging, sprang upon the running board of the machine. He seemed to wave his hand, and then there were sounds of shots. The Archduke started up, holding a protecting arm before the body of the Duchess, who had sunk back into her seat, her hand to her breast. The Archduke wavered a moment and then fell forward across the knees of the Duchess.

Of the mad moments which followed, Marishka was barely conscious. She was pushed roughly back into the turgid crowd and would have fallen had not an arm sustained her. Men seized the assassin and hurried him away. There were hoarse shouts, glimpses of soldiers, as the machine of death pushed its way through the mass of people, and always the strong arm sustained her, pushing her, leading her away into a street where there were fewer people and less noise.

"Come, Countess, be brave," Goritz was saying. "God knows you have done what you could."

"It is horrible," she gasped brokenly. "A moment sooner, perhaps, and I should have succeeded. She recognized me—you saw?"

He nodded. "Kismet! It was written," he said grimly.

"But someone must pay—someone—who was——?"

"A Bosnian student—named Prinzep—a man said."

"He was but a boy—a frail boy——"

"He has been well taught to shoot," muttered Goritz.

"Death!" she cried hysterically. "And I——"

"Be quiet. People are watching you," said Goritz sternly. "Lean on my arm and go where I shall lead. It is not far."



**"Be quiet. People are watching you," said Goritz sternly.**

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The sight of strange, distorted faces regarding her gave Marishka the strength to obey. Mechanically her feet moved, but the sunlight blinded her. She passed through a maze of small streets lined with market stalls where groups of people shouted excitedly; and dimly as in a dream she heard their comments.

"The police—we have police—where were they? The Government will be blaming us. We are not murderers! No. It is a shame!"

Marishka shuddered and leaned more heavily upon the arm of her companion. She was weary unto death, body and spirit—but still her feet moved on, out of the maze of small alleys into a larger alley, where her companion stopped before a blue wooden gate let into a stone wall. He put his hand upon the latch, the gate yielded, and they entered a small garden with well ordered walks and a fountain, beside which was a stone bench. Upon this bench at the bidding of Captain Goritz she sank, burying her face in her hands, while he went toward the house, which had its length at one side of the garden. She put her fingers before her eyes trying to shut out the horrors she had witnessed, but they persisted, ugly and sinister. Over and over in her mind dinned the hoarse murmur of the crowd, "We are not murderers! No!" Who then—? Not the frail student with the smoking pistol ... the agent of others.... The eyes of Sophie Chotek haunted her—eyes that had looked so often into her own with kindness. She had seen terror in them, and then—the mad turmoil, the dust, the acrid smell of powder fumes, and the silent group of huddled figures in the machine!...

There were sounds of voices and of footsteps approaching, but Marishka could not move. She was prone, inert, helpless.

"She is very tired," someone said.

"*Ach*—she must come within and sleep."

A woman's voice, it seemed, deep but not unsympathetic.

"A glass of wine perhaps—and food."

"It shall be as you desire, Excellency. I know what she needs."

Arms raised her, and she felt herself half led, half carried, into the house and laid upon a bed in a room upstairs. It was dark within and there was a strange odor of spices. Presently someone, the woman, it seemed, gave her something to drink, and after awhile the turmoil in her head grew less—and she slept.

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## CHAPTER XIV

## THE HARIM

Dreams, colorful and strangely vivid, but not unpleasant. It seemed that Marishka lay upon a couch so soft that she sank deliciously without end to perfect rest. Above, about, below her, perfumed darkness, spangled with soft spots of light, which came and went curiously. She tried to fix her gaze upon one of them, but it was extinguished immediately and appeared elsewhere. She found another—and another, but they fled from her like *ignes fatui*. She heard the whir of a machine, fast and then slow again, near and then at a distance. Was it an automobile or an aeroplane? The notion of an automobile speeding in space was incongruous, the milky way—a queer concept! She smiled in her dreams.... Then suddenly a bright sunlight peopled with strange figures in fez and turban, faces that leered at her, lips that howled in excitement, arms that moved threateningly, dust, noise, commotion, from which she was trying in vain to escape.... And then darkness again and the subdued murmur of voices, one voice familiar, one gruff and unfamiliar.

"Ten thousand *kroner*—that is a large sum," said the gruff voice.

"Yours, Effendi, if the thing is accomplished."

"It should not be difficult. You may reply upon me."

"And you are to show the lady every attention—every comfort—"

"*Zu befehl*—"

There was a recurrence of the changing lights and the voices receded. Presently she seemed to hear them again.

"She is to be kept in seclusion of course, but otherwise you will accede to all her requests—all, you understand—Should she care to write—you will send a message. There are more ways than one to kill a goose. And this one lays the golden egg, Effendi—"

"I understands—a golden egg."

"Very good—perhaps tonight—We shall see."

"I shall be prepared, Excellency."

The voices died away and melted into the murmur of a crowd, which merged curiously into the whir of an automobile. But it was dark again and the spots of light in the darkness reappeared. One, two, three, a dozen she counted and then they vanished. She was alone, an atom in the expanse of infinity, but the darkness and the perfume now oppressed, suffocated her, and she tried to escape. But she moved her limbs with difficulty, and a weight sealed her eyelids. She struggled up against it and managed to rise upon one elbow and look about her.

She was awake. Slowly memory returned, the memory of things which seemed to have happened a long while before, and time and distance seemed to have robbed them of their sting. She was awake and alone in a dark room, lying on a low couch, upon which were spread a number of pillows of strange design. A latticed window was near, and outside, the shadows of a tree branch fell across the barred rectangle, cutting the lines of light into broken lozenges of shadow. The room was furnished somberly but richly with heavy hangings and teakwood furniture decorated with mother-of-pearl. A lantern of curious design depended from the ceiling. There was a figure standing in the corner. She raised herself upon one elbow and examined the figure attentively, not frightened yet, but merely curious.

It was a suit of ancient armor of a period with which she was unfamiliar. She moved her limbs painfully and sat up. Her head throbbed for a few moments but she found that she was able to think clearly again. Slowly she realized where she was and what had happened. The blue door in the wall—this the house that adjoined the garden. She had slept—how long she did not know, but the beams of sunlight were orange in color and made a brilliant arabesque upon an embroidered hanging on the opposite wall. She must have slept long. Her dreams returned to her, fleeting and elusive, like the *ignes fatui* which had been a part of them. The whir of wheels, the vision of the vari-colored crowd, the murmur of voices speaking—these too had been a dream. She tried to recall what the voices had murmured. Phrases came to her. "Ten thousand *kroner*—the goose that lays the golden egg—" It was all like a story from a fairy tale. She looked about her—a dream—of course. Who could have been speaking of *kroners* and golden eggs here?

There were two doors to the apartment in which she lay, one, ornate with Turkish fretwork, which had in its center panel what seemed to be a small window, covered by a black grille. At the other end of the room another door, open, from which came a flicker of cool light, the soft pad of footsteps and the sound of a voice humming some curious Oriental air. Marishka did not get up at once, but sat among the pillows, her fingers at her temples as she tried to collect her thoughts. She knew that she must think. Everything seemed to depend upon the clearness with which her mind emerged from the fog of dreams. Slowly, the happenings of the last few days recurred—the flight, the wild ride down the ravines of the Brod, Sarajevo, the tragedy, the car of Death! She put her fingers before her eyes and then straightened bravely. And what now? Goritz! What was he going to do with her? She tried to judge the future by the past. She had given herself unreservedly into his hands in the hope of reaching Sophie Chotek before—before what had happened. Their interests had been identical—the saving of life—and if they had succeeded, there would have been no need for anxiety as to her own future. But now the situation seemed to have

changed. Failure had marked her for its own, an unbidden guest in a strange country in which she was for the present at the mercy of her captor. She could not forget that she was his prisoner, and the terms of her promise to him came to her with startling clearness. His recantation, his courtesy, his ardent looks had allayed suspicion, but had not quite removed the earlier impression. In this hour of awakening and depression there seemed to be room for any dreadful possibility.

Was she a prisoner? If so, the window was not barred, and she saw that it let upon the tiny garden fifteen feet below. If she could gather the strength, it might not be difficult to lower herself from the window sill—drop to the garden and flee. But where? To whom? She turned quickly, listening for the sounds of the footsteps in the adjoining room, her hand at her breast, where her heart was throbbing with a new hope. Hugh! Hugh in Sarajevo! And yet why not? It came to her in a throb of joyous pride that in spite of all that she had done to deter him, he had persisted in helping and protecting her, oblivious of her denial of him and of her cutting disdain. But would the frail clew of her flight through Vienna be enough to point her object and destination? The memory of his cleverness and initiative in their night ride to Konopisht gave her new hope. Why should he not come to Sarajevo? Between the lines of the note she had written him he must have read the tenderness that had always been in her heart. He was no coward, and the idea of fleeing to England when danger threatened her would, of course, be the last that would come into his mind. It was curious that she had not thought of this before. He would come to Sarajevo if he could—perhaps he was here now—

A heavy figure stood in the doorway regarding her. She could not at first decide whether it was a man or a woman for the wide, baggy trousers resembled a skirt, and the short, sleeveless jacket was similar to that worn by the male Moslems she had seen in the Carsija. But in a moment, a voice of rather low pitch spoke kindly, in atrocious German.

"The Fräulein is at last awake. Does she feel better?"

"Ah, thanks, yes," said Marishka, at last deciding that it was a woman. "I have slept long."

"Seven hours at least, and like the dead. But you must be hungry. I will prepare something at once."

"Thank you. And if I could wash my face and hands."

"It shall be as you wish. If you will but come with me—"

Marishka rose, and as she did so, the door with the black grille opened from within, and a girl came into the room. Like the older woman she wore baggy trousers and slippers, but above the waist, typifying the meeting of East and West, a somewhat soiled satin blouse which might have been made either in Paris or Vienna. The face was very pretty, regular of feature and oval in contour, but the effect of its beauty was marred by the hair above it, which was dyed with henna a saffron red. But she wore a flower at her breast, and in spite of her artificialities exhaled the gayety of youth. She smiled very prettily and came forward with a confiding air, giving Marishka her hand.

"I have been waiting for you to wake up," she said in a soft voice. "I have never known anyone to sleep so soundly."

She laughed like a child who is very much pleased with a new toy, and holding Marishka's hand, looked at her curiously from head to foot. There was something very genuine in her interest and kindness, and Marishka found herself smiling.

"I must have been very tired," she said.

"I am sorry. You are feeling better now?"

"Yes, but very dirty—"

"Come with me. Zubeydeh will bring food."

She led the way through the door of the black grille, down a short passage into a large room at the end of the house. The apartment was strewn with rugs, and its furniture was a curious mixture of the color of the East and the utility of the West—a French dressing stand beside a stove of American make, a Bosnian marriage chest, a table which might have come out of the Ringstrasse, a brass tray for burning charcoal, a carved teakwood stand upon which stood a nargileh, a box of cigars, some cigarettes, and two coffee cups still containing the residue of the last draught. There were latticed windows in *meshrebiya*, which overlooked the garden and street, and piled beside them were a number of pillows and cushions. The room was none too clean, but there were evidences here and there of desultory attempts at rehabilitation.

The girl with the red hair led Marishka to one of the window recesses, where she bade her sit upon a pile of pillows, bringing a basin and an ewer of water which she put upon the rug beside her.

"Ah, I was forgetting," said the girl, and going to the corner of the room produced with much pride Marishka's suitcase. "His Excellency left it for you this afternoon."

The sight of water and a change of clothing did much to restore Marishka's confidence and self-respect, and she opened the bag with alacrity, bringing forth from its recesses soap, clean linen

and a washcloth.

While Marishka ate and drank, the girl with the red hair crouched upon her knees beside the suitcase, sniffed at its contents eagerly, and with little cries of delight touched with her fingers the delicate articles which it contained.

"How pretty! How soft to the touch!" And then rather wistfully, "It is a pity that one cannot get such things in Bosna-Seraj."

"You like them?" asked Marishka, reveling in the delight of being free from the dust of her journey.

"Oh, they are so beautiful!"

For all her years, and she must have been at least as old as Marishka, she had the undeveloped mind of a child.

"You, too, are beautiful," she sighed enviously, "so white, your skin is so clear. Your hair is so soft." And then as an afterthought, "But I think it would look just as pretty if it were red."

Marishka laughed.

"What is your name, my dear?" she asked.

"I am called Yeva—they say after the first woman who was born."

"Eve—of course. It becomes you well."

"You think so. Was she very beautiful?"

"Yes—the mother of all women."

"The ugly ones?"

"Yes. We cannot all be beautiful."

"It must be dreadful to be old and ugly like Zubeydeh."

As Marishka brought out brush and comb and a towel, Yeva ran quickly and procured a mirror—a small cheap affair with tawdry tinsel ornaments.

"You will let me brush your hair, Fräulein. It will be a great privilege."

"Of course, child—if you care to."

And while Yeva combed and brushed, Marishka questioned and she answered. The house in which she lived was near the Sirokac Tor. Her lord and master was of the Begs of Rataj, once the rulers of a province in Bosnia, where his father's fathers had lived, but now shorn of his tithes and a dealer in rugs. He was an old man, yes, but he was good to her, giving her much to eat and drink, and many clothes. She must ask him to get some of these pretty soft undergarments from Vienna. And the Excellency. She had seen him twice, some months before through the *dutap*, when he had conversed with the Effendi in the adjoining room. And was the beautiful Fräulein in love with the Excellency?

Marishka answered her in some sort, listening to the girl's chatter, meanwhile thinking deeply of the plan that had come into her mind. Scraps of suggestion that she had gleaned from her talks with Goritz gave her at least a hope that she might be successful in reaching Hugh Renwick by messenger. "The English always go to the Europa," he had said. There, if Hugh Renwick had come to Sarajevo, was the place where a note would find him. And so, the hair brushing having been successfully accomplished, she asked the girl if there was someone by whom she could secretly send a note.

A message! To an Excellency—a Herr Hauptmann—or perhaps a General—yes. She was sure that it could be managed. She herself perhaps could take it. Had not the Effendi told her that the Fräulein was to want for nothing? And greatly excited at the thought of intrigue, brought a tabourette which she placed before Marishka, then found paper, ink and envelopes and squatted upon a pillow, watching eagerly over Marishka's shoulder. But the girl's scrutiny troubled Marishka. Was she in the confidence of Captain Goritz? And if not, could she be persuaded to hold her tongue? Instead of writing at once, Marishka relinquished the pen and took Yeva's hand.

"It is very necessary for my peace and happiness that the contents of this note should be only seen by the person to whom it is delivered——"

"Ah, Fräulein, it shall be as you say. By Allah, I swear——"

"Do you care enough? I will give you anything I possess if you will keep my secret."

"Ah!" her eyes were downcast and her tone was pained. "That the Fräulein should not believe in my friendship——"

"But I *do* believe in it——"

"Still," broke in Yeva smiling craftily, "I should very much like to have something by which to remember the Fräulein—the pink sleeping garment which is so sweetly smelling and soft to the touch."

"It is yours, Yeva. See," and Marishka took it from the valise, "I give it to you."

The girl gurgled delightedly, and crooned and kissed the garment like a child with a new doll. She was for trying it on at once and, thus for the moment relieved of Yeva's scrutiny, Marishka bent over the tabourette, pen in hand. But before she wrote she called Yeva again.

"There is no entrance to this house except by the garden, Yeva?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, to the *selamlik*, the *mabein* door and this——"

She walked to the side of the room and thrusting aside a heavy Kis-Kelim, showed Marishka a door cunningly concealed in an angle of the wall.

"That leads—where?" Marishka asked.

"To a small court of the next house."

"And the street below?"

Yeva nodded and renewed the inspection of her new present in the mirror, so Marishka wrote:

HUGH,

I am a prisoner in a house near the Sirokac Tor beyond the Carsija—a house with a small garden the gate of which has a blue door. I am treated with every courtesy, but I am frightened. Come tonight at twelve to the small court at the left of the house and knock twice upon the door. I will come to you. Forgive me.

MARISHKA.

While Yeva was scrutinizing her new adornment in the small mirror Marishka reread the note. She did not wish to alarm her lover unduly, for perhaps after all there were no need for grave alarm.

The intentions of Captain Goritz were perhaps of the best, his given word to liberate her, to free her from her promise and return her to her friends, had been spoken with an air of sincerity, which under other conditions might have been impressive. But some feminine instinct in her still doubted—still doubted and feared him. And in spite of his many kindnesses, his few moments of insensibility to her weariness and distress there in the motor in the flight from Konopisht, and in the railway carriage when he had spoken of Hugh Renwick's connection with hated Serbia—these memories of their association lingered and persisted. She feared him. The failure of their mission would perhaps have made a difference; and the promise of a man whose whole existence was a living lie, was but a slender reed to hang upon.

She straightened abruptly and gazed before her in sudden dismay. Her word of honor—as a Strahni! She was breaking her promise—had already broken it. For she had pledged herself to Goritz—to go with him whither he pleased, if he would enable her to save the life of Sophie Chotek.

But he had failed! *But he had failed!* She clutched at the sophistry desperately. Goritz had failed. Under such conditions should she consider her promise binding? It had been conditional. Liberty, there in the street below, just at her elbow, and Hugh Renwick within reach! She came to this conclusion with desperate speed, and quickly addressed and sealed the envelope.

Yeva, before the mirror, was wrapped in admiration of her new possession.

"Am I not beautiful in it, Fräulein?" she was asking as she twisted and turned, examining herself at every angle.

"Yes, Yeva," said Marishka quietly, "but it is not a garment in which one goes out upon the street."

"The street!" Yeva laughed deliciously. "I would make a sensation in Bosna-Seraj, I can tell you, attired only in this and a *yashmak*."

And then seeing the note lying upon the tabourette, she came running with little childish footsteps. "Ah, you have sealed it! And you are not going to let me see?"

"It is nothing, Yeva."

"But I thought——" peevishly.

"How can you be interested in my little affairs?"

"I hoped that he might come and I should see him through the *dutap*."

"Perhaps he may!" said Marishka with an inspiration. "Could you be trusted to keep this message a secret? To tell no one?"

"I have already promised——"

"Not even to Zubeydeh——?"

"Of course not. Zubeydeh is old and ugly. She would not understand what a young girl thinks

about."

"And can you go out without her knowing?"

"By the private stairway. Of course. There is another door below, locked, but I can procure a key."

"Then I too——" Marishka paused and Yeva turned, reading her thoughts.

"Ah, I understand. You wish to go to him. It is a pity, but it is impossible."

"Impossible! Why?"

"I can do the Fräulein a favor, since she has been kind to me, but to disobey the commands of my lord and master—I would call upon myself the curses of Allah."

Marishka pondered for a moment. "The Effendi desires that I remain here?" she asked.

"That is his command, Fräulein."

"I see."

If Marishka had had any doubts as to the intentions of Captain Goritz, the Beg of Rataj had now removed them. How much or how little of what the girl revealed had been born of innocence or how much of design, Marishka could not know, but it hardly seemed possible that the child could be meshed so deeply in this intrigue. Marishka felt sure that Yeva had promised to deliver her note, because the situation amused and interested her, as did her visitor, and because of the pink garment Yeva was now so reluctantly laying aside.

Marishka took another garment from the valise, a dainty drapery of silk edged with fine lace, and held it up temptingly.

"Yeva," she said.

"Yes, Fräulein."

"This, too, is very beautiful, do you not think so?"

Yeva sighed wistfully.

"Yes. It is very beautiful."

"And would you care to have this too?"

"Would I——? Oh, Fräulein! I cannot believe——"

Yeva came forward with arms outstretched, brown fingers curling, but as she was about to touch the garment Marishka swept it away and put it behind her back.

"I will give it to you——"

"Yes——"

"If you will take me out with you by the secret door to the Europa Hotel."

"Fräulein!" The girl stopped aghast and then slowly turned away.

"You would have me disobey the commands of my lord and master?" she said in an awed whisper.

"I am asking only my rights," urged Marishka desperately. "I am an Austrian with many friends. I have believed that I was a guest in this house, welcome to come and to go as I choose. If the Effendi desires to keep me against my will he runs a great risk of offending the government of Austria and my friends."

"As to that I do not know——" said Yeva plaintively.

"It will do you no harm to be my friend."

"I am your friend. But to disobey the command of one's lord and master——"

"It is worse to disobey the laws of Bosnia."

"But what can I do?" asked the girl, helplessly weaving her fingers to and fro.

"You need do nothing but go out to deliver my message. Then you shall appear to lock the door below, but the bolt shall not catch. That is all. When you are gone I shall follow into the street."

"And I shall not see you—and your lover through the *dutap*?"

"You shall see us there—yonder. I promise you."

"It is a terrible thing that you ask."

"Yeva!" Marishka held the silk garment up before the childish gaze of the girl. "Look, Yeva."

It was enough. With a cry, Yeva seized the garment in both hands and carried it to her lips, kissing it excitedly.

"And if I do what you ask—you will never tell?"

"Never."

Marishka had won. It was with difficulty that she restrained her companion from disrobing again and putting on the new garment, but at last by dint of much persuasion she succeeded in getting Yeva to put on her own garments, her head dress, veil and *yashmak*, and in a short while they were both attired for the street. With a last look around the room, a short vigil at the *dutap* for sounds of watchful Zubeydeh, Yeva timorously found the key of the lower door, pushed the hanging aside, and with a last rapturous look at the draperies upon the dressing stand, vanished into the darkness of the door.

Marishka, her heart beating high with hope, quickly packed a few of her belongings into a small package and followed. It was very dark upon the narrow stair, but with a hand upon the wall to steady herself, she slowly descended. Feeling for the steps with her feet, at last she reached the floor below, and stepping cautiously forward came upon a blank wall. She turned to the left and found her egress stopped—to the right—yes, there was a door. She fingered for the latch and found it, opening the door, which let in the daylight. But just as she was about to step out, she started back in sudden consternation. Upon the step, grim and forbidding, dressed in fez, white shirt, and wide breeches, stood a man with folded arms facing her. He made no sign of greeting, nor did he change his posture by so much as a millimeter, but she heard his voice quite distinctly, though he spoke in a low tone.

"You will be pleased to return at once."

"But I——" It was the courage of desperation—short-lived, alas!

"At once," the man repeated, unfolding his arms. "At once—or shall I——"

Marishka waited no more upon the order of her going but went at once, finding her way up the dusty stairs, terrified, again a prey to the most agonizing fears.

Would Yeva find Hugh at the Hotel Europa?

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## CHAPTER XV

### THE LIGHTED WINDOWS

The night journey of Mr. Renwick to the Bosnian border with the man in black was one long chapter of accidents and delays. But Herr Linke commanded the situation. He had taken care not to return the Englishman's weapon, and there was nothing for Renwick to do but sit in silence by the side of the melancholy Colossus, and pray for an opportunity which never came, for Linke had a watchful eye and sat in the tonneau of the machine. Toward midnight they reached Vinkovcze, where they had supper, and resumed their leisurely journey with a new supply of petrol, which only seemed to increase the trouble in the carburetor. It was at this time that an uncontrollable drowsiness fell upon Renwick. He struggled against it but at last realized that in spite of himself sleep was slowly overpowering him. As in a haze he saw the huge figure of Linke beside him lean over, smiling, while a deep voice which seemed to come from a distance rumbled calmly,

"You are very sleepy, Herr Renwick?"

Renwick dimly remembered muttering a curse.

"You've drugged—cof——"

Then Renwick slept.

When he awoke it was broad daylight. The car was moving smoothly enough along a good road between two mountains, and at the side of the road a river flowed in the direction from which the machine had come.

Renwick felt light-headed and rather ill, and it was some moments before he became conscious of the figure beside him, while he struggled upright and found his speech.

"Where are we?" he asked.

"Near Duboj, Herr Renwick, where we shall presently eat our supper——"

"Supper!"

"Yes. You have slept the clock around——"

"Ah, I remember," and he turned upon the man with a renewed and quite futile anger. "You drugged me, you——"

"Softly, my friend," the big man broke in soothingly. "You can do no good by defaming me."

Renwick shrugged. "You'll pay the score at settling time, nevertheless."

"Perhaps. In the meanwhile I beg you to consider that you are but fifty kilometers from your destination. Since we passed the Save we have proceeded with greater rapidity."

But Renwick had sunk into a sullen silence. The huge creature, whom he had held in such light esteem, had made a fool of him, had reduced him to the impotence of a child. As his mind cleared, the object of the man's actions became more involved. Whatever he was, he had succeeded in preventing Renwick from reaching Sarajevo before the Archduke's party should arrive, but why he should wish to drug a man who was meeting his wishes and giving no trouble was more than Renwick could answer. Still puzzled, he glanced at his watch. It was now five o'clock. The sight of the dial startled him. Had Marishka succeeded in reaching the Duchess or had—? Forgetting his quarrel with Linke in the new interest in portending events, he questioned,

"You have heard from Sarajevo?"

"By wire at Yranduk," said Linke, nodding gravely. "The Archduke Franz and the Duchess of Hohenburg were assassinated this morning in the streets of Sarajevo."

Renwick's knowledge of the plot and the difficulties which surrounded his and Marishka's efforts to prevent its consummation had convinced him that the attempt would at least be made, but Herr Linke's bold statement of the fact shocked him none the less.

"They are dead?"

"Both," said Linke. "They died before reaching the Landes hospital."

"Who——" Renwick paused, aware that names meant nothing.

"A Serbian student, named Prinzep."

The Englishman said nothing more, for he was again thinking of Marishka. She had failed! Had she arrived too late or had her visit to Sarajevo been prevented? And if so where was she now? There was nothing for it but to go on to the Europa Hotel and inquire for the note that she would leave there. In a somewhat desperate mood, he followed Herr Linke into the small hotel at Duboj, for he knew that he could not go on without food, having eaten nothing since the day before. As he hesitated, the *goulash* upon the dish before him, Linke smiled.

"You need have no further fear, Herr Renwick," he said calmly. "We are now friends, engaged upon precisely the same service."

"Indeed! And that——?"

"To find the Countess Stranhni at the earliest possible moment."

"And after that?"

"To restore her to her friends."

"You know where she is?"

"No. But I can find her."

It entered Renwick's head at the moment to tell the fellow of the note in his pocket, but the events of the night had made him careful.

"Who are you?" he asked again.

But the man evaded.

"I beg that you will eat, Herr Renwick," he said coolly. "We have no time to spare."

And so at last, when Herr Linke ponderously helped himself and the Hungarian chauffeur from the dish, Renwick followed his lead and ate.

In less than half an hour they were again upon their way, reaching the hills above the Bosnian capital just before nightfall. Here, for some reason, the machine again halted with a loud explosion of back-fire and a prodigious amount of smoke. The chauffeur got out, looked into the hood and straightened, gesticulating wildly. Herr Linke followed, and a conversation ensued, the import of which was lost upon the Englishman. But when it was finished, Linke turned to Renwick and explained that the machinery was injured beyond repair and that the car could go no further. Two Bosnian policemen who had appeared in the road before them, now rode up and made inquiries. Renwick shrugged and was about to walk away with the intention of finishing his journey afoot, when the chauffeur came forward and caught him by the arm, shouting something in an excited and angry voice, appealing to the men on horseback and pointing alternately at the Englishman and at the injured machine. The Bosnians got down and listened while one of them, who seemed to understand, addressed Renwick in German.

"This man says that you engaged to pay for any breakages to the machine, and that you have not paid him all that you owe."

"He lies. I paid him at Ujvidek. Herr Linke here will bear me witness——" As he turned to address his traveling companion, he paused in amazement, for without a word, or a sound, Herr Linke had suddenly vanished into space.

But the Hungarian was screaming again, and what he said must have impressed the policeman who had spoken to him, for he turned to Renwick, scratching his head dubiously, and suggested that the matter be further discussed before a magistrate in the city below. Renwick agreed, gave the policeman his card with the word that he would find him at the Europa Hotel and leaving his suitcase in the car as security for his appearance when summoned went hurriedly down the hills toward the city. The colloquy had occupied some moments, but when Renwick came to a straight reach of road which led toward the tobacco factory buildings he was surprised to find that Herr Linke was nowhere in sight. The man was an enigma, a curious mixture of desperado and buffoon, but his sudden disappearance without a word of thanks, apology or explanation, gave Renwick something to puzzle over as he made his way to the bridge. Its possible significance escaped him until he had reached the river, when, a thought suddenly occurring to him, he put his hand into the breast pocket of his coat, feeling for the note from Marishka. It was gone! He hunted, feverishly, one pocket after another, and was on the point of going back for a search of the machine when the truth suddenly dawned. Herr Linke had taken it from him, last night when he slept—had drugged him that he might get it without commotion! In an illuminating flash he remembered the sharp look in the man's eyes yesterday morning in the train from Budapest when Renwick had taken the note from his pocket. Linke! He hurried his footsteps, bewailing his own simplicity and wondering what this new phase of Herr Linke's activities might signify. Renwick had assumed that the Austrian was an agent of Herr Windt, who unable to follow him on to Sarajevo had guessed the train upon which he had left and had sent this man up from Budapest to get into his carriage. But his most recent accomplishment seemed to leave this presumption open to doubt. If Herr Linke had stolen the letter in the belief that it contained secret information which would be of value to Austrian secret service officials, the mere reading of it would have convinced him of its innocence in so far as Marishka was concerned. And if a forgery! Perhaps something in the message which Renwick had overlooked would put him upon the track of the fellow of the green limousine. He went along the river bank from the bridge toward the hotel, the location of which was familiar to him, hurrying his pace. At any rate the note was gone and with it the mysterious Linke, facts which clearly indicated one purpose. Herr Linke was bent upon intercepting any message which might come to the Hotel Europa for the Englishman. And given that to be his purpose, what was his intention with regard to the Countess Strahni?

Still puzzling over the mysteries, which gained in elusiveness as he hurried into Franz Josef Street, he reached the hotel, which was near the Carsija, and made hurried inquiries of the Turkish porter, who smiled and professed ignorance, but said to the Excellency that he would diligently inquire, bringing Renwick at last to the major-domo, who informed him that a note bearing the name of Herr Renwick had been left at the hotel an hour before, but that not twenty minutes ago, Herr Renwick had called and claimed it.

"That is not possible," said Renwick hotly, "since I am Herr Renwick."

The major-domo shrugged and bowed obsequiously. It was most unfortunate, he said, but of course as Excellency must know, the Hotel Europa was not a postoffice and could not be held responsible for the proper delivery of letters when it knew nothing of the identity of those to whom they were addressed.

Renwick paused a moment, and then said quickly, "To whom was the note delivered? You saw?"

"Yes, Excellency. The person who said he was Herr Renwick was tall, attired in black clothing, and carried an umbrella."

"Who brought the note?"

"As to that—I do not know."

The major-domo moved majestically away, but the Turkish porter who stood listening, broke in.

"If your Excellency will permit. It was I who received the note, late this afternoon. It was brought by a woman in a *yashmak*—a Turkish woman. Of course I could not know her, since one looks with averted eyes upon the women of Islam, but she would have come from the Turkish quarter of the town—from beyond the Carsija—perhaps. I do not know. I can say no more."

Renwick paused irresolutely and giving the man a fee, went out of the hotel into the street, mingling with the crowds upon Franz Josef Street, where but a few hours before on a nearby corner, the Archduke and Duchess had met their deaths. Deciding that at all hazards he must remain inconspicuous while he thought out a plan, he crossed the river and went into a small park, where he sank wearily into a bench and buried himself in new speculations.

A pipe and tobacco soothed, if they failed to stimulate his faculties. He had reached an *impasse*. What if the Enigma in black were playing some deep game of his own with regard to Marishka? What if, after all, he was no agent of Herr Windt, but represented perhaps the military party of Austria, which had as deep an interest in Marishka's silence as had the Wilhelmstrasse? And yet such a theory was hardly plausible, for if Linke were interested in Marishka's silence he would also be interested in Renwick's, and this being the case, the easiest way out of the business would have been to have dropped Renwick into some deep pool of the Save or the Bosna while he slept. Herr Linke puzzled Renwick, but reason informed him that the unknown limousine chap was the greater menace both to Marishka and himself. That he held Renwick's life cheaply was indicated by the frequent attempts upon it in Vienna and in Bohemia and the mere fact that he had twice failed was no sign that a third attempt might not be successful. The most unfavorable

phase of the situation was that the German agent knew Renwick by sight, and would have every opportunity of following him to some secluded spot—shooting him in the back and escaping into a nearby street before the excitement subsided. What did the German agent look like? He might pass the fellow, elbow to elbow, and the Englishman would not know him. Renwick had no fear of meeting the man on even terms, but the thought of being stabbed in the back or shot at by any casual passer-by was disturbing to his morale. Every innocent bush, every tree was an enemy. What did the green limousine chap look like? A Prussian? With a bulky nose, small mustache, and no back to his head? Or was he small, clean shaven, and ferret-like? How would he be dressed? In mufti? Or in some favoring disguise which might better lend itself to his purposes?

Renwick rose suddenly and, with a careful glance about him, made slowly for the Lateimer Bridge, sure at least, that he had not been followed, and convinced that he must equalize the hazards between this German and himself by playing the game according to the standards of the Wilhelmstrasse. So he found his way carefully into the Carsija, and found a stall where he managed to buy a native Bosnian costume,—fez, white shirt, short jacket, wide trousers fitting close below the knee, sash and slippers. His automatic having been taken by the prudent Linke, he was unarmed, but managed to find a revolver of American make and cartridges which fitted it. With his newly acquired purchases he returned in the darkness to the other bank of the river, where he found a small inn in the Bistrick quarter.

He concealed ten one hundred *kroner* notes in the lining at the belt of the trousers, and pinned it securely. The remainder of his money, a few fifty crown notes and coins, he put in his pockets with his watch and other valuables, and changed his clothing. When he had finished dressing he examined himself in a mirror. His face was tanned by exposure, and the dust of the journey which he retained gave him a soiled appearance sufficiently Oriental. He was now Stefan Thomasevic, a seller of sheep and goats, which he had brought to the market. He left his English clothing in a bundle in the care of the innkeeper and advising the man that he would return later in the night or at least upon the morrow, went forth across the river again, with a sense of greater security from the observations of any who meant mischief to Hugh Renwick. If he did not know what the green limousine chap looked like, the limousine chap at least could not know him.

As he slouched through the alleys of the Carsija, reassured as to the completeness of his disguise, he smoked a native cigarette, and asked many questions among the keepers of the stalls, squatting cross-legged with them upon the ground and learning much of all matters save of the one with which he was most concerned.

"Few but Moslem people had passed through the Carsija upon this day," they said, "for the terrible happenings of the morning had kept the Austrian Excellencies in their own part of the town and Islam—Islam in time of trouble was always wise to find its company among its own people."

Renwick's task seemed hopeless, but he did not despair, leaving the bazaar at last, and climbing the hill to the old town beyond the Bastion. Here he again questioned every passer-by. "Had the Effendi seen a tall Excellency dressed in black who carried an umbrella? He, Stefan Thomasevic, had sold the Excellency some sheep and goats, but the Excellency had not yet paid all of that which he owed. It was not a matter about which to laugh. If the Excellency did not soon appear in the Carsija, it was a matter for the police."

But no one could help him. Herr Linke was moving with discretion, for it was probable that if such a creature had strolled through the Carsija, there would be a dozen idlers who would have observed and noted the fact. Renwick's chief hopes were crumbling. And yet, if Linke suspected that the note which had been sent to the Hotel Europa was a bait, he would of course act with great caution. It was nearly midnight when, weary and disappointed, Renwick returned from the Kastele quarter in the direction of the Carsija. The houses were dark save for a glimmer of light in an upper window here and there, but the moon had come out, and Renwick, moving silently along in the shadow of walls and houses, gazed about him with the eagerness of despair. For a while he stopped in the angle of a wall, and listened to the sounds of the city below him, the rush of the river below the Bastion, the motor and bell of the electric tram-car, the whistle of a freight locomotive at the further end of the town—strident noises brought from the West to break the drowsy murmur of the Orient, but not a sight nor a sound which could give him a clue as to the whereabouts of Linke or Countess Marishka. The inaction was maddening. In his belt the American revolver hung its futile weight. Had it not been for Linke, he might have had a chance at least to follow the instructions of the note of the Hotel Europa to some conclusion whether for good or ill—it did not matter. If Marishka herself had written it!... She would be awaiting him now—and he could not come to her.... In his stead—Linke the gigantic, the mellifluous....

Renwick turned slowly into a side street, and crouched in the dark angle of a wall, for a motor car was coming toward him. Motors in the region of Franz Josef Street and the river were not uncommon, but as a rule they were seldom to be seen in the hilly region near the Bastion. From his dark vantage point, Renwick saw the car approach and pass him, quietly coasting, and stop a short distance below the angle of the street from which he had emerged. He caught a glimpse of the profile of the chauffeur, and noted the condition of the car. He judged that it had come a long journey, for Sarajevo and the part of Bosnia through which his own machine had traveled, had suffered much from the drought. This machine was covered with dust, of course, but it was also literally spattered with mud. The Englishman watched the machine for a while, but the chauffeur having silenced the engine, remained motionless, in deep shadow, waiting. Of course belated visitors from the European section of the city to the Kastele were a possibility, but the quietness

with which the chauffeur had approached, and the eager way in which he now leaned forward in his seat watching the *meshrebiya* windows of a house at some distance, excited Renwick's curiosity. Why was the man there? Who was he watching in the house of the lighted window? Had this mystery anything in common with his own? Renwick watched the windows too. A light burned dimly within, and once he thought a shadow passed. The window and the chauffeur interested him, but he was too far away to distinguish the house clearly, and so, moving stealthily, he stole quietly up the hill to a cross street, and turning to the left, in the shadow of a wall, walked rapidly down to a small alley which he took at random, at the end of which he paused for observation. The house with the *meshrebiya* windows was now just below where he stood, but opposite him was an ancient stone wall, and in its center was a blue door. There were trees within the enclosure, and he heard the sound of falling water. He found a dark doorway and crouched silently, watching.

A *cul-de-sac*? Perhaps. Disappointment and chagrin had done their worst to him. He would wait see what was to happen, and if nothing came of the venture he would merely have his labor for his pains. He noted above the wall that there were windows of the house which overlooked the garden. In one of them, in the room which the chauffeur had been observing, the light still dimly burned, but he saw no shadows. Peering out from the angle of the alleyway, he thought he had discovered a doorway or court between the house he was watching and the one below it toward the Carsija, and in a moment fancied that he could distinguish the sound of whispering voices, from that direction; but the shadow of a mosque nearby threw its shadow upon this part of the street, and he could see nothing clearly. If there were men there, they were keeping in the shadow of the wall around the turn of the street, beyond the range of Renwick's vision, but the night breeze which carried the sound of the whispers also wafted the odor of a native cigarette. The smell of it made Renwick wish to smoke, for the suspense and inaction were telling upon him, but he resisted the impulse, sinking lower into the shadow, and awaiting events.

Minutes passed—hours they seemed to the waiting Renwick—and then came the deep boom of a bell, which echoing down the silent streets, seemed just at Renwick's elbow—another—another—until he counted twelve, of the belfry of the cathedral announcing midnight.

He waited, thinking deeply. The machine which had come a long journey? The lighted windows which the chauffeur watched? The whisper of voices from the street below him? There was mystery here. He crouched lower and watched the dark shadow of the arch below the house.

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## CHAPTER XVI

### THE BEG OF RATAJ

When Marishka reached the top of the stairs, entered the Harim, gazing terrified into the darkness from which she had emerged, she pushed aside the Kis-Kelim and listening fearfully for sounds of footsteps below, then closed the door, turned the key, and put her back against it, viewing with a new vision the interior which a while ago had seemed so friendly. Without Yeva who had given its disorder a personality, the room seemed alien, hostile and madly chaotic. For the first time since the reassurances of Captain Goritz in the green limousine as to her safety, she had a definite sense of personal danger. She was not timorous by nature, and the hope of success in her mission of atonement had given her the courage for the venture. She realized now that the will which had kept her buoyant through two arduous days and nights had suddenly forsaken her and left her supine, without hope or initiative. The actions of the man at the doorway below had frightened her. He had been so uncompromising in his ugliness. The shock of her awakening had been rudely unexpected, and had bewildered her with its brutal significance. She was a prisoner in this Turkish house, in an obscure quarter of a half Oriental town, and night was imminent, a night which seemed to possess untold possibilities for evil. What was to happen? Why had not Captain Goritz returned? Enemy though she now knew him to be, even Goritz was a refuge in this perilous situation. And yet it seemed certain that the man at the foot of the stairs was acting under his orders or under the orders of another who was accountable to him.

Weakness overpowered her and she threw herself on the pile of cushions in the window and buried her face in her hands, as if by blinding herself to the imminent facts of her surroundings she could free her spirit of the terrors which were overtaking it. As in her dream, her faculties were elusive, thoughts and half-thoughts conflicting and interchangeable. The rush and the roar of the hurrying motor car, the kaleidoscope of the maddened crowd, the shots, the sunlight and then the spangled darkness with the sound of voices. She started upright in her cushions, her face pallid and drawn, her thoughts now focusing with sudden definiteness. The voices! They were no dream—no more a dream than the other horrors that encompassed her. She tried to remember what they had said. "Ten thousand *kroner*—the goose that lays the golden egg—" What did the phrases mean? Another—"To be kept in seclusion, of course, but you will accede to all her wishes." The meaning of the voices became clearer, at every moment. "Should she care to write, you will send a message!" Marishka put her hand to her lips as though to stifle a cry, and then sank back with a gasp of comprehension. Goritz! He had expected her to send a message, and had prepared for its delivery. But why? How could he have known!... Slowly the meaning of it all came to her. His certainty and insistence as to Hugh Renwick's pursuit—the belief that Renwick would go at once to the Hotel Europa! The power of suggestion! And she had followed it

blindly—unawares, leading Hugh Renwick into this deadly trap which Goritz had laid. She read the plan now in all its insidious perfection. There was something malign—hypnotic—in an influence which could so easily compel compliance. And Hugh? She had written him to come here—to the door in the court below, where men would be waiting—perhaps to take his life. It was too horrible!

Nature mercifully intervened. The strain of long days and nights of anguish had reached the limit of her endurance, and her nerves, too, long under tension, suddenly rebelled. She sank helplessly upon the floor, sobs racking her body from head to foot. She did not know how long she lay there, but when she raised her head it was already growing dark in the room, like the shadows that were stealing about her heart. Whichever way she turned, groping mentally for a thought which would lead her toward a light, disorder reigned, danger threatened. If there was a man at the foot of the stairs to prevent her escape, there would be others beneath the windows and at the door into the garden.

Yeva! She clung to the hope of Yeva's sincerity—the last thing left to her. It was difficult for her to believe that this child with the body of a woman could be guilty of complicity in any plot. She might have obeyed instructions to be the bearer of any note that Marishka might write—indeed her childish prattle as to the wishes of her lord and master verified the voices of Marishka's dream, and suggested that Marishka should be permitted to do as she chose—so that Yeva had offered, without fear of consequences, to deliver Marishka's note at the hotel. She had even consented to leave the lower door open that Marishka might escape and follow her. No woman of the world could have acted a part as Yeva had played it. If the girl had known of the guardian of the lower door, her skill in dissimulation was consummate—so much out of keeping with the simplicity of her mind as to be entirely incredible. Yeva was innocent, a mere tool in the hands of Captain Goritz, who disposed all the pawns in his command to play his game. Yeva had been permitted to depart without hindrance. Would Marishka's note reach its destination? Or would it be intercepted and its message read by Captain Goritz? His cunning had amazed her but it frightened her now. A ruse so carefully planned could have for its object nothing less than the obliteration of Hugh Renwick, as a prisoner or something worse—perhaps Death! She shuddered. She, Marishka, would unwittingly have caused it! She had asked him to come at midnight and knock upon the door in the court below and she knew enough of Hugh to be sure that if he received the message, no matter how great the danger to himself, he would come. The note! If she could recall it! She would suffer whatever Goritz had in store for her, if Hugh could only be spared. She had already done him hurt enough—without the chance of this last most dreadful sacrifice in her behalf—in vain. He would come to her and she must wait—without the power to warn him, and perhaps see him killed before her very eyes.

Her thoughts made her desperate—and the idea of another attempt to escape came into her head. If she could only reach the street, she could run—and it would be a better race with her pursuer than she had given Hugh in the rose gardens of the Archduke! She made the attempt, quietly opening the door by which she had entered the room and passing on tip-toe down the corridor to the door with the *dutap*. She drew aside the curtain which covered it and noiselessly turned the knob. As she peered out she found herself staring straight into the eyes of Zubeydeh. The woman's look was cold but full of understanding.

"Does the Fräulein wish anything?" she asked without the slightest change of expression. Her voice was colorless, like the speech which might be expected from a graven image.

"I—I was hungry," stammered Marishka helplessly. "I—I am sorry to bother you."

"If you will return to the room within, I will bring food at once," she said stolidly. And so Marishka, once more balked in her enterprise, went back to the Harim. Strong as she was, armed anew with the sudden strength of desperation, she knew that even if she could use her strength she was no match for this massive creature who, in the *selamlik* nearby, perhaps had men within call. She went to the windows and peered out into the street. There was no one in sight, except a tall man in black who carried an umbrella. She watched him a moment through the carved screen, but he went up the street and disappeared around a corner. The garden seemed to be deserted. Would the gate to the street be locked? She made an effort to move the lattice of *meshrebiya*, but it was nailed fast to the main wood work of the house. Her case was hopeless. There was nothing to do but wait upon the clemency—the mercy of Captain Goritz. A new idea of her captor was being born in her, of a creature who differed from the courteous German official of Vienna and Agram. His eyes haunted her, the dark eyes set just a little obliquely in his head, a racial peculiarity which she had not been able to identify. She knew now. They were Oriental, like Zubeydeh's, like those of the man at the door below, alien, hostile and cruel. And yet it was curious how the smile in them had disarmed her and she remembered, with a futile glow of returning hope, that she had not feared him, that she had even had the temerity to defy him. But her courage had ebbed—she could not have defied him now and in the darkness while she waited for Yeva she feared him—feared him.

It seemed strange that Yeva had not returned. She had been gone an hour or more and the Hotel Europa could not be a great distance away. As the moments passed she gave up the other hope of persuading the girl, when she returned, to go back at once to the hotel and reclaim the note, before Hugh could get it. Could anything have happened to her? Marishka wanted her—the sound of a voice, the touch of a feminine hand, her airs and graces—the foibles of a child perhaps, but intensely virile in their childishness and intensely human. It seemed that even Yeva was to be denied to her.

For when Zubeydeh brought lights and food the woman made no comment upon the absence of the girl—a confirmation of Marishka's suspicions that Zubeydeh was aware of the conspiracy and what was to come of it. But as Marishka made a pretense of eating what the woman had brought, she summoned courage to inquire.

"Yeva went out into the city by the passage to the street. She has not yet returned?"

"I do not know," she said in her heavy colorless voice.

The woman lied. Marishka knew it by the shifting glance of her eye.

"Will you kindly inform His Excellency—I need mention no names—that I should be very glad if he would meet me at his convenience——"

"Excellency is not here," said the woman.

"Well, when he comes, I should be grateful if you will deliver my message."

"I will tell him."

Nothing more. Her manner was not discourteous, but her voice was forbidding. She had been given instructions to keep silence. And just before leaving the room, a further confirmation of Marishka's conviction that Yeva was at that very moment in another part of the house, Zubeydeh gathered up the two pieces of drapery which Marishka had given the girl, and carried them out of the room.

The hours lengthened while Marishka sat trying to gather the remnants of her courage to face Captain Goritz when he should come to her. The Turkish lamp which hung from the ceiling burned dimly, casting grotesque shadows about the room, flickering in patches of tawdry light upon the gilt of the embroidered hangings, and touching the blades of the ancient weapons which decorated the wall about the couch, scimitars, swords, daggers and spears! Marishka got up and examined them more closely, curiously, as though she had not seen them before. She shuddered a little as she plucked from its sheath a small dagger with a bronzed handle, and found that its blade was very sharp and bright. She reached up to put it back, but as she did so there was a sound from the room beyond the passage, and a knock upon the door. So she slipped the weapon into the waistband of her skirt, beneath her blouse, and went to her seat among the pillows. In a moment the knock was repeated, and in reply to her call, the door opened and she heard footsteps along the corridor.

The man who entered was tall and slender, with a hooked nose, heavy brows, and a beard streaked with white. He wore the turban and bright green belt which denoted the Moslem, and the fingers with which he touched brow, lips, and heart in salutation were covered with rings.

"*Salām 'alaikum*," he muttered, bowing.

Marishka knew no reply to this and made none, waiting in some trepidation for him to proceed. He was a villainous looking creature, but comported himself with an air of some dignity. In a moment he spoke again in excellent German.

"I hope that Excellency has been able to make herself quite comfortable in my poor house."

As he spoke, Marishka remembered that this was one of the voices of her dreams, the gruff voice which talked with Goritz.

Something was required of her in reply, and so, with an effort,

"Yeva has been very kind, Effendi," she managed.

"Yes. Allah has been good to me. Yeva has a heart of gold."

"You are the Beg of Rataj?" Marishka asked.

He salaamed again.

"Will you tell me, then, what has become of Herr Hauptmann Goritz?"

The man's face wore a sudden crafty look of incomprehension.

"Goritz, Excellency?" he asked coolly. "There is no one of that name in my acquaintance."

Marishka accepted the rebuke and ventured timidly, "I mean, the—the Excellency—who brought me here——"

"Ah! Lieutenant von Arnstorff! He has gone, I think, upon a journey," said the Beg.

Marishka was silent a moment, thinking.

"That is strange. It is very necessary that I should see him."

The man smiled up at the lamp above his head, revealing a void where teeth should have been.

"I need not say that he has directed that everything possible shall be done for your comfort—and it is my pleasure to obey Excellency's orders, in so far as my poor house can afford. And even were these not Excellency's instructions," he added with a grin, "it is an honor for the house of Rataj to have beneath its roof one so noble and so beautiful."

A wave of nerves swept over Marishka for the admiration in his glance was unmistakable, but she knew that any possible chance of safety for Hugh—for herself—lay in the favor of this man. And so with a shudder of repugnance which she concealed with difficulty, she motioned to him to be seated. His small eyes appraised her eagerly for a moment, and then he sank upon a cushion near her, and without asking permission, took out a cigarette.

"I—I shall not forget your kindness, Effendi," said Marishka, struggling for her composure. "Already Yeva and I are good friends."

"Ah, that is fortunate, for it was upon the question of the future of Yeva that I have come to talk with you."

"In what may I serve you, Effendi?"

He sighed deeply.

"Times change, Excellency. In the days gone by, the Begs of Rataj were reckoned among the rulers of Bosnia, high in the counsels of the Janissaries, feudal lords of great domains. But I, alas! the last of the Begs of Rataj, whose father even held the sway of a king, have been deprived of my tithes, and reduced to the low condition of a merchant in rugs, a dealer in antiquities, dependent upon the good will of tourists from the West, reduced perhaps one day to sit in a stall in the Carsija. It is not so much that I am no longer rich, but it is my pride, the pride of race which suffers under misfortune."

Whither was the man leading? Much as she distrusted him, her curiosity was aroused, and she listened, watching him intently.

"You will perhaps understand," he continued gravely, "that all this is very hard upon Yeva, the star of my heart, with whom Allah has blessed me. The West has flowed in upon the East at Bosna-Seraj, and engulfed it. We are no more a simple Moslem city with the tastes of our fathers; and our women are no more satisfied to remain as they were, childish, ignorant, and unlettered. The spell of the Occident is upon the land. Vienna, Berlin, Paris, have come to Bosna-Seraj. Our women sigh for the things which are beyond the mountains. The peace of the home is invaded and our women are unhappy, because their lords and masters have no money to procure for them the things that they wish."

Money! Thank God! This man could be bought!

"And Yeva?" Marishka asked, trembling in fear for the new hope that had risen.

"It is the same with her as with the others, Excellency," he shrugged despairingly. "She is but a child. I have been foolishly liberal with her—as liberal as my poor means allowed, and she has come to know the value of money—the dross for which men perjure their souls, and die if need be. Yeva, alas! wishes jewels, the pretty clothing of the women of fashion. And I, as I have related, being a mere dealer in rugs, Excellency, have not been able to give them to her. It has made unhappiness come into my household; it has made me, the Beg of Rataj, hereditary ruler of thousands, ashamed to raise my head or my voice in her presence—I, Excellency, her lord and master!"

He wagged his head to and fro with an air which might have been comical, had not Marishka's need been so desperate. But she read him easily, a vile, blackmailing rogue who held no allegiance higher than what he got from it—a man who, for all his fine flow of talk, could be dangerous as well as unscrupulous. But Marishka met him fairly.

"I have taken a fancy to Yeva, Effendi," she said quietly. "She will tell you perhaps that I have already given her several trifles which she fancied. Perhaps I can do something to solve your problems. In my own country I am considered wealthy and I can be generous with those who treat me with kindness."

"Ah!" The Effendi's eyes sparkled hungrily. The Austrian countess was no fool. She had already begun to understand him.

"To treat Her Excellency with kindness! And could I do anything else? My house, poor as it is——"

"Effendi," Marishka cut in boldly, "let us waste no words. I am a prisoner in your house, at the instance of Captain—of Herr Lieutenant von Arnstorff——"

"A prisoner? Has not the Excellency——?"

"One moment. I am not aware how much you know of the political situation which has brought me to Bosna-Seraj, but I do know that I am confined here against my will—a prisoner in a house within the realms of my own country. Of course you know that I have sought to escape, that I have written to a friend who will do what he can to liberate me."

"Excellency, I beg of you——"

"Please let me finish. For political reasons, the fact of my presence here and my mission should be kept a secret. My friends, therefore, would not wish to call upon General Potiorek, the governor, for soldiers or police, if my liberty can be secured quietly—without commotion. I am willing to meet you upon any reasonable grounds."

Marishka paused, for the man had risen and was pacing the floor slowly.

"Ah, Excellency, I, too, will waste no further speech, for I see that you are a woman of the world, and I, Beg of Rataj, am only a seller of rugs. But I am placed in a difficult position. It has pained me deeply to see you constrained to stay in my poor house against your will. And yet, what would you? His Excellency has done me many favors, and gratitude is one of the strongest traits in a nature which suffers much misuse. I do not know anything of politics, or of the controversy between you, and I have simply obeyed the dictates of my heart in giving his Excellency some proof—some return of his kindnesses to me. But since I have seen you, heard your voice, felt the distinction of your presence in my poor house, I am torn between my emotions—of gratitude and of pity."

"How much do you want?" said Marishka quietly.

"Excellency, the brutality of the words!"

"I mean them. How much?"

The man's keen eyes appraised her quickly and then looked away, but he sank upon his cushion again, wagging his head and breathing a deep sigh to measure his humiliation.

"I am but a poor man, Excellency," he sighed again.

Upon Marishka's wrist was a bracelet set with diamonds. She slipped it off quickly and handed it to him.

"You are a poor man," she said. "I give you this—for Yeva."

"Ah, yes. For Yeva." But his eyes were regarding the bracelet, which he was weighing in his hand.

"And if you do what I wish, I shall give you fifteen thousand *kroner* more."

"Fifteen thou—!" he whispered. "Excellency, a fortune—"

"If you do what I wish—"

"Anything—Excellency has but to speak."

Marishka deliberated a moment and then, "You will first remove the guard at the foot of the private stairway to this—"

"Excellency, the hour is late. If you can be comfortable in my house until the morning, all shall be arranged. For tonight I have planned—"

"No. It must be as I wish. You will also take a message addressed to Mr. Hugh Renwick at the Hotel Europa, and find him—"

"And he will give me money?" the man broke in quickly, his bony fingers clutching like talons at the bracelet. "He will give me fifteen thousand *kroner*?"

Marishka hesitated. The price she had mentioned was cheap for her liberty—for freedom from the fear that had all day obsessed her, but it was a large sum, and one which it might be impossible to procure at this time of night.

"He will give you such assurances as you may require. At least he will give you something. I shall write that I need this sum of money, and he will surely do what he can."

"Something—yes," he mused. "Something is, of course, better than nothing at all. But how can I be certain that I shall see him?"

"Ah, but you must, Effendi. It is necessary for you, to find him—and at once."

"But if he should refuse?"

"He will not. Do you consent?"

He salaamed deeply.

"Excellency's wish is my law."

So Marishka sat before the tabourette and wrote:

I have promised the bearer of this note fifteen thousand *kroner*, as the condition of my liberation. Give him what you can, and arrange for the payment of the balance tomorrow. This is the cry of desperation. *Do not come here or attempt to see me.* It is dangerous. I will come to you.

M.

She sealed the note and handed it to him. He turned it over and over in his fingers, his gaze aslant.

"But suppose," he repeated slowly, "that I should not be able to find him."

"You must," she said with desperate hardihood. "If the note should not reach him, the conditions of our agreement change. And be sure of this, Effendi—if harm comes to Hugh Renwick, payment will be exacted from you to the tenth part of a hair. His safety and my freedom—"

"I do not comprehend," said the man, his brows raised in a well-simulated surprise. "What have I to do with the safety of this Excellency? He can be in no danger, here in Bosna-Seraj. We are a peaceable people——"

"Still——" she said distinctly, "you will remember."

He shrugged and took a pace away from her, still fingering the note.

"I do not comprehend," he repeated. "But I will do as you request. I shall go at once," and he moved toward the door, then paused. "As to the guard at the door below, that will not be necessary, since you will await me in the *mabein*." He went quickly down the corridor, opened the door of the *dutap*, and called Zubeydeh, who entered at once. "The Countess will wait in the outer room. When I return I shall conduct her to the Hotel Europa, where she will spend the night. You will wait upon her in the meanwhile, as becomes a distinguished guest of the house of Rataj."

Then followed a phrase or two of Turkish, and the woman bowed stolidly.

"It shall be as you wish, Effendi."

And he passed the woman with another phrase, and was gone.

Zubeydeh and Marishka stood facing each other, the elder woman in sullen antipathy, illy concealed by the habitual mask of imperturbability. Marishka had disliked her from the first, actuated by that rare instinct which only women can employ, and now there seemed something ominous in her stolid ugliness. Marishka had not fully understood the instructions of the Beg, and not until Zubeydeh picked up her suitcase and carried it down the corridor, did she realize that she was merely carrying out the orders of her master. But Marishka did not move. Before her eyes danced the words of her earlier note to Hugh, which asked him to come to her by the private passage to the court below. If the Effendi did not succeed in finding him, he would come; and she would not be there to meet him. Instead of following Zubeydeh, who had returned and stood staring at her, her feet refused to obey.

"But I should prefer to remain here——" she said firmly.

A vestige of a smile—slight, but none the less disagreeable—came into the woman's yellow face.

"The Harim," she said dryly, "is intended for the daughters of the faithful. You cannot stay tonight."

And as Marishka still stood irresolutely, she caught her by the arm with a grip which was none too gentle, and pushed her down the corridor and out into the *mabein*.

Marishka sat upon the couch in the room into which she had first been conducted, her head near the latticed window, through which the pale green moonlight vied with the glow from the lantern over her head. Though it could not yet be time for him to return, she listened intently for the sound of the footsteps of the Beg. Had she succeeded? In spite of the danger which threatened Hugh Renwick, and the ominous absence of Captain Goritz, she felt that there was a chance that all might still be well. Where was Captain Goritz? The tale that he had gone upon a journey was an invention, of course. He was here in Sarajevo if not in the house where she was held a prisoner, at least somewhere near, where he could be sure of the culmination of the plot to remove Hugh Renwick, without himself being involved in any unpleasant issues. From the appearance of the Beg of Rataj and of the man she had met at the foot of the stairs, she knew that any dreadful deed was possible in the darkness of the secluded streets outside the house, in the garden below, or in the house itself. But she did not despair. It was easier to win money by keeping within the law than by breaking it. The Beg was a rogue, but money was his fetish, and Marishka's bribe was the larger.

As the moments lengthened and the man did not return, hope ebbed, and she grew anxious. The small metal clock on the table in the corner indicated the hour. It was half-past eleven. In half an hour, if the Beg had not delivered her note, Hugh Renwick would come to find her, unless! She breathed a silent prayer—unless he had not yet reached Sarajevo! For hours she had prayed that he had followed her, for that was the proof of his devotion that her heart required of him; but now she prayed just as fervently that he had not come. The notion of another attempt to escape occurred to her, but when she got up and peered down into the darkness of the stairway which led below, her courage failed her, and she remembered the man at the foot of the other stair. Zubeydeh, too, was near, and while she was planning, the woman passed into the Harim and closed the door behind her.

She peered out of the window into the garden, searching its shadows for signs of a guard, but all was quiet, except for the sound of whispering voices, which might have come from the street or from the house adjoining. In the dim light she watched the hour hand of the clock as it slowly moved around the dial. Ten, fifteen minutes passed, and still she heard no sound of footsteps. What if Hugh came while the Beg was absent searching for him? She knew that there must be other men besides the villain she had met at the foot of the stairs. What orders had the Beg given his men? And what orders had he countermanded? The silence was closing in upon her like a fog. She could not bear it. What if Hugh were already at the foot of the stairs, waiting to knock upon the door of the Harim as she had directed? The suspense was killing her. She rose quietly and tried the door of the *dutap* into the corridor which led to the Harim. It was locked.

She staggered and clung to the wall to keep from falling. She saw it all now. Goritz had intercepted the note she had sent by Yeva. *They* were in there—Zubeydeh, the Beg and his men, and perhaps Goritz, too, waiting—waiting for the two knocks at the steps below. And then the door would be opened, and Hugh—

The bell of the cathedral tolled, and fearfully she counted its strokes. It was twelve o'clock.

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## CHAPTER XVII

### THE MAN IN ARMOR

Renwick waited in his place of concealment near the blue door, listening and watching eagerly. Something was happening in the house with the *meshrebiya* windows, for it was after midnight, and all Islam was asleep. There were sounds of whispering again, but when he peered out there was no one in sight. Then he thought he heard footsteps; but whether they came from the direction of the house of the lighted window, or whether from up the street he could not yet decide. Now he was sure of them. Someone was approaching over the rough cobbles—from the alley behind him! He crouched into a place of concealment behind a broken lattice, flattening himself against the door, and waited—breathless. He did not dare to look out, for the figure was almost upon him, but the footsteps now silent, now moving rapidly forward, indicated the stealth of a man who evades pursuit or fears detection. Presently a shadow loomed beside him as a man paused for a moment beside the doorway where Renwick stood, so close that the Englishman could hear his breathing, and then moved on to the corner of the wider street a few feet away. Even yet, Renwick feared to move, but at last, as the man went on toward the wall of the blue door, Renwick risked detection, and peered out.

The figure glanced at the blue door, and then turning quickly, went with long strides down the street toward the house with the *meshrebiya* windows. Renwick's glance had been but a momentary one, but in it he had marked a huge figure, in a squarish hat and ill-fitting clothes. Gustav Linke! In his hand, clutched like a weapon, he still carried his atrocious umbrella. A grotesque outlandish figure, an ink-blot on the velvet night! What was he doing here near the house of the lighted windows? Renwick sprang from his place of concealment, whispering Linke's name; but when he reached the corner of the alley the man was twenty paces away, and so bent upon his mission that he heard nothing. Renwick halted instinctively, and in the moment of hesitation, his opportunity was lost. As wisdom had urged caution while Renwick had waited, so doubly it urged it now. Linke moved like a man with a mission, and Renwick peered forth from the angle of the wall watching eagerly, sure now of what that mission was—the pursuit of Marishka Strahni!

He saw the man stop beneath the lighted windows, look up, and then with a glance to right and left, enter the shadow of the mosque and disappear within the small court beside the house. Renwick thought rapidly and clearly. In the court where Linke had disappeared there must be another entrance to the house. For a fleeting second, the idea entered Renwick's head to follow the man, and trust to fortune; but the wall and blue door opposite tempted him. Inside the garden, at least there would be a chance for concealment, and a vantage point from which he could watch and hear what went on within the house. He waited a moment, trying to decide whether or not he had better risk detection in the narrow strip of moonlight, or wait and see if anyone moved in the street below. He was on the point of taking the chance when from the door of a house just below him, several men emerged. It was difficult to determine how many there were, but Renwick thought that there were at least four—perhaps five; but whether Bosnians or Turks he could not decide. And from their stealth and silence, and the rapidity with which they followed the tall figure of Linke into the dark passage, the obvious inference was that they were bent upon mischief.

There was no further time to plan, so Renwick, with a quick look to right and left, darted furtively across to the gate of the blue door and tried the latch. It was unlocked, and quickly he entered the garden; with his hand upon the revolver in his belt he waited, listening, but there was no sound within but the splashing of the water of the fountain. His eyes had grown accustomed to the darkness, and he searched the shadows of the bushes by the reflected moonlight which silvered the upper stories of the building. He saw that there was a door near the center of the house facing the fountain, and upstairs in the windows over it was the dull glow of a lamp or lantern. The windows of the other room, which he had observed from across the street, were now darkened. This was curious, but there was no time to debate upon it. He must act quickly. He was sure now that Marishka was somewhere in this house, a prisoner. She had sent for him, or why should Linke be here? He drew the revolver from the folds of his sash, and with a keen glance to right and left, crouching below the level of the shrubbery, he reached the door of the house and tried it.

It was locked. He hesitated for a moment, looking over his shoulder, and then slipping his weapon into his belt again, he put a foot into the trellis beside the doorway and began climbing. It was a dangerous thing to attempt, for as he emerged from the shadows below, his figure would be clearly outlined against the moonlit wall, and a well directed shot from the garden would send him clattering down like a maimed squirrel from a tree. But the game was worth the candle, for

he had seen that the window in the room above the door was open, and as he had decided to enter the house at any cost, this was the only way. But it was slow work, for the trellis was old, and creaked beneath his weight, and once, when his foot slipped, he thought he must surely be discovered. Then he waited, with his fingers almost at the window ledge, listening. He heard the low murmur of voices, but they seemed to come from another part of the building, and so risking the whole venture in one effort, he quickly raised his head above the level of the window-ledge, and peered in. At first he saw only the flickering shadows of a lamp hanging from the ceiling, and then a figure in the corner opposite, which startled him until he saw that it was immovable—a suit of armor upright against the wall. The room appeared to be empty, and so he grasped the inside of the sill, and hauled himself up until his shoulders were within the window opening.

It was then that a female figure started up from a couch just beside him, stifling a cry. The light from the lantern above fell full upon her face, and her eyes were staring at him in terror. It was Marishka. He whispered her name, but still she stared at him wildly, and it was not until then that he remembered his disguise. He took off his fez, and spoke to her again.

"Marishka, it is I, Hugh!"

He saw her stare and then take a pace toward him as he clambered into the room, and in a moment she was in his arms.

"Hugh—belovèd!" she murmured brokenly, as she leaned heavily against him. "I have been so frightened——"

"Marishka! Your hands are ice cold. They have kept you here—against your will?"

"Yes. And you—Hugh—they've tried——"

"Don't fear," he smiled. "I've as many lives as a cat. Didn't you hear me scratching my way up the wall? Sh——"

He left her for a moment, and peered out into the darkness of the garden. All was silent as before, and so he returned and took her in his arms again.

"You've forgiven me?" he whispered.

"Need you ask? Oh, Hugh, I've wanted you so!"

"Thank God for that." Their lips met and she clung to him, all the pitiful longings of her days and nights of misery in her caress, the dependence of helpless womanhood, but greater than that, the fear for his safety, which took precedence over her own.

He kissed her tenderly, the joy of possession the greater for the dangers that they ran.

"You're trembling, Marishka. Don't worry."

But she clung to him anew.

"If anything should happen now—that I have you again."

"Dearest! I, too, have suffered with you—but I haven't despaired. I would never have given you up, you know," he said with a smile.

"I've never wanted you to give me up, Hugh. I've tested you cruelly—because—because—my pride was hurt——"

"It had to be, Marishka. But you've survived it——"

"My love is greater—greater than anything in the world to me," she murmured. "Danger has proved it—and yours——"

"It needed nothing. I love you—now and always."

"You forgive?"

He kissed her again and again, and for a long moment they clasped each other in silence, their lips together, questioning, replying in broken syllables. To the woman, nothing else mattered. If death came now, she knew that it would be sweet. And it was Renwick who found his reason first. Her hands still in his, he led her to the window, where he scanned the garden anxiously. But there was still no sign of anything suspicious, nor, in the house, any sound. But Renwick now questioned her quickly.

"You sent me a note in Vienna?"

"Yes. A warning. I was afraid. I urged you to return to England, but I hoped——"

"Ah! The note—a forgery!"

"What do you mean?"

"Your note told me to come to Sarajevo—to the Hotel Europa, where you would communicate with me."

"A forgery! Goritz! Now I understand. He said that you would follow."

"Goritz—the limousine chap! He is here?"

"I don't know. I haven't seen him since this morning. Hugh! He has laid plans to kill you—a trap \_\_\_"

"We shall outwit him—"

"But I am frightened, even now with you here beside me, Hugh. He is clever—I am no match for him—I wrote you to come—tonight. It was what he wished. Don't you understand? A trap! You are in danger—here—now—"

But Renwick did not seem to be greatly disturbed. His mind had cleared amazingly.

"We shall fight him with his own weapons—"

"I am frightened. Are you sure that no one saw you enter the garden?"

"Positive." And then pursuing his thought, "You sent a note to the Hotel Europa?"

"Yes—" she stammered, "this afternoon. I asked you to come here—tonight at twelve. You received it?"

"No. It was intercepted."

"I don't understand."

He laughed. "I don't wonder. It's the luckiest thing in the world that I've found you."

He kissed her again, and then quickly, "The Harim is—where?"

She pointed to the door with the grille, and he regarded it with a new interest. In the silence that followed, they heard again the murmur of voices, a woman's and a man's.

"Zubeydeh!" she whispered. "The woman here and—a man's voice."

"We must find a way out quickly. They may come around this way."

He noticed the door upon the other side of the room.

"Where does that lead?"

"To the *selamlık*, I think. But it is better to go by the window. I can climb. Let us go."

He shook his head.

"It's dangerous. The stairs—"

"It is dark below. I don't know where they lead."

"To the garden. They must. The door is locked on the inside, but perhaps there's another exit at the rear. Come."

He drew his revolver from his belt, and taking her by the hand, led her to the stair, and there they stopped, for Marishka clutched his arm in sudden consternation. From the Harim came a sudden muffled noise—as though some one were beating upon a carpet.

"Shots!" whispered Renwick. "We must hurry."

"Shots! What does it mean?"

"I'll explain later. Hurry!"

There were cries now—the shriek of a woman, and above all, a hoarse bellow as of some enraged animal. Renwick had already descended a few steps, Marishka following him, when the door to the *selamlık* opened, and a female figure clad in Marishka's silk drapery rushed forth. It was Yeva.

"Fräulein—" she whispered in awed tones to Marishka. "Forgive me!" she pleaded. "I have seen. It was beautiful. I could not see harm come to you. His Excellency has been in the street at the back of the house, but when the fighting began came up the rear stairway of the *selamlık* \_\_\_"

"Goritz!" stammered Marishka in terror.

"But I have locked the upper door."

"He will come here, Yeva!"

"Excellency must go—if there is yet time."

"The garden!"

"No," said Renwick, looking about for a place of concealment. "I shall stay."

"It is death—" whispered Marishka.

But Yeva was resourceful. "The armor!" she whispered. "I have often hidden in it from Zubeydeh. Quickly, Excellency! It stands upon brackets in the wall."

And while Marishka watched the stairhead in terror, Yeva helped the Englishman into this strange place of concealment. Excited as Yeva was at her share in the affair, her fingers were nimble, and she buckled the straps quickly, then turning fled into the *selamlik* and unlocked the door. But Goritz by this time had managed to find a way to the stairs to the *mabein*, and came up stealthily, listening eagerly to the increasing commotion in the Harim. He found Marishka and Yeva hand in hand at the door to the *selamlik* staring in consternation at the door of the black grille. There were no more shots, but more ominous even than shots were the sounds of voices, strained, subdued, tense with effort—the heavy breathing of men, the crashing of furniture, and then at last the jar of heavy bodies falling—a cry of triumph—and silence.

Captain Goritz had folded his arms and waited expectant.

"It is very strange," he said coolly to Yeva. "Someone has broken into the Harim?"

"Excellency, I do not know. I was at the other end of the house. The Fräulein was frightened and called to me," she lied glibly.

"It is not to be wondered at——" he said with a strange smile. "They have made enough noise to raise the dead. I have a pardonable curiosity as to what has happened." But as he strode toward the door and laid a hand upon the knob, Yeva rushed forward.

"Excellency!" she whispered. "You dare not! The law!"

He looked at her for a moment, then shrugged and turned to Marishka.

"I would suggest, Countess Strahni, that you go with this girl at once into the *selamlik*. I have no idea of what has happened, but it must be something quite disagreeable—an intruder within the Harim—the penalty is severe——"

Marishka was leaning against the rail of the stairway near the suit of armor, and Goritz watched her curiously.

"I—shall not go," she stammered faintly, wondering at the growing mystery.

He shrugged. "As you please," he muttered, "but I warn you that the situation may be—unpleasant——"

"I shall remain——" she said again.

There were sounds of heavy footsteps, and the door of the *dutap* swung open, revealing the Beg of Rataj, torn and dishevelled, his face distorted with passion. He paused in the doorway, and looked from Goritz to Marishka, breathing rapidly.

"Ah, Excellency," he gasped. "I call you all to witness. A man has entered the Harim—a Christian. Yeva, I knew, was not there, but I saw him and followed from the street with my friends—my son, my brother-in-law, my cousins. He is here. We have killed him."

Goritz glanced at Marishka, but she stared past the dreadful apparition into the corridor, behind him, incapable of speech or thought.

"A Christian!" said Goritz. "Incredible!"

"You shall see," said the Effendi. And turning to those within he uttered a phrase in Turkish, and presently Zubeydeh and a man came forward dragging something behind them. Marishka hid her face in her hands, and crouched nearer the corner where the armor was.

She saw Goritz suddenly start forward, his gaze upon the prostrate figure in black, which its bearers had deposited none too gently in the middle of the rug. Then he peered into the upturned face, starting upright and glaring at the Effendi.

"*Vermalerdeiter Hällen*——" he cried. "*It's not the man!*"

"What do you mean, Excellency?" cried the Beg.

"What I say—Idiots!"

"A Christian—in my Harim!" wailed the old ruffian. "He has ruined my furniture and killed my brother-in-law and my cousin."

"What do I care?" cried Goritz furiously. "You've got us all into trouble with your bungling. Do you know who this man is?" he stormed.

"Who, Excellency?" cried the Effendi.

"Nicholas Szarvas—the most famous secret service agent in Hungary."

"What say you, Excellency?" the Effendi asked bewildered.

"You have heard."

"It is impossible. This was the man——"

"Bah! You are a sheep's head."

"Sheep's head I am not——"

"Then you are a fool!"

"By the beard of the Prophet—he was in my Harim," muttered the Effendi. "I call you all to witness——"

"I wash my hands of the matter," said Goritz furiously.

"I am within my rights—the Harim——"

"Bah—You have killed a police officer of the Empire!"

"And you?" The Effendi's face was the color of that of the man upon the floor, but his eyes glowed with fear and desperation.

"I know nothing of the matter," continued Goritz. "A Christian comes into your Harim and you kill him. If he turns out to be an officer of the law, what is it to me?"

"You will pay me that which you owe," shrieked the Effendi. "The man has broken my furniture."

"It is a pity he didn't break your head. I pay you nothing."

And then to Marishka, "Come, Countess, we must be upon our way."

Marishka stood staring at Goritz, a new horror in her eyes. She now understood. The Effendi thrust himself between them.

"You will pay me that which you owe," he stormed again.

"Stand aside!" said the German, and then to Marishka,

"If the Countess Strahni will be good enough to accompany me?" he said, civilly.

But Marishka stood fixed, staring at him with alien eyes, as the Effendi rushed forward toward her, his arms extended.

"She shall not go. She will see what has been done. He is *not the man*. She will remain here in my house until——"

"Stand aside, Effendi!" cried Goritz furiously, and as the man did not move, he caught him by the shoulder and thrust him roughly aside. He scorned to use a weapon, and the other man and the woman seemed completely dominated by his air of command.

"You will please come at once, Countess Strahni. There is no telling how soon the police will be coming."

And as Marishka did not move—

"You heard?"

"I will not go," stammered Marishka.

Goritz paused, examining her keenly, as though he had not quite understood.

"I have asked you quite courteously, Countess——"

"I will not go," repeated Marishka. Her voice was ice-cold, like her body, which seemed to be frozen into immobility.

"I beg to remind you of your promise—to go with me——"

"I will not go," she said again.

"Then I must take you," he said, striding toward her furiously, and reaching out a hand to seize her by the wrist.

Then a strange thing happened. The man in armor, in the corner behind Marishka, strode clanking forth into the room, while a voice reverberated in the iron helmet. What it said no one understood. The Effendi gazed at the moving thing in terror, and then with a shriek fled down the stairs, Zubeydeh and her companion, *calling in loud tones upon Allah*, at his heels. Goritz glanced at the thing and then stood irresolute a moment, as the man in the armor slowly raised an arm, for at the end of the arm Goritz saw a revolver pointed directly at him.

"Hold up your hands, Captain Goritz," rang the voice from the depths of the helmet. "Quickly, or I'll shoot."

Goritz bit his lips.

"Clever—Herr Renwick," he said coolly in English. "You've taken the trick."

"Hold up your hands——"

But Goritz with a sudden leap had sprung behind Marishka. Renwick fired once as he jumped, and missed. And now Goritz, shielding himself behind Marishka's body, drew his automatic and fired again and again, riddling the ancient armor like a sieve. Marishka struggled wildly in the arms of the German, and managed to draw the dagger concealed in her waist, but he caught her wrist and held her in front of him, taking careful aim at the man in the armor and firing

deliberately. Renwick tottered forward silently and came crashing to the floor in the corner, where after a moment of struggle, he relaxed and lay motionless.

Goritz caught Marishka around the waist and disarmed her. But this act of precaution was unnecessary, for after one fleeting glance at the tangled heap of iron in the corner, she sank a dead weight in his arms.

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## CHAPTER XVIII

### NUMBER 28

For a month the Landes Hospital had been greatly interested in the mystery of patient Number 28. In spite of the imminence of war, and the preparations which were being made to care for the wounded along the border, the physicians, the nurses, and the other patients had all formed theories as to the man's history and the possible causes of his injuries. And during the long period in which he lay unconscious, hovering in the dim realm between life and death, not a day passed in which his temperature, respiration, and other symptoms were not discussed from one end of the hospital to the other. The Head Surgeon, Colonel Bohratt, inclined to the opinion that if the man continued for a few days longer without change he would recover. But the Head Nurse shook her head sagely. The wound in the head had been difficult, as the operation was an unusual one, the wound in the shoulder was nothing, but the one in the stomach! If the operation of Colonel Bohratt proved successful, then a miracle had been performed.

The interest in the case, both from the sentimental as well as the professional point of view, was so great that the man's bed had been carefully wheeled from a ward where he had been taken from the operating table, into a private room, where every chance would be given him to recover.

On the twenty-seventh of July, Fräulein Roth, the nurse on duty at the bedside of the man of mystery, noted a slight change in his breathing, and saw that he had opened his eyes, which were regarding her calmly, but with the puzzled expression of one who has come a great distance into a strange country. She knew then that what the Head Surgeon had said was true, and that the man of mystery had turned the corner which led away from the land of the Great Beyond. But being a prudent person, she gave no sign of her delight, merely moving softly closer to the bedside, and in German quietly asked him if he felt better.

The man did not or could not reply at once, but she saw that his gaze slowly passed beyond her to the bare walls of the room and to the open window, beyond which were clouds, sunshine, and the distant drowsy murmur of the city.

"You are feeling more comfortable?" she asked again, in German.

"Yes," he *muttered*.

"You have been sick," she whispered softly, smoothing his pillow.

"Ah, yes, sick," the man muttered, and closing his eyes, slept again.

It was not long before the news of the awakening of Number 28 had reached the nurses and attending physicians. Colonel Bohratt, greatly pleased at the correctness of his prophecy and the end of the period of coma, at once a tribute to his wisdom as well as to his professional skill, came himself and viewed the patient, gave directions for treatment and predicted speedy recovery.

That night, the man of mystery awoke again, exchanged a few words with Fräulein Roth as before, and again slept. And on the morrow, a sure sign that all was going well with him, he had gained so much strength that he moved freely in his bed, and took more than the casual interest of the desperately sick in his situation and surroundings. Fräulein Roth had been given instructions to keep him quiet, but she smiled at him when quite rationally he questioned her.

"Is this a hospital?" he asked.

"Yes—the Landes Hospital."

"Where?"

"Sarajevo."

"Ah,—Sarajevo."

He remained silent for a long moment.

"I have been here long?" he asked again.

"A month."

"A month! And the date?"

"The twenty-eighth of July——"

"Yes. I understand."

Fräulein Roth wished him to be quiet, but after a long moment of contemplation of the ceiling, in which his brows puckered in a puzzled way, he spoke again.

And when Fräulein Roth anxiously desired him to be quiet, she discovered that Number 28 had a will of his own and only smiled at her earnestness.

"I am feeling quite strong," he said weakly. "It will do me no harm to talk, for some things puzzle me. I was brought here. Won't you tell me how?"

She debated with herself for a moment, but after an inspection of her patient she decided to tell him the facts.

"A peasant had discovered two men lying in a strip of woods near the road to Gradina. At first he had thought that both were dead, but upon closer examination he found that one of the men, although desperately wounded, still breathed, and notified the police, who summoned the ambulance."

"I?" asked the sick man.

She nodded. "You were brought here—to the Landes Hospital in a bad condition. The other man was dead."

"The other man—dead?"

"Yes," said the nurse, "with stab wounds in the back, and one in the heart." She regarded her patient keenly a moment, and then went on. "There were no marks of identification upon either of you. You were without clothing. Following so closely upon the assassination of the Archduke Franz and his wife, the circumstances were suspicious, and the police of Sarajevo and the secret service officials have done all they could to find some clew to the murderers. You see," she concluded with a smile, "you are a man of mystery and all Sarajevo awaits your recovery."

"Oh, I see. They are waiting for me to speak?"

Number 28 lay silent, regarding the ceiling intently, frowning a little. His mind worked slowly and Fräulein Roth saw that he found some difficulty in mental concentration.

"We will talk no more at present," she said firmly. "If you are no worse—perhaps again tomorrow."

But on the following day and the next the condition of the patient was not so favorable, for he lay in a drowsy condition and showed no interest in anything. It seemed that the pallid fingers of Death were still stretched over him. There were whispered consultations at the bedside, and a magistrate came to take a deposition, but the Head Surgeon advised delay. He had a reputation at stake.

The wisdom of his advice was soon proved, for at the end of three days Number 28 rallied, his fever subsided, and he smiled again at Nurse Roth. But she had learned wisdom and refused to talk.

Number 28 straightened in bed and ran his thin fingers through the beard with which his face was now covered. He ate of his food with a relish and then eagerly questioned.

"I am quite strong again, Fräulein. See—my hand does not even tremble. Will you not talk with me?"

"My orders are to keep you quiet."

"I have been quiet long enough—a month!" he sighed. "The world does not stand still for a month."

The nurse smiled. "I see that you are used to having your own way," she said.

"Is it not natural that I should wish to know what has happened in the world? Tell me. The Archduke Franz was killed. Did they discover a plot?"

"A plot? Yes. The boy Prinzep was employed by the Serbians."

"He confessed?"

"Not to that—but it is obvious."

"And what has happened?"

She examined him intently, aware now of what she herself had long suspected, that this patient was no ordinary kind of man. His German had a slight accent, but whether he came from central Europe or elsewhere she could not decide.

"Austria Hungary is on the eve of great events. A week or more ago Austria Hungary sent an ultimatum to the Serbian government, to which an unsatisfactory reply was received. The Austro-Hungarian minister has left Belgrade, and war has been declared upon Serbia."

"War! and Russia?"

"Russia, France and Germany have mobilized."

"And England?"

"Nothing is known of what England will do. But it is feared that she may join the cause of Russia and France."

Number 28 lay silent for a moment thinking deeply, and then—

"It has come at last. War. All of Europe——"

"It is frightful. There has already been fighting on the Serbian border. We are preparing here to receive the wounded."

He remained silent a moment, his eyes sparkling as he thought of what she had told him and then quietly, "War!" he muttered. "I must get well very quickly, Nurse, I must——"

*She waited for him to go on, for, being a woman, curiosity as to his history obsessed her, but he said no more. And in spite of her interest in this man whom she had faithfully watched and served for more than a month, some delicacy restrained the questions on her tongue.*

"You will not get well for a long while, Herr Twenty-Eight, if you do not keep quiet," she said quickly.

"You are very good to me," he replied. "I shall do as you wish."

Several days after this, the patient having gained strength rapidly, he was permitted solid food. He slept much, and in his waking hours seemed to be thinking deeply. He was very obedient, as though concentrating all his mind upon an effort toward speedy recovery, but he did not talk of himself. His strength now permitting more frequent conversation, the nurse brought him the news of the world outside, which included the declaration of war by Great Britain against Germany—and the certainty of a declaration against Austria Hungary.

"It is as I suspected," he muttered. "England——"

Again her patient was silent, and Nurse Roth glanced at him quickly. English!

She did not speak her thought, for the import of her news had sent her patient into one of his deep spells of concentration. No Englishman that she had ever met had spoken the German language so fluently. But concealing her interest and curiosity when he turned toward her again, she smiled at him brightly.

"You are now getting much stronger, Herr Twenty-Eight," she said. "The Head Surgeon has given permission for your examination."

"Examination?"

"A magistrate will come tomorrow to take your deposition."

"I don't understand."

"About all the facts connected with your injuries."

"They have learned nothing?"

"A little. The man who was found with you has been identified."

"Ah!"

"As Nicholas Szarvas, a Hungarian police officer——"

"Szarvas!"

"You knew him?"

The patient was silent again. She had come suddenly upon the stone wall which had balked all her efforts. Her hand was near him upon the bed. He took it and pressed it to his lips.

"Do not think me ungrateful for all your kindnesses, Fräulein. Some day perhaps I can repay you. But there are reasons why I cannot speak."

She drew her hand away from him slowly.

"But you must speak when the magistrate questions," she said gently.

"Perhaps!" And he was silent again.

With his growing strength had come wariness. If England declared war, he, Hugh Renwick, at present unknown, would be interned, a prisoner; and all hope of finding Marishka and the German, Goritz, would be lost. In the first few days of his awakening, he had thought of sending for Warwick, the British Consul, and putting the matter entirely in his hands. But before he had had the strength to decide what it was best to do, had come the declarations of war, and he had determined to remain silent and act upon his own initiative. Unless he had muttered something of his past in his fever, and this he doubted, or some sign of it would have come from Fräulein Roth, there would be no means of identifying him as an Englishman, and when he recovered, they would let him go. As it was, he was a man of mystery, and as such he intended to remain. He had

noted the marks of interest in the face of the nurse, and in her questions, and his gratitude to her was very genuine, but he was sure now that he was in no position to take chances. War being declared, Warwick would have been given his passports, and would have left the country. No one in Sarajevo knew the Englishman, Renwick—at least no one who would be likely to connect the man of mystery of the Landes Hospital with the former secretary of the British Embassy in Vienna.

As his mind had grown clearer, the wisdom of his decision became more apparent. If a magistrate came, he would be obliged to see him, but he knew that his period of illness could cover a multitude of remembrances.

The magistrate came with a clerk, and questioned with an air of importance. Renwick realized that if he refused to answer, he might make himself an object of suspicion, and endanger the chances of his release upon recovery, and so, as he was not under oath, he invented skillfully.

"What is your name?"

"Peter Langer."

"What nationality?"

"Austrian, if you like. I am a citizen of the world."

The magistrate examined him over his glasses.

"The world is large. From what part of Austria did you come?"

"Vienna."

"Your parents are Viennese?"

"They were in Vienna when I was young."

"Were they born there?"

"I do not know."

"It is necessary that you should."

"I am sorry if it is necessary. I do not know."

"What brought you to Sarajevo?"

"I am a wanderer. I wished to see the world."

"A wish that has almost proved fatal. You have no business?"

"Merely the business of wandering."

The magistrate frowned.

"I beg that you will take this matter seriously, Herr Langer."

"I do. It is not in the least amusing."

The man consulted his notes for a moment.

"Where were you on the night of June twenty-eight?"

"I have been ill for a month. Dates mean nothing to me. My memory is bad."

"Ah! Well, then, where were you on the night of the assassination?"

"What assassination——?"

"The assassination of the Archduke," replied the magistrate sternly.

"In Sarajevo, I should say."

"*Natürlich*. But in what place?"

"In the street, perhaps—or in a house. I don't remember."

"I beg that you make the effort to remember."

"I cannot," said Renwick after a pause.

"You must."

"My mind is clouded."

The magistrate exchanged a glance with the nurse, who stood at the head of the bed, and spoke to her. "This man talks to you quite rationally?"

Fräulein Roth hesitated and then said: "Yes. But he has been very ill. I should suggest that you excuse him where possible."

"H—m! This is a matter of great seriousness. A police officer has been murdered by a person or persons unknown. This man was found near his body, both of them left for dead. It is not possible

that he can have forgotten the circumstances—the fight, the shooting which preceded his unconsciousness." And then to Renwick—"You knew Nicholas Szarvas?"

"No."

"I would remind you that this is the man who was found dead beside you."

"I did not know him."

"What are your recollections of the evening I have mentioned?"

"I have no recollections."

"You said that you were in a house."

"Or the street—I forget."

"You remember having an altercation with someone?"

"In my dreams—yes. Many."

"But before your dreams, when you were conscious?"

"None."

"Szarvas was stabbed. Did you see him attacked?"

"I did not."

"Have you any idea who shot you?"

"A man who was my enemy, I should say."

"Ah—you had an enemy?"

"What man has not?"

"What was his name?"

"I don't remember."

The magistrate got up frowning, and paced up and down the room, his hands behind his back.

"I should advise you, Herr Langer, that it is my opinion that you are willfully endeavoring to impede the steps of this investigation. I would remind you also that those who try to thwart the officers of the law in the performance of their duty, are alike amenable to it. Your reticence—I can call it by a less pleasant word—is aiding and abetting a criminal, who must be brought to justice."

"It is not likely——" He paused.

"What?"

"That I should wish to save a man who had tried to murder me."

"But this is precisely what you are doing."

Renwick smiled.

"What would you? Have me invent a story for your record? I can say no more than I remember. I remember nothing."

The magistrate took off his glasses and rubbed them rigorously, as if by so doing he could clear his own mind as to what had best be done. Then he put them upon his nose and took up his hat and papers. It was certain that the patient's brain was still far from strong.

"I shall not pursue this investigation now," he said to Nurse Roth. "I shall wait a few days in which Herr Langer may have time to reflect. He is still very weak. In the meanwhile, Herr Langer, I would tell you that it would be wise for you to recover your memory."

"A desire which I sincerely share," said Renwick with a smile.

"If not," continued the magistrate with his most magisterial manner, "you will be detained, as a material witness, in Sarajevo."

"I have no intention of leaving Sarajevo unless someone should happen to pay my railroad fare," replied Renwick wearily.

The man left, followed by his clerk, and Nurse Roth closed the door behind them. When the sounds of their footsteps had faded away along the corridor, she turned to the table where she rearranged some roses in a vase.

"You lie very ingeniously, Herr Twenty-eight," she said with a smile.

Renwick regarded her calmly.

"It is not my nature, Nurse Roth. But a cracked skull doesn't improve the brains beneath."

She came over to him quickly, and stood beside the bed.

"You have some reason for concealing your identity. I know that you remember what happened. But I will protect you as far as I can, upon one condition."

"And that?" he asked anxiously.

"That you will give me your word of honor that it was not you who killed Nicholas Szarvas."

He caught her by the hand and smiled up at her with a look so genuine that there was no question as to his sincerity.

"I give it. I did not kill Nicholas Szarvas."

"Thank you," she said simply. "I believe you."



**"Thank you," she said simply. "I believe you."**

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"I wish I could tell you," he whispered earnestly, "for I know that you are my friend, but"—and he relinquished her hand—"but I *must* keep silent."

She touched him gently upon the shoulder in token of understanding, and from that moment said no more.

The days passed slowly, but it was evident to those who were interested in the case that Number 28 gained strength very rapidly. His wounds had healed, and he was soon permitted to get up and sit in an armchair near the window, where he could look out over the minarets of the city below the hill. But to all except Nurse Roth, it seemed that the injury to his head had done something to retard the recovery of his memory. He spoke quite rationally to Colonel Bohratt upon matters regarding his physical condition, but sometimes even when the Head Surgeon was talking with him, he relapsed into a state of mental apathy which caused that worthy man to remove his bandage and examine the wound in his head. After which the Colonel would leave the room with a puzzled expression. And in consequence of this curious mental condition, it was thought wise to defer the visit of the officer of the law until the patient's mind should show a change for the better. There was even a consultation upon the advisability of another operation upon the head, but the patient showed such encouraging marks of growing lucidity that the operation was deferred.

It was a dangerous game that he was playing, and Renwick knew it, for the time would come when he must tell who he was, or find a chance to escape from the hospital. Escape was his hope and each day as he gained new strength, he thought of a hundred expedients by which it might be accomplished. He knew that even now he was under surveillance, and virtually a prisoner of the Austrian government, until he could give some account of himself, and of the events of the night of the twenty-eighth of June. And so he conserved his energies carefully, gaining courage and weight with each new day, playing the game of delay until he was assured of his strength and the moment was propitious. The chief difficulty which confronted him was a means to procure clothing. He was allowed the privileges of the hospital, permitted to walk upon the terrace, but he had no clothing except the sleeping suit of cotton and a wrapper-like affair which he wore when out of his room. Whether his restriction to this costume was by neglect or by design, he did not know, for all the other convalescents whom he met out in the air wore the clothes in which

they had come to the hospital. The fact that he had been brought here unclothed was of little comfort to him, and he feared to request a change of garments for this might excite suspicion. There was nothing for it but to wait, and when strength enough came, seize the first opportunity presented to slip quietly away.

He had been studying his chances with a discriminating eye. His room was upon the second floor, but there was a rain-spout which passed just beside it, and given the strength of hand and wrist to accomplish the descent, the matter would be simple. There was a row of shrubbery just below the terrace, which led to a path over the hills, where he might be lost under cover of the night. But even at night he could not go into Sarajevo without clothing. For a while the idea of appealing to Nurse Roth occurred to him, but he at last rejected it, aware that she had already done much that could not be repaid, and unwilling to subject her to the alternatives of refusal or acquiescence—one of which might be hazardous to his own chances, the other surely fruitful of unpleasantness to herself. He had no right to ask this of her. He wished to incur no new obligations, for when the time came, he intended to go, and he could not repay her kindness with deceit. And so he waited, simulating weakness, exercising in secret, and gaining in strength for the hopeless task before him.

He had made no plans. What plans could he make when he had no means of making inquiries? Goritz was gone with Marishka,—by this time perhaps far beyond the German border, the girl a prisoner—or—? For a moment he paused as the new thought came to him. What would be the status of the Countess Strahni since the outbreak of war? The conditions which existed before the pact of Konopisht were no more. Germany's ambitions stultified—Austria forgiving—both nations involved in a great undertaking the prosecution of which must make them careless of all less vital issues! Had Goritz been recalled from this secret mission to another more important? And if so, where was Marishka? Could she have been released? There was a chance of it, but it seemed a slender one. Goritz! Something—some deeply hidden instinct, some suspicion harbored perhaps in the long days and nights of his unconsciousness, some pang of fear born of pain and unrest, advised him that, behind the secret duty which had first brought Goritz to Vienna, he was now playing a game of his own. The brief glimpse he had had of the man, short but fearfully significant, had made an unpleasant impression. He had seen the look in the eyes of the German as he had asked Marishka to go with him from the house of the garden, a look courteous and considerate, that had in it, too, something more than mere admiration. If the man were in love with her! And what man of any vision, learning to know Marishka could help caring for her! Not love, surely! Not love from a man who sheltered himself from danger by using her as a shield. He had been safe then. Renwick could not have fired then. And Goritz was clever enough to know it. But the dastardliness of such a trick! There was a long score to pay between Renwick and Goritz, a score the items of which had begun with the attempts upon the Englishman's life in Vienna and Konopisht, the imprisonment of Marishka, and the shooting in Sarajevo which had nothing to do with politics. They were enemies. Their countries were enemies. It was written.

Absorbed in these unpleasant meditations, Renwick sat upon the terrace of the hospital after supper, idly manicuring his nails with Nurse Roth's scissors. As it grew dark, he got up, slowly pacing up and down the length of the terrace. The moment was approaching when he would be called in to go to his room, but he grudgingly relinquished the moments in the soft evening air. It was curious how much latitude they gave him—curious, also, that the magistrate, after his second fruitless visit a few days ago, had not returned. As Renwick had continued evasive the magistrate had grown angry and at last had threatened him with the visit of one who would make him speak. Who was this new inquisitor to be? Someone in higher authority? Or perhaps some secret service agent who had finally succeeded in getting some clues as to the murder of the colossal Szarvas?

Of one thing Renwick was sure—that soon he must make a break for liberty. Tonight—now—into the dusk beyond the hills. He was not very strong yet, but it might be—

"Herr Twenty-Eight," said the voice of Nurse Roth at his elbow, "you are to go at once to your room for examination."

"Thanks, Fräulein. I shall go. It is the magistrate?"

She nodded soberly.

"The magistrate and another whom I have never seen. They are now in the office consulting the Head Surgeon."

Renwick smiled at her as he whispered, "I am to be *grilled*?"

"I fear so."

He shrugged. "The time for subterfuge is past." And then, taking her hand again, "I shall go at once. But whatever happens I want you to know that I shall never forget what you have done for me."

"It is nothing. Now go, please."

He bowed and preceded her into the hallway. As they passed the office the door was open and Renwick glanced in. The magistrate was there and another man, talking to Colonel Bohratt, all of them unaware of the patient in the darker hallway looking at them. Renwick started, and then gazed again at the third man leaning over the table facing him. His figure seemed familiar, his bowing and gestures more so, and yet for a second Renwick could not place him. And then the

man smiled, showing a gold tooth which caught the reflection of the electric light upon the table. A gold tooth—

Nurse Roth was regarding Renwick who glanced at the open door behind him and then at Nurse Roth. The pause was momentous. Renwick quickly recovered his poise and went on a few steps.

"They wish to see me—in the office?" he asked in a whisper.

"In your room, please. I shall tell them that you are waiting."

"Thanks, again," said Renwick abruptly, with outstretched hand, "and good-by."

"Good-by?" she asked in alarm.

He smiled over the shoulder as he went up the stairs.

"I think I shall exchange the hospital—for the jail."

He left her standing there looking up at him in wonder or pity, and then turning the stairhead went on down the upper corridor. There were nurses conversing here, and a patient or two, so Renwick went slowly until he reached his room. But once within the door he acted with speed and resolution. First he turned the key in the lock and softly shot the bolt, then crossed the room quickly, his heart beating rapidly. He was not strong and his nerves already were warning him, but they did not fail him. He peered out of the window upon the terrace. It was not yet dark and there was a nurse below standing beside a man in a wheel chair. He could not go now for they would see him and surely give the alarm, and so he waited, going back to the door and listening for the sound of approaching male footsteps. As yet no sound. He peered down upon the head of the luckless nurse, mutely imprecating. The moments were precious. Would they never go in? It was past the hour for loitering on the terrace. For a moment the idiotic notion came to him to go out into the corridor and call the attention of the nurse in charge of the floor to the infraction of rules, but he turned again to the window. The nurse was moving now, slowly pushing the wheel chair toward the door. It was barely a hundred feet away, but to Renwick it seemed an eternity before the pair vanished within. Then taking off his slippers he put them in the pocket of his wrapper, and rolling it into a bundle, dropped it noiselessly upon the terrace below. His nerves quivered as he sat astride the window-sill but he set his jaw and lowered himself from the window, catching the iron gutter-pipe with bare fingers and toes. The spout seemed to creak horribly, and for a moment he thought that it was swaying outward with him. But the sensation was born of his own weakness. The pipe held and slowly he descended, reaching the ground, his knuckles bruised and torn, but so far, safe.

He paused for a moment to slip into his wrapper and then crossed the terrace quietly, reached the lawn and the shelter of the bushes below.

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## CHAPTER XIX

### DISGUISE

Long ago he had planned the direction in which he should go when the time came for him to escape. And so without pausing to look behind him he hurried down the hill in the shelter of the hedge until he reached its end. A hundred yards away was a hillock. By going forward in a line which he had already marked he would have the partial protection of rocks and bushes. He paused just a moment to be sure that no one was coming after him. All was as before and the dark group of buildings, his home for nearly two months, loomed in silent dignity behind him. But Renwick knew that it would not be long before the whole countryside would be buzzing like a hornet's nest. In his enfeebled condition, he could hardly hope to cope with his pursuers in the matter of speed and so as he went on across the stream at the base of the hill, he tried to plan something that would outwit them. The nearest outlying houses of the town were but a few hundred yards distant, but instead of taking the road down the hill, he turned sharply to his left after crossing the road and entered the Moslem cemetery, laid according to the custom in a cypress grove. He now moved slowly and leaning against the bole of a tree regained his breath while he listened for the expected sounds of pursuit. The cemetery seemed to be deserted, but he decided to take no chances, so he found a tree with thick foliage, and climbed from one bough to another until he found a crotch of a limb where he disposed himself as comfortably as possible to wait until the pursuit had passed him by.

His pulses were still pounding furiously from the sudden effort of muscles long unused, and his nerves were tingling strangely, but he clung to his perch until the period of weakness passed and then planned what he had better do. Inside of an hour every policeman in Sarajevo would be warned by Herr Windt to look out for a man with a beard, wearing a sleeping suit and a blue woolen wrapper. The obvious thing therefore was to avoid Sarajevo or else find a means to change his costume. But if he begged, borrowed, or stole an outfit of native clothing—what then? Where should he turn? He had no money, for that, of course, had been taken by the ruffians who had carried his body into the woods and stripped him of his clothing. To all intents and purposes he had been born again—had come into the world anew, naked save for the unsightly flapping things in which he was wrapped. His English clothes were at the inn in the Bistrick quarter

where he had left them, but to seek them now meant immediate capture. And if he wore English clothes in the streets of a town full of men in uniform he would be as conspicuous as though in sleeping suit and wrapper. A native costume was the thing—and a fez which would hide the plaster on his head. But how to get it? He heard voices, and two men passed below him weaving in and out among the trees; he blessed the inspiration which had bidden him climb. He would have known Windt. He was not one of them. They were men from the hospital, out of breath with running, and the phrases they exchanged gave Renwick comforting notion that they were already wearily impressed with the hopelessness of their task. A while they waited, and then he saw them go out on the further side of the copse as though glad to be well away from so melancholy a spot. Indeed the gray turban-carved tombstones were eloquent to Renwick and a newly made grave not far away was unpleasantly suggestive of the fate that had so nearly been his. It was starlight now, but dark, and the owls were already hooting mournfully as though the souls of those who lay in the sod beneath had come again to visit by night their last resting places. It was not the most cheerful spot for a man who had just come out of a bout with death, and Renwick had no mind to stay there. So when the men who had been searching for him had gone their ways, he clambered stiffly down. He lingered by the newly made grave, obsessed by the rather morbid notion of digging up the estimable Moslem who reposed there and exchanging his own hospital wrapper for the much to be desired native costume, but desperate as was his need the idea was too unpleasant. He would rob, if necessary, but not the dead.

As he wandered among the trees in the direction of the nearest lights, he felt a pair of scissors in the pocket of his wrapper—Fräulein Roth's. His fingers closed upon them now. A weapon? Better than that. A plan had come to him which he proceeded immediately to put into practice. Taking off his wrapper he seated himself upon a tombstone and began cutting it into pieces, shaping a short sleeveless jacket. He cut the sleeves of the wrapper lengthwise and made a turban.

Its skirt made him a belt with something left over. He puzzled for awhile over the remnant of cloth left to him, thinking of his legs, but at last discarded it as useless, and hid it among the bushes. Then, laboriously, he trimmed his mustache and beard. It was low work without light or mirror, but he persevered until to the touch of his fingers the merest bristle remained, a stubble such as a man would have who had gone a few days without shaving. Then, satisfied that under cover of the darkness he might pass in a crowd of people unnoticed, he slipped the scissors into the coat of his sleeping suit and sallied forth.

At least he was rid of the flowing robe which would have made of him a marked man. Fortunately the night was hot and sultry, and so far he suffered no inconveniences, but he knew that this disguise was only a makeshift and that by fair means or foul, he must come into the possession of some sort of costume in which he could face the light of day. In the road, he passed a farmer returning from the bazaar, and the careless greeting of the man reassured him. A polyglot costume surely—but this was a city of polyglots. The disguise would do—at least for this night. But the appearance of Windt had seriously alarmed him. It meant, if he was taken, that he would surely be interned, or worse, perhaps that he might be accused of complicity in the murder of Szarvas, Windt's own man. In the back of his head a plan had been forming, which meant if not active help in escaping from the city, at least a short refuge from pursuit, and perhaps something more. He meant to go to the house where Marishka had been—and speak to the girl, Yeva. It was the only hope he had of a clew to Marishka's whereabouts—the only hope of help in this city of enemies. He was quite sure that he would not be a welcome visitor, for it was the old ruffian in the turban, of course, who had taken the clothing from Renwick's body and left him for dead upon the hillside. The theory in the hospital had been that those who had carried Renwick into the woods had intended burying the bodies—for a spade had been found later near the place—but that the murderers had been frightened away before being able to carry out their plan. And lacking information upon the subject, Renwick had come to the same conclusion. He might not be welcome at the house of the blue door, but he knew the old man's secret and decided to risk danger by playing the game with an open hand.

Instead of going into the city by the nearest way, which would have led him in a few moments into the European part of the town, he bore to the left again, climbing the hill behind the Tekija mosque, until he reached an eminence back of the fortress above the Golden Bastion, and then slowly descended into the Turkish quarter of the town where the streets were narrow and dark and the danger of detection minimized. He had already passed many people who had merely glanced at him and gone their ways, and the success of his disguise gave him confidence; but as he approached the Sirocac Tor he was badly frightened, for on turning the corner of a street he ran directly into the arms of a stout Bosnian policeman who was looking for him. The man swore at him in bad German and Renwick drew back against the wall, sure that the game was up, until he realized that the fellow was only cursing because he was almost, if not quite as much startled as Renwick. So the Englishman, regaining his composure, bowed politely and would have gone on, but the policeman spoke.

"Which way have you come?" he asked.

"From the Kastele."

"You have seen no bareheaded man with a beard, wearing a long blue coat?"

"A long blue coat? There are none with long blue coats in the Kastele in the month of August."

"Pfui—! I do not wonder!" said the fat Bosnian, and hurried on.

But the venture made Renwick more cautious, and he avoided the street-lights, moving under the shadows of walls and houses, at last reaching the tortuous alleyway down which he had once come to inspect the house with the *meshrebiya* windows. Almost two months had passed since he had stood in this spot, watching these same lighted windows, unaware of the success that had been almost within his grasp. Outwardly nothing was changed. The blue door faced him, and gathering courage, he crossed the street and entered the garden. It was very dark under the trees and he went quietly forward, stopping by the fountain to listen for sounds within the house. He realized that it was growing late, and that while the garden offered him a refuge from those who were seeking him in the city, daylight would make his tenure precarious even here. If the girl Yeva would only come down into the garden! He waited by the bench listening, and presently was rewarded by hearing a light rippling laugh from the room above the door. She was there—the girl—but not alone—with the old woman perhaps, or the man with the beard. Renwick listened again and watched the window, but heard nothing more. There was nothing for it but to put on a bold front, so summoning his courage, he walked to the door of the house and loudly knocked.

There was an exclamation, a sound of footsteps upon the stair, and at last the bolt of the door was shot and the door opened. Zubeydeh stood, a lantern in her hand, scrutinizing him.

He spoke in German at once. "I come upon an urgent matter," he said coolly. "Upon a matter very important to the owner of this house——"

"Speak—what do you want?" she asked.

"I bear a message."

"The Effendi is not at home——"

"Ah—then Yeva may receive it."

"Yeva! Who are you?"

He smiled. "For the present that need not matter."

Zubeydeh blocked the door more formidably with her body.

"No one enters this house in the Effendi's absence."

"I do not desire to enter the house. I merely wish to talk with Yeva, here——"

"That is not possible." The woman moved back and made a motion to close the door, but Renwick took a pace forward and blocked her effort with his foot.

"Wait," he said.

Something in the tone of his voice arrested her, and the hand which held the door relaxed. She regarded Renwick with a new curiosity. Her eyes narrowed as she peered into his face. She had seen someone who looked like this tall beggar, but where——?

"Who are you?" she asked again, this time with a note of anxiety, scarcely concealed.

Renwick smiled, but he had not yet removed his foot from the sill of the door.

"You do not remember me?"

"No—and yet——" She paused in bewilderment, and Renwick quickly followed his advantage.

"I am one who can save this house from a danger."

"Speak!"

"I have but to speak yonder," and he gestured eloquently toward the city below them, "and the danger will fall." He leaned forward, whispering tensely, "The secret police of the Austrian government wish to know more about the death of Nicholas Szarvas and——"

Zubeydeh dropped the handle of the door and seized Renwick's arm, while her narrow eyes glittered terrified close to his own.

"And you——?"

"It is merely that I did not die," he said coolly.

"You are——?"

"I am the man in the armor, Zubeydeh," he said solemnly.

She started back from him in affright, her hands before her eyes.

"Allah!" she whispered, and then leaned forward again touching his arm lightly, imploringly, while she looked past him into the dark recesses of the garden.

"Then they are there—the police are coming——?"

He quickly reassured her.

"No. I mean you no harm. Do you understand? I have said nothing—nor shall I speak unless——"

he paused significantly.

"Unless——?"

"Unless you refuse to permit me to speak with Yeva. That is all. Listen, Zubeydeh; since that night I have been in the hospital. They would keep me here a prisoner. I have escaped—in this disguise. I make a bargain with you. You help me—I will be silent. If you refuse, I shall tell the police."

"What do you want?" she asked breathlessly.

"A disguise, a weapon, and some money—not much."

"Money! The Effendi has gone upon a journey."

"A few *kroner* only—enough to get me out of town."

"And you will keep silent?"

"As the grave. Don't you understand? I wish to go away from here—quickly, and then you will not see me again."

"How can I believe you?" she said suspiciously.

"Bah! Don't be stupid! If I had desired to betray you, I should have told the truth long ago."

Zubeydeh hesitated.

"You will go away?"

"Yes. I shall go——"

There was a sound upon the stairs behind Zubeydeh and Yeva thrust herself forward.

"I was at the window above. I heard. Allah be praised! You are alive?"

"Yeva! You know anything—of *her*?"

"No, nothing," sadly. And then as she examined him closely, "But you must come into the house. I will do what you wish."

The matter was now out of Zubeydeh's hands, for whatever her doubts, Yeva's swift confidence had swept them away. She stood aside and motioned for him to go up the stairs.

"You will not remain long?" she asked.

"Only long enough to change my clothing—you will provide?"

"Yes. There are garments."

"A fez, jacket, breeches, stout *opankas*."

"It shall be as you desire."

Renwick went up the stairs into the room where he and Goritz had met, recapitulating briefly in his mind the sequence of events which had led to his own downfall. If he had only shot the man when he had stood there a fair mark, defenseless! It had not been the sporting thing, but if he had known what was to follow, he would have done it nevertheless. At least he thought so now. The fateful armor had been restored to its place in the corner, and while he anxiously awaited Yeva's return he examined it casually with the rather morbid interest which one might display in the inspection of one's coffin. It was dented upon the sides with the marks of bullets which had glanced aside, but three neatly drilled holes, two in the breastplate and one in the helmet, reminded him again how narrow had been his escape from death. "Close shooting, that," he muttered to himself. "Emptied clip and not one miss."

Yeva, who had gone with Zubeydeh into the Harim, now returned (discreetly veiled) and with an air of restraint made a sign to the Englishman to be seated while Zubeydeh brought refreshments.

He heard Yeva speaking gently at his ear.

"Allah is good. Excellency, they told me that you were dead—that they would bury you. They took your body and that of the other man in a cart to the hills above the city. But someone came, and they were forced to go away."

"You saw her go with him?"

"Yes. She had fainted. I helped to carry her down through the *selamlik* to the street at the back of the house. Then an automobile came, and they took her away."

"There have been no inquiries here?"

"None. And you will say nothing?" she asked anxiously.

"Not a word. Would you have me deliver myself into the hands of my enemies?"

"I shall help you, Excellency, if you will try to find her."

"Yes. I shall try. I will follow, if you will provide me with clothing."

"It shall be done. But first you must eat and drink and then we shall plan."

Zubeydeh, now completely disarmed, brought cakes and sherbet, and when Renwick had eaten and drunk, gave him cigarettes and the clothing, showing him into a room where he quickly divested himself of his rags of wrapper and put on the garments which she had brought. They were curiously familiar. His own disguise—that which he had bought in the bazaar and had worn when he had first come to this house. He felt in the pockets of his trousers but the money was gone. And when he was dressed, Zubeydeh colored his face with some liquid which she brought from the kitchen.

The clock on the mantle indicated the hour of eleven when Renwick prepared to take his departure. It had been a market day in the Turkish quarter, and late at night the farmers would be returning to their homes. Aware of the difficulties which might lie in the way of his leaving the city, Yeva proposed that Renwick should leave the Carsija in the cart of a cousin of Zubeydeh's, a farmer who lived on the Romanja Plain; and Renwick, quick to see the advantages of the plan, readily agreed, for it was toward the Visegrader Gate, he had learned, that the automobile of Captain Goritz had departed.

As he left the lower door with Zubeydeh, who was to accompany him as far as the Carsija, Renwick caught Yeva by the hand.

"I cannot thank you, girl. But some day I shall pay. You will remember. I promise."

"It is nothing," she said; and then with a laugh: "But if in Vienna or Paris or London, you should see a silk dress of blue——"

"You shall have two of them—and two of pink——"

"Excellency——!" she cried, clapping her hand childishly.

"And if I find her—jewels——!"

"It is too much——" she cried. And then eagerly, as though she feared he might misinterpret, "Still, I should like them——"

"You shall have them—some day."

"I shall pray to Allah that you may find her. Go, Excellency. Go to her and tell her that I have done what I can."

"Allah will bless you."

"May Allah bless you both," she sighed, "for it is all so very beautiful."

The last glimpse that Renwick had of her was from the gate of the garden, where he turned to wave his hand as she stood, leaning wistfully against the doorpost of the house, looking after him.

The arrangements for his journey were readily made and the business of the night being concluded, in half an hour Renwick, passing again as Stefan Thomasevics on his way to Rogatica to help in gathering the harvest, was seated beside Selim Ali, Zubeydeh's cousin, driving in a cart through the silent Kastele. Renwick saw several Bosnian police officers in uniform, who inspected the empty vehicle, but merely glanced at the slouching figures on the seat. At the Visegrader Gate they were detained and questioned, but Selim had a clever tongue and told a straight story which Renwick corroborated with nods and gestures. It would have been dangerous to risk his too fluent German on the officer of the guard. No, they had seen no bearded man in a blue coat. It had been a hot day in the bazaar. One didn't like to think of blue coats on such a day. Even tonight it was still sultry, but soon the harvest time would be here, and after that the snows. Would the Excellency like a fine melon, for forty *hellers*—the only one left in all the day? No? Then we will give it to the Excellency for nothing.

The officer grinned and let them pass, but he took the melon. It was after midnight for in the distance behind them they had heard the bell of the cathedral tolling the hour. Safely past all military barriers, Selim, who had had a long day, yawned and clambered into the tail of the cart to sleep, leaving the horse to its own devices. But sleep was not for Renwick. His escape had been accomplished without much trouble, and given a little luck and some skill he thought he could manage to lose himself quickly in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. But the magnitude of his undertaking in finding Marishka was formidable. Most of Bosnia and all of Austria Hungary lay between Sarajevo and the German border—five hundred miles of enemy's country to be traversed without other resources than eighteen *kroner* pieces and a pair of somewhat worn *opankas*! And after that—the heart of the enemy's country!

Eighteen *kroner*! His own, probably, filched from the pockets of the clothing he had worn when he had entered the house in search of Marishka. His own clothing, the disguise he had bought in the bazaar. Then perhaps——! Feverishly he felt along the upper lining, where he had pinned the larger sum of money he had taken from his purse when he had changed from mufti at the inn over in the Bistrick quarter of the town. They had found it? Something crinkled under the pressure of his fingers, and a pin pricked his thumb. It was there—his money. They had not searched for it, thinking of course that the money they had found in the pockets was all that he had possessed. He found the head of the pin and opened the lining, counting the notes—ten of

them in all—of one hundred *kroners* each.

A thousand *kroners*! He could have shouted for glee. But caution came to him in time. He looked around to find that Selim had awakened and was sitting up rubbing his eyes.

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## CHAPTER XX

### RENWICK QUESTIONS

Had the man observed him when he was counting his money? The hazard of his position made Renwick suspicious. Selim was a crafty rogue as his conversation with the officer at the Visegrader Gate had shown, and one of Zubeydeh's breed needed watching. But the man yawned and stretched his arms, then got up and looked about with so genuine an air of drowsiness and fatigue that Renwick concluded that he had been mistaken. How much or how little Selim had been told of Renwick's affair the Englishman did not know. But the man had already done him a service and might be in a position to help him further. So he decided upon an attitude of friendliness and gratitude which might perhaps be measured by a few of his eighteen *kroners* but no more.

It was about three o'clock, when having met no adventures upon the way, they reached the farm of Selim Ali upon the border of the Romanja Plain. Twenty hours at a stretch, nine of which had been spent in the tension of his escape, were more than Renwick's strength permitted, and he sank upon the straw pallet to which Selim assigned him, weary and shaken, and with a hand which instinctively clutched the lining of his trousers where his money was pinned, he fell into a deep sleep, from which he did not awaken until the sun was high in the heavens.

He did not rise at once, but lay on his cot, gazing at the ceiling, his mind adjusting itself slowly to his situation. He felt for the money in the lining of his trousers. It had not been touched. If Selim had discovered the notes in Renwick's possession he was either without design upon them or had concluded to postpone its consummation until some later hour. Where was the man? Renwick wanted to talk to him. He heard the sound of a voice in another part of the house, and getting up went outside and walked around to the rear of the building. A young woman in Turkish costume was washing some clothing in a tub by the door.

Renwick greeted her with a bow and a smile, and asked for Selim. She pointed toward a distant field, and then asked if he desired food. Renwick thanked her and replied that he would wait until Selim returned, and went back to bed. There, some moments later the woman brought him coffee, bread, and excellent soup, which the Englishman devoured hungrily, not aware until the moment that it was precisely food he required. When he had finished eating, he smoked a cigarette and planned his pilgrimage.

He had but two known facts with regard to the flight of Captain Goritz with his prisoner; first, the automobile had gone through the Kastele in the direction of the Visegrader Gate, over the very road by which Renwick had come with Selim; second, the object of Captain Goritz was to reach the German border as speedily as possible.

The fact that Goritz had left town by this road to the north and east indicated one of two things: that Goritz, seeking the more quietly to escape from the town, had chosen the road through the Kastele quarter, intending to make a *détour* over the mountains and reach the Bosna road, by which he would go straight through Hungary and Austria to his destination; the other inference was that Goritz had chosen the more easterly road to the north in order to avoid passing through Austria, seeking the shortest road into Silesia, through central Hungary and Galicia by way of Cracow. It seemed probable that Goritz had already reached Germany, and yet even this was no assured fact. If Goritz had chosen to return through Austria by the main traveled roads, by Bosna, by Agram, or by Budapest, there was scarcely a chance that he could have eluded the agents of the watchful Windt. The plot against the life of the Archduke had consummated in his death. Marishka had failed, but with her failure had come a restitution of her complete rights as an Austrian citizen. Herr Windt, no longer seeking to restrain her actions, would wish to save her from the results of her own imprudences, redoubling his efforts to come between Goritz and the German border.

Renwick tried to think as Goritz would think. Why had Goritz come by the circuitous road over the Romanja Plain? Surely not to go north by way of Serbian territory. Goritz had a reason. The shortest road—the least traveled road, the road which avoided Brod, the main gateway into Bosnia, was the road by which he would pass through the rural districts of eastern Hungary, proceeding all the while along the level country of the Danube or the Thies, reaching Silesia—the long tail of the German Empire which thrust out between Poland and Galicia.

Renwick paced the room with quick strides. The theory hung together. And given this to be the plan of Goritz, had he succeeded in carrying it out? Possibly. But Hungary was wide. It was five hundred miles at least from Sarajevo to the Carpathians, and much may happen to an automobile in five hundred miles. Marishka, Yeva told him, had fainted. It would have been inhuman for Goritz to have taken her such a distance without a chance for rest or recuperation. Goritz! Every theory that Renwick devised seemed to fall to the ground when he thought of him. The cleverness

of the man was amazing. And what lay behind his cleverness? What of decency or what of devilry lay behind the mask that Renwick had seen? The man had treated her with consideration—for Marishka had not complained of his attitude toward her—until there in the Turkish house, when he had seized her by the arm....

Deliberation had gained something—only a theory as yet, but if a theory, one which stood the acid of inspection from every angle.

Renwick's task seemed hopeless, but that spirit of persistence, of which Marishka had once spoken, was one of the dominating characteristics of his nature. Given a sound purpose, a worthy desire, he was not easily dismayed, and desperate as his chances of finding Marishka now seemed, it did not enter his head to give up and seek his way—as he might easily have done—to the Serbian border and so to safety. Marishka had forgiven him! During the long days of his convalescence the memory of their brief joyous moments in the Turkish house had renewed and invigorated him. He had heard her calling to him across the distances—despairingly, but hoping against hope that the man she loved was still alive. It thrilled him to think that he could still come to her—if she would wait—come even from the grave and answer her call to him—the call of one brave spirit to another, which needed no material fact of physical utterance to make itself heard. He would find her—not soon perhaps, but all in good time. Providence had not saved him miraculously for failure, and it was written that he should succeed. The gods would be with him now and arm him against disaster. He rejoiced to find how strong he felt today. All the tremors had gone out of his nerves, and he was ready to begin his journey whenever it should be time. But first he wanted to question Selim—Goritz had passed this house—there was a chance ...

Selim Ali returned from the fields at supper time, greeted Renwick with bluff heartiness, and together they sat at a substantial meal of *Jungfern-Braten*, over which Selim's wife Zaidee presided. In the light of events, Renwick willingly reconstructed his estimate of Selim. Last night Renwick would have been suspicious of the angel Gabriel, but with the courage of the sunlight had come confidence in himself, and faith in his star. It seemed that Zubeydeh had told her cousin nothing of Renwick's nationality or predicament, but that he was a friend who had gotten into a trouble, and that the police of Sarajevo were looking for him. Selim was to shelter him and speed him upon his way. Selim asked many questions which Renwick answered as he chose, biding his own time. Yes, *he*, Stefan Thomasevics, had gotten into trouble in Sarajevo, all because of a woman (and this Renwick knew to be true), and desired to leave the country. He did not wish to go to the war and he would not fight against the Serbians who were not in the wrong. He, Thomasevics, wished to go north to Budapest where he would work in the factories and amass a fortune. Selim wagged his head wisely and laughed.

"You must work long, my young friend, and spend nothing," he said. "Come. You're a strong fellow—a little weak just now from smoking too many cigarettes and staying up too late at night. But I will give you work here upon my farm and pay you well."

But Thomasevics shook his head.

"Thank you. You are kind, but I have already made up my mind."

Selim shrugged and lighted his long pipe.

"As you will, but I have made you a good offer."

"A good offer. Yes. Which I would accept were my mind not set upon other matters." He paused and then, "Selim, you are a good fellow. I will tell you the truth. I would like to stay with you, but I am searching for something which may take me to the ends of the earth."

"That is a long way, my friend."

"Yes, a long way, when one doesn't know which way to go."

"Ah, that is even longer. There are but two things which will take a man like you so far as that—vengeance, or a woman."

Renwick smiled.

"I see that you are wise as well as clever. I go for both, Selim."

"A woman? Young?"

"Yes."

"Beautiful?"

"Yes."

"And the vengeance—"

"That shall be beautiful also."

Selim smoked his pipe solemnly and as Renwick hesitated,

"Will it please you to tell me more?" he asked.

Renwick deliberated.

"Yes. I am groping in the dark. And the darkness begins at Sarajevo. She left there in the night—with *him*."

"Ah, a man! Of course."

"They fled by the Visegrader Gate and they came upon this road, past this very house."

Selim shrugged.

"At night! It is a pity. I might have seen them but I sleep soundly."

"There are no other houses for a long distance in either direction. They might have stopped here."

"But they did not!" And as Renwick gave up despairingly, "You see, I worked very hard all last week and slept like a dead man."

"It was not last week," said Renwick gloomily, "almost two months ago——"

"Ah, as to that——" and Selim shrugged again. "One has no recollection of things that happened before the Hegira."

Of course it was hopeless. Renwick had only unraveled the thread to see how far it would lead. Here it broke off, and so he relinquished it. Rather wearily he sank back into his chair and gazed out of the window into the sunset.

Selim's wife entered with a tray to take away the dishes. She wore no *yashmak*, for Selim, though professing the Moslem faith, was somewhat lax in carrying out its articles. He did not believe in running a good thing into the ground, he said. So Zaidee came and went as she chose.

"I have been listening from the kitchen," she said with a smile. "It is always a woman that makes the trouble, *nicht wahr?*"

"Then how can Paradise be Paradise?" grunted Selim.

"Thou wouldst get on poorly without us, just the same," said Zaidee demurely.

"But I should not go to the ends of the earth, like Stefan, here."

"Thou! Thou dost not know the meaning of love. I wish I could help him."

"It is impossible," sneered Selim.

"But it is interesting," sighed Zaidee. "She went away with another man—that is cruel!"

"Perhaps Stefan is better off than he knows," said Selim.

"Selim," said Zaidee with great solemnity, "thou art a pig!"

"Pig I am not."

"Pig!" she repeated with more acerbity.

Renwick was in no mind to take a part in their quarrel and was moving toward the door of the adjoining room when a phrase caught his ear.

"And thou art a magpie, Zaidee, always croaking. It will get us into trouble, thy talking. I have but to set my foot outside the house and thy tongue wags like the clothing of a scarecrow."

"I have done no harm," she said angrily.

"It is no affair of thine—they will come again asking questions. I have no humor to talk with any of that accursed breed."

"What harm can come—if we tell the truth——?"

"Bah—what do the police care about the truth?"

Renwick turned and reëntered the room.

"The police!" he said quickly.

"Zaidee talks too much. A month ago in my absence they came inquiring."

"And what wouldst *thou* have said?" cried Zaidee angrily. "To shelter a sick woman is no crime ——"

"I should have said nothing."

"And what happened?" asked Renwick eagerly, now aware of the bone that chance had thrown in the way of a starving man.

"In the middle of the night which followed the day upon which the Archduke was assassinated ——"

"And whose tongue is wagging now—thou magpie?" put in Zaidee spitefully.

"Be quiet——" said Selim.

Renwick glared at the woman as though he would have liked to choke her, and she subsided.

"An automobile stopped at my door. There were three people, an Austrian officer, a lady who was sick, and a man who drove the car. They asked admittance on account of the Excellency who was sick. I could not refuse, for they said that they would pay me well."

Selim paused, hunting in his pockets for a match to light his pipe, and Renwick, containing his patience with difficulty, stood, his hands clenched behind him, waiting. They had stopped here—at this very house.

"And then——?" he asked calmly.

"We put the Excellency to bed——"

"I did," said Zaidee.

"Bah! What matter? They were bound upon a journey over the mountains to Vlasenica, where the Excellency was taking his wife for the waters."

"His wife," mumbled Renwick.

"They traveled at night to avoid the heat of midday, but the sudden sickness of the Excellency made further travel impossible."

"The officer Excellency lied——!" said Zaidee.

"Be quiet, thou——!" roared Selim.

"Let Zaidee speak. I am no policeman," said Renwick.

"What interest is it of yours?"

Renwick caught the man by the shoulders with both hands and glared at him.

"Merely because this is the woman I seek."

"An Excellency like—and you?"

"What I am does not matter. A hundred *kroner* if you tell the truth——"

"A hundred *kroner*——!"

His eyes searched Renwick eagerly, and then, "There is little I would not tell for a hundred *kroner*, but——"

"I am not of the police, I tell you. This lady is an Austrian noblewoman in danger."

"And the Austrian officer——"

"Is no Austrian, but an enemy of Austria——"

"A Serb——?"

"No."

"Who are you?"

"What does that matter?"

Selim shrugged. "Nothing perhaps—still——"

"And if I tell you, you will keep silent?"

"A hundred *kroner* will make me dumb."

"I am an Englishman," said Renwick after a moment.

"Ah—a spy!"

"No. A prisoner who has escaped."

"That is better."

"Speak!"

And as the man still hesitated Renwick unpinned the notes in his pocket and tossed one of them upon the table, in front of him. Selim took it eagerly.

"I am quite ready to believe anything you say——"

But Renwick seized his wrist in a strong grip. "You have not spoken yet."

"I will speak, then," said Zaidee. "Selim is a fool to hesitate. I nursed the Excellency for two nights and a day. I cooked her eggs and chicken and soup, but she would not eat. She was very much frightened."

"The man—he treated her badly?"

"Oh, no. Very politely, and paid us for our service, but the Excellency was frightened. I was kind

to her, and she was grateful, but she spoke nothing of where she was going. Perhaps she did not know. But it was not to take the waters."

"You, Selim," broke in Renwick, "you heard the men speaking? What did they say?"

He shrugged.

"How can I remember? They planned their journey with a map, but I had no interest——"

"What map——?"

"A map—how should I know——"

"Of Hungary——"

"Hungary!" And then scratching his head, "Yes, it must have been of Hungary, for they spoke of Budapest——"

"And what else? The Danube—the Thiess?"

"I do not remember?"

"You must——!" Renwick's fingers closed again upon the hundred *kroner* note which Selim had put back on the table.

"What good would it do if I lied to you?"

"Think, man, think! They made marks upon the map?"

"Marks? Oh, yes—marks."

"Up and down, the way they were sitting?"

"Yes. I think so. By the beard of the Prophet! You can't expect a fellow to remember such things as this for two months."

"Did they speak of mountains?"

"Mountains——!" Selim scratched his head again. "How should I know?"

"The Carpathians?"

"The Carpathians. Perhaps. Ah——"

Selim tapped his brow with a stubby forefinger.

"There was a name they spoke many times. It was a strange name."

"What?"

"I can't think."

"Zaidee, you heard?" Renwick asked.

"I was listening, but I could not understand."

"Was it a city?"

"I do not know."

"Was it Cracow? Kaschau? Agram? Was it Brünn?"

But they made no sign.

"Think!" said Renwick. "At the top of the map—away from them—near the edge?"

Selim shrugged hopelessly. "I can't remember," he said.

Renwick despaired.

"Was the map large?"

"Yes. I remember that. It covered this table——"

"Ah—then you can tell me how they stood?"

"Yes. I can tell you that."

He got up and placed himself at the side of the table. "The Excellency was here—the map spread out——"

"Did he lean to the left or to the right?"

"He leaned well forward with both elbows upon the table—straight forward—yes—almost across—a pencil in his hand—the other was pointing. The lamp was just there——" pointing to the left center of the table.

"The lamp was on the map?"

"Yes—to keep it in position——"

"On the left-hand side?"

"Yes."

"And they didn't move the lamp?"

"No. It remained there until they raised it to take the map away."

"I understand. And they made marks up and down with a pencil?"

Selim shrugged.

"It is what I think, merely."

"And the name was——?"

"How can one be sure of a name? It is a wonder just now that I can remember my own. Had I known what was to happen——" And he shrugged and dropped wearily again into his chair.

"And the police—? What has Zaidee said to the police?"

"Merely that the Excellencies were here—in this house."

"The police are coming again?"

"I do not know. It would seem that they have forgotten."

"And if they come, you will speak?"

"The hundred *kroner* will make me dumb."

"And Zaidee?"

"I will not speak."

"Nothing of me, you understand. I am but Stefan Thomasevics——"

"It is understood."

"And you remember nothing more?"

"Nothing."

"You are sure. The Excellency left no message—no note——?"

"Nothing."

Renwick pushed the hundred *kroner* note toward Selim and straightened.

"You have done me a service, Selim. They have gone to the east of the Tatra——"

"Tatra!" suddenly shouted Selim triumphantly. "It is the name!"

"Are you sure?" asked Renwick excitedly.

"Yes. Tatra—that is it. They spoke of it for half an hour. Eh—Zaidee?"

"Yes. It is the name."

Renwick paced the floor with long steps.

"Selim," he said at last, "it is now dark. I must go at once."

"Tomorrow."

"Tonight. The stars are out."

He moved to the door and peered out.

"You will keep silent?" he asked.

"Have I not promised?" said Selim.

He caught them both by the hand.

"Allah will bless you."

"A hundred *kroner*—that is blessing enough for one day, Stefan Thomasevics," he laughed.

"Adieu!" said Renwick, and walked bravely off into the starlight.

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## CHAPTER XXI

### AN IMPERSONATION

At least he now had a goal—"the center of the map, near the top"—the Tatra region by which

Goritz had passed (if he had not been intercepted) into Galicia and so into Germany. Aside from the value of Selim's information, one other fact stood out. The secret service men who had visited Selim a month ago had not returned. Did this mean that Herr Windt had already succeeded in closing the door of escape? The passes through the Carpathians could of course be easily guarded and closed, for there were few of them accessible to traffic by automobile. Was Renwick's goal, after all, to be there and not beyond? He had put in one summer in the Tatra region with Captain Otway of the Embassy, and he knew the district well,—a country of mountain villages, feudal castles, and rugged roads. Otway had been interested in the military problems of the Austro-Hungarian empire, and Renwick remembered the importance of the Tatra as a natural barrier to Russian ambitions. The shortest automobile road into Silesia lay to the *east* of the Tatra range—and the passes through the Carpathians at this point were few and well known. By process of elimination, Renwick had at last assured himself that his first theory was tenable, for Selim had confirmed it. A hundred conjectures flashed into the Englishman's mind as he trudged onward, to be one by one dismissed and relegated to the limbo of uncertainty. But assuming that Selim had told the truth, Renwick had found the trail, and would follow wherever it might lead him, to its end.

His idea of traveling afoot by night and of hiding by day, at least for the first part of his journey, was born of the desire to leave nothing to chance. His own capture meant internment until the end of the war, or possibly an exchange for some Austrian in England. But they should not catch him! Concealed in his belt he wore the American revolver, and carried some cartridges which Zubeydeh had restored to him.

The weather fortunately had been fine, and the days and nights in the open were rapidly restoring him to strength. The discomfort at the wound in his body which had bothered him for a few days had disappeared. He was well. And with health came hope, faith even, in the star of his fortunes. It took him two weeks to reach Polishka, below which he crossed the Save at night in a boat which he found moored to the bank, and daylight found him at a small village through which a railroad ran north towards the plains of the Danube. Here he paused dead-tired for food and rest.

The innkeeper, who spoke German fairly well, swallowed Renwick's story, his taste somewhat stimulated by the sight of the ten-*kroner* piece which the Englishman used in paying for his breakfast.

But the time had now come for the execution of a bold plan which for some days and nights Renwick had been turning over and over in his mind. It was a good plan, he thought, a brave plan which stood the test of argument pro and con. The British Embassy in many of its investigations during times of peace,—investigations of a purely personal or financial nature,—had been in the habit of calling in the services of one Carl Moyer, an Austrian who ran a private inquiry bureau in Vienna. He was an able man, not directly connected with the secret service department of the Empire, but frequently brought into consultation upon matters outside the pale of politics. Renwick's interest in Moyer had been limited to the share they had both taken in some inquiries as to the standing of a Russian nobleman who had approached the Ambassador with a scheme of a rather dubious character. But a physical resemblance to Moyer, which had been the subject of frequent jokes with Otway, had now given Renwick a new and very vital interest in the personality of the man which had nothing to do with their business relations. Moyer was thinner than Renwick, and not so tall, but their features were much alike. When at first the idea of an impersonation had come to Renwick, he had rejected it as dangerous, but the notion obsessed him. The very boldness of the project was in its favor. He could now move freely along the railroads and if one ignored the hazard of meeting the man himself or someone who knew him intimately, he could pursue his object of following the trail of Captain Goritz with a brave front which would defy suspicion. True, he would have no papers and no credentials, but this, too, was a part of the guise of a man who might be moving upon a secret mission. Carl Moyer, disguised as an Austrian of the laboring class, moving from Bosnia to the Carpathians—what could be more natural?

As Renwick ate his breakfast in the small inn at Otok, he came to a sudden decision to put this bold plan into practice. And so, exhibiting another ten-*kroner* piece, he made known his wishes to the innkeeper. He was a Bosnian, he said, but in Hungary he did not wish to attract attention by wearing his native costume. In parts of Hungary there was a feeling that the Bosnians who lived near the Serbian border were not loyal to the Emperor and this, it had been said, might make it difficult for him to obtain employment. His purse was not large but if his host would procure for him a suit of western clothing, a coat, a pair of trousers, a shirt, a cravat, and a soft hat, he, Thomasevics, would offer his Bosnian clothing in exchange and do what was fair in the matter of money. The train from Britzka did not go north for an hour. Would it be possible to find these things in so short a time? The innkeeper regarded the worn and mud-stained garments of his guest rather dubiously, but the terms of the offer in the matter of money having been made clear, the transformation was accomplished without difficulty and Renwick boarded the train rather jubilant at the celerity and speed of his journey. By nightfall, with luck, he would be across the Danube and well within the borders of Hungary, mingling in crowds where all trace of his identity would be lost. He spent most of his afternoon on the train trying to recall the mannerisms of the man Moyer, a trick of gesture, a drawl and a shrug which he thought he could manage. Carl Moyer he now was, on a mission from Bosnia to the North, in which the better to disguise himself he was permitting his hair and beard to grow.

Hut success had made him over-confident, for at the Bahnhof at Zombor where he had to change

into a train for Budapest, something happened which drove all thought from his head save that of escape from the predicament into which his imprudence had plunged him.

He was sitting upon a bench on the platform waiting for his train when a man approached and sat beside him. Renwick needed no second glance to reassure himself as to the fellow's identity. He was Spivak, Windt's man, the fellow who had kept guard on the cabin at Konopisht. The Englishman feared to get up and walk away, for that might attract attention. So he sat, slouched carelessly, his hat pulled well down over his eyes, awaiting what seemed to be the inevitable. Spivak—one of Windt's men sent of course to Zombor, one of the important railway junctions, to watch all arrivals from the south. Renwick had been ready with his story when he debarked from the train but there had been a crowd and he had been in the last carriage. Renwick's mind worked rapidly, and to an imagination already prescient of disaster, the man seemed to be inspecting him. As Spivak's chin lifted, Renwick faced him squarely. Their glances met—and passed. Renwick calmly took out a cigarette and bending his head forward lighted it coolly, aware that the man was saying something in Hungarian.

Renwick made a gesture of incomprehension, wondering meanwhile how he could kill the man on the crowded platform without attracting observation.

"The train from the south was crowded today," said Spivak in German.

"Crowded? Yes."

"Do you come from Brod or Britzka?"

"From Britzka," said Renwick without hesitation, and then with the courage of desperation—

"I have seen you before," he went on, calmly puffing at his cigarette.

"I have, I think, the same impression."

"Your name is Spivak—of the Secret Service——"

"You——"

"My name is Carl Moyer."

It was a gambler's chance that Renwick took. If Spivak intimately knew the man—but he did not and the effrontery disarmed him.

"You are Carl Moyer? I must have seen you," he muttered. "I have been in Vienna a little—with Herr Windt, but I am of the Hungarian branch. You have been in Sarajevo?"

"Yes," said Renwick easily following out a wild plan that had come into his mind. "I have been employed by the Baroness Racowitz to find the Countess Marishka Strahni."

"Ah, I see. It has come to that!" And then, regarding his companion with a new interest, "When did you come from Sarajevo?"

"Last night. It is a strange case."

"And you have found a lead?"

"Several——"

"You can do nothing against such a man as Goritz."

"It is Goritz—yes—but I will find her if I have to go through Germany with a harrow."

"They have not gone to Germany, my friend. Every gate out of Hungary has been closed to them since the assassination."

Renwick smiled. The thing had worked. The spirit of the venture glowed in him—its very impudence fascinated.

"Perhaps!" he replied. "Still, a man who could outwit Nicholas Szarvas——"

Spivak caught him so suddenly by the arm that Renwick trembled.

"You think he killed Szarvas——?" whispered Spivak eagerly.

"If not himself, it was by his orders. And the Englishman—Renck——"

"Renwick."

"I've found the evidence that Renck was lured to Sarajevo. He possessed a secret dangerous to Germany and so Goritz killed him."

"And this Peter Langer—who escaped from the hospital——?" asked Spivak cynically.

"The chauffeur of Goritz, left for dead in the fight with Szarvas and stripped of his clothing to hide all marks of identity. It is no wonder that he wished to escape——" The Englishman broke off with a rough laugh and rose. "But this won't do, I'm giving you all my thunder. Herr Windt does not relish my employment in this service, but since he has accomplished nothing you cannot blame my clients. I am on my way to Germany. The surest way to catch a fox is to smoke him out of his hole."

Spivak took a few paces away, and then slowly returned.

"What you say is interesting, Herr Moyer, and the theory hangs together, but you will waste your time in Germany."

"Why?"

"Because Captain Goritz is still in Hungary."

"What further reason have you for believing that he is here?"

Spivak smiled and hesitated a moment. And then, "You have talked freely. One good turn deserves another. I will tell you. We know that Captain Goritz is still in Hungary because within the past week the Wilhelmstrasse has sent urgent messages to Vienna inquiring for him."

"Ah—that is interesting," said Renwick slowly, trying to hide the throb of triumph in his throat. "Then you think——?"

"Merely that he is in hiding—with the lady," said Spivak with a leer. "It is no new thing for a man to go in hiding with a lady."

Renwick's laugh was admirably managed, for fury was in his heart. "This information is helpful," he said. "You believe that it is true?"

"I am sure. Berlin is anxious because he has not returned. I do not know what they suspect over there, but the situation is changed. The war has made a difference. We have no idea where he has gone. All that we know is that it will be very difficult for him to get out."

In the distance the train was rumbling up the track, and Renwick was thankful. But he caught the fellow by the hand.

"You are a good fellow, Spivak. If at any time you wish to leave the government service and take a good place at a fair payment, you will come to see me in Vienna."

"Thanks, Herr Moyer. I shall remember. You are going on to Budapest?"

"Yes. And you?"

"I am detained here to watch for a Russian spy who is trying to get through to the Galician border." He laughed. "You're sure you're not——?"

"That's a good joke, Spivak," he smiled. "A Russian! I'd have precious little chance——" And then as the train rolled in—

"Don't forget—Ferdinand Strasse, Number 83——"

"I will not. Adieu!"

"Adieu, my friend."

And with a final wave of the hand Renwick turned and slowly mounted into his third class carriage. The plan had worked and the man, it seemed, had not the slightest suspicion. He was, as Renwick remembered from Konopisht, not infallible, and the ease with which Renwick had accomplished his object and the remarkable nature of his newly acquired information could only be explained by the fact that Spivak was seeking the Russian and not himself, and by the boldness of his impersonation, which had immediately pierced the crust of Spivak's professional reserve. All had gone well, but it seemed an age before the train drew out of the station. Renwick did not dare to look out of the window to learn if the man were still there, and until the bell of the locomotive rang announcing the departure of the train, he was unpleasantly nervous, for fear that a suspicion might dawn in the man's mind which would lead him to pursue the conversation.

Renwick never learned whether Spivak's second thoughts had warned him that all was not as it should be, for instead of taking any chances, the Englishman got down from the train at the first stop and disappeared into the darkness.

It was with a feeling of elation mingled with apprehension that Renwick made his way forward. Elation because of the new crumbs of information, apprehension because of the definite assurance that Goritz still held Marishka a prisoner somewhere within the borders of Hungary. Definite it seemed, for Spivak had spoken with the utmost confidence of things with which he was intimately concerned. The trail narrowed. It seemed as though Providence, aware of past impositions, was bent on making amends to one who had suffered much from her disfavor. The sudden appearance of Spivak, which had seemed to threaten disaster, had been turned by a bold stroke from calamity to good fortune. But Renwick determined to avoid further such encounters if possible. And so, resuming the mode of progress which had been so effective on the way to Tuzla, he walked at night, and slept under cover by day, reaching a town upon the banks of the Danube, where he bought new clothing, a straw hat, a change of linen, and a hand bag with which (representing himself as a grain merchant of Ujvidek), he boldly boarded a steamer upon the river, reaching Budapest without further incident.

It was not until he had passed the Quai and was safely in the Karoly Korut that Renwick breathed easily. He was now safe, finding his way to his immediate destination, the house of a person connected with the English Secret Service, into whose care he confidently entrusted himself.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE NEEDLE IN THE HAYSTACK

Herr Koulas was by birth a Greek, by citizenship, an Austrian, and by occupation, a chemist; but his real *métier*, concealed under a most docile and law abiding exterior, was secret inquiry in behalf of the British government into all matters pertaining to its interests, either social, political, or military. He knew his Hungary from Odenburg to Kronstadt, from the Save to the Carpathians, and Renwick, while somewhat dubious as to the wisdom of his visit under the circumstances, found himself received at this excellent man's home with a warmth of welcome which left no doubt in his own mind as to the unselfishness of his host. Even before the war Renwick and Constantine Koulas had met in secret, so that if trouble came no plan should mar the man's impeccable character in Austrian eyes. And Renwick would not have come to him now, had not his own need been great. But Herr Koulas, having heard the tale of his adventures and reassured as to the present danger of pursuit, gave willingly of his hospitality and counsel, and when he learned the character of Renwick's mission, volunteered to procure him a set of papers which would rob his pilgrimage to the north, at least, of its most obvious dangers. He was ready with information, too, and offered a mind with a peculiar genius for the kind of problem that Renwick presented. The fact that the great Prussian secret agent, Leo Goritz, was involved in the affair lent it an individuality which detracted nothing from its other interest. Leo Goritz! Only last year there had been a contest of wits between them, both under cover, and Koulas had managed to get what he wanted, not, however, without narrowly escaping the revelation of his own part in the investigation. Goritz was a clever man and a dangerous one, young, brilliant, handsome, unscrupulous, who wore an armor of impenetrability which had not yet revealed a single weak link. And yet, Herr Koulas reasoned, broodingly, that there must be one. A weak link! Where was the man without one? The messages from the Wilhelmstrasse! Why had Goritz not returned to Berlin upon the outbreak of the war? What was keeping him in Hungary? He was in the Tatra region? Possibly. Which were the passes by which he might try to go? Uzoker, Dukla, or perhaps even Jablunka. The Russians were already battering at Przemysl—Uzoker Pass was out of the question. Jablunka—that was nearer the German border, but eagerly watched even in times of peace. Goritz would not have dared to try to abduct the Countess Strahni by way of Jablunka! The railroad went through Jablunka, a narrow highway with no outlet for many miles. It was not the kind of *cul-de-sac* that Goritz would have chosen. Dukla? Perhaps. A little farther to the east, of course, but not yet menaced by the Russian advance.

The thing was puzzling, but interesting—very. The abduction of a loyal citizen of Austria—a lady of noble birth—a hurried flight by unfrequented roads and then an *impasse*! Had Herr Windt blocked the way? Was the lady ill? Or had something else detained them?

Renwick sat in the back room of the small laboratory, his arms folded, his brows tangled in thought, as Herr Koulas, puffing great clouds of smoke from his long pipe, thus analyzed the situation.

"I have thought of all of these things, Herr Koulas," Renwick muttered, "and my mind always comes back to the same point. If I know that Goritz has come to this region, if I know that he has not gone out of it, I also know that he remains. I do not care *why*—my question is *where—where?*"

Koulas ran his long forefinger over the map upon the table.

"It is the map Goritz might use—a road map of the government," he grumbled.

"The center near the top—Poprad—he would get through there with difficulty——"

Renwick had risen and paced the floor slowly.

"I have not been through Dukla. It is accessible?"

"Yes. Svidnik to Przemysl. Rocks—a *schloss* or two——" He turned. "It was there that the Baron Neudeck was killed—you remember—three years ago?"

"I have forgotten—Neudeck—an Austrian?"

"A German—Neudeck was selling military plans to the Russians—Goritz!"

Koulas sprang to his feet triumphantly—"Goritz! It was Goritz who discovered him——"

Renwick was listening eagerly, and Koulas turned with a shrug. "Nothing much, my friend. And yet—a coincidence perhaps—Goritz, Neudeck, Dukla. Goritz—Strahni—the center of the map—at the top.' It might be worth trying."

"I shall try it. There is nothing else for me to do. The Pass is used for transport?"

"No. The line of communication is through Mezo Laborcz."

"It will be risky——"

"Not unless you make it so. With luck you shall bear a letter to General Lechnitz (which you need

never deliver) as a writer for a newspaper."

"That can be managed?"

"I hope—I believe—I am confident."

Renwick smiled. Herr Koulas was something of a humorist.

"Tell me more of this Neudeck case," asked the Englishman.

"There is unfortunately little more to tell. Neudeck was a German baron with military connections, not too rich and not above dishonesty. Goritz traced the plans to Schloss Szolnok, an ancient feudal stronghold which an elder Baron Neudeck had bought——"

"In the Dukla?"

"—in the Dukla—where some Russian officers were invited for the shooting. They did not know how little they were to enjoy it——" Koulas chuckled and blew a cloud of smoke—"for Goritz shot Neudeck before their very eyes, and took the plans back to Germany. This is secret history—a nine days' wonder—but it passed and with it a clever scoundrel who well deserved what he got."

"And since his death who lives in Schloss Szolnok?"

"I don't know." He laughed again. "You jump very rapidly at conclusions, my friend."

"Time passes. I must jump at something. I am going to Dukla Pass—tomorrow if you will help me."

"That goes without saying. For the present you shall go to bed and sleep soundly. I would like to go with you, but alas—I am not so young as I was and I can best serve all your interests here."

Renwick shook Koulas by the hand and took the bedroom candle that was offered him.

"Good night," he said. "I pray that no harm may come to you from this imprudence of mine."

"Do not worry, my friend. I am well hedged about with alibis. Good night."

The next evening after dark Renwick, now Herr Max Schoff of the *Wiener Zeitung*, supplied with a pass which Herr Koulas by means of his underground machinery had managed to procure, took the night train for Kaschau, which he reached in the early morning of the following day, going on later to Bartfeld, the terminus of the railroad, a small and ancient town under the very shadow of the mountains. Here, it being late in the afternoon, he found the Hungaria, a hotel to which he had been directed, where he made arrangements to stop for the night while he leisurely pursued his inquiries.

Now at last, so very near his destination, he was curiously oppressed with the futility of his pilgrimage. He had come far, braving the danger of detection and death, for he had no illusions regarding the status of an Englishman approaching the battle lines under the guise of a newspaper writer. If taken, it would be as a spy, and he would be treated as such.

Herr Koulas had warned him not to be too sanguine, for the roads out of Hungary were many, and Dukla Pass, merely because of a bit of forgotten secret history, a possibility not to be neglected. Herr Koulas had also warned him that the methods in induction which had been open to him had also been open to the Austrian secret service men who, perhaps, had already taken measures to follow the same scent. And so it was that the golden smile of Herr Windt still persisted in Renwick's dreams by night, and in his thoughts by day. If Spivak had told his story of his meeting with the spurious Moyer, his conversation about Szarvas would immediately identify him as Renwick the Englishman. But however near the two trails ran, Windt's men had not yet come up with him, and, until they did, Renwick knew that he must move boldly and quickly upon his quest. And so at last resolution armed him anew.

It was now approaching dusk, and he cast about for a person to whom he might talk without arousing suspicion, and so he turned into an inn at the corner of the street and ordering beer sat himself upon a bench along the wall before a long wooden table. The few men who sat drinking and smoking gave him a curious glance, and the proprietor of the establishment, aware of a stranger, felt it to be his duty to learn something of his mission to this small town and of his identity. This was what Renwick wanted, and as the man spoke in German, he told with brief glibness his well rehearsed story, inviting his host to join him in a glass, over which they were presently chatting as thick as thieves. He was a newspaper writer, Renwick said, upon his way to the front, and showed the letter to General Lechnitz. But he had never before been in this part of the country and intended to see it, upon the way. It was an interesting town, Bartfeld, a fine church too, St. Aegidius. Had his host lived in Bartfeld a long time?

The man was a native, and very proud of his traditions, expanding volubly in reply to Renwick's careless questions. His father and grandfather had kept this very inn, and indeed for all he knew their fathers' fathers. A quiet town, but interesting to those who were fond of historical associations. Renwick listened patiently, slowly drawing the man nearer to the subject that was uppermost in his mind. It was a short distance to Dukla Pass, a very picturesque spot, he had been told, one well worth a visit, was it not?

"Dukla Pass!" said the man. "A name well known in the annals of the country in the days of John Sobieski, long before the railroad went through beyond; a wonderful spot with cliffs and ravines.

I have been there often. In the season, before the war, one drove there—for the view. Now alas! what with the Cossacks running over Galicia, the people had more serious things to think about."

"It is easily reached?" asked Renwick.

"By the road beyond the town—a short cut—a climb over the mountains, but not difficult at this time of the year."

"There is a village there?"

"A few farmhouses merely, in the valley along the streams. The glory of the Dukla is its ruins."

"Ah, of course, there are feudal castles——"

"Javorina, Jägerhorn, Szolnok——"

"Szolnok!" said Renwick with sudden interest. "I have heard that name before——"

He paused in a puzzled way.

"It was the summer residence of Baron Neudeck——"

"Ah, then it is not a ruin?"

"Until three years ago he lived there—in the habitable part—when something terrible happened. No one about here is sure—but the place has an evil name."

"That is interesting. Why?"

"The facts have never been clearly explained. The story goes that Baron Neudeck was in the midst of entertaining guests—a hunting party of gentlemen; that there was a night of revelry and of drinking. One of the servants, entering the dining-hall in the morning, found Baron Neudeck lying dead upon the hearth with a bullet wound in his forehead. The guests had disappeared—vanished as if the earth had swallowed them."

"And the police?"

"The police came and went. It was very strange. Nothing further was heard of the matter. But no one about here will go within a mile of the place after nightfall."

"And the servants—what became of them?"

The man shrugged. "They did not come from around here. They were Germans, who came with the Baron. If the police are satisfied, I am."

The man shrugged and drained his glass.

"The other castles are ruined, you say? Then it cannot be long before Szolnok will share their fate—since it is not occupied," suggested Renwick.

"Perhaps," said the man indifferently, rising with a view to closing the conversation.

Renwick ordered another glass of beer, and sat looking out of the small casement window at the passers-by, thinking deeply.

The inspiration of Herr Koulas had at least set him upon a scent which still held him true upon this trail. The information he had received might mean much or little. German servants? Had Goritz used the servants of Baron Neudeck in unraveling the secret of the stolen plans? Had they been implicated in the affair? Did he hold them his creatures by a knowledge of their share in the guilty transaction? Three years had passed since the killing of Neudeck. What had happened in the meanwhile? Had the title of the property passed to others? Had the Schloss been occupied since the Baron's death, or was it deserted? He evolved a theory rapidly, determining to test it at once. It would perhaps be imprudent to question further this innkeeper, a public character, and it seemed quite probable that he knew little more than had already been told. A visit to the farmhouses in the valley would reveal something. He would go——

Renwick had been gazing out of the window, but his attention was suddenly arrested by the figure of a man at the corner of the street, who stood, smoking a cigarette. There was nothing unusual in his clothing or demeanor, but the thing which had startled Renwick into sudden alertness was the rather vague impression that somewhere he had seen this man's face before. A vague impression, but definite in the sense that to Renwick the face had been associated with something unpleasant or disagreeable. But even as Renwick looked, the man tossed his cigarette into the cobbles and turning on his heel walked up the street, passing out of Renwick's range of vision. The Englishman started up from his unfinished glass with the notion of following, but a second thought urged caution. It was still light outside, and if the stranger's memory for faces were better than his own, a meeting face to face would merely court unnecessary danger. So Renwick returned to his bench and made a pretense of finishing his beer, awaiting in safety the darkness. Where had he seen this man before? He searched his mind with painful thoroughness—wondering if the injury to his head had robbed his brain of some of its clearness. He had seen this man's face before—before his sickness—he was sure of that. Hadwiger, Lengelbach, Linder—one by one he recalled the secret service men. The face of the stranger was that of none of these. Someone—a shadowy someone—out of darkness—or dreams. Could the idea have been born of some imaginary resemblance, some fancied recollection? The thing was elusive, and so he gave it

up, aware that if his brain had played him no trick, there was here another confirmation of his hope that he was on the true scent. Were the threads converging?

The plan that he now had in mind was to go over the mountains afoot and make some quiet inquiries among the farmhouses in the valley below the Pass, in regard to Schloss Szolnok. And so as the light had grown dim, he got up and went forth into the street, pulling his soft hat well down over his eyes, and making his way toward the road which led to Dukla Pass. He verified the innkeeper's direction by inquiry at the end of the main street, and as the night was clear, set forth briskly upon his walk over the mountain road, for the idea of spending the evening in inactivity was not to be thought of until all the facts regarding this Schloss Szolnok were in his possession.

A ruin—uninhabited? And with its crumbling, his own hope.... It was no time for despair. Had he not come miraculously from death and traveled safely from one border of the enemy's country almost to the other, as though led or driven by some secret impelling force—some inspiration, some hidden guidon or command? At each turn, at each danger, he remembered he had acted with swiftness and decision, and had at no time been at a loss. Fortune had favored him at each stage of his journey and had directed his steps with rare assurance in this direction. Fortune or a will-o'-the-wisp? Or was Marishka calling to him? He had had the impression of her nearness often—there in the hospital—and since, at Selim Ali's—upon the road. It seemed strange and a little mystifying too, that he had never doubted that he would be able to find her.... And now—if not at Schloss Szolnok—elsewhere.

As the darkness of the mountain road deepened, swift vision came to him. The possible danger of attack ... Out of the gloom of shadowy rocks, he had a vision of men who interposed, barring his way, a man in a cap asking the time. Vienna—the night that he had left Marishka, when the three men had attacked him! The face of the man in the cap, and the stranger of Bartfeld—they were the same!

He could have shouted aloud in the joy of the revelation. The man who had attacked him in the streets of Vienna—this cigarette-smoking stranger in Bartfeld. A German? Who else? Perhaps the man who had shot at him—in Vienna—at the Konopisht railroad station, a minion of Goritz. Then Goritz could not be far away....

Renwick strode down the mountain side toward the distant lights of the valley, like a man in seven-league boots, searching eagerly meanwhile the gloomy peaks above him to his left for signs of Schloss Szolnok. He could distinguish nothing amid the deep shadows of the mountain side. But the lights below beckoned warmly, and finding a road to his right at the foot of the declivity, he went toward them rapidly, knocking boldly at the door of the first house to which he came.

An old man answered his summons, a tall old man with a long pipe in his hand, who inspected the visitor narrowly.

"I have lost my way," said Renwick with a smile, "and thought you might let me have a cup of milk and some bread, for which I will pay generously."

The man in the doorway waved his hand in assent, and Renwick followed him into the house, where his host made a motion for him to be seated. A girl and a woman sat by the table knitting, and an old crone sat in a large chair by the fireplace, in which some embers still glowed. Renwick was hungry, but not nearly so hungry as impatient for the crumbs of information that these worthy people might possess, and so he invented a story while he ate which the girl, who spoke German more fluently than the old man, translated to her elders. The woman at the table spoke a little German and shyly added her share to the rather desultory conversation. Bartfa was not far, only a few miles over the mountain—a short distance by wagon or horseback, but something of a distance for one who was weary and footsore. Herr Schoff had come all the way from Mezo Laborez—and afoot? A newspaper writer? That was a dangerous occupation in times like these.

Renwick, having finished his bread and milk, deftly directed the conversation to the possibilities of Dukla Pass from the Russian point of view as a means of invasion of the Hungarian plain, and it was soon quite clear that this possibility had not been absent from their minds. Renwick praised the effectiveness of the Austrian army which he had seen, and quickly reassured them. For Dukla Pass, as he had heard, was but a slit in the mountains, which the Austrians could easily defend. A few guns upon the rocks, and a million Cossacks could not break through.

It was encouraging, the man put in in his patois, for they had been greatly disturbed by rumors among the country-folk and many soldiers already had passed through.

"It is a place of historical interest," said Renwick easily, "a *Schloss* or two perhaps."

"Javorina—Jägerhorn, yes—but mere ruins, long ago the property of the Rakoczi family. And Szolnok——" Here the man paused, glanced at the girl and the woman, and they both made the sign of the cross with their forefingers at their breasts.

In the slight period of embarrassment which followed, Renwick regarded them with a new interest. The old crone at the fireside, who had been leaning forward with a hand cupped at her ear, caught the significance of the gesture and solemnly imitated them.

"Ah, I remember now," said Renwick with an air of seriousness which matched their own. "Was it not at Szolnok that Baron Neudeck was killed?"

The old man glanced at the others before speaking.

"Yes. It was there," he said quietly.

"And the place is no longer occupied?" asked the Englishman.

No one replied.

"There is a mystery attached to Schloss Szolnok?" asked Renwick, lighting his pipe.

"He asks if there is a mystery," said the woman dully. And then followed as before the strange ceremony of the cross.

"I am a stranger in these parts," Renwick went on, "and no mischief maker. This story interests me. I should like to know——" He paused again as the old man leaned forward toward him, and laid his skinny forefinger along Renwick's knee.

"It is the abode of the devil," he whispered, and then crossed himself again.

"Ah—something mysterious——"

"It is not a matter which we talk about in this house. We are poor, hard-working people who fear God. But strange things are happening up yonder night after night. Here in the valley, we no longer go near by day—nor even look."

"Ah, I see. Then the place has long been unoccupied?"

The old man was silent, but the woman, gathering confidence, took up the story.

"It was always a place of mystery—even in the days of Baron Neudeck, who was an evil man. The servants were strangers to our people and spoke not at all. They never came into the valley."

"And they did not come for food—for milk, eggs, butter?"

"Szolnok farm was above the Schloss upon the mountain side. They had what they needed."

"Ah, I understand. And since the death of the Baron?"

"We do not know. We do not go there. Two years ago a young man from this village went there seeking a sheep which had gone astray. He never came back. And the sheep skin was found some days later at the foot of the precipice. And scarcely a month ago, a venturesome young man from Bartfa climbed the road to the castle in the dead of night on a wager. What he saw no one will ever know, for he came running down the road to his companion stricken with terror, and has never spoken of the matter from that day to this. It was a ghost he saw, they say——"

"Or a devil," put in the old man.

"And by day? You see no one?"

"The Schloss is well within the gorge. I do not go to look, my friend."

"Have there been no lights at night for three years?"

"None that I remember—until now."

"Then it is only for a month or more that they have been seen?"

"Perhaps. I do not know."

The man was growing reticent and his family followed his example. The character of the occupants of Szolnok was not a popular topic for conversation in Dukla Valley. But this man could help Renwick, and he determined to use him. And so as the woman bade him good night and went upstairs, Renwick rose and went to the door, where the old man followed him.

"It is late, my friend," he said, "and a weary walk for me to Bartfa. I will pay you well for a bed."

"Willingly, if we but had the room——"

"Or a pallet of straw in your stable. I am not fastidious."

"Ah, as to that, of course. It can be managed." Renwick took out a hundred-*kroner* note, and held it before the man's eyes.

"If you will do as I ask I will give you this."

"And what is that?"

"A place in your stable tonight—breakfast at three in the morning, and the clothing you now stand in——"

"My clothing?"

"No questions asked, and silence. Do you agree?"

"But I do not understand."

"It is not necessary that you should. I shall do you no harm."

"A hundred *kroner*—it is a large sum——"

"Yours—if you do what I ask——" And he thrust the note into the old man's fingers.

This bound the bargain.

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## CHAPTER XXIII

### SCHLOSS SZOLNOK

The night and day which followed the terrible events in the house of the Beg of Rataj were like an evil dream to Marishka Strahni. She slept, she awoke, always to be hurried on by her relentless captors, too ill to offer resistance or any effort to delay them. Hugh Renwick was dead. All the other direful assurances as to her own fate were as nothing beside that dreadful fact. And Goritz—the man who sat beside her—Hugh's murderer! Fear—loathing—she seemed even too weak and ill for these, lying for the first part of their long journey, inert and helpless. The man beside her watched her furtively from time to time, venturing attention and solicitude for her comfort, but she did not reply to his questions or even look at him. At the house of Selim Ali she recovered some of her strength, and again upon the following night, at a small inn not far from the Serbian border, she fell into a deep sleep of exhaustion, from which she was aroused with difficulty. The machine was stopped frequently, and its occupants were questioned, but in each case Captain Goritz produced papers from his pocket, which let them pass. They were now well within the borders of Hungary, and as the girl grew stronger, courage came, and with it the thought of escape. But in spite of her apparent helplessness she was aware that her captors were watching her carefully, permitting no conversation with anyone, locking the doors of the rooms in which she slept, at the houses where they stopped, and taking turns at keeping guard outside. But their very precautions gave her an appreciation of the risks that they ran. She was a prisoner in her own country. All those she passed upon the road were her friends. She had only to make her identity known, and the object of her captors, to gain her freedom. She was somewhere in eastern Hungary, but just where she did not know. The chauffeur spoke the language fluently, and Marishka's ignorance of it made her task more difficult. But one night at an inn in a small village, she found a girl who spoke German, and in a moment when the attention of her guards was relaxed, she managed to make the girl understand, promising her a sum of money if she would summon the police of the town, to whom Marishka would tell her story. The girl agreed, and in the early morning just as the machine came around to the door Goritz found himself confronted by two men in uniform.

Marishka, who had been waiting, trembling, in her room above, came running down the stairs and threw herself upon their mercy, telling her story and begging their intercession.

But even as she spoke she realized that the very wildness of her narrative was against its verity in the minds of these rustic policemen.

"It is an extraordinary tale," said the elder man, "and one which of course must be investigated—an abduction!"

"If you will permit me," said Goritz smiling calmly. "This lady is my wife. I am taking her to the north for the baths. As you observe, she is the subject of delusions——"

"It is not true," cried Marishka despairingly. "I beseech you to listen—to investigate——"

"I regret," said Goritz, with a glance at his watch, "that I have no time to delay. I am Lieutenant von Arnstorf of the Fifteenth Army Corps, bearing a safe conduct from General von Hoetzendorf, which all police officers of the Empire are constrained to respect. Read for yourself."

And he handed them the magic paper which already had done him such service. The men read it through with respect and not a little awe, bestowing at the last a pitying glance upon Marishka, which too well indicated their delicacy in interfering in the affairs of one in such authority.

"And you will not summon the mayor? What I tell is the truth. In the name of the Holy Virgin, I swear it."

One of the men crossed himself and turned away. Goritz had already laid his fingers firmly upon her arm and guided her toward the machine.

"Come, Anna," he said in a sober, soothing tone, "all will be well—all will be well."

And so Marishka, with one last despairing glance in the direction of the two officers, permitted herself to be handed into the machine by Captain Goritz who, before the automobile departed, handed a piece of money to the girl who had done Marishka this service. The last glimpse that Marishka had of the police officers showed them standing side by side, their fingers at their caps. Her case was hopeless. She had no friend, it seemed, in all Hungary, and she abandoned herself to the depths of her despair. How could she have expected to cope with such a man as this?

Goritz said nothing to her of warning or of reproach, but in the same afternoon, after drinking a cup of coffee which he urged upon her, she became drowsy and slept.

She awoke in a large room with walls of panelled wood, and a groined ceiling. She lay upon a huge bed, raised high above the floor, over the head of which was a faded yellow silken hanging. Her surroundings puzzled her, but she seemed to have no desire to learn the meaning of it all, lying as one barely alive, gazing half conscious toward the narrow Gothic window near by, through which she had a glimpse of mountains and blue sky. But the sunlight which fell in patches upon the Turkey rug dazzled her aching eyes, and she closed them painfully. She felt wretchedly ill. Her throat was parched, and her body was so weak that even to move her hand had been an effort. She slept again, woke and slept again, aware now, even in her stupor, of someone moving near her in the room. At last with all the will-power left at her command, she opened wide her eyes and raised herself upon an elbow. It was night, but lamps upon two tables shed a generous glow.

As she moved, a figure that had sat near the foot of the bed, rose and came toward her. It was a very old woman with a wrinkled face and the inturnd lips of the toothless. But her face was kindly, and her voice when she spoke had in it a note of commiseration.

"The Excellency is feeling stronger?" she asked.

"I—I do not know," said Marishka painfully struggling to make her lips enunciate. "I—I still feel ill. What is this place?"

"Schloss Szolnok, Excellency, in the Carpathians." She laid her rough hand over Marishka's. "You have some fever. I will get medicine."

"A—a glass of water——"

"At once." The woman moved away into the shadows and Marishka tried to focus her eyes upon the objects in the room—large chests of drawers, and tables, a cheval glass, a *prie-dieu*, a carved escritoire with ormolu mountings, a French dressing table, portraits let into the panelling, massive oaken chairs, well upholstered—a room of some grandeur. Schloss Szolnok? What mattered it where she was? Death at Schloss Szolnok could be no worse than death elsewhere. Weakness overpowered her, and she sank back into her pillow, aware of her throbbing temples and a terrible pain that racked her breast. Death. Hugh, too. He was calling to her. She would come. Hugh! With his name upon her lips she sank again into unconsciousness.

For weeks, the very weeks that Hugh Renwick lay in the Landes Hospital, Marishka lay upon the tall bed in the great room at Schloss Szolnok, struggling slowly back to life from the clutches of pneumonia. There was a doctor brought from Mezo Laborcz, who stayed in the castle for a week until the danger point had passed, and then came every few days until the patient was well upon the road to recovery. Marishka did not learn of this until much later when, convalescent, she sat by the window, looking out over the sunlit mountains beyond the gorge, and then in wonder and something of disappointment that Goritz had not permitted her to die. And when the old woman, who bore the name of Ena, related that the Herr Hauptmann had himself driven the automobile which brought the doctor in the dead of night to Szolnok, the wonder grew. Marishka had learned to think of Goritz as one interested only in her death or imprisonment, and after Sarajevo she had even believed that her life while in his keeping had hung by a hair. He had killed Hugh, brought her into this far country against her will, had even drugged her that he might avoid a repetition of her attempt at escape. And now he was sparing no pains to bring her back to health, daily sending her messages of good will and good wishes, with flowers from the garden in the courtyard, which, as Ena had reported, he had plucked with his own hand. It was monstrous!

A few mornings ago he had written her a note saying that he awaited her pleasure, craving the indulgence of a visit at the earliest moment that she should care to see him. Marishka, much to Ena's chagrin, had sent no reply. The very thought of kindness from such a man as Goritz—a kindness which was to pay for Hugh's death and her favor, made a mockery of all the beauties of giving—a mockery, too, of her acceptance of them, whether tacitly or otherwise. A man who could kill without scruple, a woman-baiter, courteous that he might be cruel, tolerant that he might torment! By torture of her spirit and of her body he had brought her near death that he might gain the flavor of saving her from it.

He was of a breed of being with which her experience was unfamiliar. The note of sentiment in his notes, while it amazed, bewildered and frightened her a little. She was completely in the man's power. What was Schloss Szolnok? Who was its owner? Ena would not talk; she had received instructions. Before her windows was spread a wonderful vista of mountains and ravines, which changed hourly in color, from the opalescent tints of the dawn, through the garish spectrum of daylight to the deep purple shadows of the sunset, to the crepuscular opalescence again. Under any other conditions, she would have been content to sit and muse alone with her grief—and Hugh. He was constantly present in her thoughts. It was as though his spirit hovered near. She seemed to hear him speak, to feel the touch of his hand upon her brow, soothing her anguish, praying her to wait and be patient. Sometimes the impression of his presence beside her was so poignant that she started up from her chair and looked around the vast room, as though expecting him to appear in the spirit beside her. And then realizing that the illusions were born of her weakness, she would sink back exhausted, and resume her gaze upon the restful distance.

Ena, her nurse, was very kind to her, leaving nothing undone for her comfort, sitting most of the while beside her, and prattling of her own youth and the Fatherland. And so, sure of the woman's growing interest and affection, she slowly revealed the story of Konopisht Garden, her share in it, and the events that had followed. Marishka could see that the woman was greatly impressed by

the story which lost no conviction from the pallid lips which told it. And of her own volition, that night, Ena promised the girl to reveal no word of her confidences, and gave unreservedly the outward signs of her friendship for the tender creature committed to her care. She had believed that the kindness of the Herr Hauptmann had meant the beginnings of a romance. But she understood, and aware of the sadness of the sick woman's thoughts, did what she could to delay a meeting which she knew must be painful.

In reply to Marishka's questions, now, she was less reticent, and told of the long years at Schloss Szolnok under the Barons Neudeck, father and son, of the coming of Herr Hauptmann Goritz, and of the threat which had hung over them for three years since the dreadful night when her young master had been killed. There had been no heirs to the estate and no one knew to whom the half-ruined Schloss belonged, but each month money had arrived from Germany, and so she and Wilhelm Strohmeier, her man, and two other servants under orders from Germany, had remained. She had lived here almost all her life. The people in the village a mile away were the nearest human folk, and Baron Neudeck had not endeared himself to them, for once he had beaten a farmer who had questioned the Excellency's right to shoot upon his land. And so the country people passed aside and did not venture up the mountain road which indeed had become overgrown with verdure. And for their part the servants were contented to stay alone. It was very quiet, but as good a place to die in as any other.

Marishka listened calmly, trying to weave the complete story and Captain Goritz's part in it. Whether Schloss Szolnok was or was not the property of the German government—and it seemed probable that it would have been confiscated upon the discovery of Baron Neudeck's treachery—the fact was clear that Goritz was now its occupant and master. She had not dared to wonder what was still in store for her at the hands of Captain Goritz, and had lived from day to day in the hope that something might happen which would end her imprisonment and martyrdom. She heard nothing from the outside, and Ena, who had long ago given up the world, was in no position to inform her.

But as she gained her strength, Marishka knew that she could not longer deny herself to Captain Goritz. The mirror showed her that her face, while thin and wan, was still comely. Wisdom warned her that however much she loathed the man, every hope of liberty hung upon his favor. And so she gained courage to look about her and to plan some means of outwitting him or some mode of escape from duress. The latter alternative seemed hopeless, for it seemed that the castle was built upon a lonely crag, its heavy walls, which dated from feudal times, imbedded in the solid rock. From her bedroom window, below the buttressed stone, were precipitous cliffs which fell sheer and straight to the rocky bed of the stream which rushed through the ravine two hundred meters below. But there would be other modes of egress, and so, feeling that her strength was now equal to the task, she determined to go forth and test the cordon which constrained her. One morning, therefore, she called Ena's attention to her pallid face and suggested the sunlight of the garden as a means to restoration. The woman was delighted, and attired in a costume of soft white silk crepe, which she had fashioned in her convalescence from some posthumous finery that Ena had discovered, Marishka walked forth of her room down a stone stairway into the great hall of the castle; and so into the ancient courtyard where the flower garden was. She had expected Captain Goritz to join her, and in this surmise she was not mistaken, for she had culled an armful of blossoms which she sent to her room by Ena when the German appeared. She heard his voice behind her, even before she had summoned courage for the interview.

"My compliments upon your appearance, Countess," he said soberly. "I hope that you find yourself well upon the road to recovery."

"Thanks," she replied in a stifled tone. "I am feeling much stronger."

"It has been a very pitiful experience for you—one which has caused me many qualms of conscience," he muttered, "but I have tried to atone and would beg you to believe that all my happiness for the future depends upon your forgiveness."

"I can—never forgive—never—" said Marishka, her throat closing painfully. "I hoped to die," she sighed, "but even that you denied me."

"I have only done my duty—my duty, Countess—a sweeter duty than that which urged me to Vienna—to undo the wrong that I have done you, to bring again the roses into your cheeks."

She waved her hand in deprecation. "For your courtesy, for the kindness of your servants, I thank you. But for what you are yourself—only the God that made you can understand—can forgive—that."

He straightened a moment and then slowly leaned against the wall beside her, his chin cupped in his hand.

"You are cruel—"

"I am truthful. Anything else from me to you would be beneath my womanhood. I would kill you if I had the strength or if I dared." She gave a bitter laugh. "It is at least something, that we understand each other."

He paused a long moment before replying.

And then, "*Do we understand each other? I hope that you will permit me to speak a few words in*

extenuation of a person you have never known—of Leo Goritz, the man."

"A man who makes war upon a woman—who uses violence to compel obedience——"

"A woman—but an enemy to my country. Between my duty to Germany and my own inclinations, I had no choice. I was an instrument of the State, pitiless, exact and exacting. You have spoken the truth. So shall I. Had my duty to Germany required it of me, I should have killed you with my own hand—even if you had been my sister."

She gazed at him with alien eyes.

"It is monstrous! I would to God you had."

He bowed.

"That is merely my official conception of my obligation to the Fatherland," he said quietly.

She still gazed at him unbelieving, but he met her glance squarely.

"You need not believe me unless you choose, but I speak the truth. My orders were to bring you safely into Germany, or to—to eliminate you. Perhaps you will understand now my difficulties in keeping you unscathed."

"My death would have relieved you of that responsibility. It would have been so easy to have let me die——"

"I could not!" He bent his head over his folded arms. "I could not," he repeated. And then, after a silence, "Countess Strahni, I beg that you will consider that I have succeeded so far in saving you from personal danger."

"And yet you used me as a shield to save yourself from the bullets of the man you killed——" She broke off, laughing bitterly.

"He would not fire. I knew it. He was a fool to give me the chance. I took it. There was nothing else——"

"It was murder. And you——"

She glanced at him once and then turning away, hid her head in her arm. "O God!" she whispered, as though to herself. "How I loathe you!"

Though the words were not even meant for him to hear, he did not miss them.

"That is your privilege," he said after a moment, "and mine—to—to adore you," he said in deep accents.

Slowly she lowered her hands and gazed at him with eyes that though they looked, seemed to see not.

"You—*you*—! You care for *me*!" She dropped her hands to her sides, and then with a voice that sought steadiness in its contempt, "What object has the Fatherland to gain by this new hypocrisy, Herr Goritz?"

He stood stock still, making no effort to approach her.

"I think you do me some injustice," he said.

"Injustice!" she said coldly. "*I* do *you* injustice? I think you forget."

"If you will permit—it is only fair at least that you should listen. Even if what I say does not interest you."

She waved a hand in a gesture of deprecation—but he went on rapidly in spite of her protest, with an air of pride, which somehow robbed the confession of its sincerity.

"Your words have been cruel, Countess, but the cruelest were those in which you attribute the highest motive of my life to the baseness of hypocrisy. I have done many wrongs, broken many oaths, sinned many sins—in the interests of my country—the service of which has been the only aim of my existence. I have been entrusted by the Emperor himself with missions which would have tested the courage of any man, and I have not failed. That is my pride—the glory of my manhood, for the means of accomplishment no matter how unworthy, are unimportant compared with the great mission of the Germanic race in the betterment of humanity."

"I fail to see, Herr Hauptmann, how——"

He commanded her silence with an abrupt gesture.

"If you will be pleased to bear with me a little longer. *Bitte*. I shall not be very long. I merely wanted you to understand how my whole life has been devoted to the great uses of the State, with the most unselfish motives. I have been not a human sentient being, but a highly specialized physical organism to which any wish, any emotion, unless of service to the state, was forbidden. Charity, kindness, altruism, all the gentler emotions—I foreswore them. I relinquished friendship. I became a pariah, an outcast, save to those few beings from whom I took my orders, and to them I was merely the piece of machinery which always accomplished its tasks. I have had no happiness, no friendships, no affection, but I am the most famous secret agent in Germany. A

somber picture, is it not?"

He paused and shrugged expressively. And then his voice lowered a note. "Perhaps you will believe me when I say that my whole existence is a living lie. Ah, yes, you think that. It is a lie, Countess, because no human being can defy the living God that is within him. He cannot forever quell the aspirations of the spirit. The spark is always alight. Sometimes it glows and fades, but sometimes a worthy motive sets it on fire. It is that spark which has survived in me, Countess Strahni, in spite of my efforts—my desires even—to deny its existence. Your illness——"

"Herr Hauptmann, I beg of you——"

"No. You cannot deny me. I nursed you, there—brought you back to life. Ah, you did not know. I brought a doctor at the hazard of the discovery of my hiding place. Charity came, love——"

"Herr Hauptmann, I forbid you," whispered Marishka chokingly, wondering now why she had listened to him for so long. "I must go—go to my room."

Goritz straightened and stood aside.

"You need not fear me, Countess," he said. "You see?" he added quickly. "I do not touch you."

Marishka moved a few paces away and then turned to look at him. He stood erect, smiling at her, his cap in his hand.

"I—I must go to my room, Herr Hauptmann," she murmured haltingly. "I—I am yet—far from strong."

"I am sorry. I pray that you will feel stronger in the morning. Adieu!"

"Adieu——" she murmured, and hurried through the stone portal, aware of the gaze of those dark, slightly oblique eyes which had puzzled, then fascinated—then frightened her.

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## CHAPTER XXIV

### PRISONER AND CAPTIVE

It was with mingled feelings that Marishka found the sanctuary of her sleeping room. Her abhorrence of Goritz as the murderer of Hugh Renwick was uppermost in her breast, her fear of him as her captor of scarcely less import, but his tumultuous plea for her forgiveness and his strange avowal had given her food for thought. Such a rapid *volte-face* was beyond credence. This man had watched by her bedside, nursed her during the week that she had lain unconscious. Her cheeks burned hot at the thought of the situation, and quickly she questioned Ena who at last reluctantly admitted the truth. Herr Hauptmann Goritz had sat many nights by the bedside while she, Ena, had slept so as to be fresh for the day to follow. He had commanded her silence, and Ena had obeyed. She hoped that the Excellency would understand.

Marishka nodded and sent her from the room, for she wanted to be alone with her thoughts. He had watched by her sickbed, carrying out the orders of the doctor while she had lain unconscious—Goritz, the master craftsman of duplicity—Goritz, the insensible! What did it mean? Had the man spoken the truth? Was he—? Love to such a man as Goritz! It was impossible.

He had always been courteous and considerate, but there was a new note in his voice which rang strangely. Another lie—another hypocrisy? And yet the very frankness of his admission with regard to her safety for a moment disarmed her. He would have killed her—"eliminated" her—had the necessities of his duty demanded it of him. And yet he had confessed his love for her. What was the meaning of the paradox? Had he something to gain by her favor? Had a change taken place in their situation? A chance phrase had revealed the fact that there was now a danger of the revelation of this hiding place. They had been pursued—what had balked him in the continuance of their flight into Germany? Meditation only served to enhance the mystery, and she emerged from an hour of thought over the scene in the courtyard with no very clear idea of what the future had in store for her, sure only of one thing—that she must not hang importance upon the words of this man, who had already proved himself a deadly enemy to her happiness. He had hired assassins to kill Hugh, and when they had failed, had accomplished his purpose by a vile expedient.

Love! She knew what love was. She closed her eyes and buried her face in her arms in wordless, silent grief for the man to whom she had given all that was best and noblest of her—Hugh! But she could not weep. It seemed as though, long since, the fountains of her misery were dry. For a long while she crouched in the window, motionless, and when at last she raised her head and gazed out down the shimmering vista of the gorge, it was with a look of new resolution and intelligence. She must escape. Every iota of cleverness must be given to find a way out of Schloss Szolnok. What if, in spite of all, the things that Leo Goritz had confessed were true! She doubted it and yet—if he loved her—! Here was a woman's revenge, to bait, to charm, to spurn; and then to outwit him! A test of the sincerity of his professions, and of her own feminine art—a dangerous game which she had once before thought of playing, until his cruelty had atrophied all impulse.

But now! If he really cared—her power would grow with the venture, her own safety the pledge of his purity—a dangerous game, indeed, here alone upon this crag in the mountains, but if he were sincere, she was armed with a flaming sword to defend—to destroy! If—? She would not trust him, but she would fight him with the weapons she had. Her lips closed in a thin line, and a glint as of polished metal came into her eyes as the scene in the house of the Beg of Rataj shut out the lovely landscape before her. To destroy—to fan the spark to flame that she might extinguish it; to corrode the spirit with the biting acid of contempt; to envenom the soul—newly born, perhaps—to the sweeter uses of beneficence, and then escape! If he cared!

And if he did not care—if, as she really believed, he lied to gain an end....

This was the thought of him that obsessed her. A liar, always. Why not now? Men of his kind were unusual to women of hers, but even in the midst of his confession—as near self-abasement as a man of his type could come, the note of egotism rang clear above the graceful phrases—too graceful to be anything but manufactured in that clear inventive brain of his.

She paced the floor, thinking deeply, and at last stopped by the window and sought again the counsel of the eternal hills. After a while she turned again into the room and peered into a mirror, seeking in her face the answer to the riddle. It was pale, resolute, but it was not ugly.

She planned her campaign with the calm forethought of a general who picks out his own battlefield, disposing his forces to the best advantage, for attack or for repulse, for victory, or defeat. She must mask her approach, conceal her intentions, and develop slowly the real strength of her position. There was much that she wished to learn as to Schloss Szolnok, and its security from those who sought to intercept them, much in regard to the plans of her captor for the future, but she knew that she must act with caution and skill, if she hoped to escape.

Goritz had previously expressed a wish that when she grew strong enough to leave her bedroom, she would join him at dinner, which she heard was served in one end of the great Hall, but she decided that the first skirmish should take place in a situation of her own choosing. And so after dusk, the moon coming out, she went again upon the terrace where she leaned upon the wall of the bastion and looked down with an air of self-sought seclusion, upon the mists of the valley.

Goritz was not long in joining her. She heard his footsteps as he approached but did not give any sign or acknowledgment of his presence.

"May I talk with you, Countess Strahni?" he asked easily.

Her shrug, under her cloak, was hardly perceptible.

"Since you have already done so it seems that my own wishes do not matter," she said coolly.

"I have no wish to intrude."

Marishka laughed. "I can go in——" She drew her wrap more closely about her throat and straightened.

"I hope that you will not do that," he said.

"Is there anything you wished to speak to me about—? That is—er—anything of importance?"

Goritz looked past her toward the profile of the distant mountain, and smiled.

"I thought that you might be interested to learn something of my reasons for stopping here."

"The insect in the web of the spider has little emotion left for curiosity."

"The spider! I have always admired your courage, Countess."

"I can die but once."

"Perhaps you may care to know that you are not in the slightest danger of death."

"Thanks," she said coolly. "Your kindness is overwhelming. Or is my—'elimination' no longer essential?"

The more flippant her tone, the more somber Goritz became.

"My purposes, Countess Strahni, I think, you no longer have any reason to doubt. You are quite safe at Schloss Szolnok——"

"So is the insect in the web—from all other insects but the spider." She turned away. "You cannot blame me, Herr Hauptmann, if I judge of the future by the past."

"I would waste words to make further explanations which are so little understood, but there are matters of interest to you."

"Ah."

"You have been ill. Many things have happened. You would like to hear?"

"I am listening."

"It is the trifles of the world which make or prevent its greatest disasters. The man with the lantern at the bridgehead at Brod did not know that he held the destiny of Europe in his hand.

And yet, this is the truth. Had he permitted us to pass unquestioned we should have reached Sarajevo in time to prevent the greatest cataclysm of all the ages."

Marishka turned toward him, her interest now fully aroused.

"What do you mean?"

"War, Countess Strahni—the most bloody—terrible—in the history of the world—the event that I have striven all my life to prevent. All of Europe is ablaze. Millions of men are marching—battles have already been fought——"

"Horrible? I cannot believe——"

"It is the truth. It followed swiftly upon the assassination at Sarajevo——"

"Serbia!"

"Serbia first—then Russia—Germany—Belgium—France—England, too——"

"You are speaking the truth?"

"I swear it."

"And Austria?"

"Germany and Austria—against a ring of enemies bent on exterminating us——"

"England—?"

And while with eager ears she listened, he told her the history of the long weeks, now growing into months, in which she had been hidden from the world—including the defeat of the Austrians by the Serbians along the Drina, and the advance of the Russians in East Prussia and Galicia.

She heard him through until the end, questioning eagerly, then aware of the dreadful significance of his news, forgetting for the moment her own animosities, her own questionable position in the greater peril of her country—and his. His country and hers at war against the world!

"Russia has won victories against Austria—in Galicia?" she urged.

"Yes—the Cossacks already are approaching Lemberg——"

"Lemberg!"

"They are less than two hundred kilometers from us at the present moment."

"And will they come—here?"

"I hope not," he said with a slow smile. "But Schloss Szolnok is hardly equipped to resist a siege of modern ordnance."

"And you—why are you here?"

The ingenuousness of her impetuous question seemed to amuse him.

"I?" he said. "I am here because—well, because you—because I had no other place to go."

"Will you explain?"

"I see no reason why I should not. I chose the place as a temporary refuge from pursuit. Your illness marred my plans. The war continues to mar them."

"How?"

He smiled.

"The insect *has* curiosity, then? Schloss Szolnok has proved safe. I have no desire to take unnecessary risks."

"You were pursued?"

He nodded. "Yes. And I managed to get away—here, but the other end of this pass is now strongly guarded. I could have gone through when I first came, but you were very ill. You would probably have died if I had gone on. Now it is too late. You see," he said with a shrug, "I am quite cheerful about it."

She turned and examined him with an air of timidity.

"You mean that—that to save my life you—you have sacrificed all hope of winning through to Germany?"

"With you, yes—for the present," he smiled.

She turned away and leaned upon the wall.

"I—I think that I—I have done you some injustice, Herr Hauptmann," she murmured with an effort.

"Thank you."

"But I cannot understand. The papers which passed you through Hungary—signed by General Von Hoetendorf—"

"Unfortunately are of no further service. An order for my arrest has been issued in Vienna."

"Your arrest? For taking me?"

"For many things——" And he shrugged.

"What do you propose to do?"

"Remain here for the present," he said slowly. "It is doubtful if anyone would think of seeking us here. The Schloss has an evil name along the countryside. None of the peasants dares to come within a league of the place."

"And I—?" she asked.

"It seems, Countess Strahni," he said slowly, smiling at her, "that our positions are now reversed—you the captor—I the prisoner. And yet, as you see," with a shrug, "I am making no effort to escape. You have led captivity captive."

His phrases were too well spoken, and the look in his eyes disturbed her.

"You—you wish me to understand that I am free to go——"

"Hardly that," he interrupted with a short laugh. "Only this morning you said that you would kill me if you dared. I do not relish the notion of being delivered into the hands of the police."

"You think that I would do that?" she questioned.

"Wouldn't you?"

"I don't know. I——"

"I am sure of it. I am no longer under any illusions with regard to your sentiments toward myself. This morning I uncovered my heart to you—and you plunged a dagger into it. It was too much—beyond my deserts. I am no man for a woman to spit upon, Countess Strahni. You are still a prisoner—as completely under my power as though you and I were the last people left upon the earth."

His tone was mild, but there was a depth of meaning under it.

"I—I can scarcely be unaware of it," she murmured. "What are you going to do with me?"

"For the present we shall stay here—until an opportunity presents——"

"For escape?"

"I could go alone tonight—and reach Germany—without you. That is not my purpose."

"Then you propose to take me with you?"

"When the coast is clear—yes."

"And if the coast should not be clear?"

"I shall remain."

The situation was as she had supposed, but his motive—the real motive! She drew the wrap more closely around her throat and turned away from him again. To escape from him! That was the only thing she could think of now. Upon the road, his attitude of firm consideration, his cool insistence upon compliance with his wishes, had not been nearly so ominous as the personal note which he had injected into their relations. He frightened her now. But to escape? She was watched, she was sure, for in the afternoon, while the drawbridge was lowered, she had made out the figure of a man on guard at the end of the causeway. But while her conversation with Goritz dismayed her, she studied him keenly, trying to read him by what he did not say.

She smiled at him impudently.

"And suppose I attempted to escape?" she asked.

"You would fail. There is but one exit from Szolnok—the drawbridge—and that is continually guarded."

"You have ordered your men to shoot me?"

"No—but you will not pass."

"I see. Your contrition does not go as far as that."

"Not beyond the walls of Schloss Szolnok," he said coolly.

"And you ask me to believe in the integrity of your motives? What was the use, Herr Hauptmann? I could understand duplicity to me in the performance of a duty, but to practice your machine-made emotions upon my simplicity—! I could hardly forgive you that."

He kept himself well in hand and even smiled again.

"You wrong me, Countess Strahni. I have spoken the truth."

"You cannot deny me the privilege of doubting you," she replied.

"What further proof would you have me give you that I am honest in my love for you?"

She pointed past the drawbridge along the causeway toward the valley below.

"Permit me to go—there—alone—tonight."

He laughed quietly.

"Alone? I do not know what danger may lurk in the valley. The fact that I wish to keep you here—is a better proof of my tenderness."

She turned away from him and leaned upon the wall. But to him at least she did not show fear.

"We cannot remain here indefinitely," she said coolly.

"Are you not comfortable? Is not everything provided for you? It has been my pride to make your convalescence agreeable in all ways," he said, leaning a little nearer to her. "I have tried to atone for the discomforts of your journey. Was it not my solicitude for your health which balked my own plans? You have questioned the truth of my professions, but you cannot deny the evidences of your safety."

Marishka was thinking quickly. Much as she abhorred the man, she realized that, if she were to have any chance of success she must meet him with weapons stronger than his own. And so she turned to him with a smile which concealed her growing terror.

"Herr Hauptmann, I do not wish you to think that I am ungrateful for the many indulgences that you have shown me. Your position has been a difficult one. But from the beginning we have been enemies——"

"Before the outbreak of the war—but allies now——"

"Not if you persist in your plan to carry me to Germany."

He asked her permission to smoke, and when she had granted it he went on coolly.

"Perhaps something may happen to prevent the execution of my plan," he said.

"What?" she stammered.

He searched her face eagerly for a moment.

"You may be sure, Countess Strahni," he said in a half-whisper, "that it is very painful to me that you should think of me as an enemy. Enemy I am not. It is my duty to take you to Germany, but it is very painful to me to do anything which makes you unhappy. Here, safe from detection, I am still doing my duty. And in remaining here you, too, are safe. Will you not try to be contented—to endure my society just for a little while? I want to show you that I can be as other men——"

She laughed to hide her fears.

"All men are alike where a woman is concerned——"

"Will you try? I will be your slave—your servant. Within the castle you may come and go as you please. No one shall approach you without your permission. You see, I am not an exacting jailer. All I ask is the hope of your friendship, a glimpse of your returning smile, and such companionship as you care to give me. It is not much. Do I not deserve it? *Bitte*, think a little."

Marishka gasped and fought the impulse to run from him, for his face was very near her shoulder, his voice very close to her ear.

"I—I think that—we may be friends," she murmured.

"Will you give me your hand, Countess Strahni?"

She extended it slowly and he bowed over it, pressing it to his lips.

She found her excuse in a cough, a vestige of her illness which she summoned to her rescue.

"It—it is getting late, Herr Hauptmann," she said. "I must be going in. The night air——"

"By all means." He accompanied her to the portal of the hall and then she left him.

That night Marishka did not sleep, and the next day, pleading fatigue, remained in her bedroom, trying to muster up the courage to go forth and meet Goritz at this tragic game of his own choosing. That she had stirred some sort of an emotion in the man was not to be doubted. She read it in his eyes, in the touch of his fingers, and in the resonant tones of his voice, but she read too, the sense of his power, the confidence of his egotism to which all things were possible. And much as she wished to believe the testimony of his flashes of tenderness, the hazard of her position stared her in the face. But she knew that with such a man she must play a game of subtlety and courage. And so she resolved to meet him frequently, testing every feminine device to win him to her service which would obliterate all things but her own wishes, and present at last an opportunity for her escape.

In the week that followed she walked out with him across the causeway into the mountain road, visiting Szolnok farm and climbing the hills adjacent to the castle, but she saw no one except the German farmers, and it seemed indeed as though the gorge was taboo to all human beings. Goritz made love to her, of course, but she laughed him off, gaining a new confidence as the days of their companionship increased. Slowly, with infinite patience, with infinite self-control, she established a relationship which baffled him, a foil for each of his moods, a parry for each attack. With a smile on her lips which masked the lie, she told him that Hugh Renwick had been nothing to her.

And Goritz told her of the women he had met in the performance of his duty from London to Constantinople, women of the secret service of England, France, Russia, who had set their wits to match his. Some of them were ugly and clever, some were stupid and beautiful, but they had all been dangerous. He had passed them by. No woman in the world that he had ever known had had the nobility of spirit, the courage, the self-abnegation of the Countess Strahni.

It was in these moods of adulation and self-revelation that Marishka found him most difficult. But she managed to keep him at arm's length by the mere insistence of her spirituality which accepted his friendship upon its face value, telling him that she forgave the past, and vaguely suggesting hope for the future. With that he had to be content, though at times he was dangerously near rebellion. She promised him many things but denied him her lips, hoping day by day for the rescue which came not, and praying night after night that the God who watched over her would forgive her for her duplicity and for the hatred of him that was in her heart.

But there came a day when the walks beyond the causeway ceased, and from the window of her bedroom she learned the reason. Far, far below her in the valley along the road which wound through the Pass, she saw the figures of marching men. Austrian soldiers! What did their presence mean? They were going toward the other end of the pass—thousands of them. Had the Russians crossed Galicia? That night there were no lights in the side of the castle toward the gorge save the candle in her room, which was screened by heavy hangings. And when at dinner she questioned Goritz he gave her the briefest of replies. The Cossacks were coming? Perhaps, but they would not take Dukla Pass. He warned her not to show her figure at the castle windows or above the wall of the rampart, and she obeyed.

For several days Goritz disappeared, and she gained a breathing space to think over her position. She ventured out many times into the courtyard in the hope of finding an opportunity to elude her guard, but each time she approached the drawbridge she saw the chauffeur Karl seated in the shadow of the wall, smoking his pipe. And so she knew that any attempt to pass him would be impossible.

At the end of the fourth day, Captain Goritz joined her at the supper table. He had now discarded his Austrian uniform and wore a rough suit of working clothes, similar to the peasant costume which Ena's husband wore. He greeted her gladly, but she asked him no questions as to his absence, upon her guard as she always was against the unknown quality in the man, which held her in constant anxiety. But after he had eaten, the cloud which had hung over him seemed to pass, and he leaned forward, smiling at her across the table.

"You have been obedient?" he asked.

"What else is left for me?" she smiled. "I have wondered where you were."

"Ah," he laughed, "you missed me? That is good. You wondered what would happen to you if I did not come back." He laughed as he lighted his cigarette. "I am not so easily to be lost, I assure you. I have been through Dukla Pass."

"Many soldiers have gone through the pass today—many this morning—many more this afternoon."

"Yes, I saw them."

"And the Russians?"

He was silent for a while, and then spoke very quietly. "They are coming."

She made no sound and seemed to be frozen into immobility by the import of the information.

"The Austrians have fortified the other end of the Pass, but it is said that the Russians are in great numbers, sweeping everything before them——"

"Przemysl—! Lemberg——!"

"Lemberg has fallen. The fate of Przemysl hangs in the balance." He shrugged. "Tomorrow, perhaps, may see the Cossacks at Dukla Pass."

"And then——"

"I do not wish to alarm you," he said gently. "Six hundred years have passed over Schloss Szolnok, and it still stands. I am not going to run away."

"But you can do nothing—against so many."

"They will not bother us, I think. The Austrians, you see, have passed us by. They are taking all their artillery to Javorina and Jägerhorn and mounting them upon the old emplacements of the

ruins. The defense will be made there where the gorge is narrower."

"But if they should come—here—the Cossacks—!" she whispered fearfully.

He laughed easily. "Ah, Countess, I am not a half-bad jailer, after all?"

"The Cossacks!" she repeated.

"They shall not come here."

"What can you do?"

"The place is impregnable—sheer cliffs upon all sides—the causeway two hundred meters long. I could pick them off one by one from the top of the keep. With the drawbridge up, we are as safe as though we were in Vienna."

"But their artillery?"

"They will not think us worth their while. In the armory there are six repeating hunting rifles and four shotguns, ammunition plentiful——" He broke off and, rising, came over and stood beside her. "But we will not think of unpleasant possibilities. It has been so long since I have seen you—too long."

She let him take her hand and press it to his lips, but tonight that condescension did not seem to be enough. He fell to one knee beside her and would have put his arm about her waist if she had not risen and struggled away from him.

"You forget, Herr Hauptmann, the dependence of my position here—alone with you. Whatever our personal relations, a delicacy for my feelings must warn you——"

"Marishka!" he broke in. "What does a man who loves as I do, care for the conventions of the sham world you and I have left so far behind. I adore you. And you flout me."

"For shame! Would you care for me if I were a woman without delicacy or dignity? I beg of you ——"

But he had held her by the hand and would not release her.

"I adore you—and you flout me—that is all that I know. Your indifference maddens me. Perhaps I am not as other men, and must not be judged by other standards than my own which are sufficient for myself as they should be sufficient for you. You know that I—I worship you—that by staying here I have forgotten my duty to my country at a time when I am most needed. Does that mean nothing to you? Can you be callous to a love like mine which lives only in your happiness and hangs upon your pleasure? I worship you, Marishka. Just one kiss, to tell me that you care for me a little. I will be content——"

She struggled in his grasp, her fear of him lending her more strength. Her lips—? Hugh's! Never—never—as God witnessed.

"One kiss, Marishka——"

She struggled free and struck him with her clenched fist furiously, full in the face, and then ran to the window, as he released her, breathing hard, trembling, but full of defiance. The suddenness of the affair and its culmination had driven them both dumb, Marishka with terror, Goritz with chagrin at his mistake and anger at her temerity. He touched his face with the fingers of one hand and stared at her with eyes that burned with black fire in the pallor of his face.

"You have struck me," he muttered. And then, with a shrug, "That was not a love tap, Countess Strahni."

She could not speak for very terror of the consequences of the encounter, but stood watching him narrowly, one hand upon the window-ledge beside her.

"Well," he asked presently, "are you dumb?"

"You—you insulted me," she gasped.

"Whatever I have done, you have repaid me," he muttered.

She glanced out of the window into the black void beneath.

"I—I am not afraid to die, Herr Goritz," she said.

He caught the meaning of her glance and her poise by the window-ledge, and their significance sobered him instantly. He drew back from her two or three paces and leaned heavily against an oaken chair.

"Am I so repellent to you as that?" he whispered.

"My lips—are mine," she said proudly. "I give them willingly or not at all."

His gaze flickered and fell before the high resolve that he read in her face. And her courage enthralled him.

"*Herr Gott!*" he muttered, "you have never been so beautiful as now, Marishka!"

She did not reply or move, but only watched him steadily.

He paced the floor stiffly, his hands behind him, struggling for his self-control. And the better instinct in him, the part of him that had made life possible for Marishka at Schloss Szolnok, was slowly triumphant.

"A kiss means much or little," he said quietly at last. "To me, the consecration of a love which has leaped the bounds of mere platitude. A woman of your training perhaps cannot grasp the honesty of my unconviction. I have meant you no harm. But that you should have misunderstood—!"

"One thing only I understand—that you have violated the hospitality of Schloss Szolnok."

"I beg of you——"

"It is true. Was your kindness, your courtesy, your consideration, but the means to this end? I can never believe in you again."

"Do you mean that?"

"I do——"

"It is a pity."

"It is the truth. Fear and affection cannot survive together."

"Fear?"

"I can never trust you again. Let me go—I beg that you will excuse me."

He bowed. "If that is your wish——" and turned and walked to the window opposite, while Marishka found her way up the stairs and so to her room where she lay upon her bed fully dressed, in a high state of nervous excitement.

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## CHAPTER XXV

### THE RIFT IN THE ROCK

Hugh Renwick in his borrowed plumage, strode forth before dawn, and reaching a spot where the valley narrowed into the gorge and marked the grim outline of Schloss Szolnok against the lightening East, slowly climbed the rugged slope of the mountain on his left which faced it. He meant to spend the morning in a study of the approaches to the castle, and if possible devise some means by which he could inspect it unobserved at closer range. Daylight found him perched in a crevice of rock among some trees, through the leaves of which he could clearly see the distant mass of stone which rose in solitary dignity, an island above the mists of the valley, a grim relic of an age when such a situation meant isolation and impregnability.

Indeed, it scarcely seemed less impregnable now, for upon two sides at least, the cliffs rose sheer from the gorge until they were joined by the heavy buttresses which tapered gracefully until they joined the walls of the crenelated towers and bastions. In the center of the mass of buildings rose the square solid mass of the keep, with its crenelated roof and small windows commanding every portion of the space enclosed within the gray walls. He marked the dim lines of a road which ascended from the valley upon the further mountain, now scarcely visible because of the vegetation which grew luxuriantly on the hillsides, and he studied this approach to the castle most attentively—the straight reach of wall, built to span a branch of the gorge beyond, perhaps two hundred feet deep and six hundred wide. This was the main entrance to the castle, a narrow causeway, that terminated at the gate where he marked a drawbridge now raised, which hung by chains to the heavy walls above.

The only means of access? Perhaps, and if the gate were guarded, impassable by night as well as day. But Renwick was not sure that there was no other means of ingress. To the left of the keep, and on a level with the top of the long curtain of wall, the building fell away in ruins, for portions of old bastions were missing, and there was a breach in the northern wall, which had tumbled outward over the precipice into the ravine below.

As daylight came Renwick watched the windows and ramparts intently. There was no sign of life, but remembering that here there was no need for early rising, he waited patiently, gazing steadily through the leaves across the valley. At last his patience was rewarded, for from a building in the courtyard near the central mass, he made out a thin pale blue line which ascended straight into the sky. Smoke! Breakfast was cooking. His heart gave a leap. There were no devils in Schloss Szolnok—but Goritz! In a short while, still watching intently, he saw a figure pass from the gate toward the main buildings, where it disappeared. Renwick would have given the remainder of his hundred-*kroner* notes for a good pair of field glasses, by which it might have been possible to distinguish the identity of any figure that could be seen. But he realized that he had accomplished the object of his visit, for the raised drawbridge indicated that whoever occupied the castle, seclusion was important to him. Deciding that he knew enough to warrant closer investigation, Renwick moved slowly along the mountain side into the gorge, under the cover of rocks and undergrowth, slowly descending toward the road, with the idea of crossing the

stream and climbing the rugged cliff beyond, from which he could gain a nearer view of the northern and ruined end of the castle.

But after an hour of careful progress, as he reached a projection of rock which hung over the road below, he crouched, suddenly listening. For he heard the sound of voices, a rumble of wheels, and the creaking and clanking of heavy metallic objects. The sounds came nearer, swelling in proportion, now clearly distinguishable; and so lying flat upon his stomach, he parted the bushes at the edge of the rock and peered over. There was a cloud of dust and the clatter of iron-shod boots against the flints of the road, and in a moment he made out long ranks of soldiers, marching rapidly to the northward into the Pass. Renwick knew that the northern end of the Pass was already strongly guarded, for his host had told him that many soldiers had gone through during the weeks before; but the sight of these hurrying men, the shrouded guns which lumbered amidst them, and the long line of motor trucks and wagons which followed, gave Renwick a notion that events of military importance were pending in the Galician plain beyond. He tried to form some idea of the number of men that passed. A regiment—two, three, four—artillery—three batteries at least. For an hour or more they passed, and then at last, silence and solitude.

Although adequately disguised, Renwick was in no position to be stopped and searched, for if he wore no marks of identification, his automatic, and the money pinned in his trousers lining, would have made him an object of suspicion, the more so in a country where soldiers were moving in so precarious a military situation.

And so he descended slowly, hiding in a copse at the base of the rocks where he waited for a while listening, and then peered cautiously out. Then matching his footsteps to those of the soldiers, he crossed the road obliquely and plunged through the bushes down over the rocks to the bed of the Dukla, where he waited and listened again, crossing the stream at last by a fallen tree and reaching the protection of the undergrowth upon the farther bank.

Though he had been able to learn little in Budapest of the military situation, even from Herr Koulos, the sight of Austrian soldiers marching toward the northern end of the Pass assured him that the Russians must have won important victories in Galicia, thus placing all the passes of the Carpathians in jeopardy. But whatever his interest in conjectures regarding the possibility of victory or defeat, his own business was too urgent to admit of other issues, and so he made his way forward cautiously through the underbrush, which in places was almost impenetrable. Four-footed things, startled by this unusual invasion of their hunting ground, started up almost beside him and fled—rabbits, squirrels, a wolf, and a brown bear, which rocked upon its four legs dubiously for a moment, and then lumbered comically away. These creatures and the pathless woods advised him that however frequented the mountain road below, the inhabitants hereabout were not in the habit of traversing the wooded mountain sides. Moving forward slowly he climbed the hills in the general direction of the castle, the sunlit bastions of which suddenly appeared through the foliage above him and to the right.

He moved more warily now, for if Goritz were in hiding within Schloss Szolnok, he would of course take pains that every avenue of approach should be watched. But a careful inspection of the crag upon which the castle was perched, and from this new angle, led Renwick to the conclusion that Goritz might be so sure of its inaccessibility from the north that no guard at the ruined end would be thought necessary. At first glance, indeed, Renwick was inclined to that opinion himself, for the rocks, though fissured and scarred as though by the blasts of winter, though not so high, were scarcely less precipitous than upon the southern side. At his very feet, perhaps already buried for years in the loam and moss, were the huge blocks of stone which had fallen from the northern towers and rolled down the steep slope of the natural counterscarp which the conformation of the mountain provided.

Renwick scrutinized the beetling wall of rock above the incline with a dubious eye, seeking a possible path or succession of footholds by means of which he might make his way to the breach in the stone rampart above. The task seemed hopeless, but he knew that the most formidable difficulties are often solved by the simplest devices, and so he studied the wall patiently, his gaze suddenly focusing upon a fissure in the cliff, a little to his right, which went upward at an angle, its apex passing a projection of the rock which extended for a hundred feet or more to the southward. Above that precarious platform, the cliff was splintered and torn as though the agencies which had devastated the wall above had wreaked their vengeance here too. But there were finger holds and footholds, a desperate climb even in the daylight to a member of an Alpine club. But Renwick from his ambush studied the face of that rock foot by foot, and at last decided that when night came, the possibilities of entrance having been denied him elsewhere, he would make the effort.

He did not know what he would find among the ruins above, their connection with the habitable part of the castle having probably been walled up by Baron Neudeck, and granting that Renwick succeeded in making his way to the top, his chances of reaching the main buildings might be slim indeed. And suppose after all this effort, that Marishka were not here—that Goritz had gone on—!

But how could he have gone on? Surely not by a road guarded by an army at its other end. And it was only last night that he had seen Goritz's fellow assassin and hireling. Marishka was within, and Renwick had not permitted a doubt of it to enter his mind since yesterday.

But to make certain of the matter he decided upon further investigation, retracing his steps for some hundred yards down the declivity, making sure of his landmarks as he went, until he

reached the lower level of the valley, where crossing a brook he began climbing the steeper slope of the northern mountain. Here a greater degree of caution was required, for the rock upon which the Schloss was built was close to the northern slope and it was over the eastern reaches of the northern crags that the road passed which led to the causeway. To make his investigation more difficult of accomplishment, most of the mountain side was in bright sunlight while the castle was in shadow. And so, it being now the middle of the afternoon, he decided to move slowly at first, find a secluded spot and eat of the bread and cheese which was to be both his breakfast and supper.

From his position, well up among the rocks, he had a view of the tree-tops of the valley below with a glimpse of the road a short distance from the spot where he had crossed it in the morning. The ruined end of the castle he commanded, too, from a new angle. He was now above the level of the crag and made out among the twisted mass of stone the vestiges of what had once been a chapel, and a watchtower. There was an arch which seemed to lead into a vaulted structure, but from his position he could not see within it.

Renwick's eyes were good and they searched the valley below him ceaselessly. He thought he heard a rumble as of thunder in the distance, but as the sky was clear he knew that he must have been mistaken, but after a while along the road below him more soldiers passed, riding rapidly and silently—into the deeper shadows of the gorge. Their clattering wagons followed, and this, Renwick decided, was the cause of the distant sound that he had heard. Once or twice he thought that he saw motion among the undergrowth at some distance below him, but decided that he had been mistaken. Again—nearer and to his right. There was no doubt of it now. Renwick crawled deeper into his place of concealment and peered out.

Some one was climbing up over the rocks below him, mounting slowly a little farther up the gorge. He heard the crackling of twigs and the sound of voices in a subdued murmur. There were two of them. Venturing his head beyond the leaves he got a glimpse through the trunks of the pine-trees—a tall man and a shorter, stouter one. They were more than a hundred yards away and moving up the mountain side away from him, but to Renwick's mind, fixed only upon the men he sought and those who sought himself, the figures, though wearing rough clothing like his own, seemed strangely like those of Herr Windt and Spivak. Of course he might have been mistaken, for within two miles of this spot at least two hundred people lived, but the profusion of game in the valley confirmed the report of his host of last night that the peasants who lived in the vicinity of Dukla were not in the habit of venturing into the Pass. And if not peasants and not the men he had imagined them to be, who were they and what were they doing here? He lay quietly, listening for the sound of their footsteps which seemed to pass toward the castle above him and at last died away in the distance.

Windt here? It seemed incredible that he had traced Renwick so quickly. Or was it as Herr Koulos had said, that the same sources of information which had been open to Renwick had been open to Herr Windt also? Was he seeking Goritz or Renwick or both, trusting to the relations between Renwick and Marishka to bring all trails to this converging point? If the strangers among the rocks above him were Windt and Spivak, he was indeed in danger of detection and capture, and the fate of an Englishman taken armed in a region where Austrian troops were massing was unpleasant to contemplate. And yet Renwick decided that before he made the rash attempt to mount the cliff he must further investigate. And so he lay silent until nightfall when with drawn automatic he emerged from his hiding place and quietly made his way along the mountain side. He searched the undergrowth eagerly, as a man only can when his life depends upon the keenness of his senses, and without mishap reached a point opposite the castle where he commanded both the courtyard and the mass of buildings around the central tower. The distance across the narrow gorge at this side of the castle was perhaps two or three hundred yards, and Renwick from the shelter of a bush could see the windows quite distinctly. As the night grew dark two lights appeared—both, he noted, upon the side of the buildings toward where he sat—lights which could not be visible from the deeper, wider valley upon the other side or from the road below. He saw figures moving—the small bent figure of a woman in the building upon the left which seemed to be the kitchen, a man in the courtyard near the gate which Renwick had seen from the other side. The room upon the right near the keep, seemed to be the Hall, for the windows were longer than any others and denoted a high ceiling within. There was a light here too, and Renwick watched the windows, his heart beating high with hope. In his anxiety to see who was within the apartment he forgot the strangers upon the mountain side, the danger of his position, the hazardous feat before him—all but the hope that Marishka was here.

He had almost given up hope of seeing her when she appeared. He knew her instantly, though he could not easily distinguish her features. She sat in a chair at a table, conversing with some one whom he could not see. A pang of jealousy shot through him. Goritz—!

What if believing him dead Marishka had learned to tolerate the German agent, even to the point of friendship. There they were, sitting face to face at table, as they had done for two months or more. What were their relations? Prisoner and captive? And which was which? How could he have blamed Marishka,—Renwick, a dead man?

He knew that she had grieved, that she must have hated the man who had done him to death—perhaps still hated him as Renwick did. He peered at the fragment of Marishka's white dress, the only part of her that was visible to him, and upbraided himself for his unworthy thoughts of her.

And when the dead came to life what would she say to him?

Hedged about with difficulties and dangers as he was, the sight of the girl so near him and yet so inaccessible was maddening. Now that he had discovered her, every impulse urged him to the feat of scaling the wall. And yet, as though fascinated, he still sat, his gaze fixed on the bit of white drapery which was a part of Marishka. He tried to imagine what Goritz was saying to her, for he seemed to know that Goritz was her companion, seemed to hear the murmur of their voices. He waited long and then the white drapery vanished, reappeared, and Marishka's figure stood in the window, leaning with one hand upon the casement, in silhouette against the light. And now quite distinctly against the velvety soft background of the breathless night the sound of her voice, refined by the distance between them, but fearful in its tone and significance.

*"I—I am not afraid to die, Herr Goritz,"* it said.

Renwick started to his feet as though suddenly awaking from a dreadful dream into a still more dreadful reality. Marishka still stood in the window motionless, but the words that she had spoken seemed to be ringing endlessly down the silent gorge and in his brain, which was suddenly empty of all but its echoes. He wanted to shout to her a cry of encouragement—and hope, but he remained silent, grimly watching and listening.

Marishka said something else and then turned into the room, while through another window he saw the dark figure of Goritz pass away from her toward the outward wall. Of Marishka he saw no more, but at intervals he saw Goritz pacing to and fro....

How much longer Renwick watched he did not know, but after a while he found himself stumbling along the face of the mountain, descending by the way that he had come, Marishka's words singing their message through and through him. It was as though the words had been meant for him instead of Goritz, that Renwick even in death should know of her danger and come to her aid. He was coming now, not as an avenging spirit, but in the flesh, armed with righteous wrath and a fearful lust for vengeance. He understood what the message meant. Hers was not a cry of despair but of defiance.... What had happened? He had not seen.

"I am not afraid to die." Nor was Renwick—but to live were better—to live at least for tonight. Fury gave him desperation, but for the task before him he needed coolness, too. And realizing that haste might send him hurtling to the bottom of the gorge, he moved more cautiously, stepping down with infinite pains until he reached the brook, which he crossed carefully, and then moved back up the declivity toward the castle.

The night was clear, starlit but moonless, and the cliff as he reached it looked down upon him with majestic and sullen disdain. The ages had passed over and left it scarred and seared but still defiant and inaccessible. Renwick paused a moment to be sure of his ground and then boldly crawled up over the chaos of tumbled boulders and broken masonry, until he reached the wall of solid rock, where he stopped again to regain his breath and examine the fissure that he had studied earlier in the day. It was a cleft in the rock, the result of some subterranean upheaval which had caused the whole crag to settle into its base; a fissure, originally a mere crack which had been widened and deepened by the erosion of time. Upon closer inspection, it was larger than it had appeared from below, perhaps ten feet in width at the outside, and tapering gradually as it rose.

He entered and ran his fingers along its sides, penetrating to its full depth until there was just room enough in which to wedge his bent body. Then rising cautiously, seated, so to speak, upon the incline which seemed to be about thirty degrees from the vertical, he dug the iron-shod toes of his peasant's boots into the roughnesses of the wall before him and rose, pushing with elbows and arms where the wall was too smooth for a foothold. It was hard work, and at the end of ten minutes, perspiring profusely, and leg and arm weary, he stopped upon a projecting ledge, where he found a perfect balance for his entire body, and relaxed. But he had gained fifty feet.

Above him was the long streak of pallid light shimmering against the gloom of the rock like the blade of a naked sword, with its point far above him among the stars. For a full five minutes he rested, and then went upward again, feeling with his finger ends while he braced his body, taking advantage of every foothold before and behind. At one spot the fissure widened dangerously, but he struggled inward; at another it went almost straight upward, requiring sheer strength of fingers; but at last he found another ledge and braced himself with his feet for another rest. He did not dare to look downward now, for fear of dizziness, but he knew that he had already come high. The sword blade was shorter, curved now more like a scimitar at its tip, which showed that the angle was greater.

But what if before he reached the rocky platform, the cleft should grow too narrow to admit the passage of his body? It was too late now to think of any such impediment. He struggled upward again, slipping back at times, clawing like a cat, with toes and fingers, fighting for his breath, but always mounting higher, his gaze upward toward a star in the heavens near the point of the scimitar. Would he ever reach the top? Bits of the rock crumbled, broke off and flew out into space, and once he slipped and slid outward, only saving himself from destruction by the aid of a jutting piece of jagged rock which caught in his clothing. A desperate venture—but successful, for with one final effort, with fingers torn, and knees and elbows bruised and bleeding, he hauled himself up to the level of the flat projection of rock upon which he dragged himself, exhausted and breathless, but so far, safe.

He lay there for a long time, flat on his back, his eyes dimmed with effort, his gaze on the stars, which now seemed to blink in a friendly way upon his venture. To succeed so far—failure was

now impossible. Fearfully he peered over the edge of the cliff upon the velvety tree-tops of the valley below. Three hundred feet, four perhaps, and beyond to the left where the crag fell down to the very bed of the Dukla itself, black void—vacancy.

Above him still was the hazardous climb up the broken face of the rocks, but he did not fear it. His nerves were iron now. There were roots growing here, and small bushes, stunted trees, growing in the interstices of the rocks, and he climbed steadily, always looking upward, toward the breach in the wall now so very near, fifty feet, forty—and then the wall seemed to hang over him smooth and bare. So he hung there by a sturdy branch, one foot clinging, and studied the surface, descending a few feet carefully and then rising again to the left in a fissure, swinging himself along a narrow ledge where the masonry of the bastion joined the rock. Over this he climbed, finding solid footing at last, and then rest and a breathing space within the broken walls.

He lay behind a pile of rocks which had fallen from the walls of the watchtower, recovering his breath again, and the strength of his fingers, every bone of which was crying out in protest. He peered over into the depths below, trying to measure the distance he had come—three hundred feet—perhaps more. Could he find a rope of that length within the castle—? After a while he straightened in the shadow of the wall and peered cautiously up at the dark bulk of the keep and the tower, beyond the ruined chapel, searching its roofs and window for a sign of life. Silence. The ruin was deserted. For half an hour he watched and waited, and then sure that there was no chance that he had been observed, rose to his feet and moved forward stealthily into the shadows of the chapel. The roof had long since fallen in and been removed, but Renwick stumbled over a dusty tomb, toward the fragment of altar with the reredos still showing traces of sculpture, partially protected by a fragment of roof over the apse which had been spared by the wind and storm. To the right of the altar was a Gothic door, which had at one time led into the building adjoining, but upon investigation he found that it had been built in with solid blocks of stone. The other arch of the vaulted structure outside which he had noted from the mountain side was also filled by a wall. So far as Renwick could see, the ruined part of Schloss Szolnok was isolated, with no mode of egress from the habitable part.

Renwick had screened his movements as far as possible from view of the windows in the keep and other buildings, and now discovered that the lowest one was at least fifteen feet above the level of this rampart; and so before planning any action, he investigated the guardhouse, a fallen ruin upon the north bastion. He seemed to make out the forms of what had once been the stone treads of a circular stair in a tumbled mass. At first the appearance of the place discouraged him, for it seemed too far away from the main mass of buildings to furnish any communication with them, but as he peered among the fallen masonry he thought he detected a darker spot in the obscurity, and bending forward was aware of a heavy smell, as of mold and dampness. Upon investigation he discovered an irregular hole under the mass of stone, a little wider than his body.

He dared not strike a match for fear the glow of it might be observed from one of the windows of the keep, but testing the balance of the heavy stone steps, he decided to investigate, and so lowering his legs into the dark aperture he let himself hang from his waist and found that his toes encountered solidity. He tested his footing with his weight, and then let go, descending into the hole, which seemed to be a stairway, leading from the tower into the bowels of the rock. With a touch of fingers upon the efflorescent walls he moved cautiously down, step by step, sure now that this was the ancient corridor by which the men-at-arms passed from the guardhouse to the other rampart. Sixty-two steps down he counted, and then he reached a level, where he paused a moment to look at the vague blotch of gray which was the starlight. Even with eyes that had now grown accustomed to the darkness he could see nothing, and so deeming himself safe from observation, he struck a match, which struggled a moment against the foul air and then went out. But in the brief moment of partial illumination, Renwick made out a corridor extending straight before him, slightly downward. He followed it cautiously his hands stretched out, his toes feeling for pitfalls, and at last came to a rough wall.

Was this the end—a wall which shut off communication with the ruins? Emptiness to the right. He turned and followed the wall blindly, down its tortuous way, aware of a difficulty in breathing, and a throbbing at his temples down which the moisture was pouring profusely. In a while which seemed hours, the rough wall stopped, and his fingers encountered a wooden upright—a doorway—open. And testing the stone floor carefully he passed through it, the echoes of footfalls advising him that he was in a larger space. He peered in all directions, seeking a sign of light within, for it seemed that the air had now grown fresher, but he saw nothing, and so striking a third match which burned more brightly, he held it over his head for a moment and looked about him.

It was a kind of crypt in a good state of preservation, octagonal in shape, about twelve feet high, and the ceiling was supported by arches which sprang from dwarf columns of stone at the angles. From the center of the ceiling by a heavy chain hung an ancient iron lamp which still contained the remnants of a candle. There was a heavy wooden table at one side, and two heavy chairs, but Renwick's gaze passed these quickly to a partition of rough boards in one of the walls opposite, and then his match burnt his fingers and expired.

## THE DEATH GRIP

He stood in the middle of the stone floor, matchbox in hand, trying to decide what he must do next. As nearly as he could judge by his observations during the afternoon, and the direction of the steps and passageways, the vault was somewhere under the main group of buildings, the keep or one end of the Hall, two or three stories below the level of the chapel floor. Part of the corridor through which he had passed was hewn from the solid rock, and part was built of masonry. The wooden partition opposite him was obviously the beginning of the used part of the castle, but admitting that he could pass it, in which direction would it lead him? He feared to strike another match, for beyond the door perhaps someone might be moving. It was now, as nearly as Renwick could judge, about one o'clock in the morning. He crossed the crypt carefully and found the partition, feeling its surface, which was made of rough boards loosely nailed together. He put his eye to one of the cracks and peering in, could see nothing; but a current of warmer air which came through the slits, slightly aromatic in odor, warned him that the space beyond was surely connected with the habitable part of the castle—a wine cellar perhaps, or a storage room. He debated for a moment whether it was wise to use another light and then at last decided to take the risk, and as matches were scarce, found the ancient candle in the iron lamp, which after sputtering feebly for a moment, consented to burn. By its aid he examined the dust upon the floor of the crypt, which showed the imprint of no footsteps but his own; then the walls of the crypt, discovering immediately another door which his eyes had missed in the earlier glow of the match,—a narrow door open to the left, of thick wood, with heavy iron hinges, the flanges of which formed the braces of the door itself. He blew out the candle and put it into his pocket. Peering through the keyhole and seeing nothing, he lifted the latch and tried to open it.

His efforts proved that it had been unused for many years, for the hinges had sagged, and some of its weight rested upon the stone floor. But with an effort, he managed to move it an inch or so. Another effort swung it clear of its stone sill, and at last he managed to open it wide enough to admit the passage of his body. But with this last attempt the rusty hinges rasped horribly; and so he waited in silence, listening fearfully for any sounds in front or behind him which might indicate alertness above.

Another passage lay before him, a narrower one, which soon developed a straight flight of narrow stairs leading upwards. He stood for a moment staring, for the gloom above him seemed to lighten. He sat upon the lower step and took off his heavy boots, then crept up the stairs noiselessly, reaching a landing dimly lighted by a small slit of a window which looked out upon the night. Pausing here, he was enabled definitely to establish his position within the castle walls. Below him was the narrower gorge, opposite him the cliff upon which he had crouched this afternoon. He was beneath one end of the Hall, and from all indications, in an ancient secret passageway, the existence of which from its condition had for years been forgotten. At the landing there was a heavy wooden door upon his left. This he examined as minutely as possible by the dim light of the loophole, peering through the keyhole, from which exuded a faint odor of gasoline. It must be here that Goritz kept the car. The platform was near the level of the rampart, then. Renwick did not pause here long for he saw that the stairs turned and mounted again in the opposite direction.

Renwick felt for his automatic, and leaving his shoes on the landing by the window, again climbed into the darkness. Another landing—and before his eyes, now sensitive to the slightest lessening of the gloom, a thin thread of light crossed the narrow passage, terminating at his right in an illuminated spot upon the wall. It did not emanate as he had at first supposed, from a keyhole, but from a crevice between two stones, where the joints had turned to powder. He peered through eagerly, but his range of vision was small, covering merely a section of paneled woodwork, a mullioned window, and a chair or two. He held his breath and listened, for he fancied he heard the sound of footsteps. Yes, there they were again, the slowly moving footsteps of a man pacing to and fro—and then the footsteps halted suddenly and a voice spoke. It was that of Leo Goritz.

"Are you sure that you saw them?"

"There is no mistake. My eyes are good."

"Did they remain long?"

"For twenty minutes or so, but they saw that the thing was impossible and went away."

"The situation becomes interesting," said Goritz.

"Rather too risky, I should say," put in the other. "If the Herr Hauptmann had only taken my advice last week—"

"I never take advice. But you may have been mistaken. I can scarcely believe that Herr Windt had the skill to trace us here—unless—"

"But it was he. I was peering through the slit in the postern, not twenty feet away. I could have killed him easily."

"But twenty feet is a long distance when two hundred feet yawn beneath. Let him come. We have food enough for a siege—ah, there it is again!"

There was a significant silence between the two men, but Renwick listened the more keenly, for

he heard the deep rumble, as of thunder, which had perplexed him in the afternoon—a reverberation, repeated and continued, which seemed to make the very flags beneath him tremble. But since he could hear and feel it within these solid walls, much nearer and louder, he realized now that it meant the roar of artillery—the defiant blasts of the Austrian guns at the end of the Pass, or the triumphant salvos of the Russians. And the voice of Goritz confirmed him.

"The thing has come rather sooner than I expected," he growled. "*Donnerwetter!* Why couldn't the Russians have put off the attack for a week!"

"And if they win the Pass——"

"Perhaps it is just as well for us if they do. Herr Windt may neglect us in the general scramble for safety."

"He is not of that sort, Herr Hauptmann."

"Then let him come. Twenty feet is a long jump even for the legs of the Windt."

Goritz laughed at his joke and then yawned sleepily.

"You may go now, Karl. Is Strohmeyer at the gate?"

"Yes, Herr Hauptmann."

"You are sure that he will not go to sleep?"

"I think not."

"The signal is one stroke of the postern bell. He understands?"

"Yes, Herr Hauptmann. Any other orders?"

"None except these. That he is on no account to fire unless attacked. But this fact is to be understood. No man is to pass into Schloss Szolnok tonight."

"*Zu befehl*, Herr Hauptmann."

The chauffeur, Karl, passed across Renwick's range of vision and the steps of Goritz resumed their pacing of the floor—more slowly now. The Englishman had been kneeling, scarcely daring to breathe, and now he wondered what he had better do next. Taking infinite pains to make no sound he investigated the wall of the Hall with his finger tips. There was a door here, a secret door, he thought, hidden from the interior of the Hall in the paneling of the wainscoting. Did Goritz know of its existence? The floor of the crypt, it was true, had shown no sign of footsteps, and the door below, Renwick was sure, had not been opened for many years. But if Goritz knew of this passage, there was a chance of his entering and finding him. Renwick dared not strike matches now, and determined to go on until he had mastered all the architectural details of the passage, and then devise some plan to reach Marishka. Balked in other directions he could return to this secret door into the Hall, and awaiting the departure of Goritz, force an entrance and trust to luck.

But there might be some other and less dangerous means of reaching Marishka. Even if he entered the Hall, he would have no idea which way to turn. Better to follow the passage to the upper floors, if it were possible, and enter above, thus creating a diversion which might add to the advantage of his surprise. But did the passage mount higher? Or was—? His advancing toes touched something solid. Bending forward, he found steps, and immediately began mounting them on all fours.

The sleeping-rooms, he had supposed, were on the two upper floors of the keep and in the buttressed building toward the south which was a part of it. This was the direction in which he was going now. He reached another landing, as nearly as he could judge by the steps he had taken, almost over the crypt, three levels below. This was the keep, then, upon his left. With pulse beating rapidly he felt for and found a wooden upright—another door. He paused and listened. There was no sound nor any light upon the other side. So he went on slowly until at a distance above him he saw the starlight coming through another loophole, the counterpart of that below the Hall, and mounted noiselessly, peering out upon the wider valley to the south. He had therefore traversed the castle from one side to the other, and was now near the top of the buttressed wing of the keep.

Breathing in deep gasps the keen night air, Renwick waited, listening, and now heard again from outside the thunderous reverberations of the battle at the head of the Pass. He had been so intent upon his mission that he had forgotten it! But now the furious character of the engagement was obvious. It was far distant, perhaps four or five miles away, and yet the wild heavens were aglow with strange flashing fires, the reflections of the bombs and star-shells which paled the ineffectual lights of the firmament. Battle! Schloss Szolnok, too, should see battle—his own with Goritz! But Renwick would take no chances this time.

The heavy reverberations rose and died away, but a fainter spatter of sounds continued, the deadly counter-melody of machine-gun and rifle fire which went on without intermission. Far below the Schloss, in the direction of the road along the Dukla, he heard the clatter of transport, and the calls of men.

All of this Renwick's mind assimilated in his moment of rest and recuperation, but beside the

loophole, clearly defined by the flashes in the heavens, his searching glances made out the uprights of another door. Here, perhaps—He bent forward, listening at its cracks, and then knelt, searching for a latch or keyhole. Nothing. But as he turned his back to the loophole, shutting out the starlight, he imagined that he saw something white upon the stone flagging. He leaned forward to pick it up and found that his fingers were softly illuminated. The spot was the reflection of a dim light within the room. He put his face close to the floor and found the aperture, a small hole of irregular shape in the baseboard of the door. A candle. Someone, then, was within? He put his ear to the chink and listened. A muffled sound, faint, but agonizingly definite—a woman's sobs! Renwick straightened and then listened again. Silence. Perhaps he had been mistaken. No. There it was again—fainter now. He ran his fingers softly along the edges of the woodwork, seeking a latch, a handle, but could find none. If there were a secret spring, it was so deftly hidden that he could not discover it. But in the brief moments of his search he had decided that he must enter this room at all costs. And so rising to his feet, he gave up trying to find the secret of admittance and slowly put his weight against the woodwork. It made no sound nor yielded to his pressure. He tried it again with the same results. Then despairing, and desperate, he struck a match and ran it quickly along the jambs. The hinges were concealed, but he found signs of them at the right. To the left, then—another match—a handle, a knob—where? And then just as the third match went out he found it—a flat, iron lever which moved around a swivel, cunningly let into the woodwork. He caught it quickly in his fingers, twisted it down, and then, automatic in hand, he pushed upon the door which opened and swung inward upon its hinges.

Renwick waited for a moment in the doorway, pistol in hand, blinking at the candle upon the table, like a cat emerging from a cellar, searching the vast room for its occupant. A huge room with wainscoted walls, with heavy hangings at the windows, massive furniture, a high canopied bed—

He took a few quick steps forward into the room, for a figure clothed in soft white had started up from the bed and was staring at him with startled eyes—Marishka!

Renwick was hatless, tattered, covered with dust, his face streaked with grime and sweat, and the short beard that he wore still further transformed him. But it seemed that a look of recognition struggled with the terror in her eyes.

"You, Hugh—again!" she whispered.

A pang shot through him at the pitiful sound of her voice and at the words. Had her sufferings —

"Your spirit. It has—has been—with me often, Hugh." She went on dreamily.

"Marishka!" he whispered, crossing to her swiftly. "It is I—Hugh. It is no dream, no vision. Awake!"

She brushed an arm across her eyes like one arousing from a deep sleep, and then straightened suddenly and still uncertainly. But he caught her by the arm and brought her face close to his own so that she might see.

"I didn't die, dear. I am here in the flesh—to protect—to take you away from this place."

"Then I—I have not dreamed?"

"Not now?"

She clasped his wrists, his shoulders, his face with her hands to assure herself of the truth, and he took her in his arms and kissed her tenderly.

"Marishka!" he murmured again. And then she seemed to grow heavy in his arms, repeating his name breathlessly.

He was frightened for a moment for her head drooped away from him. She looked so piteously thin and white, and her hands were ice cold.

"Marishka!" he pleaded. "Marishka."

Her eyes opened again and her smile reassured him.

"Forgive me, Hugh. The joy is almost more than I can bear."

"You are safe now," he whispered. "Safe!" And he clasped her close, holding her there in a breathless moment oblivious to their danger.

Then while she still wondered, Renwick suddenly released her, moving quickly to the door by which he had entered, and after examining the mechanism carefully, quietly closed it. Then he turned to Marishka and questioned, while still seated upon the bed, she regarded him with bewildered eyes.

"What men are there at Schloss Szolnok, Marishka?" he asked quickly.

"Goritz—the chauffeur—and Ena's husband," she answered slowly, with an effort.

"Strohmeier?"

"Yes. The two men—at the farm—are not here—at night."

"Ah, I see——" And then, "That other door," he whispered tensely. "Is it locked?"

"Yes. I—I locked it tonight."

"You feared?"

"Hugh—until tonight——"

She stopped and shuddered, until he came to her and held her for a moment in his arms.

"He will not frighten you again," he muttered between set lips.

"Thank God," she whispered, now starting up as though with the first realization of their position.

"Have you any plan of what you will do?"

"Yes. Goritz is still below in the Hall. I have a plan, but I can do nothing until he goes to bed. Where is his room?"

"In the keep, along the passageway outside."

"I see," thoughtfully; and then, "Do you know where I can find a rope—several ropes, stout ones?"

"I do not know. There is a storeroom."

"Do you know where it is?"

"Yes, I think so."

"And you can find it—in the dark?"

"I think so."

"Is there any way of telling when Goritz goes to bed?"

"I hear his steps sometimes in the corridor outside."

He went noiselessly over to the door, listened a moment and then returned.

"No sounds. There isn't much sleep for anyone here tonight. The noise and the knowledge that Herr Windt is somewhere near——"

"Herr Windt!"

"He has followed us here. I think he found a trace of me at Bartfeld—the village beyond the mountain," he whispered.

"But we might go down through the castle and the courtyard—if we could pass the man at the drawbridge. Does it make a noise when it is lowered?"

"Oh, yes, Hugh—a dreadful noise."

"That's awkward." He crossed to the door into the wainscoting and listened there, then at the other door into the corridor, and returned to her.

"For the present, at least, we're safe."

He caught her in his arms and held her silently. Her arms clinging to him, she raised her head and found his lips.

"Belovèd," she whispered, "how did you——"

"I followed you here—on a mere fragment of a clew—but it was enough."

"But he shot you——"

"I was well cared for—in a hospital."

"You were wounded—dangerously?"

"Yes, but I don't die easily. I'm quite well again."

"Are you sure?"

He laughed. "Could I be here, else? Your cliffs are steep——"

"You climbed——?"

"Yes, up a fissure and through the ruins. I saw you—there in the window—from across the gorge. I heard you call, Marishka——"

"Call——?"

"That you were not afraid to die."

"But I *was* afraid, Hugh—it was so far—so dark below." She shuddered.

He pressed her closer to him. "Has he—has Goritz——"

"Until tonight, Hugh—he has not been unkind," she said slowly. "I was sick; he nursed me. But I've feared him—I fear him still——"

He felt her body trembling against his own, and reassured her gently, pausing a moment to listen tensely for sounds at either door. And then——

"Don't worry, dearest. He cannot harm you. I was not spared from death for nothing."

"I am not frightened now, but tonight has been horrible—the noise—my terror of I know not what. It has been like the end of the world to me."

"The beginning of our world, yours and mine," he said confidently.

She straightened, drew away from him and put a hand before her eyes again. "Even yet I cannot believe." She looked up at him with a wide gaze that still held in it something of the reflection of the long days of helplessness and misery—something more deeply spiritual than he had ever seen. "Hugh, dear," she went on softly, "you will think it strange, but I—I have heard you calling to me—speaking to me, like a living presence here in this room. Not as you are now, beloved, but paler.... I thought that you were dead.... And so when you came—at the door—I thought—I must have dreamed——"

"You were frightened, dear."

"Yes—terribly frightened, Hugh," she confessed, "by *him*—and by the firing. It seemed at times as though the castle were rocking under me. Listen!"

A terrific cannonading began again—louder, more continuous than any that had gone before.

"Yes—they are fighting for the end of the Pass," he muttered; "the Russians——"

"And will they——?"

"God knows. I pray——" he paused and scanned her face anxiously.

"What, Hugh?"

"That the Russians may win."

She started away from him, her eyes widely inquiring.

"Why?"

He smiled slowly.

"It's simple enough. Because if I am taken by the Austrians I shall be shot as a spy."

"You—a spy!"

"No, not really," he said soberly. "But I'm an Englishman, an enemy of Austria armed and in disguise. That is enough——"

"They—my people would shoot you!" She whispered, horror-stricken.

"I have no illusions about my fate—if taken——"

"But you have come here—to help me——"

"Unfortunately that does not change matters."

He put her gently aside and went for a while and listened at the doors, and then came back to her.

"Silence. But we will wait a little longer," he whispered.

Marishka caught him by the shoulders and looked up into his eyes.

"Hugh, what you have said frightens me. You mean that you—that we are enemies—you and I—because our nations are at war——!"

She drew away and held him at arm's length while she scrutinized him in the light of the guttering candle.

"You—my enemy, Hugh? I—yours?" A wan smile came proudly to her lips. "If I am your enemy, beloved, then love and loyalty have perished from the earth. And you, who have risen from the grave to come to me——!"

"Sh——, dear," he whispered. "You must know the truth. Whatever happens—here in the castle, the Austrian troops are all around us. Herr Windt, too. There is no escape for me unless the Russians come through. That is why I hope——"

Marishka put her arms around his shoulders quickly and kissed him on the lips.

"Then I, too, pray that they may come through," she whispered fervently.

"Marishka! I do not ask you to give up your allegiance——"

"No, Hugh. I give without asking. Belovèd, I want you to understand," she said solemnly. "Those

that are your enemies are my enemies. You would have died for me—and I, can I do less for you?"

"Sh—, Marishka," he murmured, "there is no death—"

"Death can be no worse for me than the horrible utter loneliness without you; but whatever comes, I am yours, Hugh—in life—in death. I owe no allegiance, no fealty, but to you, and I have kept the faith, Hugh, even here. I can have no country that you may not share, no compatriots that are not yours also. My kingdom is in your heart, beloved, there to live while you will have it so."

"Marishka!" He caught her in his arms and held her long in his embrace, and she clung close to him, her lips on his in this final test of their plighted troth. About them the thunder of battle, ever approaching nearer; the rumble and din of groaning wagons on the road below; the hoarse cries of men; the whine and sputter of laboring motors trying to pass in the narrow road—confusion, disorder, chaos; but now they heard nothing. For them the earth stood still. Nations might totter and crash, but their Empire was in each other....

Renwick raised his head at last. "Marishka," he whispered, "it is time that we made a move." He released her suddenly, listened at the doors, and then moved to the table beside her.

"First, we had better put out the light—then perhaps we can see if there is anyone outside."

Marishka snuffed the candle, and they went to a window overlooking the courtyard, drew the hangings and peered out. The din in the valley below them was increasing, a hurrying of wagons, horses and guns in the narrow road. Were more Austrian reinforcements coming up? It seemed so. From the mountains beyond, the rattle of small-arm fire had risen to a steady roar, but the detonations of heavy ordnance were less frequent.

"The Austrians—may be winning," he said calmly.

She pressed his hand. "I am sorry," she said bravely.

But there was a world of meaning for Renwick in the way she whispered it.

"Your people shall be my people," she murmured again. "And your God, my God."

He could only return her pressure in silence.

He would have been little happy if he could have said how much.

Together they peered through the slip of the silken hanging to the rampart below. Flashes of reflections from the end of the Pass played like sheet lightning, and in the fitful illuminations they could see the figure of the old man, Strohmeyer, reclining in the shadow by the postern gate. The drawbridge was still raised, and beyond it they could see in the flashes, the length of the causeway stretching out into the darkness of the mountainside beyond. Strohmeyer did not move. It almost seemed as though he were asleep.

"What makes you think that Herr Windt is here?" asked Marishka suddenly.

"I saw him with Spivak yonder," and he pointed to the north beyond the gorge.

Marishka was silent, her eyes eagerly searching the shadows. Her hand was trembling a little with the excitement of their situation, but her voice was firm as she whispered:

"Perhaps tonight my eyes are uncertain, Hugh. But do you not see something moving in the shadow of the wall?"

"Where?"

"Of the causeway—there, beyond the chain of the drawbridge—"

He peered eagerly in the direction she indicated.

"A shadow—?" he questioned. "I can't—no—yes—it moves—there!"

"Yes—another and still another. And they are carrying something."

Renwick watched again for a tense moment.

"Windt—and his men," he said with conviction. "They are going to try to span the abyss."

"Strohmeyer—"

Here at least was a community of interest with Goritz. "They will win their way across, unless he wakes," said Renwick tensely.

"What is it that they are carrying?"

"Timbers—see! There are at least four men to each. They are putting them in the shadow of the wall. Will the man never wake up?"

"What can we do?" she whispered desperately. "I could call out to him."

"No—" he said, "I don't want to arouse Goritz yet. Ah! They have slunk away again to get more timbers, I think."

"And if they should succeed—?"

"They must not. One man could hold the place indefinitely from the protection of the gate. If the man would only wake!"

But Strohmeier slept on.

"And Goritz?" she said anxiously. "Surely tonight he cannot be sleeping."

"Perhaps he is so sure of himself—yes—in the passage below I heard—there was to be a signal—one stroke of the postern bell—"

"But if the man sleeps—"

"If they come again—no matter what happens, we must warn him," he decided.

"Sh—"

Renwick felt his arm seized suddenly by Marishka's icy fingers and turned, following her wild gaze into the room behind them listening. The anxieties of the night had made Marishka's senses keen. "The door!" she whispered. "The secret door by which you came!"

Renwick listened. In a brief lull in the commotion outside, he heard a slight sound, near and startlingly distinct like that of a rat in a partition. Then in the blackness of the room, a gray streak appeared, slowly widening. The door into the secret passage had opened, and the starlight from the loophole beyond now showed a dusky silhouette. Renwick felt Marishka's arm clutch his in terror, as Goritz noiselessly stepped forward into the room. Renwick had instinctively drawn the hanging behind him, and he and Marishka were in deep shadow while every move that Goritz made was clearly defined. First he took a pace toward the bed, then paused and turning struck a match and searched for the candle.

He was in shirt sleeves. Renwick had drawn his automatic and could have shot him easily. But murder, in cold blood—even when his life and Marishka's depended upon it! Renwick could not. He saw Goritz turn from the lighted candle and stare toward the empty bed and then quickly search the shadows of the room. It was a long moment before he saw the blaze of the candle beside him reflected in Renwick's eyes which peered down the barrel of his automatic.

"What nonsense is this—Marishka—?" he began.

But Renwick's voice cut the darkness like a steel blade.

"Don't move—Goritz. Hands up—high!"

"Who—?"

"Hands up, I say—" And as he slowly obeyed, "Now turn toward the bed—"

Goritz was now staring at Renwick as though he had seen a ghost, but he knew better than to take his hands down.

"You—" he muttered. "You're—"

"I'm Renwick," said the Englishman crisply. "Now do as I tell you or—"

He paused uncertainly, for at that moment, behind him through the window came the deep boom of a bell.

"The drawbridge!" cried Marishka.

"Ah!" came from Goritz's throat as with an incredibly swift movement he smothered the candle. Renwick fired twice and then threw Marishka to one side, but there was a crash of the door in the wainscoting, and then silence.

"He has gone!" cried Marishka somewhere in the darkness.

"Wait!" shouted Renwick. Some instinct warned him of the trick, and he sprang aside just as Goritz darted at the spot where he had been. He felt the rush of the man's body and turned, but did not dare to fire, for fear of hitting Marishka, so he ran forward toward the window and presently they met, body to body, clutching in primitive combat. The man's hand went at his throat, but he wrenched it away again—again. His arms went around the waist of his adversary low down, in the attempt to raise him and bear him to the ground. Goritz was now striking furiously at his head, and by this token Renwick knew that the man was unarmed. Renwick's furious rush brought them with a thud against the wall, where they fell, oversetting a table to the floor. Amid the broken furniture they struggled, in the pitch blackness, with their bare hands, for Renwick's weapon had been knocked from his fingers. In the rebound from the wall Renwick fell beneath, Goritz with one hand upon his throat with a grip which was slowly tightening, but Renwick managed to tear it away and release himself, striking furiously at the man's face. Goritz was young and strong, and Renwick's struggle up the cliff had taken away some of his staying power, but he fought on blindly in the darkness; grimly, like the bulldog that holds and ever tightens his jaws, no matter what the punishment he suffers. The bulldog against the wolf. Goritz was agile, and his arms were strong and wiry. He struck and tore, but Renwick's arms were cracking his ribs, squeezing the breath from his body. He struggled with an effort to one knee, and in the change of position managed to get the fingers of one hand around Renwick's throat

again. They rolled over and over upon the floor, first one uppermost and then the other, but the fingers on the Englishman's throat were strong. Fires flashed before Renwick's eyes and the blood seemed to be bursting from his temples.

His grip was relaxing.... He felt his strength going. Then with his remaining consciousness he was aware of a warm moisture upon one of his wrists. Blood! Goritz had been struck by one of his bullets. With a desperate effort, he let go one arm and struck. The man's grip relaxed and he tore it away, gasping greedily for breath.

Marishka in terror had at first slunk into a corner, listening to the fearful sounds of the combat—following it with her ears from one part of the room to another. What must she do? Gathering courage, she passed the foot of the bed, and grasping for the table found the match box and managed to light the candle.

They were upon the floor near one of the windows over the valley, locked in a deadly grip, breathing in terrible gasps. She must do something to help—something—for as the glow fell upon them they seemed to struggle upward against the wall by the window, upon the sill. She could not make out which was which—but instinctively she seemed to realize their deadly purpose—death for one or both on the rocks below! The hanging at the window came crashing down and enveloped them, but they did not know. They were drunk with the lust of killing—mad!

Out of the confusion she saw Goritz rise smiling, straining with his arms, hauling Renwick over the sill. Death! Hers, too, then! With a cry of despair she reached them, clinging with her arms around Renwick's waist.

Goritz opened his mouth to speak, but no sound came forth. He might have struck her down but he did not. Instead he rose with one foot upon the sill in one supreme effort to throw Renwick over, but the Englishman, already half out of the window, got his right arm loose, and swinging with all the strength left to him, launched a terrible blow at his adversary. It struck him on the point of the chin. Goritz staggered, lost his balance, toppled for a moment in the air, his grip on the Englishman's collar, which tore loose as he fell—out—into the black abyss....

Renwick sprawled half across the wide sill, but Marishka clung desperately, dragging him in—to safety. He toppled in upon the floor and lay motionless while Marishka hovered over him.

"Hugh—!" she cried. "Hugh!"

Renwick struggled up slowly, trying to speak, but his chest heaved convulsively, and he could only gasp meaninglessly.

"All—right," he managed to utter after a moment.

She got water and he drank of it.

"You're hurt—you're covered with blood."

"No, no——" he gasped, "winded."

"But the blood!"

"His. I had shot him—through the body."

Marishka peered toward the window and shuddered.

"His face—Hugh—I can't forget."

Renwick struggled painfully to his feet.

"Nor I. He almost did for me. If it hadn't been for you—"

"You'd have followed him, Hugh!" And then almost inaudibly, "Holy Virgin!" she whispered.

Renwick moved his limbs to be sure that they were sound.

"Close thing, that," he muttered. "Beastly close."

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## CHAPTER XXVII

### BESIEGED

So desperate had been the struggle that they had forgotten the peril of the drawbridge. Shots had already been fired in the courtyard but they had not heard them. Now, as an awed silence fell upon them, at the passing of Goritz and at their relief from immediate danger, they were suddenly aware of the sounds of commotion outside near at hand, the sharp crack of small arms, the cries of men and the booming of the postern bell—calling Goritz—who would never come!

Renwick staggered to the window over the courtyard, Marishka's hand in his, and peered out. Somewhere a great fire was burning, for overhead the sky was copper-colored with its reflections, and below they saw dimly two figures crouching in the shadow of the postern gate. As

they looked, three men emerged from the wall of the causeway, carrying a timber with which they approached the abyss, but as they neared the edge a flash darted from the postern and the foremost man fell. The others, with a rush, tried to cast an end of the heavy plank across the intervening space, but it fell short and went crashing down into the void below.

"They may be able to hold out for a time," whispered Renwick, "long enough to let us get away—come, Marishka—the ropes!"

He took the candle, and she opened the door into the corridor which led to the keep. Outside they met the old woman Ena, who was crouched upon the floor by a window, wringing her hands, half dead with fear. But she started up at the sight of Renwick, who led the way, and then looked in astonishment at Marishka.

"Who——?" she gasped, and paused.

"A friend, Ena," said Marishka. "Do not fear."

But she still regarded Renwick in terror, for his appearance, disheveled, torn and bloody, was not one to inspire confidence.

"The Herr Hauptmann——!"

"He is dead," said Marishka quietly.

"Dead! *Herr Gott!*" And she shrank back into her corner, her head in her hands.

But there was no time to delay. Renwick hurried Marishka down the stone stairway to the Hall, whence they descended to a lower floor to the storeroom.

It was filled with a conglomeration of dusty odds and ends, boxes, barrels, bottles innumerable, the relics of the hospitality of Baron Neudeck, but at first they could see no sign of what they were seeking. Above them shots sounded intermittently, and the roar of the distant battle never ceased. Renwick searched feverishly while Marishka held the candle above his head, overturning the dusty objects, and at last with a cry of triumph found what they sought, a coil of heavy rope in a far corner. He dragged it forth and examined it carefully. It was heavy and long. Was it long enough? There was no way of telling except by measuring in yard lengths, and no time to risk that.

There had been a long interval of silence on the rampart above. Had Windt succeeded in winning his way across?

He raised the coil of rope from his shoulder with an effort and took the candle from Marishka's hand, moving toward an arch to their left, seeking a direct way to the boarded door into the crypt. It should be in this direction—yes, the wine cellar—here it was—the boarded partition. Marishka took the candle from his hand again while he examined the fastenings—nails somewhat rusted, which would not resist leverage. He found a piece of plank which he inserted in the edge of the door and managed to pry it open a little, and then bracing a foot against the stone wall, made an opening wide enough to admit them.

So far, so well. They were within the crypt, but while Marishka waited, Renwick pulled the partition back into place to hide their mode of retreat if the gate above were taken. Then moving rapidly along the tunnel they reached the steps which led to the watchtower, where Renwick snuffed the candle; and they climbed, emerging at last among the ruins with their precious rope. If they could get down they would crawl through the bushes and undergrowth, making their way before daylight to the house of the peasant who had sheltered him last night. Another sum of money would secure their immunity—at least for the present.

To the northward, the sky was vividly aglow with the reflection of the flames of a burning house—fired perhaps by the shells of the Russians, which still seemed to be bursting not far away. And now their acrid fumes were poisoning the clean night-wind from the north. Below them in the valley they still heard the sounds of passing transport, and the hoarse calls of men. The battle for the head of the Pass was desperate—but with such reënforcements, the Austrians would hold it. The crackle of small arms after a slight lull rose in intensity to a continuous roar. And while Renwick was making the end of his rope fast around a huge granite block, there was a tremendous explosion which seemed to tear the bloody sky to tatters.

"A magazine or a mine," muttered Renwick.

She smiled at him bravely, and resumed her watch of the windows of the castle. Here in the open, hidden from the courtyard beyond the bulk of the buildings, they could hear nothing of what was passing at the drawbridge gate. The silence seemed ominous. Had Windt's men succeeded in bridging the gap? As yet there were no signs of light in the castle windows, except the lurid reflections of the northern sky. But in any event there was no time to spare. Renwick tied a large knot and a loop in the end of the rope and then carefully lowered it over the northern wall, measuring its length by his arms, as it went over. Fifty yards, sixty, seventy, eighty—when it stretched taut. Eighty yards! Sick with anxiety, he crawled upon his stomach to the edge of the precipice and peered over into the abyss.

The rope swung like a giant pendulum from side to side. By the luminous heavens he could just see the loop at its end—at least seventy feet from the counterscarp. Seventy feet—or fifty or even twenty-five—for Marishka sure death among the welter of jagged rocks below!

Slowly he rose and faced her. She read the truth in his dejection.

"The rope is too short," he muttered.

She caught him by the hand.

"I can climb down by——"

"No, no," he said in sudden horror, "it is not to be thought of. You, at least, are safe."

"But you——?"

"Perhaps something may happen. We can at least hide in the wall. They may not find us. Come."

He descended into the hole among the broken masonry and lowered Marishka gently beside him, and there for a moment upon the stairs he held her in his arms while they listened again for noise of pursuit along the dark passage. Silence.

She drew his head down until their lips met.

"Your fate, Hugh—whatever it is—shall be mine."

He smiled in the darkness. A love like this was worth fighting for. "We shall win—somehow," he whispered, "we must!"

Together slowly they retraced their steps to the crypt, where they lighted the candle and listened again, and now, faintly above, they heard the sound of a shot.

"They have not won through yet, Marishka," he said. "My cause is Goritz's now. We must hold the gate."

"I am not afraid," she said. "We can still fight."

He looked at her pale face in admiration, for the fire of resolution glowed in her eyes.

"Yes," he muttered grimly, "we can still fight." And then, "Are there any weapons here?"

"In the armory—come!" And she led the way up the stair. But as they searched the Hall, Ena hobbled down the stone stairway from above, shrieking, and threw herself at their feet. They could not make out what she said, but Renwick rushed to the door and peered out toward the postern. Upon the flagging, a figure lay motionless, and the other man was nowhere to be seen. But worse than that, as though aware of their advantage, in the causeway beyond, several men were advancing, bearing another timber. Renwick's eye appraised the situation hurriedly and he planned quickly, for delay would be fatal. As he reloaded the clip of his automatic he ordered quickly.

"Marishka, I have a plan. There are two joists at the foot of the stair—not very heavy. You and Ena must bring them up here. Then get what loaded weapons you can. Bring them here, too. Lose no time. I will return."

And leaving her, he dashed out of the door, and running to the right gained the protection of the rampart, behind which he crawled toward the gate. Where was the other man, the chauffeur, Karl?

In a moment he learned. For as Renwick approached, the men upon the other side succeeded in spanning the abyss, and one of them rushed over. When the man was halfway across, a shot rang out from the gate and the man on the board swayed and fell. Another followed and another shot rang out, but the man still came on.

Renwick, running forward, shouted a word of encouragement. He saw the man Karl rise from his concealment and meet the fellow just as he reached the gate, striking him a blow which made him lose his balance and fall. Then he swung the end of the timber free and it fell into the gorge as he sprang back to safety, but before he reached the protection of the gate, several flashes darted from the causeway and the chauffeur staggered and dropped forward upon his face just as Renwick reached him.

"Your orders, Herr Hauptmann," he gasped. "But they're too many—my cartridges—are gone——" He turned with a groan, and for the first time saw Renwick's face. "You——" he muttered. "You're not——?"

"It doesn't matter who I am. Are you badly hurt?"

"*Donnerweiter!* Yes—through the breast—I'm done for."

But Renwick stepped past him and found a loophole through which he could watch what was passing upon the other side of the abyss.

The last disaster had robbed the besiegers of some of their enthusiasm, for they had withdrawn to the other end of the causeway where they were holding council. Searching the shadows of the wall for signs of any others concealed near at hand, Renwick took the chance of leaving the gate unguarded, and in the shadow of the wall rushed back to the Hall. There he found Marishka with the two joists, waiting for him.

"They've withdrawn," he said, "but they'll be coming on again in a moment. We are alone, dear, to

defend the gate. Can you help?"

She was deathly pale, but she smiled at him bravely. He picked up the two joists and carried them outside while she followed him, listening.

"You on one side of the gate, I on the other. If they succeed in throwing a timber across, we must push it off. In this way neither of us need expose ourselves."

"I understand—and there are rifles and shotguns."

"Good! Can you load them?"

"Strohmeyer loaded them while Karl kept the gate, but Ena was afraid to take them out."

"Then bring them. You're quite safe if you keep below the wall of the rampart. Now go, dear—and God bless you!"

He reached the gate before Windt's men returned to the attack, and put one of his new weapons of defense upon each side of it. But he feared to leave the gate again and crouched, waiting. Below in the valley the commotion had increased and the sounds of firing went on unceasingly. It seemed indeed, as Marishka had said, that the end of the world had come. Beside him, the man Karl was breathing with difficulty. From his post at the loophole, Renwick heard him mutter, and as the road was still clear, he listened.

"You're Renwick—the Englishman?" he whispered hoarsely.

"I am."

"And Herr Hauptmann Goritz?"

"He is dead," replied Renwick.

"*Ach—danke*," said the man. "It is well then—you too—soon—"

He nodded forward, toppled sideways and lay still.

The situation was desperate, and yet as Renwick thought calmly, he gained courage. With Marishka upon one side and him on the other armed with the joists, it would be difficult for the attackers to get a lodgment for their bridges, for the stone outside the gate was quite smooth, and little effort would be required to push their timbers down. Both Strohmeyer and Karl had lost their lives by exposing themselves unnecessarily. But with the two joists, both sides of the gate could be commanded. In a moment, creeping under the protection of the wall, Marishka joined him, bringing two rifles.

"Are they coming?" she asked.

"Not yet. But they will soon."

He explained his plan more fully, then bade her go back for another rifle, ammunition; and return in the protection of the opposite wall to the post opposite.

"They can do nothing unless they bring artillery," he said confidently. "Don't expose yourself or look out, but if a plank comes over, push it down."

She smiled and slipped away into the darkness, and Renwick returned to his loophole. The sky above was getting lighter, and a glance up the mountain side to his left showed it already in clear profile against the lightening east, which announced the coming of the dawn. And with the dawn—light. Was this what the attackers were waiting for?

He saw the gray figure of Marishka creep along the opposite wall, and in a moment she was there, not ten feet away at her post, crouched in safety and waiting.

"On no account look through the loophole," he ordered. "As the light grows, there will be men to shoot at them. Keep under cover. Understand?"

She only laughed hysterically.

In a moment, as the light grew, he warned her that they were coming again.

"Keep in," he cried. "Don't try to look at the end of the—"

The warning came just in time, for a fusillade of bullets swept the gate and they heard the sounds of many men's voices as they came on the run. Another fusillade which sent dust and fragments of stone flying all about them! Then a timber crashed across, but before it settled into place the two joists had pushed it off the smooth landing. At the same time another volley was fired which would have surely found a mark if Renwick had exposed himself, but Marishka matched her action to Renwick's, crouching low, safe from observation, pole in hand, eagerly watching her half of the gate.

Another timber—which fell harmlessly and crashed down into the gorge, and another volley—alike harmless to the defenders. High hopes rose in Renwick. They could do nothing. Opposite him Marishka, forgetting all her fears, had caught the contagion of successful resistance and crouched, her jaws set, eyes sparkling, her slender hands grasping the rough timber, undaunted and resolute.

"Keep under cover——" he shouted, as another timber came across.

This one was better cast and lodged squarely upon the stone lintel. They both shoved at its end, but a man's weight already upon it made their task difficult.

"It is on my side. Push, Marishka!"

He aimed his automatic past the edge of the gatepost and shot the man—an Austrian soldier—just as he sprang for the landing. He fell upon the stone, hung to the timber a moment, and fell. Renwick sprang further out and emptied his clip at the next man, who gave a cry and dropped. Renwick felt a stinging blow on his left arm, but before another man began to cross Marishka managed to shove the timber clear and it fell into the abyss below.

They were safe for the moment. He looked at Marishka in the gathering light. She was pale as death, but she did not show fear.

"All right?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes—yes," she gasped, "and you?"

"Never better."

His arm burned like a live coal, but the madness of battle was in his blood and he did not care—so long as Marishka did not know of his injury. The firing had ceased for the moment, as he crawled up and peered through the loophole.

"We've beaten them, Marishka," he cried triumphantly. "They've gone back—I see no timbers. They're doing something. I can see quite plainly now—fastening a handkerchief to the muzzle of a rifle." And as she rose to look, "Don't expose yourself. It may be a trick. For God's sake keep down."

He picked up the magazine rifle beside him and thrust it through the loophole, covering the two men who were advancing to the brink of the abyss. In the pale light he marked the figure of Windt quite clearly. The other man wore the uniform of an officer of Austrian infantry. And now he heard the voice of the officer raised in parley.

"Schloss Szolnok—a truce!"

For reply Renwick thrust the muzzle of his rifle further through the loophole.

"In the name of the Emperor of Austria, I command you to deliver Herr Hauptmann Leo Goritz."

Renwick laughed madly.

"I regret that that is impossible."

"I beg that you will listen to reason. Austrian troops are all about you. You cannot resist by daylight. If you will deliver the person of Herr Hauptmann Goritz and Countess Strahni, we will leave you in peace."

Renwick paused. Far below in the valley to his right, a new sound broke the stillness of the early morning—rifle-fire close at hand, rapid volleys, and then a scattering of shots which echoed with a new significance up the mountain side. He peered through one of the crenelations of the rampart beside him and could just see through the morning mists the moving mass of rushing men,—horses—guns in mad confusion.

"Well, what is your reply?" came the voice of the Austrian officer.

Renwick laughed again.

"Why should you leave us in peace if you can take the drawbridge?" he shouted.

"Hauptmann Goritz is wanted on the charge of murder. I give you this chance. Will you take it?"

"I regret that it is impossible," replied Renwick.

"Why?"

"Because Herr Hauptmann Goritz is dead."

"Dead? What assurances can I have that this is the truth?"

"You have only to look at the foot of the cliff below."

The two men consulted for a moment and then Herr Windt's voice was heard. "Is Countess Strahni there?"

"Yes—and quite safe."

"And who are you?"

"My name is Hugh Renwick, Herr Windt——"

"Renwick—the Englishman——" he heard him gasp.

"Precisely. And if you're going to take this gate, you'd better be in a hurry about it—for the

Russians are approaching."

"Then you refuse?"

"Positively."

The Austrian officer saluted, and the two men marched up the causeway. Marishka, on the other side of the gate, had started up and was regarding him anxiously.

"What you say, Hugh—it can't be that——"

"It's true, dear," he almost shouted. "The Russians. They're coming below there in the valley. I have just seen. The Austrians are in full retreat. The army has been retreating all night, and we thought there were reinforcements. If we can hold out a short while longer, we will be safe. Are you frightened?"

"No. Will they come again, you think?"

"Yes. They'll hardly give up so easily. But keep down, Marishka, further—in the corner. You can see as well. Ah! I wasn't mistaken. Here they come!"

Into the squad of Austrian soldiers advancing Renwick emptied the magazine of his repeating rifle, and took up the other. Two men fell and the remainder paused, only to be brought on by the Austrian officer who led them, sword in hand. Renwick could have shot him easily, but he held his fire and as the mass of men came on he saw them raise their rifles to their shoulders.

"Keep down!" he shouted to Marishka, "they're going to——"

Dust and mortar flew from the ancient gate and behind in the castle, windows crashed.

"You are safe?" he shouted.

"Yes," her voice replied.

"Now watch the gateway."

A plank came over, but profiting by their earlier experience, they shoved it off before it came to rest. Another, a longer one, and another, both of which found lodgment squarely between the gate posts. Renwick sprang to the loophole; but the volley that followed splattered harmlessly around him.

He was a good shot with a rifle, and aimed deliberately, dropping the first man that put his foot on the hazardous bridge. Gasping with her exertions Marishka pushed the shorter timber over, but the longer one jammed hopelessly against the gate post.

"Hugh," she cried, "we are lost."

But a strange thing happened then. For as the second man approached the bridge and had even put one foot upon it, a shrill call rang out at the other end of the causeway.

"The retreat!" the officer shouted. "To the rear——"

The look of relief upon the face of the brave fellow who was venturing death upon the precarious timber was reflected in Renwick's own heart, for he spared the man who, with a startled glance over his shoulder, presently caught up with the rapidly vanishing Windt. Renwick rushed out and lifting the dangerous timber hurled it down into the gorge.

Then he caught Marishka by the waist and lifted her.

"We're safe, dear—they've gone——" he cried.

She turned one look up at him and then, slowly closing her eyes, sank back helpless in his arms.

"Marishka! It has been too much——"

The blood flowed from a slight cut upon her cheek where she had been struck by a piece of flying stone, but he saw that it was not deep. He laid her gently upon the flagging, and ran to the Hall for water. There he found Ena, crouched in a corner, more dead than alive. But he commanded her to come and bring water and brandy, and she obeyed.

Marishka had only fainted and the brandy soon restored her.

"They've gone?" she asked of him.

"Yes, dear. We're quite safe. Listen. The Russians are driving them down the valley."

He washed the wound in her cheek tenderly.

"It will not scar you, Marishka," he smiled. "But if it does—an honorable scar such as no woman of Austria wears."

She touched it with her fingers and smiled.

"I did not even know——"

And then she saw the blood at his shoulder.

"You're hurt?"

"Only a scratch. It's nothing."

But weak as she was she tore away the sleeve of his shirt, and made him bathe and bind it with linen from her skirt.

"Will the Russians come here, you think?" she asked.

He smiled.

"If they don't come to us," he said soberly, "we will go to them."

She smiled.

"And your people shall be my people ... " she murmured softly.

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Galenski, Colonel of Russian cavalry, sat on his horse on a slight eminence beside the road which descended from Dukla Pass into the valley beyond, watching through a pair of field glasses the ramparts of an ancient castle perched upon a crag.

Beside him his regiment streamed down the hill at a hand gallop, its gray coats flapping, as it spread out fanwise in the meadow below, its lances lightly poised in pursuit of the fleeing Austrians. As a company captain passed he called out a name, and the officer, with a word to his lieutenant, galloped up and saluted.

"Is not that Schloss Szolnok, Captain Kotchukoff?"

"Yes, sir. You remember—the affair of Baron Neudeck."

"Of course. I have been watching it, as we came down the road. Fighting has been going on there for an hour or more."

"Fighting?"

"Yes. I don't understand. The Austrians were attacking it. I am certain for I clearly made out the kepi of the infantry."

"That is strange."

"Is it possible that some of our advance posts could have occupied it?"

"I should say that that was impossible."

"We must investigate. Detach your company from the command and bring your men up the road yonder. I will join you."

Captain Kotchukoff saluted, wheeled his horse and galloped at full speed down the road into the meadow, while Colonel Galenski trotted slowly down the hill until he found a ford in the stream, and then slowly rode up the hill beyond.

"It is very strange," he muttered.

As he reached the road above, the company of Captain Kotchukoff came riding up, but he gave the command to walk their horses, and slowly, Colonel and Captain riding in front, they approached the end of the long causeway which led to the castle. That he had not been mistaken in his observations was clearly to be seen, for several men lay either dead or severely wounded in the middle of the walled road. As they neared the drawbridge three more prostrate figures were seen, one of them hanging almost on the lip of the abyss.

The drawbridge was raised and beyond the gate another form lay beyond the threshold. But as yet he saw no sign of life. Colonel Galenski reined in his horse sharply, raised his hand, and behind him his captain shouted the loud order to halt.

At the sound a man suddenly appeared in the gate, and beside him a very beautiful young woman. Colonel Galenski was a good officer, but the fact, though of no military importance, was quite clearly to be noted—a very beautiful woman. The man beside the girl was tall, and bore himself well. But he was covered with grime and dust and his clothing was torn and streaked with blood. One sleeve of his shirt was missing, and his bare arm was bandaged just below the arm-pit with a bloodstained cloth. And as he looked, the man smiled and saluted.

Colonel Galenski returned the salute, and spoke in German.

"You will lower the drawbridge if you please. I wish to enter."

The man disappeared for a moment, the girl beside him, and presently, with a loud clatter of rusty chains which made necessary some excellent feats of horsemanship by the men of the company behind him, the drawbridge crashed down, and Colonel Galenski rode forward through the gate, followed by the company of horsemen, who wheeled by fours into line and halted in the courtyard.

Colonel Galenski dismounted, neglecting no detail of the signs of combat, the bullet-scarred

flagging, the broken rock, the timbers, the two figures lying in the shadow of the wall of the gate.

"From below, with my glasses, I saw the Austrians attacking your drawbridge," he said. "There were many of them along the road. Your men have well defended the position. Where are they?"

The tall man smiled and took the beautiful young woman by the hand.

"I beg to present you to my garrison," he said with a laugh. "Countess Marishka Strahni—and—er —?"

"Colonel Galenski of the Fifth Regiment—horse," said the Colonel with a bow. "And you, sir—who are you?"

The tall man extended a grimy hand to the immaculate Russian.

"I will tell you that, sir, if"—and he laughed—"if you'll give me a cigarette."

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## IN REGARD TO THE EVIDENCE IN THE CASE

If the reader of this book is not inclined to accept the *prima-facie* evidence as presented in the newspapers from official sources with regard to the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand and his wife, the Duchess of Hohenberg, he is referred by the publishers to the very interesting article by Mr. Henry Wickham Steed called "The Pact of Konopisht," printed in the *Nineteenth Century* for February, 1916. Mr. Steed, as is well known, was for twenty years the correspondent in Vienna of the *London Times*, and is also the author of the latest and presumably the most authoritative work in English on the Austro-Hungarian government and the House of Habsburg.

The facts presented in that article beginning with the open breach between Franz Joseph and the Archduke on his marriage to Sophie Chotek; the *entente* between Kaiser and Archduke at Eckartzau and Potsdam; the seizure of the Archduke's papers by the Austrian government after the assassination; the instructions to the Sarajevo police from the military authorities of Austria-Hungary to make no special arrangements for the Archduke's protection; the fact that no evidence has ever been adduced proving the complicity of the Serbian government; the funeral of the Archduke and Duchess, at which no wreaths were sent by Emperor Franz Joseph, by the Archduke's sister, or any member of the Austro-Hungarian Imperial Family; the inadequacy of the formal arrangements for burial and the obvious intention of the Court authorities to pay as little honor as possible to the dead; the exclamation of the Kaiser, during Kiel week when the news of the assassination was brought to him, "Now I must begin all over again":—these facts must be considered as circumstantial evidence of the most positive sort that the relations between Archduke and Kaiser had been looked on with disfavor and suspicion by the Imperial Family of Austria. What actually happened at Konopisht of course will never be known, but there is strong presumptive evidence that a pact of the character suggested in this story was made in the rose garden of the castle and that Von Tirpitz was a witness to it.

Whatever the police records show with regard to Cabrinovitz and Prinzep, the former, who threw the bomb, the latter who did the killing, no successful effort has been made to show that they were employed by the Serbian government, nor is it probable that Serbia would have promoted a plot which would give Austria Hungary a pretext for assailing her, a pretext that Austria Hungary had already sought. The story of the beginnings of the Great War has shown how she found it.

In the light of the ascertained facts concerning the production of anti-Serbian forgeries employed by Austria during the annexation crises of 1908-9, and exposed during the Friedjung trial of December, 1909, it certainly would not be beyond the power of Austro-Hungarian Secret Service agents to cook up a plot at Belgrade or Sarajevo, were it considered desirable, for reasons of Imperial policy, either to "remove" obnoxious personages or to provide a pretext for war.

The dream of an empire from Hamburg to Saloniki is as yet a dream, but that it was dreamed in Potsdam no one doubts.

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## Books by George Gibbs

The Secret Witness  
Paradise Garden  
The Yellow Dove  
The Flaming Sword  
Madcap  
The Silent Battle  
The Forbidden Way  
The Bolted Door  
Tony's Wife

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