The CZAR'S SPY

The Mystery of a Silent Love

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ILLUSTRATIONS By C·D·RHODES

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CHAPTER XVII—Continued.

"In sheer desperation I went to the Ministry of the interior and secured an interview with the baron, who, when I told him of the disaster, appeared greatly concerned, and went at once to the police department to make to me with the news that the charge against my mother had been proved by a statement of the woman Shibyoff herself, and that she had already started on her long journey to Siberia—she had been exiled to one of those dreaded Arctic settlements beyond Yakutsk, a place where the most eternal winter, and where the conditions of life are such that half the convicts are insane. The baron, however, declared at the time, as my father's friend, it was his duty to act as great as he could, and that as my father had been English I ought to be put in an English school. Therefore, with his self-assumed title of uncle, he took me to Chichester. For years I remained there, never knowing that he was suddenly and farthed me away, taking me over to Helsingfors—for the czar had now appointed his governor-general to Finland. There, for the first time, he introduced me to his son Michael, a pimply-faced lieutenant of cavalry, and said in a most decisive manner that I must marry him. I naturally refused to marry a man of whom I knew so little, whereupon, finding me obdurate, he quietly entered his tactics and became kindness itself, saying that as I was young he would allow me a year in which to make up my mind.

"A week later, while living in the palace at Helsingfors, I overheard a conversation between my governess general and his son, which revealed to me a staggering truth that I had never suspected. It was Oberg himself who had denounced my mother to the minister of the interior, and had made those cruel, baseless charges against her! Then I discerned the reason. She had spoken of my father, as well as that of my father, came to me. The reason they were anxious for Michael to marry me was in order to obtain control of my money, and then, after the necessary legal formalities, I should, on a trumped-up charge of conspiracy, share the same fate as my mother had done."

"The internal scoundrel!" I declared, when I read her words while from Jack, who had been looking over my shoulder, escaped a fierce and forcible use of language.

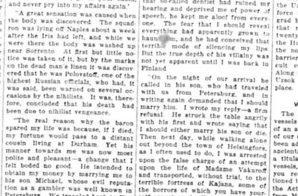
"The baron took me with him to Petersburg where he went on official business, and we remained there only a month," the narrative went on. "While there I received a secret message from 'The Red Prince', the unseen and unknown power of nihilism, who has for so many years baffled the police. I went to meet him, and he revealed to me how Oberg had contrived to have my mother banished upon a false charge. He warned me against the man who had pretended to be my father's friend, and also told me that he had known my father intimately, and that I got into quite a further difficulty I was to communicate with him if ever I should need me. Oberg took me back to Helsingfors a few months later and in another we went to England. He was a marvellously clever diplomatist. His tactics he could change at will. When I was at school he was rough and brutal in his manner towards me, as he was just, but he now seemed to be endeavouring to make my life endurable by treating me with kindly regard and pleasant affability.

"In London, at Claridge's, we met my old schoolfriend, Marcel and her father—a friend of Oberg's—and in response to their invitation went for a cruise on their yacht, the Iris, from Southampton. Our party was a very pleasant one, and included Woodford and Chater, while our cruise across the Bay of Biscay and along the Portuguese coast proved most delightful. One night, while we were lying off Lisbon, Woodroffe and Chater, together with Olinto, went ashore and when they returned in the early hours of the morning they awoke me by crossing the deck above my head. Then I heard someone descend my cabin door working as though with a screw-driver, unscrewing a screw from the woodwork. This screwed up interest, and next day I made a minute examination of the panelling, where, in one part, I found two small brass screws that had evidently been recently removed. Therefore I succeeded in getting hold of a screwdriver from the engineer's shop, and next night, when everyone was asleep, I crept out and unscrewed the panel, when to my surprise I saw that the secret cavity behind was filled with beautiful jewelry, diamond collars, tiaras, necklaces, fine pearls, emeralds and turquoises, all known to Indemnitas.

"I replaced the panel and kept carefull watch. At Marseilles, where we called, more jewelry and a heavy bag full of plate was brought aboard and secreted behind another panel. Then I knew that the men were thieves.

"Until one hot summer's night we were lying off Naples, and as it was a grand festa ashore and there was to be a gala performance at the theatre, Lethbourt took a box and the whole party were invited ashore. The crew were also given shore-leave for the evening, but as I was tired I was upset me I declined to accompany the theatre party and remained on board with one sailor named Wilson to conduct the yacht. We had anchored about half a mile from the shore, and about 10 in the evening the baron had gone ashore to meet a Prussian Russian and had not returned.

"About ten o'clock I went below to try and sleep, but I had a slight attack of fever, and was sitting on the bed when I heard a splash. Wilson, who was on deck, called out to me that there was a boat alongside, he said. Girl! Recollect that night's work secret. If not, you shall



When Everyone Was Asleep I Crept Out and Unscrewed the Panel.

do a death more painful than that I have died once, and I know the agonies of the torturers of the Spanish Inquisition. Well, I will go on—or death! Now, go to your cabin, and never put yourself in my affairs again."

"A great sensation was caused when the yacht was discovered. The second-mate was lying on Marcel's bed, and after the Iris had left, and while we were at breakfast, he crept up on deck and jumped into the sea. He was picked up on the dead man's linen it was discovered that he was Stepanoff, one of the highest Russian officials, who had, it was said, been sent down to inquire into rumors by the nihilists. It was thought that he had been done to nihilist vengeance.

"The real reason why the baron spared me was because, if I died, my fortune would pass to a distant relative, Mr. Hayward Durham. Yet his manner towards me was now most polite and kindness to a degree that I felt bodeed no good. He intended to obtain by marriage with Michael, or his son Michael, whose evil reputation was well known in Petersburg. We traveled back to Finland in the autumn, and in the winter he took me to stay with his sister in Nice. Yet almost daily he referred to the death at Naples, and threatened me with death if ever I uttered a single word, or even hinted to me, I had ever seen the man who was his friend and his victim."

"Last June," commenced another paragraph, "we were in Helsingfors, when one day the baron called me suddenly and told me to prepare for a journey. We were to cross to Stockholm and thence to Hill where the Iris was awaiting us. Mr. Lathbourt and Marcel had sailed for a summer cruise to the Greek islands. We boarded the yacht much against my will, yet I was powerless, and dare not disobey. Now that I had already established concerning my father's death, I feared, and, it seems, were taken merely in order to blind the shore-guards and customs officials at to the real reason, for I had left Wilson behind, and I was left out of the channel, I was conducted and hurried below, until her exterior presented quite a different appearance from the Iris.

"The port of Leghorn was our first place of call, and for some reason, certain purposely upon a sandbank and were towed off by Italian torpedo boats. Next evening we came to Naples and closed. Mortel and myself having arrived there, not to show our relives. We, however, watched you, and I saw you come up my gangway, which I had that day torn up. Then we proceeded at once to Hill and left Wood-roffe, Chater and Mackintosh went ashore, and we lay there for several hours in the middle of the night. Just before they returned the baron rapped at the door of my cabin saying that he was ready to retire, and telling me to dress and accompany him. He would not allow me the luxury of a maid. Fearing, I suppose, that I might be lours too much. In obedience I rose and dressed, and when I went forth he told me to get my traveling cloak and something warm, as I was to be compelled to go north, as to continue office. Then we proceeded to the deck of the car, and a serious rival so they flavor the Russian Government methods in Finland were not exactly approved by the Russian Government was well aware of this, and by inspired by the nihilists, and that the iris he accredited by handing that