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ing you, with a constant fear of the Siberian mines weighing upon you, you would not be calm."

"Poor woman! I appreciate your feelings in the matter. But try to maintain your composure, for one mistake now, the slightest suspicion on the part of Neslerov, may destroy the efforts we have made during the last two years."

"Six months, princess."

"For you, since your husband died. I have been working upon this mystery since I returned from Paris two years ago. If God spares my life, I will avenge the crime that was committed against our branch of the Neslerovs."

That evening the princess met Neslerov in the dining room with no show of emotion. Her smile was as winning and her wit as sharp as ever.

"I have not seen you during the afternoon, fair cousin," said Neslerov.

"But I have not forgotten you. I have been gathering the resources of Tomsk to give you a fitting welcome to our city. Tomorrow night there will be a reception and fete here in your honor."

"Tomorrow night? That is quickly done."

"It does not take long to arrange such a thing here. We have so few social pleasures that when the opportunity occurs we grasp it greedily. The officers of the garrison and the head officials, with their families, will attend. You must not expect to see the grandeur of a fete in St. Petersburg or Paris."

"It would weary me," said Olga.

The perfecting arrangements for the fete made Neslerov hurry away, and Olga was soon left to herself. She had resolved upon certain plans, but the activity of the palace in the preparations for the coming festivities seemed destined to balk her. She roamed through the great rooms alone, scanning the faces of those she met, speaking to few, but watchful for the opportunity she craved.

It was nearly midnight when she became discouraged and went to her room. The servants of the palace were still at work arranging the rooms for the dance.

But the princess did not retire. She sat down near a window and waited.

From the ballroom windows the glare of lights spread out upon the surrounding trees and buildings. From below came voices of those who were making ready for the reception.

Theresa came in to prepare her mistress for bed.

"Not yet, Theresa," said the princess wearily. "I shall not retire."

"You will make yourself ill," said Theresa nervously.

"Do not fear—I shall not be ill. But I am not ready for bed. I must wait—and act."

"You will learn nothing tonight."

"It is a night to learn. Leave me alone."

Theresa stood a moment watching the princess with a wistful, loving glance, and then she went to her own room.

The princess sat with scarcely a motion for more than two hours. An observer might easily have supposed she had gone to sleep. But suddenly the glare of the lights from the ballroom died away, and the princess rose to her feet.

"It is finished," she said, "and they are weary. Tomorrow night will be a severe one, and they will retire at once. Some one must be on guard—and gold is powerful. Tonight I must learn something."

Still she waited and soon all was silent in the palace.

"I wonder if Neslerov is asleep," she said. "Neslerov! I could almost hate the name, though it is my own. How so cruel and heartless a man became a member of our family I cannot conceive. Even though the relationship is remote, some cousinships removed, I believe, yet I regret that any should exist. No—not now—I am glad; for were he not sufficient relation to warrant my presence in his detestable palace I could not have this opportunity to learn the truth. Oh, Neslerov! Vengeance will be mine—and it will be sweet."

She had incased her feet in light Parisian slippers, and in these she stepped noiselessly from the room. The great bare corridor was dimly lighted and no person could be seen.

While caution was necessary, it was not because Olga feared. She was too powerful herself to fear injury in the palace of Neslerov. If the governor suspected the purpose of her visit, she would be no longer welcome, and the solution she had so long sought would be delayed.

Silently she crept down the great winding stairs into the main hall. This was a wide, high apartment, and from it opened many doors into other apartments. On one side were the offices of the government of the province, on the other the living rooms of the governor's household.

The doors upon the left, leading to the reception room, the governor's room, the great ballroom and the dining room, were closed. Two of those on the right were open. In one room there was a light, and from it came the subdued voices of two men and the odor of tobacco. The other room was dark.

The princess remembered these rooms. She had seen them in her inspection of the palace. That from which came the voices and in which a light was burning was the office of the superintendent of police. The one next to it was a smaller room, connected with the other by a door, which was locked. This small room had been intended for an office, but was now used for the purpose of storing books, records, police material and desks. It was part of the suit allotted to the superintendent of police.

Olga stood in the hall and listened. She heard the name of Paulpoff. With a fluttering heart she darted into the darkened room and took up her posi-

tion near the closed door between that and the office.

The two speakers sat near that door, with a round table between them, and upon the table was a supply of liquor and cigars.

The work of preparing the palace for the festivities on the following night did not come under the supervision of the police, but all connected with the palace were interested, and these two were the last to retire.

The speakers in that other room were Jansky, superintendent of police, and Inspector Unsethlop.

"The whole thing is a complete mystery to me," said Unsethlop, speaking somewhat thickly, having drunk considerable liquor. "It is a mystery. First we receive one command, then another, and we do not know what to do. The governor is not wont to act thus."

"You are not the first to have felt the influence of this great mystery," said Jansky. "The governor is discreet."

"Oh, I said a complete mystery. I would not call it a great mystery. That would bring it to the dignity of a celebrated case."

"So it is. It is one of the most celebrated cases in all Russia."

"That is too much! One of the most celebrated cases in all Russia, and they have not been in the dungeons more than three days! The matter could scarcely have gone beyond Tomsk."

"Nevertheless I spoke truly."

"Then there is something about it I do not know. When I reflect, it seems of course that this must be the case."



"It is a mystery. First we receive one command, then another."

Else why should we receive secret orders to capture—arrest, if you like—an American and a convict already punished and—well, see that they become lost to the world?"

Princess Olga gave a gasp as she heard this.

"There is one thing about it," said Unsethlop, who was now getting drunk enough to be independent and indiscreet. "If something is not done soon I shall wash my hands of it. I don't like the looks of it. Of course, one might kill a blacksmith convict and no inquiry would be made, but that American—that is different."

"Keep quiet for a few days. Have you not seen that the governor has a guest?"

"Yes, a beautiful one."

"That is Princess Olga of the great and powerful Neslerovs. She is distantly related to the governor. And, since you are interested, I will tell you the story as I know it."

"Oh, there is a story, then. I thought so."

"There is a story, and it is one which the governor would not like to have brought into prominence while the princess is here. The elder brother of Neslerov married Alexandra, a cousin of Princess Olga. This was something like twenty-three or twenty-four years ago. No; I think it must be twenty-five or six. Well, they were well mated, those two. Prince Alexis was the heir to the great estate of Graslov and his hereditary title, besides being Prince Neslerov, was Duke of Graslov. A year or so after this happy marriage a son was born to this couple. He was named Alexis, after his father. He was a fine young fellow, so I have heard, and grew sturdily. When he was a year old, or perhaps two, Prince Alexis died. Now, it so happened that the old Duke of Graslov, who was still living, had had a quarrel with Princess Alexandra. Her branch of the family was not friendly to his, and things did not go right, and they quarreled. Just what that had to do with the story I do not know, but I am telling you what everybody in Perm knew at that time.

"At that time Prince Nicholas, now governor of Tomsk, was fifteen years of age, and was the favorite of his father. It was commonly reported that the duke preferred to see his younger son inherit the title and estate rather than have it go to the son of the princess. Anyway, one day, twenty years ago, the young prince, then about three years old, or perhaps less, was drowned in the Kama. At least that is what was said. The boy wandered away from his nurse and walked to the river. Some of his garments were found on the river bank, and it would seem as though the little fellow had intended to follow the example of the boys of the serfs he had seen and was going to take a river bath. However, the body was never found and the poor princess was broken hearted. In a year she, too, died, and at the time her branch of the Neslerovs charged foul play. It was openly said they accused the old duke and Prince Nicholas of having murdered her. It was not proved and was not tried. The two branches remained at feud. The old duke died and Prince Nicholas entered into his inheritance, but he has not used the title, probably out of con-

sideration for the feelings of his relatives."

"Now we come down to the present day. It was openly charged by some of the other Neslerovs that the servants of the house of Graslov were involved, and it was thought at one time that certain others not of the household knew something. Among these was the family of an ironworker, Michael Paulpoff, consisting of himself, his wife and a child. But the Paulpoffs disclaimed all knowledge, and were so stupid and innocent looking that they were dropped from consideration. But it seems that an enmity has long existed in their obscure minds against the governor, and they have been secretly working to fasten the murder of Princess Alexandra upon him. Whether they knew anything at the time or whether some one dying told them, I do not know. Certain it is that they have some knowledge they will use against our governor. They were sent to Siberia and were unable to work at the mystery. But this accused American came and was interested. He swore he would fasten this murder upon Neslerov because Neslerov had loved that American girl, daughter of Gordon, the engineer. Now you see why the American, Denton, and the powerful young blacksmith were arrested, and why, even though in the dungeons, nothing more can be done until this princess leaves. Neslerov declares he is innocent, but the power and influence of her family, if joined with the efforts of the American and the Paulpoffs, might destroy him. Am I understood?"

"Yes, perfectly. Neslerov is ours, and we are his. We must be loyal. Let the prisoners remain in the dungeons until we are free to act. Then—well, even now we might forget to send them food."

"That, Unsethlop, is the very idea. The princess will dance merrily upon this floor while they starve to death on the one below."

The two police officers chuckled, and Olga, having learned enough, crept back to her room. She was passing through the upper corridor when she was startled by a shadow of a man.

A young officer in command of the palace guard was making his rounds. He stopped short when he saw the princess; then, discreet as all young officers about the palace were, he saluted and was about to pass on. She stopped him.

"Lieutenant," she said, "this is my room. I wish to speak to you alone."

He hesitated. He knew that she was the Princess Olga. He knew she would not seek his presence for pleasure. He feared the displeasure of Neslerov, but the winning beauty of Olga conquered, and he slipped into her room.

"What is your name?" she asked, her manner turning at once to that of the stern woman of business.

"Michael Dermsky, princess."

"Your position?"

"Lieutenant of the guard."

"How would you like to be a major of cavalry?"

"Major of cavalry! Such a promotion at my age—from a lieutenant?"

"It is possible—even more is possible. But you must obey me."

"You are the Princess Olga, but I must obey the governor of Tomsk."

"Wait," she said, and from a secret receptacle she took a folded paper upon which were a few words and a great seal. She held it for him to read. He dropped to his knees.

"The seal of his majesty the czar!" he said in an awestricken voice. "I obey—command me—I obey."

"Rise. When will you be relieved?"

"Soon."

"Come to me and say nothing to any one."

"I obey; I will be dumb."

Quickly, though she was weary, Olga sat down and wrote a letter. It was scarcely more than finished when the officer returned.

"Is there not a train to Tobolsk this morning?"

"There is. The train your highness came on returns today."

"Take this letter to Tobolsk. Give it into no other hand but that of Count de Muloff, governor general of western Siberia. Do you understand?"

"I do. And if the governor should—"

"Remain at Tobolsk. I have arranged for that in the letter. You need never fear the present governor of Tomsk."

He bowed, placed the letter in his bosom and retired. With a sigh of weariness and of relief the princess threw herself upon her bed and was soon asleep.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

A Platform Speaker.

"That man," remarked Smithers, "makes a hundred speeches from the platform every day."

"Some great political leader?" asked Smithers.

"No," replied Smithers, "street car conductor. He says, 'Move up forward, please!' every time any one gets on his car."—Cincinnati Commercial Tribune.

The Advantage of Waiting.

Her Father—But my boy, surely you are too young to marry Aurelia. How old are you?

Her Suitor—One and twenty, sir.

Her Father—And she is twenty-seven—too great a disparity. Why not wait half a dozen years? Then you'll be twenty-seven and she'll probably be just about the same age as you.

A Sage Conclusion.

Uncle Reuben says: "Arter arguin' fur forty yars dat de whale couldn't possibly have swattered Joner and makin' three or four enemies a yar ober it I has come to de conclusion dat my belief, one way or de odder, wouldn't affect de past 2 cents' wuth. I have simply wasted a heap o' breath fur nuthin'!"—Detroit Free Press.

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