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*Okhrana Women II*

and surveillance agents. Still another report said that the subversives had possession of some important documents stolen from the Okhrana office.

Elaborate security precautions had always been taken to keep unauthorized personnel off the Okhrana premises. La Petite was the only outsider ever admitted to the official quarters, and now she had been seen with the terrorist Rotte. A few forgotten incidents of the past two years were now recalled. One morning, Zavarzin himself remembered, he had found Yan's wife and daughter Handzhia cleaning his office, and La Petite was with them. When he asked what she was doing there, "After I delivered the milk I came to see Handzhia," she had said.

She spoke perfect Russian. Her explanation was that her father, although a Pole from Austria, spoke only Russian at home, having learned it during years of employment in a Moscow brewery. After his death three years earlier her mother had come to work in Warsaw.

Zavarzin recalled also that one morning his administrative assistant was unable to find a batch of papers which he thought he had—carelessly—left on a table the night before. A thorough search was made without success. Moreover, La Petite was often seen in the carriage shed and the dressing room where agents changed into coachman's uniform for surveillance assignments.

La Petite and her mother were both placed under surveillance. It was soon learned that the woman lived with Mishas, an influential member of the Polish Socialist Party, and that this man had been accompanied by La Petite on walks through the city. It was decided that the mother, being an Austrian subject, should be expelled from Warsaw and should be induced to take La Petite with her.

Zavarzin had them both brought to his office. The mother, named Kusitska, was cooperative but evasive when it came to giving information. When she realized he knew about her daughter's activity, she admitted through tears that she had been unable to counteract the corrupting pressure of the revolutionaries upon her child. She would therefore be glad to leave Warsaw for any place where she could get the girl away from their vicious influence and enroll her in some school.

"One would not give her ten years," she said, "and she's already thirteen. She did spy on your office at first, but after being treated so kindly by you all she was ashamed and stopped. Didn't you?"

The girl was all red in the face, too embarrassed to answer, or more likely unwilling to confirm a patent lie.

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*Reunion*

Nine years later, when Russia and Austria were at war and Zavarzin was in charge of the Okhrana office in Odessa, he received a telephone call late in the evening. A woman's voice: "Hello, Colonel Zavarzin, Chief of Section." No one ever addressed him thus by title. Whose was this strange, attractive voice?

"I must see you urgently, but not in your office. I'm calling from the railroad station. Tell me a good hotel where we can meet."

"But who are you?"

"La Petite from Warsaw. Do you remember me?"

She stayed in the Hotel London, but the meeting took place in a safe house. Zavarzin instructed Budakov, his chief of surveillance, to arrange for complete coverage after the meeting. He did not share Budakov's fears for the meeting itself—that La Petite might come with a pistol in her muff.

She came in, still small for a grown woman, scintillating with pleasure: "You remember me! That's so wonderful! But I'm no longer the subversive La Petite of Warsaw. I have become your ally. Before coming in I asked this man [Budakov] to inspect my bag. One could of course expect anything from La Petite of the past." Zavarzin soon realized that she had become a professional intelligence agent. But whose?

"You have no doubt taken measures to keep me under surveillance," she plunged in. "That's important, because at one after midnight tonight I am to meet at the Variété a man I don't know. I'm to be introduced to him by a woman who is appearing in the show as a famous sharpshooter. The man is in touch with the Austrian general staff, and it will be important for you to keep him under close watch. He is one of the top Austrian agents here. Then tomorrow I am going to Petersburg to see Okhrana chief Bielezky, who will probably take me to the imperial general staff. It may be that on the road to Petersburg I shall be met by persons in whom you may be interested, so you will probably want to have me covered all the way through."

Having disposed of this urgent matter on her mind, the attractive visitor proposed dinner. She was tired and hungry; the wartime trip from Vienna to Odessa was by no means without hardships. After the meal she was ready to talk about her past. But first she wanted to thank Zavarzin as the great benefactor who had played an important role in her life. Instead of putting her mother and her in prison

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he had given them good advice and sent them to safety. Her mother, La Petite said, had been a weak woman; for a little love she had become a slave to Mishas. His every word came to be an order for both mother and child. La Petite delivered dynamite and bombs for the Rotte woman and other terrorists. It was Mishas' plan to blow up the Warsaw Okhrana office and kill Zavarzin. As a child she had been fascinated by the plan, and Mishas became a hero in her eyes. Three years after leaving Warsaw, when she read in the newspapers about the apprehension of the Warsaw terrorists, including Mishas, and their trial and execution, she realized how criminal her activities had been.

Zavarzin probably did not swallow whole the story of her remorse, for he changed the conversation with a question about the color of her hair. As a child it was light blond, now nearly jet black. How come? She said she dyed it in order to look older. Then she went back to what had happened since she last saw him at thirteen.

#### *Tale of Two Services*

Upon arrival in Lvov her mother sent her to a convent for schooling and to learn dressmaking. It was a harsh life, with constant work or kneeling in prayer and frequent cruel punishment as she grew rebellious. More often than not she was hungry, and after her mother's death she had no affection from anyone. One day the mother superior found her crying in the cold chapel, took pity on her, and promised thereafter to be a mother to her. Life remained hard, but under the old abbess' protection Seraphine, as she was named in the convent, became an obedient pupil.

After six years of convent life she was employed in the household of a wealthy Galician merchant. A romance soon developed with the merchant's nephew and they were married. He was a panslavist employed by the Russian services, and thus both newly-weds were soon working for the Russians in Austrian Galicia.

When the war broke out the Austrians drafted her husband, and soon thereafter he was taken prisoner by the Russians. La Petite, after giving birth to a child, made up her mind to get to Russia at all costs. She thought of the possibility of being taken into the Austrian espionage service and sent there. Leaving the baby with her mother-in-law, she set up as a dressmaker catering to various families of army officers. In time she found an officer of the general staff who was interested in more than her dressmaking.

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Her frequent night meetings with this man gave her a chance to let him see her, incidentally, as an Austrian patriot who knew Warsaw extremely well, spoke Russian perfectly, and was intelligent and resourceful. She did not need to prompt him to the proposal that she would do well in Austrian intelligence. With all the modesty Seraphine had learned in the convent, she replied that she had no experience to fit her for such work, but he insisted that she should at least give it a try. After a few days of thinking it over, she decided that there would be nothing wrong in tentative acceptance.

They tried all sorts of tests on her. Questions were shot at her in the least expected forms. She would be left alone in an office with documents marked secret scattered on the desks and watched through a peephole to see whether she showed undue interest in the papers. She was followed on city streets to determine whether she had assimilated the psychological training they had given her in operational conduct and patriotism. After two months' training the Austrians set up an interview with a German officer. He interrogated her in German and Russian and found her Russian more fluent than her German. When he learned that the convent had given her considerable training in caring for the sick, he named her on the spot chief nurse in a hospital for seriously wounded Russian prisoners. It was he who insisted that she dye her hair black so as to look old enough to be a chief nurse. Her job was to attend the wounded and report anything they might say, perhaps in delirium, of interest to the German forces.

After three months of this service, she was summoned before a captain and told she had been assigned an important mission on which much would be expected of her.

"From now on your name shall be Anna Yakovlevna Lyubova, with Tyumen in Siberia as your place of origin. Here is your passport. It is a genuine document: the real Lyubova is here in Austria. She is married and has no desire to return to Russia. You will take her place among a large group of Russians who are being repatriated in exchange for Austrians from Russia. In this assignment you will have to exercise much prudence, and if there are difficulties you will have to be guided by your patriotism. We all put our country first . . ."

The entire operational program, with many alternative courses of action, was outlined for "Lyubova." She was to contact Austrian agents and deliver them instructions all along the way, as far as

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Vladivostok. From there she was to go on to Harbin and then proceed to Shanghai, where she should report to the German consulate.

*L'Autrichienne*

From Odessa Zavarzin promptly wired to Petersburg headquarters the whole long story. Surveilling La Petite and her German contacts the same night, Budakov found that the introduction and meeting took place as she had told. The sharpshooter woman and the German man, named Gross, were both exiled to Siberia for the duration; there was not enough proof to hang them.

La Petite revealed also that the German dreadnoughts "Goeben" and "Breslau" were heading for the Black Sea to bombard Russian ports. This information was confirmed within a few days. Although Zavarzin had reported the intelligence promptly, the defense command was in no position to take counter action, and the attack caused havoc in several harbors.

"Lyubova" was carefully watched on her way to Petersburg, where she went directly to the Okhrana chief as scheduled. He had her case transferred to military intelligence, and there was no trace in Okhrana files of her subsequent whereabouts and activities. Years after his exile, Zavarzin speculated that a dashing young lady of her description who lived in Monte Carlo and was known as "L'Autrichienne," speaking perfect Russian and Polish, of angelic beauty, and wildly spending her Brazilian husband's wealth, could be La Petite.

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