

***ROBERT
W. CHAMBERS***

A silhouette of a man in a suit is shown from behind, looking out a large, multi-paned window at night. The window is framed by dark curtains and shows a blurred cityscape with lights. The overall mood is contemplative and mysterious.

***THE DARK
STAR***

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The Dark Star

EAN 8596547253761

DigiCat, 2022

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PREFACE

CHILDREN OF THE STAR

Not the dark companion of Sirius, brightest of all stars—not our own chill and spectral planet rushing toward Vega in the constellation of Lyra—presided at the birth of millions born to corroborate a bloody horoscope.

But a Dark Star, speeding unseen through space, known to the ancients, by them called Erlik, after the Prince of Darkness, ruled at the birth of those myriad souls destined to be engulfed in the earthquake of the ages, or flung by it out of the ordered pathway of their lives into strange byways, stranger highways—into deeps and deserts never dreamed of.

Also one of the dozen odd temporary stars on record blazed up on that day, flared for a month or two, dwindled to a cinder, and went out.

But the Dark Star Erlik, terribly immortal, sped on through space to complete a two-hundred-thousand-year circuit of the heavens, and begin anew an immemorial journey by the will of the Most High.

What spectroscope is to horoscope, destiny is to chance. The black star Erlik rushed through interstellar darkness unseen; those born under its violent augury squalled in their cradles, or, thumb in mouth, slumbered the dreamless slumber of the newly born. xix

One of these, a tiny girl baby, fussed and fidgeted in her mother's arms, tortured by prickly heat when the hot winds blew through Trebizond.

Overhead vultures circled; a *stein-adler*, cleaving the blue, looked down where the surf made a thin white line

along the coast, then set his lofty course for China.

Thousands of miles to the westward, a little boy of eight gazed out across the ruffled waters of the mill pond at Neeland's Mills, and wondered whether the ocean might not look that way.

And, wondering, with the salt sea effervescence working in his inland-born body, he fitted a cork to his fishing line and flung the baited hook far out across the ripples. Then he seated himself on the parapet of the stone bridge and waited for monsters of the deep to come.

And again, off Seraglio Point, men were rowing in a boat; and a corded sack lay in the stern, horridly and limply heavy.

There was also a box lying in the boat, oddly bound and clamped with metal which glistened like silver under the Eastern stars when the waves of the Bosphorus dashed high, and the flying scud rained down on box and sack and the red-capped rowers.

In Petrograd a little girl of twelve was learning to eat other things than sour milk and cheese; learning to ride otherwise than like a demon on a Cossack saddle; learning deportment, too, and languages, and social graces and the fine arts. And, most thoroughly of all, the little girl was learning how deathless should be her hatred for the Turkish Empire and all its works; and xx how only less perfect than our Lord in Paradise was the Czar on his throne amid that earthly paradise known as "All the Russias."

Her little brother was learning these things, too, in the Corps of Officers. Also he was already proficient on the balalaika.

And again, in the mountains of a conquered province, the little daughter of a gamekeeper to nobility was preparing to emigrate with her father to a new home in the Western world, where she would learn to perform miracles with rifle and revolver, and where the beauty of the hermit thrush's song would startle her into comparing it to the beauty of her own untried voice. But to her father, and to her, the most beautiful thing in all the world was love of Fatherland.

Over these, and millions of others, brooded the spell of the Dark Star. Even the world itself lay under it, vaguely uneasy, sometimes startled to momentary seismic panic. Then, ere mundane self-control restored terrestrial equilibrium, a few mountains exploded, an island or two lay shattered by earthquake, boiling mud and pumice blotted out one city; earth-shock and fire another; a tidal wave a third.

But the world settled down and balanced itself once more on the edge of the perpetual abyss into which it must fall some day; the invisible shadow of the Dark Star swept it at intervals when some far and nameless sun blazed out unseen; days dawned; the sun of the solar system rose furtively each day and hung around the heavens until that dusky huntress, Night, chased him once more beyond the earth's horizon. xxi

The shadow of the Dark Star was always there, though none saw it in sunshine or in moonlight, or in the silvery lustre of the planets.

A boy, born under it, stood outside the fringe of willow and alder, through which moved two English setters followed and controlled by the boy's father.

"Mark!" called the father.

Out of the willows like a feathered bomb burst a big grouse, and the green foliage that barred its flight seemed to explode as the strong bird sheered out into the sunshine.

The boy's gun, slanting upward at thirty degrees, glittered in the sun an instant, then the left barrel spoke; and the grouse, as though struck by lightning in mid-air, stopped with a jerk, then slanted swiftly and struck the ground.

"Dead!" cried the boy, as a setter appeared, leading on straight to the heavy mass of feathers lying on the pasture grass.

"Clean work, Jim," said his father, strolling out of the willows. "But wasn't it a bit risky, considering the little girl yonder?"

"Father!" exclaimed the boy, very red. "I never even saw her. I'm ashamed."

They stood looking across the pasture, where a little girl in a pink gingham dress lingered watching them, evidently lured by her curiosity from the old house at the crossroads just beyond.

Jim Neeland, still red with mortification, took the big cock-grouse from the dog which brought it—a tender-mouthed, beautifully trained Belton, who stood with his

feathered offering in his jaws, very serious, very proud, awaiting praise from the Neelands, father and son. xxii

Neeland senior “drew” the bird and distributed the sacrifice impartially between both dogs—it being the custom of the country.

Neeland junior broke his gun, replaced the exploded shell, content indeed with his one hundred per cent performance.

“Better run over and speak to the little girl, Jim,” suggested old Dick Neeland, as he motioned the dogs into covert again.

So Jim ran lightly across the stony, clover-set ground to where the little girl roamed along the old snake fence, picking berries sometimes, sometimes watching the sportsmen out of shy, golden-grey eyes.

“Little girl,” he said, “I’m afraid the shot from my gun came rattling rather close to you that time. You’ll have to be careful. I’ve noticed you here before. It won’t do; you’ll have to keep out of range of those bushes, because when we’re inside we can’t see exactly where we’re firing.”

The child said nothing. She looked up at the boy, smiled shyly, then, with much composure, began her retreat, not neglecting any tempting blackberry on the way.

The sun hung low over the hazy Gayfield hills; the beeches and oaks of Mohawk County burned brown and crimson; silver birches supported their delicate canopies of burnt gold; and imperial white pines clothed hill and vale in a stately robe of green.

Jim Neeland forgot the child—or remembered her only to exercise caution in the Brookhollow covert.

The little girl Ruhannah, who had once fidgeted with prickly heat in her mother's arms outside the walls of Trebizond, did not forget this easily smiling, tall young xxiii fellow—a grown man to her—who had come across the pasture lot to warn her.

But it was many a day before they met again, though these two also had been born under the invisible shadow of the Dark Star. But the shadow of Erlik is always passing like swift lightning across the Phantom Planet which has fled the other way since Time was born.

Allahou Ekber, O Tchinguiz Khagan!

A native Mongol missionary said to Ruhannah's father:

“As the chronicles of the Eighurs have it, long ago there fell metal from the Black Racer of the skies; the first dagger was made of it; and the first image of the Prince of Darkness. These pass from Kurd to Cossack by theft, by gift, by loss; they pass from nation to nation by accident, which is Divine design.

“And where they remain, war is. And lasts until image and dagger are carried to another land where war shall be. But where there is war, only the predestined suffer—those born under Erlik—children of the Dark Star.”

“I thought,” said the Reverend Wilbour Carew, “that my brother had confessed Christ.”

“I am but repeating to you what my father believed; and Temujin before him,” replied the native convert, his remote gaze lost in reflection.

His eyes were quite little and coloured like a lion's; and sometimes, in deep reverie, the corners of his upper lip twitched.

This happened when Ruhannah lay fretting in her mother's arms, and the hot wind blew on Trebizond.

Under the Dark Star, too, a boy grew up in Minetta Lane, not less combative than other ragged boys about xxiv him, but he was inclined to arrange and superintend fist fights rather than to participate in battle, except with his wits.

His name was Eddie Brandes; his first fortune of three dollars was amassed at craps; he became a hanger-on in ward politics, at race-tracks, stable, club, squared ring, vaudeville, burlesque. Long Acre attracted him—but always the gambling end of the operation.

Which predilection, with its years of ups and downs, landed him one day in Western Canada with an "Unknown" to match against an Athabasca blacksmith, and a training camp as the prospect for the next six weeks.

There lived there, gradually dying, one Albrecht Dumont, lately head gamekeeper to nobility in the mountains of a Lost Province, and wearing the Iron Cross of 1870 on the ruins of a gigantic and bony chest, now as hollow as a Gothic ruin.

And if, like a thousand fellow patriots, he had been ordered to the Western World to watch and report to his Government the trend and tendency of that Western, English-speaking world, only his Government and his daughter knew it—a child of the Dark Star now grown to early womanhood, with a voice like a hermit thrush and the skill of a sorceress with anything that sped a bullet.

Before the Unknown was quite ready to meet the Athabasca blacksmith, Albrecht Dumont, dying faster now, signed his last report to the Government at Berlin, which his daughter Ilse had written for him—something about Canadian canals and stupid Yankees and their greed, indifference, cowardice, and sloth. xxv

Dumont's mind wandered:

"After the well-born Herr Gott relieves me at my post," he whispered, "do thou pick up my burden and stand guard, little Ilse."

"Yes, father."

"Thy sacred promise?"

"My promise."

The next day Dumont felt better than he had felt for a year.

"Ilse, who is the short and broadly constructed American who comes now already every day to see thee and to hear thee sing?"

"His name is Eddie Brandes."

"He is of the fight *gesellschaft*, not?"

"He should gain much money by the fight. A theatre in Chicago may he willingly control, in which light opera shall be given."

"Is it for that he hears so willingly thy voice?"

"It is for that.... And love."

"And what of Herr Max Venem, who has asked of me thy little hand in marriage?"

The girl was silent.

"Thou dost not love him?"

“No.”

Toward sunset, Dumont, lying by the window, opened his eyes of a dying *Lämmergeier*:

“My Ilse.”

“Father?”

“What has thou to this man said?”

“That I will be engaged to him if thou approve.”

“He has gained the fight?”

“Today.... And many thousand dollars. The xxvi theatre in Chicago is his when he desires. Riches, leisure, opportunity to study for a career upon his stage, are mine if I desire.”

“Dost thou desire this, little Ilse?”

“Yes.”

“And the man Venem who has followed thee so long?”

“I cannot be what he would have me—a *Hausfrau*—to mend his linen for my board and lodging.”

“And the Fatherland which placed me here on outpost?”

“I take thy place when God relieves thee.”

“*So ist's recht!... Grüs Gott—Ilse--*”

Among the German settlers a five-piece brass band had been organised the year before.

It marched at the funeral of Albrecht Dumont, lately head gamekeeper to nobility in the mountains of a long-lost province.

Three months later Ilse Dumont arrived in Chicago to marry Eddie Brandes. One Benjamin Stull was best man.

Others present included "Captain" Quint, "Doc" Curfoot, "Parson" Smawley, Abe Gordon—friends of the bridegroom.

Invited by the bride, among others were Theodor Weishelm, the Hon. Charles Wilson, M. P., and Herr Johann Kestner, a wealthy gentleman from Leipsic seeking safe and promising investments in Canada and the United States.

A year later Ilse Dumont Brandes, assuming the stage name of Minna Minti, sang the rôle of *Bettina* in "The Mascotte," at the Brandes Theatre in Chicago.

A year later, when she created the part of *Kathi* in "The White Horse," Max Venem sent word to her that xxvii she would live to see her husband lying in the gutter under his heel. Which made the girl unhappy in her triumph.

But Venem hunted up Abe Grittlefeld and told him very coolly that he meant to ruin Brandes.

And within a month the latest public favourite, Minna Minti, sat in her dressing-room, wet-eyed, enraged, with the reports of Venem's private detectives locked in the drawer of her dressing table, and the curtain waiting.

So complex was life already becoming to these few among the million children of the Dark Star Erlik—to everyone, from the child that fretted in its mother's arms under the hot wind near Trebizond, to a deposed Sultan, cowering behind the ivory screen in his zenana, weeping tears that rolled like oil over his fat jowl to which still adhered the powdered sugar of a Turkish sweetmeat.

Allahou Ekber, *Khodja*; God is great. Great also, *Ande*, is Ali, the Fourth Caliph, cousin-companion of Mahomet the Prophet. But, *O tougtchi*, be thy name Niaz and thy surname Baï, for Prince Erlik speeds on his Dark Star, and beneath the end of the argument between those two last survivors of a burnt-out world—behold! The sword!

THE DARK STAR

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CHAPTER I

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THE WONDER-BOX

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As long as she could remember she had been permitted to play with the contents of the late Herr Conrad Wilner's wonder-box. The programme on such occasions varied little; the child was permitted to rummage among the treasures in the box until she had satisfied her perennial curiosity; conversation with her absent-minded father ensued, which ultimately included a personal narrative, dragged out piecemeal from the reticent, dreamy invalid. Then always a few pages of the diary kept by the late Herr Wilner were read as a bedtime story. And bath and bed and dreamland followed. That was the invariable routine, now once more in full swing.

Her father lay on his invalid's chair, reading; his rubber-shod crutches rested against the wall, within easy reach. By him, beside the kerosene lamp, her mother sat, mending her child's stockings and underwear.

Outside the circle of lamplight the incandescent eyes of the stove glowed steadily through the semi-dusk; and the child, always fascinated by anything that aroused her imagination, lifted her gaze furtively from time to time to convince herself that it really was the big, familiar stove which glared redly back at her, and not a dragon into which her creative fancy had so often transformed it.

Reassured, she continued to explore the contents of the wonder-box—a toy she preferred to her doll, but not to her beloved set of water-colours and crayon pencils.

Some centuries ago Pandora's box let loose a world of troubles; Herr Wilner's box apparently contained only pleasure for a little child whose pleasures were mostly of her own invention.

It was a curious old box, made of olive wood and bound with bands of some lacquered silvery metal to make it strong—rupee silver, perhaps—strangely wrought with Arabic characters engraved and in shallow relief. It had handles on either side, like a sea-chest; a silver-lacquered lock and hasp which retained traces of violent usage; and six heavy strap hinges of the same lacquered metal.

Within it the little child knew that a most fascinating collection of articles was to be discovered, taken out one by one with greatest care, played with discreetly, and, at her mother's command, returned to their several places in Herr Wilner's box.

There were, in this box, two rather murderous-looking Kurdish daggers in sheaths of fretted silver—never to be unsheathed, it was solemnly understood, except by the child's father.

There was a pair of German army revolvers of the pattern of 1900, the unexploded cartridges of which had long since been extracted and cautiously thrown into the mill pond by the child's mother, much to the surprise, no doubt, of the pickerel and sunfish.

There were writing materials of sandalwood, a few sea shells, a dozen books in German with many steel 3 plate

engravings; also a red Turkish fez with a dark blue tassel; two pairs of gold-rimmed spectacles; several tobacco pipes of Dresden porcelain, a case full of instruments for mechanical drawing, a thick blank book bound in calf and containing the diary of the late Herr Wilner down to within a few minutes before his death.

Also there was a figure in bronze, encrusted with tarnished gold and faded traces of polychrome decoration.

Erlík, the Yellow Devil, as Herr Wilner called it, seemed too heavy to be a hollow casting, and yet, when shaken, something within rattled faintly, as though when the molten metal was cooling a fissure formed inside, into which a few loose fragments of bronze had fallen.

It apparently had not been made to represent any benign Chinese god; the aspect of the yellow figure was anything but benevolent. The features were terrific; scowls infested its grotesque countenance; threatening brows bent inward; angry eyes rolled in apparent fury; its double gesture with sword and javelin was violent and almost humorously menacing. And Ruhannah adored it.

For a little while the child played her usual game of frightening her doll with the Yellow Devil and then rescuing her by the aid of a fairy prince which she herself had designed, smeared with water-colours, and cut out with scissors from a piece of cardboard.

After a time she turned to the remaining treasures in the wonder-box. These consisted of several volumes containing photographs, others full of sketches in pencil and water-colour, and a thick roll of glazed linen scrolls covered with designs in India ink.

The photographs were of all sorts—landscapes, rivers, 4 ships in dock, dry dock, and at sea; lighthouses, forts, horses carrying soldiers armed with lances and wearing the red fez; artillery on the march, infantry, groups of officers, all wearing the same sort of fez which lay there in Herr Wilner's box of olive wood.

There were drawings, too—sketches of cannon, of rifles, of swords; drawings of soldiers in various gay uniforms, all carefully coloured by hand. There were pictures of ships, from the sterns of which the crescent flag floated lazily; sketches of great, ugly-looking objects which her father explained were Turkish ironclads. The name "ironclad" always sounded menacing and formidable to the child, and the forbidding pictures fascinated her.

Then there were scores and scores of scrolls made out of slippery white linen, on which had been drawn all sorts of most amazing geometrical designs in ink.

"Plans," her father explained vaguely. And, when pressed by reiterated questions: "Plans for military works, I believe—forts, docks, barracks, fortified cuts and bridges. You are not yet quite old enough to understand, Ruhannah."

"Who did draw them, daddy?"

"A German friend of mine, Herr Conrad Wilner."

"What for?"

"I think his master sent him to Turkey to make those pictures."

"For the Sultan?"

"No; for his Emperor."

"Why?"

"I don't exactly know, Rue."

At this stage of the conversation her father usually laid aside his book and composed himself for the inevitable narrative soon to be demanded of him. 5

Then, although having heard the story many times from her crippled father's lips, but never weary of the repetition, the child's eyes would grow round and very solemn in preparation for her next and inevitable question:

"And did Herr Wilner *die*, daddy?"

"Yes, dear."

"Tell me!"

"Well, it was when I was a missionary in the Trebizond district, and your mother and I went--"

"And *me*, daddy? And *me*, too!"

"Yes; you were a little baby in arms. And we all went to Gallipoli to attend the opening of a beautiful new school which was built for little Mohammedan converts to Christianity--"

"Did I see those little Christian children, daddy?"

"Yes, you saw them. But you are too young to remember."

"Tell me. Don't stop!"

"Then listen attentively without interrupting, Rue: Your mother and you and I went to Gallipoli; and my friend, Herr Wilner, who had been staying with us at a town called Tchardak, came along with us to attend the opening of the American school.

"And the night we arrived there was trouble. The Turkish people, urged on by some bad officials in the Sanjak, came with guns and swords and spears and set fire to the mission school.

“They did not offer to harm us. We had already collected our converts and our personal baggage. Our caravan was starting. The mob might not have done anything worse than burn the school if Herr Wilner had not lost his temper and threatened them with a 6 dog whip. Then they killed him with stones, there in the walled yard.”

At this point in the tragedy, the eagerly awaited and ardently desired shivers passed up and down the child’s back.

“O—oh! Did they kill him *dead*?”

“Yes, dear.”

“Was he a martyr?”

“In a way he was a martyr to his duty, I suppose. At least I gather so from his diary and from what he once told me of his life.”

“And then what happened? Tell me, daddy.”

“A Greek steamer took us and our baggage to Trebizond.”

“And what then?”

“And then, a year later, the terrible massacre at our Trebizond mission occurred--”

That was what the child was waiting for.

“I know!” she interrupted eagerly. “The wicked Turks and the cruel Kurds did come galloping and shouting ‘Allah!’ And all the poor, converted people became martyrs. And God loves martyrs, doesn’t He?”

“Yes, dear--”

“And then they did kill all the poor little Christian children!” exclaimed the child excitedly. “And they did cut you with swords and guns! And then the kind sailors with

the American flag took you and mamma and me to a ship and saved us by the grace of our Lord Jesus!”

“Yes, dear--”

“Tell me!”

“That is all--”

“No; you walk on two crutches, and you cannot be 7 a missionary any more because you are sick all the time! Tell me, daddy!”

“Yes. And that is all, Rue--”

“Oh, no! Please! Tell me!... And then, don't you remember how the brave British sailors and our brave American sailors pointed their cannon at the *I-ronclads*, and they said, 'Do not shoot or we shall shoot you to pieces.' And then the brave American sailors went on shore and brought back some poor little wounded converted children, and your baggage and the magic box of Herr Wilner!”

“Yes, dear. And now that is enough tonight--”

“Oh, daddy, you must first read in the di-a-ry which Herr Wilner made!”

“Bring me the book, Rue.”

With an interest forever new, the Carew family prepared to listen to the words written by a strange man who had died only a few moments after he had made the last entry in the book—before even the ink was entirely dry on the pages.

The child, sitting cross-legged on the floor, clasped her little hands tightly; her mother laid aside her sewing, folded it, and placed it in her lap; her father searched through the pencilled translation which he had written in between the lines of German script, found where he had left off the time

before, then continued the diary of Herr Conrad Wilner, deceased:

March 3. My original plans have been sent to the Yildiz Palace. My duplicates are to go to Berlin when a messenger from our Embassy arrives. Murad Bey knows this. I am sorry he knows it. But nobody except myself is aware that I have a third set of plans carefully hidden.

March 4. All day with Murad's men setting wire & entanglements under water; two Turkish destroyers patrolling the entrance to the bay, and cavalry patrols on the heights to warn away the curious.

March 6. Forts Alamout and Shah Abbas are being reconstructed from the new plans. Wired areas under water and along the coves and shoals are being plotted. Murad Bey is unusually polite and effusive, conversing with me in German and French. A spidery man and very dangerous.

March 7. A strange and tragic affair last night. The heat being severe, I left my tent about midnight and went down to the dock where my little sailboat lay, with the object of cooling myself on the water. There was a hot land breeze; I sailed out into the bay and cruised north along the coves which I have wired. As I rounded a little rocky point I was surprised to see in the moonlight, very near, a steam yacht at anchor, carrying no lights. The longer I looked at her the more certain I became that I was gazing at the Imperial yacht. I had no idea what the yacht might be doing here; I ran my sailboat close under the overhanging rocks and anchored. Then I saw a small boat in the moonlight, pulling from the yacht toward shore, where the crescent cove had already been thoroughly staked and the bottom closely

covered with barbed wire as far as the edge of the deep channel which curves in here like a scimitar.

It must have been that the people in the boat miscalculated the location of the channel, for they were well over the sunken barbed wire when they lifted and threw overboard what they had come there to get rid of—two dark bulks that splashed.

I watched the boat pull back to the Imperial yacht. A little later the yacht weighed anchor and steamed northward, burning no lights. Only the red reflection tingeing the smoke from her stacks was visible. I watched her until she was lost in the moonlight, thinking all the while of those weighted sacks so often dropped overboard along the Bosphorus and off Seraglio Point from that same Imperial yacht. 9

When the steamer had disappeared, I got out my sweeps and rowed for the place where the dark objects had been dropped overboard. I knew that they must be resting somewhere on the closely criss-crossed mesh of wires just below the surface of the water; but I probed for an hour before I located anything. Another hour passed in trying to hook into the object with the little three-fluked grapnel which I used as an anchor. I got hold of something finally; a heavy chest of olive wood bound with metal; but I had to rig a tackle before I could hoist it aboard.

Then I cast out again; and very soon my grapnel hooked into what I expected—a canvas sack, weighted with a round shot. When I got it aboard, I hesitated a long while before opening it. Finally I made a long slit in the canvas with my knife....

She was very young—not over sixteen, I think, and she was really beautiful, even under her wet, dark hair. She seemed to be a Caucasian girl—maybe a Georgian. She wore a small gold cross which hung from a gold cord around her neck. There was another, and tighter, cord around her neck, too. I cut the silk bowstring and closed and bound her eyes with my handkerchief before I rowed out a little farther and lowered her into the deep channel which cuts eastward here like the scimitar of that true believer, Abdul Hamid.

Then I hoisted sail and beat up slowly toward my little dock under a moon which had become ghastly under the pallid aura of a gathering storm--

“A poor dead young lady!” interrupted the child, clasping her hands more tightly. “Did the Sultan kill her, daddy?”

“It seems so, Ruhannah.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know. He was a very cruel and wicked Sultan.” 10

“I don’t see why he killed the beautiful poor dead lady.”

“If you will listen and not interrupt, you shall learn why.”

“And was the chest that Herr Wilner pulled up the very same chest that is here on the floor beside me?” insisted the child.

“The very same. Now listen, Rue, and I shall read a little more in Herr Wilner’s diary, and then you must have your bath and be put to bed--”

“Please read, daddy!”

The Reverend Wilbour Carew turned the page and quietly continued:

March 20. In my own quarters at Trebizond again, and rid of Murad for a while.

A canvas cover and rope handles concealed the character of my olive wood chest. I do not believe anybody suspects it to be anything except one of the various boxes containing my own personal effects. I shall open it tonight with a file and chisel, if possible.

March 21. The contents of the chest reveal something of the tragedy. The box is full of letters written in Russian, and full of stones which weigh collectively a hundred pounds at least. There is nothing else in the chest except a broken Ikon and a bronze figure of Erlik, a Yildiz relic, no doubt, of some Kurdish raid into Mongolia, and probably placed beside the dead girl by her murderers in derision. I am translating the letters and arranging them in sequence.

March 25. I have translated the letters. The dead girl's name was evidently Tatyana, one of several children of some Cossack chief or petty prince, and on the eve of her marriage to a young officer named Mitya the Kurds raided the town. They carried poor Tatyana off along with her wedding chest—the chest fished up with my grapnel. 11

In brief, the chest and the girl found their way into Abdul's seraglio. The letters of the dead girl—which were written and entrusted probably to a faithless slave, but which evidently never left the seraglio—throw some light on the tragedy, for they breathe indignation and contempt of Islam, and call on her affianced, on her parents, and on her people to rescue her and avenge her.

And after a while, no doubt Abdul tired of reading fierce, unreconciled little Tatyana's stolen letters, and simply ended the matter by having her bowstrung and dumped overboard

in a sack, together with her marriage chest, her letters, and the Yellow Devil in bronze as a final insult.

She seems to have had a sister, Naïa, thirteen years old, betrothed to a Prince Mistchenka, a cavalry officer in the Terek Cossacks. Her father had been Hetman of the Don Cossacks before the Emperor Nicholas reserved that title for Imperial use. And *she* ended in a sack off Gallipoli! That is the story of Tatyana and her wedding chest.

March 29. Murad arrived, murderously bland and assiduous in his solicitude for my health and comfort. I am almost positive he knows that I fished up something from Cove No. 37 under the theoretical guns of theoretical Fort Osman, both long plotted out but long delayed.

April 5. My duplicate plans for Gallipoli have been stolen. I have a third set still. Colonel Murad Bey is not to be trusted. My position is awkward and is becoming serious. There is no faith to be placed in Abdul Hamid. My credentials, the secret agreement with my Government, are no longer regarded even with toleration in the Yildiz Kiosque. A hundred insignificant incidents prove it every day. And if Abdul dare not break with Germany it is only because he is not yet ready to defy the Young Turk party. The British Embassy is very active and bothers me a great deal.

April 10. My secret correspondence with Enver Bey has been discovered, and my letters opened. This is a 12 very bad business. I have notified my Government that the Turkish Government does not want me here; that the plan of a Germanised Turkish army is becoming objectionable to the

Porte; that the duplicate plans of our engineers for the Dardanelles and the Gallipoli Peninsula have been stolen.

April 13. A secret interview with Enver Bey, who promises that our ideas shall be carried out when his party comes into power. Evidently he does not know that my duplicates have been stolen.

Troubles threaten in the Vilayet of Trebizond, where is an American Mission. I fear that our emissaries and the emissaries of Enver Bey are deliberately fomenting disorders because Americans are not desired by our Government. Enver denies this; but it is idle to believe anyone in this country.

April 16. Another interview with Enver Bey. His scheme is flatly revolutionary, namely, the deposition of Abdul, a secret alliance, offensive and defensive, with us; the Germanisation of the Turkish army and navy; the fortification of the Gallipoli district according to our plans; a steadily increasing pressure on Serbia; a final reckoning with Russia which is definitely to settle the status of Albania and Serbia and leave the Balkan grouping to be settled between Austria, Germany, and Turkey.

I spoke several times about India and Egypt, but he does not desire to arouse England unless she interferes.

I spoke also of Abdul Hamid's secret and growing fear of Germany, and his increasing inclination toward England once more.

No trace of my stolen plans. The originals are in the Yildiz Palace. I have a third set secreted, about which nobody knows.

April 21. I have been summoned to the Yildiz Palace. It possibly means my assassination. I have confided my box of data, photographs, and plans, to the Reverend Wilbour Carew, an American missionary in the Trebizond sanjak.

There are rumours that Abdul has become mentally unhinged through dread of assassination. One of his own aides-de-camp, while being granted an audience in the Yildiz, made a sudden and abrupt movement to find his handkerchief; and Abdul Hamid whipped out a pistol and shot him dead. This is authentic.

April 30. Back at Tchardak with my good missionary and his wife. A strange interview with Abdul. There were twenty French clocks in the room, all going and all striking at various intervals. The walls were set with French mirrors.

Abdul's cordiality was terrifying; the full original set of my Gallipoli plans was brought in. After a while, the Sultan reminded me that the plans were in duplicate, and asked me where were these duplicates. What duplicity! But I said pleasantly that they were to be sent to General Staff Headquarters in Berlin.

He pretended to understand that this was contrary to the agreement, and insisted that the plans should first be sent to him for comparison. I merely referred him to his agreement with my Government. But all the while we were talking I was absolutely convinced that the stolen duplicates were at that moment in the Yildiz Kiosque. Abdul must have known that I believed it. Yet we both merely smiled our confidence in each other.

He seemed to be unusually good-natured and gracious, saying that no doubt I was quite right in sending the plans