

The soldiers marched them out again, and put them back in the sleighs, and they drove away, still more rapidly, towards their place of detention.

That night Ruric Brassoﬀ passed in a solitary cell, ﬁtted up with some petty concessions to his princely rank, but otherwise bare and cold and wretched and uncomfortable. And all night long he thought of Owen Cazalet and Ioné Dracopoli—and of what could have brought Olga Mireﬀ at this juncture to Moscow.

If only he could have seen her for one minute alone! If only he could have said to her, 'Nikita has an envelope. Kill him! Secure it! Destroy it!' But there he lay helpless, cooped up in that narrow prison cell; and when he saw Olga to-morrow morning, perhaps it would be too late; perhaps he would be unable to communicate with her at all. Perhaps he might find her a traitor to Russia.

His own life he gave up—he owed it to Russia. And for Russia he despaired. But one thing still troubled him. He wished he could only have saved Owen from the sword of Damocles that must hang for ever henceforth over his head and Ioné's.

Olga Mireﬀ in Moscow! What could have brought her there? he wondered. A horrible doubt rose ﬂoating for a moment in his mind like a hateful picture. Had Olga turned against him? No, no; he ﬂung the doubt from him like an evil dream. Yet stay! what was this? He was a traitor himself. Whom could Russia trust now, if Ruric Brassoﬀ betrayed her?

And then, in a sudden ﬂash of insight, Fomenko's casual words came back to him with a new and unsuspected meaning. That 'lodger downstairs, a woman with great staring eyes, a milliner or something,' whom he took to be a spy—who on earth could it be but Olga Mireﬀ?

Was she there to betray them or to warn them? That was the great problem. Would she turn up to befriend him to-morrow morning at that supreme moment, or to confront and denounce him as a convicted conspirator?

He had played for a terrible stake, and lost. If Olga forsook him, all was ﬁnished indeed, and Owen would be at Alexis Selistoff's mercy.