

why he came there. Low as they two had spoken, he couldn't conceal from himself the fact that they must have heard him acknowledge he was Ruric Brassoﬀ.

The good-humoured commercial traveller stepped forward with an air of authority as soon as the chief prisoner was safely pinioned, and laid his hand hard on his captive's shoulder.

'Prince Ruric Brassoﬀ,' he said, in a formal voice, 'I arrest your Excellency on a charge of conspiracy against his Most Sacred and Most Orthodox Majesty, the Czar of All the Russias.'

'Traitor!' Ruric Brassoﬀ answered, turning upon him with a face of the utmost contempt and loathing. 'Vile spy and reptile, I'm ashamed of having spoken to you.'

The commercial gentleman smiled blandly and good-humouredly.

'Your own fault,' he said, with a quiet air of official triumph. 'You let yourself in for it. You should choose your acquaintances better. My name is Nikita, chief clerk and secretary to General Alexis Selistoff.'

He turned to his second prisoner.

'Michael Fomenko, author and journalist,' he said, in the same formal voice, 'I arrest you as an accomplice of Prince Ruric Brassoﬀ in his conspiracy against his Most Sacred and Most Orthodox Majesty.'

Fomenko, white as a sheet, stood still and answered nothing. His horror was all for the arrest and betrayal of Ruric Brassoﬀ.

The soldiers gripped their arms. Two stood in front of each, two behind, two beside them. Nikita turned triumphant to the gentlemanly lodger next door.

'I think, Major and Count,' he said, smiling, 'we may really congratulate ourselves upon having effected this important and difficult arrest without trouble or bloodshed.'

The Count bowed and nodded. He was all polite acquiescence.

'And especially on having secured this incriminating document,' he said, turning it over.

Ruric Brassoﬀ glanced round in a ferment of horror, for Owen's sake. The Count held the envelope in his