

hour later, as she gazed out of the window, still on the look-out for her Chief, she saw the man himself hustled into a sleigh between two brutal soldiers, a prisoner for his life, with his arms tied behind him. Then she hurried away breathless to the Kremlin, all on fire, to await Alexis Selistoff's arrival from St. Petersburg, and to ask leave to be present at his interview with the arch-conspirator.

These things Olga Mireff turned over with bewilderment in her own whirling brain as the sleigh hurried her on over the yielding snow through the streets of Moscow.

At her hotel it drew up short. The *dvornik* came out and received her courteously. A very great lady, Olga Mireff, in Russia; a close friend of the Czar's and of Alexis Selistoff's. Had she heard the news of the General's death? Olga Mireff started. Why, it was there before her! Yes, yes—impatiently—she had heard it, of course; was there herself at the time; would be a witness at the inquiry; had seen and recognised Prince Ruric Brassoﬀ. The *dvornik* bowed low, but turned pale at the same time.

'Is Prince Brassoﬀ dead, too, then?' he asked, with a tremor in his voice.

In a second, with feminine instinct, Olga Mireff turned on him. She had caught at the profound undercurrent of hidden sympathy and interest in the man's words and tone.

'Why, are you of ours?' she asked low, in a ferment of surprise, giving a Nihilist password.

The man started and stared.

'And you?' he asked, half terrified.

Olga Mireff pointed with pride to the spots of red blood on her skirt and bodice.

'Ruric Brassoﬀ's,' she said hurriedly. 'I gave him the pistol to shoot with. It's here, in my bosom. I was one with the martyr. See here, I can trust you. I need your aid. It was I who helped him to kill the creature Selistoff. He gave me a dying commission to carry out. When it's done, with that same pistol, I, too, shall free myself from this hateful despotism. Come to my room, *dvornik*, in ten minutes from now. I shall want you to