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## CHAPTER EIGHT

OT a window of the fourteenth century yellow with its famous garden of the nine fountains.

that was not ablaze with life." light, glittering against a faraway background of violet mountains crowned by

Outside the tall bronze gates where marble lions crouched the crowd that might not pass beyond stared, chattered, pointed and exclaimed without jealousy of their betters. Unser Leo was giving a ball, and it was enough for their happiness to watch the slow moving line of splendid state coaches, gorgeous automobiles and neat broughams with well known crests upon their doors; to strive good naturedly for a peep at the faces and dresses, the jewels and picturesque uniforms; to comment upon all freely, but never impudently, asking one another what would be for supper and with whom the emperor would dance.

"There she is-there's the beautiful young foreign lady who saved him!" cried a girl in the throng. "I was there and saw her, I tell you. Isn't she an angel?"

Instantly a hearty cheer went up, growing in volume, and the green coated policemen had to keep back the crowd that would have stopped the horses and pressed close for a long look into a plain dark blue brougham.

Virginia shrank out of sight against the cushions, blushing and breathing quickly as she caught her mother's hand.

"Dear people-dear, kind people!" she thought. "I love them for loving him. I wonder, oh, I wonder, if they will ever see me and cheer me driving by his side!"

She had chosen to wear the white dress with the pearls, though up to the last moment the grand duchess had suffered tortures of Indecision between that and the blue, to say nothing of a difference. As for what she did," went pink chiffon trimmed with crushed roses. Before the carriage brought them to the palace doors the girl's blush had faded, and her face was as white as her gown when at her mother's side she passed between bowing lackeys through the marble Hall of Lions, on through the frescoed Rittersaal to the throne room, where the emperor's guests awaited his coming.

It was etiquette not to arrive a moment later than 10 o'clock, and a few minutes after the hour Baron von Lyndal in his official capacity as grand master of ceremonies struck the polished floor twice with his gold knobbed wand of ivory. This signaled the approach of the court from the imperial dinner party, and Leopold entered, with a stout, middle aged royal highness from Russia on his arm.

Until his arrival the beautiful Miss av had held all when he appeared she was not forgotten. Every one was on tenterhooks to see how she would be greeted by the grateful emperor.

The instant that his dark head towered above other heads in the throne room it was observed even by those not usually observant that never had Leonold been so handsome.

His was a face remarkable for intellect and firmness rather than for classical beauty of feature, though his features were strong and clearly cut. But tonight the sternness that sometimes marred them in the eyes of women was smoothed away. He looked young and ardent, almost boyish, like a man who has suddenly found an absorbing new interest in life.

The first dance he went through with the Russian royalty, who was the guest of the evening, and, still rigidly conforming to the line of duty, which obtains in court ballrooms as on battlefields, the second, third and fourth dances were for the emperor penances instead of pleasures. But for the fifth, a waltz, he bowed before Virginia.

During this long hour there had been hardly a movement, smile or glance of hers which he had not contrived to see since his entrance. He knew just how well Baron von Lyndal carried out his Instructions concerning Miss Mowbray. He saw each partner presented to her for a dance the emperor might not claim, and to save his life or a national crisis he could not have forced the same expression in speaking with her royal highness from Russia as that which spontaneously brightened his face when at last he approached Vir-

ginia "Who is that girl?" asked Count von Breitstein in his usual abrupt manner as the arm of Leopold girdled the slim waist of the princess and the eyes of Leopold drank light from another pair of eyes lifted to his in laughter.

I; was to Baroness von Lyndal that the old chancellor put his question, and she fluttered a tiny diamond spangled fan of lace to hide lips that would smile as she answered, "What, chancellor, are you jesting, or don't you really know who that girl is?"

Count von Breitstein turned eyes cold and gray as glass away from the

the music to the face of the once celebrated beauty. Long ago he had admired Baroness von Lyndal as passionately as it was in him to admire any woman, but that day was so far dis tant as to be remembered with scorn. and now such power as she had over him was merely to excite a feeling of irritation.

"I seldom trouble myself to jest," he answered.

"Ah, one knows that truly great men are born without a sense of humor. Those who have it are never as successful in life as those without," a Hungarian and loved laughter better than anything else except compliments upon her vanishing beauty. "How stupid of me to have tried your patience! "That girl," as you so uncompromisingly call her, has two claims to attention at court. She is the English Miss Helen Mowbray whose mother has come to Kronburg armed with sheaves of introductions marble palace on the hill, to us all. She is also the young wom- it were to further some cause of his an of whom the papers are full today, for it is she who saved the emperor's

"Indeed!" said the chancellor, a gray gleam in his eye as he watched the Really, said the baroness to herself, white figure floating on the tide of there was an actual remblance in music in the arms of Leopold. "Inmusic in the arms of Leopold. "Indeed!"

"I thought you would have known, for you know most things before other people hear of them," went on the baroness. "Lady Mowbray and her daughter are staying at the Hohenlangenwald hotel. That's the mother sitting on the left of Princess Neufried-the pretty Dresden china person. But the girl is a great beauty.

"It's generous of you to say so, baroness," replied the chancellor. didn't see the young lady's face at all clearly yesterday. I was stationed too far away. And dress makes a great



"Who is that girl?"

on the old man, whose coldness to women and merclless justice to both sexes altke had earned him the nickname of "Iron Heart"-"as for what she did, if it had not been she who intervened between the emperor and death it would have been the fate of another to do emperor has no youth in his veins." It was a fortunate thing for the girl, we may say, that it happened to I do think is that my teachings have be her arm which struck up the weapon.'

"Or she wouldn't be here tonight, you mean," laughed the baroness. Don't you think, then, that his majesty is right to single her out for so much honor?" Her eyes were on the dancers, yet that mysterious skill slightest change of expression, if there were any, on the chancellor's square, lined face.

"His majesty is always right," he rements, a call to pay his respects-a gentleman could not be less gracious. And his majesty is one of the first gentlemen in Europe."

do and what not to do." The baroness flung her little sop of flattery to Cerberus with a dainty ghost of a bow for the man who had been as a second father to Leopold since the late emnever's death "But-we're old friends, chanceflor"-she was not to blame that they had not been more in the days before she became Baroness von Lyn- the man in abundance during her twendal-"so, tell me, can you look at the ty-two years at the Rhaetian court, girl's face and the emperor's and still say that everything will end with an invitation, a dance, some compliments and a call to pay respects?"

Iron Heart frowned and sneered. wondering what he could have seen twenty-two years ago to admire in this flighty woman. He would have escaped from her now if escape had been feasible, but he could not be openly rude to the wife of the grand master of ceremonies at the emperor's ball, and, besides, he was not unwilling perhaps to show the lady that her sentimental and unsuitable innuendos were as the buzzing of a fly about his ears.

"I'm close upon seventy and no longer a fair judge of a woman's attractions," he returned carelessly. "A look at her face conveys nothing to me, but were she Helen of Troy instead of he should be. I suppose even that if, Helen Mowbray the invitation, the being but a young man and having the dance, the compliments and the call, with the present of some jeweled sou- into a primrose path you would take venir, are all that are permissible in the circumstances."

"What circumstances?" and the baroness looked as innocent as an inquir-

ing chlid. "The lady is not of royal blood, and his majesty, I thank heaven, is not a roue.'

"He has a heart, though you trained him, chancellor, and he has eyes. He may never have used them to much away a woman's paint and powder and purpose before, yet there must be a coldly counts the wrinkles underneath. first time, and, the higher and more "I must have misunderstood you, then, strongly built the tower, once it begins a moment ago," he said. "I thought to topple the greater is the fall thereof."

"Is it the sense of humor, which you round, madam." say I lack, that gives you pleasure in two figures moving "" mically with Cocuseing the wildest improbabilities What can one do at a ball when one

neither of us is the emperor's keeper."

"We're at least his very good friends, chancellor, and you and I have known amuses me to discuss improbabilities. why not? Since you call them improbabilities it can do no harm to dwell upon them as ingredients for romance. Not for worlds would I suggest that his majesty isn't an example for all men to follow nor that poor, pretty smiled the baroness, who was by birth Miss Mowbray could be tempted to indiscretion, but yet I'd be ready to make a wager, the emperor being human and the girl a beauty, that an acquaintance so romantically begun won't end with a ball and a call."

"What could there possibly be more, or what you hint at as more, in honor?"

The chancellor's voice was angry at last as well as stern, for he could not bear persistence in other people unless own. To the delight of the woman who had once tried in vain to melt his Iron heart, Count von Breitstein began to look somewhat like a baited bull. few more little ribbon tipped banderillos.

What fun it was to ruffle the temper of the surly old brute who had humiliated her woman's vanity in days long past, but not forgotten! She knew the chancellor's desire for the emperor's marriage as soon as a suitable match could be found and, though she was not in the secret of his plans. would have felt little surprise at learning that some eligible royal girl had already been selected. Now how amusing it would be actually to make the old man tremble for the success of his hopes, even if it should turn out in the end to be impossible or undesirable to upset them!

"What could there be more in honor?" she echoed lightly after an instant given to reflection. "Why, the emperor and the girl will see a great deal of each other unless you banish or imprison the Mowbrays. There'll be many dances together, many callsin fact, a serial romance instead of a short story. Why shouldn't his majesty know the pleasure of a-platonic friendship with a beautiful and charming young woman?"

"Because Plato's out of fashion, if ever he was in, among human beings with red blood in their veins and because, as I said, the emperor is above all else a man of honor. Besides, I doubt that any woman, no matter how pretty or young, could wield a really powerful influence over his life."

"You doubt that? Then you don't know the emperor and you've forgotten some of the traditions of his house."

"Are you trying to warn me of disaster, baroness?

She laughed. "Oh, dear, no-of nothing disagreeable! But I should be sorry to think, as you seem to do, that our

"I think nothing of the sort. What not been in vain and that he has grown up to put his duty to his country and his own self respect above everything. He's a strong man-too strong to be trapped in the meshes of any pink and white Vivien. And if he admired a young woman not of royal blood he would keep his distance for her sake. which most women of the world have You say this English miss is with her learned taught her how not to miss the mother at the principal hotel of Kronburg. If Leopold constantly visited them there we should have a scandal. On the other hand, to suggest meeting saved his life."

Baroness von Lyndal's color rallied to the support of her rouge, and her smile dwindled to inanity, for she had "He has had good training what to insisted upon the argument, and it was going against her.

In her haste to vex the chancellor she had not stopped to study from every side the question she had raised. So far she had merely succeeded in irritating him, and she owed him much more than a pin prick. Such infinitesimal wounds she had contrived to give but now, if she hurt him at all, she would like the stab to be deep and memorable.

To be sure, in beginning the conversation she had thought of nothing more than a momentary gratification, but the very heat of the argument into which she had thrown herself had had been uttered he would stand to his warmed her malice and sharpened the weapon of her wit. She could justify her expressed opinion only by events, and it occurred to her that she might be able to shape events in such a way that she could say with eyes if not in words, "I told you so."

Her fading smile brightened. "Dear chancellor, you do well to have faith it." in your imperial pupil," said she. You've helped to make him what he is, and you're ready to keep him what hot blood of his race, he should stray advantage of old friendship to erput up signposts and barriers?"

"Were there the slightest chance of such necessity arising," grumbled the chancellor, shrugging his shoulders.

"It's like your integrity and courage. What a comfort, then, that the necessity is so unlikely to arise!"

The old man looked at her with level gaze, the ruthless look that brushes your argument was all the other way

"I told you I was amusing myself. gether.

as if they were events to be consider- has reached the age when it would be He kept it. He will always keep it. you once more, whatever comes." ed seriously? If it is I'm not sorry to foolish to dance? Why, I believe that lack it. In any case, it's well that Lady Mowbray and her daughter are not remaining long in Kronburg."

you as well as I in my humbler way. she had given the chancellor a few uneasy moments, for his eyes brightened each other for twenty-two years. If it visibly with relief. "Ah," he returned, "then they are going out of Rhaetia?" "Not exactly that," said the baroness

slowly, pleasantly and distinctly. hear that they've been asked to the country to visit one of his majesty's oldest friends." Leopoid was not supposed to care for

dancing, though he danced-as it was

his pride to do all things-well. Certainly there was often a perfunctoriness about his manner in a ballroom. a suggestion of the soldler on duty in his unsmiling face and his readiness

to lead a partner to her seat when a dance was over.

But tonight a new Leopold moved to the music. A girl's white arm on his -that slender arm which had been quick and firm as a man's in his defense-the perfume of a girl's hair and the gold glints upon it, the shadow of a girl's dark lashes and the light in a pair of gray eyes when they were lifted, the beating of a girl's heart near him, the springtime grace of a girl's sweet youth in its contrast with the voluptuous summer of Rhaetian types of beauty, the warm rose that spread pward from a girl's childlike dimples to the womanly arch of her brows-all these charms and more which rendered one girl a hundred times adorable took hold of him and made him not an emperor, but a man, unarmored.

When the music ceased he fancied for an instant that some accident had befallen the musicians. Then when he realized that the end of the dance had come in its due time he remembered with pleasure a rule of his court established in the days of those who had been before him. After each dance an interval of ten minutes was allowed before the beginning of another. Ten minutes are not much to a man who has things to say which could hardly be said in ten hours. Still, they are something, and to waste even one would be like spilling a drop of preclous elixir from a tiny bottle containing but nine other drops.

They had scarcely spoken yet, except for commonplaces which any one might have overheard, since the day on the mountain, and in this first moment of the ten each was wondering whether or no that day should be ignored between them. Leopold did not feel that it should be spoken of, for it was possible that the girl did not recognize the chamois hunter in the emperor, and Virginia did not feel that she could speak of it. But, then, few things turn out as people feel they

Next to the throne room was the ballroom, and beyond was another known as the waldsaal, which Leopold had fitted up for the gratification of a fancy. It was named the waldsaal because it represented a wood. Walls and ceiling were masked with thick growing creepers trained over invisible wires, through which peeped stars of electric light, like the check erings of sunshine between netted branches. Trees grew up, with their roots in boxes hidden beneath the moss covered floor. There were grottoes of ivy draped rock in the corners. and here and there, out from leafy shadows, glittered the glass eyes of birds and animals-eagles, stags, chamois, wolves and bears-which the em

peror had shot. This strange room, so vast as to seem empty when dozens of people wandered beneath its trees and among its rock grottoes, was thrown open to the girl outside or incognito would be guests whenever a ball was given at plied diplomatically. "An invitation to an insult. Either way he would be the palace, but the conservatories and a ball, a dance or two, a few compli- but poorly rewarding a woman who palm houses were more popular, and when Leopold brought Miss Mowbray to the waldsnal after their dance it was in the hope that they might not be disturbed

She was lovelier than ever in her white dress under the trees, looking up at him with a wonderful look in her eyes, and the young man's calmness was mastered by the beating of his blood.

"This is a kind of madness," he said to himself. "It will pass. It must Dibss." And aloud, meaning all the while to say something different and a man speaks in a dream. commonplace, the real words in his mind broke through the crust of conventionality, "Why did you do it?"

Virginia's eyes widened. "I don't understand." Then, in an instant, she found that she did understand. She knew, too, that the question had asked itself in spite of him, but that once it guns

"I mean the thing I shall have to thank you for always.

If Virginia had had time to think she might have prepared some pretty answer; but, there being no time, her response came, as his question had, from the heart, "I couldn't help doing

"You couldn't help risking your life to"- He dared not finish. "It was to save"- Nor was then

any end for her sentence. Then perhaps it was not strange that he forgot certain restrictions which a royal man in conversing with a commoner is not supposed to forget. In fact, he forgot that he was royal or that she was not, and his voice grew unsteady, his tone eager, as if he had been some poor subaltern with the girl of his first love.

"There's something I must show you." he said. Opening a button of the military coat blazing with jewels and orders, he drew out a loop of thin gold chain. At the end dangled a small bright thing that flashed under a star of electric light.

"My ring!" breathed Virginia. Thus died the emperor's intention to ignore the day that had been theirs to-

"Your ring! You give it to Leo

Have I surprised you?"

Virginia felt it would be best to say "Yes," but instead she answered "No, At last she was able to judge that for pretty white fibs cannot be told under such a look in a man's eyes by a girl who loves him.

"I have not? When did you guess the truth-yesterday or"-

"At Alleheiligen."

Silence fell for a minute, while Leopold digested the answer and its full meaning. He remembered the bread and ham, the cow he could not milk, the rucksacks he had carried. He remembered everything and laughed.

"You knew at Allehelligen? Not on the mountain when"-

"Yes, I guessed even then, I confess, Oh, I don't mean that I went there ex-



"My ring!" breathed Virginia.

pecting to find you. I didn't. I think I shouldn't have gone had I known. Every one believed you were at Melinabad, but when I tumbled down and you saved me I looked up and-of course I'd seen your picture, and one reads in the papers that you're fond of chamois hunting. I couldn't help guessing. Oh, I'm sorry you asked me this!' "Why?"

"Because one might have to be afraid of an emperor if he were angry."

"Do I look angry?"

Their eyes met again, laughing at first, then each finding unexpected depths in those of the other which drove away laughter. Something in Leopold's breast seemed alive and struggling to be free from restraint, like a fierce wild bird. He shut his lips tightly, breathing hard. Both forgot that a question had been asked, but it was Virginia who spoke first, since it is easier for a woman than a man to hide feeling.

"I wonder why you kept the ring after my-impertinence."

"I had a good reason for keeping it." "Won't you tell me?"

"You're quick at forming conclusions, Miss Mowbray. Can't you guess?"

"To remind you to beware of strange young women on mountains." "No."

"Because your own picture is inside?"

"It was a better reason than that."

"Am I not to ask it?" "On that day you asked what you chose. All the more should you do so now, since there's nothing I could re-

fuse you." "Not the half of your kingdom, like the royal men in fairy stories?"

As soon as the words were out Virginia would have given much to have them back. She had not thought of a meaning they might convey, but she tried not to blush lest he should think of it now. Nevertheless he did think of it, and the light words, striking a chord they had not aimed to touch, went echoing on and on till they reached that part of himself which the emperor knew least about-his heart.

"Half his kingdom?" Yes, he would give it to this girl if he could. Heavens, what it would be to share it with her!

"Ask anything you will," he said as

"Then tell me-why you kept the ring."

"Because the only woman I ever cared-to make my friend took it from her finger and gave it to me.

"Now the emperor is pleased to pay compliments."

"You know I am sincere." "But you'd seen me only for an hour Instead of deserving your friendship.

I'm afraid I"-"For one hour? That's true. And how long ago is that one hour? A week or so, I suppose, as time counts. But then came yesterday and the thing you did for me. Now I've

known you always."

"If you had, perhaps you wouldn't want me for your friend." "I do want you."

The words would come. It was true already. He did want her, but not as a friend. His world-a world without women, without passion fiery enough to devour principles or traditions-was upside down.

It was well that the ten minutes' grace between dances was over and the music for the next about to begin. A young officer, Count von Breitstein's half brother, who was to be Miss Mowbray's partner, appeared in the distance looking for her, but stopped,

seeing that she was still with the emperor. "Goodby," said Virginia while her

words could still be only for the ears of Leopold. "Not goodby. We're friends,"

"Yes. But we shan't meet often." "Why? Are you leaving Kronburg? "Perhaps-soon. I don't know."

"Once more, perhaps. I hope so,

"After that"-

"Who knows?" "Once more-once more!" The words echoed in Virginia's ears. She heard them through everything, as one hears the undertone of a mountain torrent, though a brass band may bray to drown its deep music.

Once more he would see her, whatever might come. She could guess why it might be only once, though he would fain have that once again and again repeated, for this game of hers, begun with such a light heart, was more difficult to play than she had dreamed.

If she could but be sure he cared, if he would tell her so in words and not with eyes alone, the rest might be easy, although at best she could not see the end. Yet how in honor could he tell Miss Helen Mowbray that he cared? And if the telling were not to be in honor how could she bear to live her life?

"Once more!" What would happen in that "once more?" Perhaps nothing save a repetition of grateful thanks and courteous words akin to a farewell.

To be sure, Lady Mowbray and her daughter might run away and the negotiations between the emperor's advisers and the Grand Duchess of Baumenburg-Drippe for the Princess Virginia's hand might be allowed to go on as if no outside influence had ruffled the peaceful current of events. Then in the end a surprise would come for Leopold. Willful Virginia would have played her little comedy, and all might be said to end well. But Virginia's heart refused to be satisfied with so tame a last chapter, a finish to her romance so conventional as to be distastefully obvious, almost if not quite a failure,

She had begun to drink a sweet and stimulating draft-she who had been brought up on milk and water-and she was reluctant to put down the cup, still half full of sparkling nectar.

"Once more!" If only that once could be magnified into many times. If she could have her chance, her "fling," like the lucky girls who were not royal!

So she was thinking in the carriage by her mother's side, and the grand duchess had to speak twice before her daughter knew their silence had been broken.

"I forgot to tell you something, Virginfa."

"Ye-es, mother?"

"Your great success has made me absentminded, child. You looked like a shining white lily among all those handsome, overblown Rhaetian women."

"Thank you, dear. Was that what you forgot to say?"

"Oh, no! It was this: The Baroness von Lyndal has been most kind. She urges us to give up our rooms at the hotel on the first of next week and join her house party at Schloss Lyndalberg. It's only a few miles out of What do you think of the town. plan?"

"Leave-Kronburg?"

"She's asked a number of friends-to meet the emperor." "Oh! He didn't speak of it-when

we danced." "But she has mentioned it to him since, no doubt-before giving me the invitation. Intimate friend of his as she is, she wouldn't dare ask people to meet him if he hadn't first sanctioned the suggestion. Still, she can afford to

be more or less informal. The baroness was dancing with the empero:, I remember now, just before she came to me. They were talking together quite earnestly. I can recall the expression of his face." "Was it pleased, or"-

"I was wondering what she could have said to make him look so happy. Perhaps"-"What answer did you give Baroness

von Lyndal?" "I told her I thought you wouldn't mind. I told her we would go."

[TO BE CONTINUED.] Here comes the Spring Winds to chap, tan and freckle. Use Pinesalve Carbolized. (Acts like a poultice) for cuts, sores, burns, chapped skin.

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