



"Soon I shall be with you again, to celebrate another victory," he said. "And you will help me"

By Eleanor Mercein

ILLUSTRATED BY C. C. BEALL

A memorable romance and an unforgettable tragedy,
against the grim background of the terror in Poland

THE aging Princess Anastasia Leczinski, bored with waiting for something to happen in the Ulica Kanonji, that curve of ancient noble houses in the shelter of Warsaw's cathedral close, called one morning for her blond Paris wig, two new spades and her town victoria. Having been awakened early by the passing tramp of citizens from the near-by market district on their way to dig defense trenches, it had occurred to her that the moment was ripe to set an example of proper citizenship in higher quarters.

"But, chère madame," protested her young companion in some anxiety, "surely you do not contemplate handling a spade yourself?"

"And why not? I have never been one to concede in any respect the superiority of the male sex," replied the old lady, hardily. "However, it is all, of course, mere hysterical poppycock; my nephew Wladimir and his sons would never permit the enemy to approach so close."

The girl Tamara started to say something, at which the old valet, Fedor, shook his head. Princess Anastasia's whim at present was to ignore all unpleasant facts, on the principle that nothing exists until it is named.

The outdated elegance of the princess' equipage excited unusual attention along crowded Marszalkowska Street, its high-stepping cobs in their jangling harness, its quiet liveries on the box and the two ladies, one with a palsied head shaking constantly in its bright gold wig, the other very young and shy, each with a gloved hand resting conspicuously on a spade handle. All of them, including the horses, were supplied with dangling gas masks against emergency.

Everywhere their passage was marked with pleasure, even with sporadic cheers—Poles being always appreciative of a fine gesture. "Ah, it appears one is not yet forgotten here!" commented the princess complacently, adding with acerbity, "Why do you blush,

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my girl? It is not you they recognize!"

Tamara started. She had been looking about, as always in any crowd, for the face of a certain young American friend; and blushing at her own thoughts.

The street, always busy, was almost impassable that morning. "But what occurs?" demanded the old lady. "Do we celebrate some civic occasion? Where are all these people going?"

"Anywhere, madame, out of Warsaw," murmured the girl; and added, greatly daring, "as we should be going ourselves, while there is yet time."

"Ha!" said the other, her mad old eyes a gleam. "Rats that desert the sinking ship, eh?" She paused abruptly, shocked by her own suggestion.

She was reassured, on reaching the scene of action, to find that others of her acquaintance had conceived the idea of setting humbler citizenry an example. Among them she noted the fashionable Countess Czapska, with her usual attendant, Pan Waclaw Chaluski.

THE city's mayor, hero of his brief hour, came to kiss Princess Anastasia's hand, and to conduct her and Tamara ceremonially toward an excavation into the side of which she thrust, under his direction, a quite vigorous spade. The onlookers applauded.

"And who," Pan Waclaw asked the countess, adjusting a monocle to his eye, "is the princess' present keeper-companion? Ah, to be sure, the foundling protégée. Quite lovely, really! How she grows to resemble Anastasia's handsome nephew, Victor."

"Fie, fie, Chaluski, such indelicacy!" chided the countess, smiling. "You know, many believe that Prince Victor married his little friend before he went off to be killed in the wars—though the family, of course, do not admit it. Rather amusing of the old spinster to challenge convention so, at this late date!"

"A Leczinski," he observed, "creates her own conventions. Especially Anastasia. But what a day to choose for a public appearance! Can it be that she has not heard—? I must go and send them away."

Princess Anastasia received him, as always, with much pleasure, finding in this fastidious dilettante of fashion, equally at home on the battlefield or in the drawing room, a suave and charming ferocity of nature that met with congenial qualities in herself.

"It seems natural, Chaluski, *mon cher*, to see you again in uniform," she greeted him. "But why not at the front?"

"Has it not occurred to you, *ma chère*, that Warsaw is the front?"

"Absurd!" She shrugged. "No doubt my nephew's forces have retreated temporarily in order to outmaneuver the enemy. Once arrived at the Vistula—"

"The enemy," he said quietly, "crossed the Vistula some time since. And what, one wonders," he added with sudden sternness, "are you yourself doing in Warsaw, Princess, rather than at the front—your own front? With all young men mobilized, and the castle closed, to whom shall your peasantry turn for protection, when the enemy arrives?"

"So!" A gleam that he was watching for appeared in the senescent eyes. "Fedor, take away this silly shovel, and get me to my carriage. We have other things to occupy us than theatricals, it seems."

The girl Tamara, following with Pan Waclaw, said in a low voice, "My thanks, Monsieur le Colonel, for accomplishing the impossible."

He replied, "You made a mistake not to tell her the full truth, mademoiselle. She is less mad, at times, than people fancy."

The girl said desperately, "I know. But she is very difficult. All of us—servants, doctors, her present favorite, the cousin from America—have tried in vain to persuade her at least to retire to the country. Monsieur Stefan has offered to drive us, at any hour, in a car borrowed from the American embassy."

"So, the American relative still remains? That is foolish of Mr. Stefan Elliott! One wonders why?" He put up his monocle to inspect her blush, and dropped it, smiling. Then, leaning over the carriage door, he kissed the withered hand of the princess lifted to him. "Do not, most cherished of sporting comrades, delay your departure for the place where you will assuredly be needed. Remember when the enemy appears, it will be well to hover under the castle wing all young virgins of the neighborhood. The Germans are also indefatigable colonizers."

She tapped his sleeve with an appreciative nicker of laughter. "*Tiens, mon cher*, you quite alarm me! Do you suppose that I myself shall be safe from their colonizing attentions?"

"Only," he assured her gallantly, "because the Teutonic taste in such matters is perhaps less discerning than our own."

Evening headlines bore the account of the death that day of Colonel Waclaw Chaluski, together with many less illustrious citizens and soldiers, caught at their trench digging by German bombing planes. Among them was also the name of Wanda, Countess Czapska. But Princess Anastasia was spared knowledge of this, being already on her way to the country in an embassy car driven by the American cousin.

STEPHEN, because of his connection with this powerful family through Polish ancestry of his mother's, had been frequently entertained at Princess Anastasia's country seat. But he came to it now, out of the extreme nervous tension of a city under siege, as into a sort of still enchantment, seeing with spelled eyes the sun-dappled vistas of wooded park, where fallow deer paused to gaze at them, unafraid, out of shy, soft eyes like the girl Tamara's.

The house in the center of this gothic woodland was not, however, the antique castle it should have been, but merely a tall, rather ugly red brick mansion. Across the courtyard stood an older, simpler building, used now as a guest house; and from kennels at the rear rose a deep-throated baying of stag hounds. A priest in a black silk cassock came to welcome them, with several curtsying elderly maidservants.

"You come in a good hour, my daughter. The peasants frighten themselves. They say that the Russians are coming again."

"Russians? Absurd! That barbarism at least we are spared. No, no, this time it is merely Germans, who are, one must suppose, a fairly civilized enemy. You remember that my own half sister, Natalie, married into a German house, where she pined away from lack of congenial society—in fact, she died of it," she added cheerfully; and went on into the house, commanding tea.

Stephen Elliott left the two ladies that evening with some relief, albeit with reluctance. There was a reassuring sense of security about the house, with its fringed, overstuffed furniture, and faded photographs, and other family memorabilia, that reminded him nostalgically of his own grandparents' place on the Hudson; although here the walls bristled with hunting trophies, antlers, elk heads, horns of chamois and the like, which were the result of Princess Anastasia's

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What she said they did not afterwards remember; only the impact of her voice, and the quite mad glitter in her eyes

By all the rules of politics, Robert A. Taft should always come in second best. Nevertheless, he is one of the best vote-wranglers in the country. And his eyes are focused on the Philadelphia convention

IT WAS while the loving understanding that had bound Theodore Roosevelt to William Howard Taft was dissolving that the former galumphed into the White House one day thirsting for jabberwock blood. Mr. Taft, who was ceasing rapidly to be Theodore's beamish boy, had slowed down his presidential progress to a cautious trudge and Theodore, his political creator, was not happy.

"Will," barked Theodore, "what are you afraid of? Why this everlasting middle-of-the-roading? By George, Will, if I didn't know you I'd think—"

Whereat the vast Mr. Taft, whom the crown of Roosevelt the First fitted like a five-and-ten toupee and to whom crusading held something less than irresistible appeal, smiled indulgently upon his ever-lathered predecessor.

"Theodore," said he, "with demons on the right and angels on the left where else shall a man seek sanity? Besides, I'm not built for stomping through thickets."

Today, with well-bred eagerness, Mr. Taft's elder son, Robert Alphonso, is to be seen and heard plodding up the middle of the White House turnpike, resolutely prepared to give battle to two major jabberwocks ahead. To win the Republican nomination he must convince the furious conservatives that he'd slay the New Deal and present them with the creature's head. Should he be nominated he must convince the voting masses, if he hopes to be President, that he won't. And Senator Taft is no hand at two-timing. He's just about as subtle as a load of buckshot.

If he gets as far as November's voting and emerges second best—well, nobody's face is going to be redder than his. His best friends (he has an almost irreducible minimum of close ones) hasten to admit it. Should he be defeated in November, they see him returning to his leathery law offices in Cincinnati to look back upon a campaign wherein he lent himself to publicity stunts as foreign to his true nature as the role of leading man at Minsky's. And he'll probably be violently ill.

Well-equipped but Has No Glamour

However, before casting Robert Alphonso Taft's November horoscope it might be wise to see what happens to him in June. In spite of polls, if you'll accept the majority opinion of Republican national committeemen, his chances of nomination are encouraging. There are those who could wish that he had more color, more political chic, more shine. These, saying that the party is reeking with brains but lacks a showman, incline toward Mr. Dewey, although admitting that Senator Taft is far better equipped. Senator Taft has all the glamour of a pint of branch water and he's rather proud of it.

"The trouble with glamour," he told us, "is what's so frequently underneath it."

"What?"

"Too little," sighed he.

So he's a middle-roader like his father, seeking the presidency because he thinks he has what the country needs even if it turns out that he hasn't what it takes. As there are those anti-New-Dealers who lament his lack of oomph, zowie and smacko, there are others who fear that he has too much tolerance for the dreadful things that have been going on in Washington during the past seven years, six months. Among them are mourners of the dear old dead days who, throwing caution to the winds, accuse him of being a liberal. Senator Taft thinks so too.

For years in private (and publicly as long ago as 1936 when there was some Ohio small talk of his being Mr. Landon's teammate), he announced himself for virtually everything advocated today by Dr. Glenn Frank's Republican Program Committee and much more succinctly and clearly. In ten almost crisp answers to ten comprehensive questions he said everything that Doctor Frank used 33,000 words to write. Two years later those ten (Continued on page 32)

BASHFUL BUCKEYE

By Walter Davenport

