Long Live the King

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COUNTESS LOSCHEK'S SECRET MESSAGE CAUSES A LOT OF TROUBLE FOR SEVERAL PEOPLE

Synopsis.-The crown prince of Livonia, Ferdinand William Otto, ten years old, taken to the opera by his aunt, tires of the singing and slips away to the park, where he makes the acquaintance of Bobby Thorpe, a little American boy. Returning to the palace at night, he finds everything in an uproar as a result of the search which has been made for him. The same night the chancellor calls to consult the boy's grandfather, the old king, who is very ill. The chancellor suggests that to preserve the kingdom, which is threatened by plots of the terrorists to form a republic, the friendship of the neighboring kingdom of Karnia be secured by giving the Princess Hedwig in marriage to King Karl of that country. Countess Loschek, lady-in-waiting to Princess Annunciata, Hedwig's mother, is in love with King Karl and plots to prevent his marriage to Hedwig. She sends a secret message to King Karl.

CHAPTER V.-Continued.

"Mother, you cannot look back, and Am I never to have any friends?" -and remember your own life, and allow me to be wretched. You can- friends, of course. It is not friendship translated most of his motions into lying dead in the street. That man

Hedwig began to cry. silly," she said coldly. "You have al- realize-"

ways known that something of the sort was inevitable." She moved toward the door. The is in love with you." two princesses and her lady in wait- "How silly!" said the Princess Hed-

ing remained still until she had left wig, with glowing eyes, the table. Then they fell in behind her, and the little procession moved to ess. "If only you would use a little the stuffy bouldoir, for coffee. But caution. Open defiance is its own defell behind. But the wind was tricky, Hilda slipped her arm around her sis- feat." ter's waist, and the touch comforted "I am not ashamed of what I do," into a stone archway, lighted his Hedwig.

ing. She went slowly to a window, she smiled grimly in the darkness, loquacious one went down. Instantly and stood gazing out. Looming against "not so old myself but that I can un- a huge figure of a man outlined against the sky-line, in the very center of the derstand." place, was the heroic figure of her dead Hedwig stood still. The old city was over the prostrate form of the fallen grandmother. She fell to wondering preparing for sleep. In the place a man. Even in the imperceptible secabout these royal women who had pre- few lovers loitered, standing close, and ond before he started to run toward ceded. Her mother, frankly unhappy the faint tinkling of a bell told of the the group, Nikky saw that the silent In her marriage, permanently embit- Blessed Sacrament being carried one, unmolested, was looking on. not picture him as a lover. To her bowed her head. he was a fine and lonely figure. But It seemed to her, all at once, that bristled with excitement. He flung out "I see!" remantic? Had he ever been roman; the world was full of wretchedness and arms that were both furious and

She slipped out onto the balcony be worse than death. and closed the curtains behind her. "I wish I could help you, highness," darkness she saw that there was some see you happy. But happiness does burg. one below, under the trees. Her heart not come of itself. We must fight for beat rapidly. In a moment she was it." certain. It was Nikky down there, "Fight? What chance have I to Nikky, gazing up at her as a child may fight?" Hedwig asked scornfully. look at a star. With a quick gesture "One thing, of course, I could do," Hedwig drew the curtain back. A pursued the countess. "On those days thin ray of light fell on her, on her when you wish to have tea with-his slim bare arms, on her light draperies, royal highness, I could arrange, peron her young face. He had wanted haps, to let you know if any member to see her, and he should see her. Then of the family intended going to his ther hands together lest, in spite of her, they reach out toward him.

salute her? Then came the quick ring tea with my cousin," she said coldly, of heels on the old stone pavement. "I shall do it openly, countess." She knew his footsteps, even as she knew every vibrant, eager inflection of his voice. He went away, across the the greater because trimph had square, like one who, having bent his knee to a saint, turns back to the busimess of the world.

In the boudoir the archduchess had picked up some knitting to soothe her Jangled nerves. "You may play now, to get even.

Annunciata dozed, and Hilda played softly. The countess' opportunity had come. She put down the dreary embroidery with which she filled the drearier evenings, and moved to the window. She walked quietly, like a

Her first words to Hedwig were those of Peter Niburg as he linked arms with his enemy and started down Hedwig was still a star, whose light

Hedwig raised her eyes to the stars. "It is very lovely."

"A night to spend out-of-doors, instead of being shut up-". She

Hedwig was not fond of the countess. She did not know why. The and remote. And then, that very truth being, of course, that between morning. Hedwig had been thrown. them lay the barrier of her own in Not badly-she was too expert for touched hers, she drew aside.

dreamily, "I should like to be in a and had almost succeeded in lighting anotor, speeding over mountain roads. on her feet. It was not at all I come from the mountains, you know. dramatic. And I miss them."

but as the countess went on, she lis- she sat, half vexed and wholly tened. After all, Nikky, too, came ashamed, and carried her to a chair. from the mountains. And because she That was all. But when it was all was sorry for the countess, who was over, and Hedwig was only a trifle gutter. Beside him, on his back, lay homesick, and perhaps because just wobbly and horribly humiliated, a sprawling and stertorous figure, stealthy business of the night brought car-particularly rash here, where bethen she had to speak to some one, Nikky Larisch knew the truth about with, so quick the downfall, a cane him out? she turned to her at last with the thing himself, knew that he was in love still hooked to his arm.

"Is it talked about? Am I the only stances would be ever be able to tell abominably. mbout it?"

"No, highness, I had heard nothing, would thereafter travel different Of course, there are always rumors." roads.

mother referred to," Hedwig held her three years Nikky surveyed Karl's alhead very high, "I-she was unjust. "Friends, highness? One may have

they fear."

"What then?" The archduchess hated tears, and "A lover," said the countess softly. her softer moments were only mo- "It is impossible to see Captain Lar- pened on the thing that was to take doors at night." ments. "Dry your eyes, and don't be isch in your presence, and not

"Go on."

"But highness!" implored the count- head.

said Hedwig hotly.

teered cautiously. "Perhaps it is Karl. things that are harmless in others in silent but violent struggle just ahead. I am quite mad about Karl, myself." your position—you are young. You The two men had been attacked by Hedwig, however, was beyond listen- should have friends, gayety. I am," three others, and as he stared, the

ath, and of separation, which might

apartments."

It was a moment before Hedwig Did she fancy it, or did the figure her haughtily. "When I wish to have

She left the balcony abruptly, abanthe greater because triumph had seemed so near. Alone, she went red and white, bit her lips, behaved according to all the time-honored traditions. And even swore—in a polite, cating himself. His cap lay in the

Things were going very wrong for Nikky Larisch.

Perhaps, at the very first, he had been in love with the princess, not the woman. It had been rather like him to fix on the unattainable and worship it from afar. Because, for all the friendliness of their growing intimacy, the street. "A fine night, highness," touched him, but whose warmth was not for him. He would have died fighting for her with a smile on his lips. But he had no hope of living for her, unless, of course, she should happen to need him, which was most finished her sentence with a shrug of although in parade dress, with white gloves, he hoped he cut a decent figure. nocence. When the countess' arm that. As a matter of fact, feeling her-"Tonight," said the lady in waiting young arms around her horse's neck, self going, she had flung two strong

Hedwig moved, a little impatiently, ing. He had lifted her up from where with the granddaughter of his king, "This marriage," she said bitterly, and that under no conceivable circum- Bending over made his head ache for the spy. He groaned, and sat one in the palace who has not known her so. Knew, then, that happiness and he had said a long farewell, and Rouse yourself!"

things over. Probably never before in his life had he deliberately done such a thing. He had never, as a fact, thought much at all. It had been his comfortable habit to let the day take care of itself. Beyond minor problems of finance-minor because his income was trifling-he had considered little. In the last border war he had distinguished himself only when it was a matter of doing, not of thinking.

But he was young, and the night was crisp and beautiful. He took a long breath, and looked up at the stars. After all, things might not be so bad. Hedwig might refuse this marriage. They were afraid that she would, or why have asked his help? When he thought of King Karl, he drew himself up, and his heels rang hard on the slow progress, pavement. Karl! A hard man and a From the full manhood of his twenty- haps, personal enemies?" most forty, and considered it age.

motion. So he set off briskly, turn- will be I." ing into the crowded part of the city.

him far that night, and bring about many curious things. Not far ahead his hand over his breast pocket. "And not realize, highness, that he went slowly, arm in arm. One was Nikky was slow at recognizing one.

Nikky, pausing to light a cigarette, of the hidden eyes of government. and with his third match he stepped cigarette, buttoned his tunic high "He may be very nice," Hilda volun. "Ashamed! Of course not. But against the chill, and emerged to a briefly. the light from a street lamp, crouched

> soldierly cap fell off. His fair hair ter. An affair of jealousy." strong, and with each blow the group licity,

down on the pavement, was groaning. and Nikky had felled one man and was starting on a second with the fighting appetite of twenty-three, when Herman, and stopped. something happened. One moment Nikky was smiling, with a cut lip, and hair in his eyes, and the next he was dropped like an ox, by a blow from behind. Landing between his shoulder blades, it jerked his head back with a snap, and sent him reeling. A second followed, delivered by a huge

Down went Nikky, and lay still. The town slept on. Street brawls tardily. "And my thanks. But for were not uncommon, especially in the neighborhood of the Hungaria. Those who roused grumbled about quarrelsome students, and slept again.

Perhaps two minutes later, Nikky



In the Thick of Things and Fighting Gloriously.

"Here, man!" he said. "Get up!

"As to the other, the matter my So that night he started out to think quality, and lay still. But his eyes out the hour.

opened slowly, and he stared up at At ten minutes past the hour, Nikky driver acts from the spinal cord, and ruined. I am dead."

> speaks with an uncommonly lusty ger. But he raised Peter Niburg gently breast pocket, there was no longer from the ground and, finding his knees room for doubt, nor, for that matter, held it there. unstable, from fright or weakness, time for thinking. As a matter of stood him against a house wall. Peter fact, never afterward could Nikky re- The lamps were near enough the edge Niburg, with rolling eyes, felt for his call thinking at all. He moved away to make him dizzy. letter, and, the saints he praised, quietly, hidden by the shadows of the found it.

'After all, it is not so bad as I feared. in themselves and their business, they They got nothing."

but tottered, reeled. Nikky caught dropped, a blood curdling drop, from "Careful!" he said. "The colossus low.

was doubtless the one who got us both, and we are likely to feel his was to cut a tire. By getting his opweight for some time. Where do you ponent into a stooping position, over live?" Peter Niburg was not for saying. He would have preferred to pursue his

solitary if uncertain way. But Nikky

was no half Samaritan. Toward Peter

Niburg's lodging, then, they made a

"These recent gentlemen," said Nikgood king-that was Karl. And old. ky, as they went along, "they are, per-

Peter Niburg reflected. He thought not. "But I know why they came," he It was typical of Nikky to decide said unguardedly. "Some early mornthat he needed a hard walk. He ing, my friend, you will hear of a man

"The thought has a moral," observed And here it was that Nikky hap- Nikky. "Do not trust yourself out-of-

But he saw that Peter Niburg kept

of him two men were talking. They Never having dealt in mysteries, talking loquaciously, using his free But, he reflected, many things were arm, on which hung a cane, to gestic- going on in the old city in these trouulate. The other walked with bent bled days. Came to Nikky, all at once, that this man on his arm might be one

"These are difficult times," he ventured, "for those who are loyal." Peter Niburg gave him a sidelong "Difficult indeed," he said

"I think," Nikky observed, "that, after I see you safely home, I shall report this small matter to the police." But here Peter Niburg turned even paler. "Not-not the police!" he

stammered. "But why? You and I, my friend, will carry their insignia for some days. I have a mind to pay our debts."

Peter Niburg considered. He stoptered; her grandmother. Hedwig had through the streets to some bedside of A moment later he was in the thick the police," he said. "Perhaps I have ped and faced Nikky. "I do not wish never seen the king young. She could the dying. The Princess Hedwig of things and fighting gloriously. His said too little. This is a private mat-

"Naturally, not a matter for pub-

assumed a new formation. Unluckily, "Very well," Nikky assented. But a great deal of the fighting was done in his mind was rising dark suspicion. As her eyes grew accustomed to the said the countess. "I should like to over the prostrate form of Peter Ni- He had stumbled on something. He at the car, kicked a tire with a prac- moon showed its depth, and the valley cursed his stupidity that it meant, so But disaster, inglorious disaster, far, nothing more than a mystery to waited for Nikky. Peter Niburg, face him. He did not pride himself on his intelligence.

"You were not alone, I think?" Peter Niburg suddenly remembered "Your friend must have escaped." "He would escape," said Peter Ni-

burg scornfully. "He is of the type that runs." He lapsed into sullen silence. Soon he paused before a quiet house, one of the many which housed in cavernous depths uncounted clerks and other small fry of the city. "Good night to

you I should now-" he shrugged his shoulders. "Good night, friend," said Nikky. And better keep your bed tomorrow." He had turned away and Peter Ni-

you," said Peter Niburg. Then, rather

burg entered the house. Nikky inspected himself in the glow of a street lamp. Save for some dust, and a swollen lip, which he could not enough, anyhow, for the empty streets. house and the neighborhood over carefully. He might wish to return to that | road and waved his lantern.

At last, having almost circled the city. high tower. He stopped and consulted | beating of his own heart. his watch. The fancy took him to go up the high steps, and look out over dropped in the road. The car bumped the city from the colonnade.

a column, looking out. There was sentries. Then the jerk following a someone coming along the quiet hasty letting-in of the clutch, and they streets, with a stealthy, shuffling gait were off again. that caught his attention. So, for instance, might a weary or a wounded But Nikky, who knew the road, bided man drag along. Exactly so, indeed, his time. Then at last, at two o'clock, had Peter Niburg shambled into his came the steep ascent to the very

house but two hours gone. commenced a painful struggle up the slowly in the lowest. ascent. Nikky moved behind his col-

Nikky bent over Peter Niburg. the last step or two proved too much ing ribbon of uneven road. down painfully, near the top. His then, with one singularly efficient geshead lolled forward, and he supported ture, he flung his tunic over the it on two shaking hands. Thus he sat, Peter Niburg made an inarticulate huddled and miserable, for five min- himself, did Nikky-not his own, of reference to a piece of silk of certain utes or thereabouts. The chime rang course; he was far too poor-and he

robbed," he said. "Robbed. I am around the corner. Peter Niburg heard hold them out. it, and rose. A moment later a man, So it happened. The man's hands

colonnade. Behind him, on the steps, "Ah!" he said, and straightened up. the two men were talking. Absorbed neither heard nor saw the figure that He made a manful effort to walk, slipped through the colonnade, and the high end of it to the street beunsoldierlike thing that he afterward

Nikky's first impulse, beside the car, the damaged wheel, it would be easier



A Sentry Stepped Into the Road.

the melee. And second thought gave deadly earnest. him a better plan. After all, to get "I have a fancy, my friend," he said, tant. He had no time to think fur- is, you are to tell me." The messenger was coming The man on the ground grinned heels of heavy boots.

Nikky flung his long length into the Nikky had thought things out fairly tonneau, and there crouched. It was well, for him, ticed foot, and got in.

the suburbs were reached, the driver Then he sat down and waited. put on all his power. He drove carefully, too, as one who must make haste of ten minutes' unbroken silence. but cannot afford accident.

Nikky grew very uncomfortable. tween the shoulders where the concierge had landed his powerful blows throbbed and beat. Also he was that most of all.

After a time he raised his head. He made out that they were going east. toward the mountains, and he cursed border and into Karnia.

With a squealing of brakes the mareached it, a sentry stepped into the

Nikky burrowed lower into the car, For two hours he walked, and re- and attempted to look like a rug. In sumed his interrupted train of thought. the silence, while the sentry evidently examined a passport and flashed a he came to the Cathedral. It was lantern over the chauffeur, Nikky nearly midnight by the clock in the cursed the ticking of his watch, the there-and finish me off." Then, stern-

Then came a clanking as the chain over it, and halted again. The same Once there, he stood leaning against formalities, this time by Karnian

For some time they climbed steadily. crest of the mountain, and a falling The footsteps paused, hesitated, back, gear by gear, until they climbed

Nikky unfolded his length quietly. umn, and waited. Up and up, weary The gears were grinding, the driver step after weary step. The shadowy bent low over his wheel. Very defigure, coming close, took a form, be- liberately, now that he knew what he came a man-became Peter Niburg. was going to do, Nikky unbuttoned his Now, indeed, Nikky roused. Beaten tunic and slipped it off. It was a rash and sorely bruised, Peter Niburg thing, this plan he had in mind, rash should have been in bed. What under any circumstances, in a moving tween the cliff and a precipice that Fortunately for Nikky's hiding place, fell far away below, was only a wind-

Nikky, he waited his moment, and chauffeur's head. He drove a car counted on one thing on automobile

the stars. "A fine night," he said heard the engine of an automobile, not from the brain. Therefore his thickly. "A very fine-" Suddenly he No machine came in sight, but the brain may be seething with a thousand raised himself to a sitting posture, throbbing kept on, from which he frenzies, but he will shove out clutch Terror gave him strength. "I've been judged that a car had been stopped and brake feet in an emergency, and

"Tut," said Nikky, mopping his cut with the springiness of youth, mounted left the wheel, but he stopped his car. lip. "If you are dead, your spirit the steps and confronted the messen- Not too soon. Not before it had struck voice! Come, get up. We present together a shameful picture of defeat."

Nikky saw a great light. When curve out toward the edge of the precipice. But stop it did, on the very the cliff, and then taken a sickening edge of eternity, and the chauffeur

"Set the hand brake!" Nikky said.

The chauffeur ceased struggling, and set the hand brake. His head was stiff covered. But having done that, he commenced a struggle more furious than forceful, for both of them were handicapped. And now Nikky was forced to an

tried to forget. For the driver developed unexpected strength, refused to submit, got the tunic off his head, and, seeing himself attacked by one man only, took courage and fell to. He picked up a wrench from the seat beside him, and made a furious pass at Nikky's head. Nikky ducked and, after a struggle secured the weapon. All this in the car, over the seat back. It was then that Nikky raised the wrench and stunned his man with it. It was hateful. The very dull thud of it was sickening. And there was a bad minute or two when he thought he had killed his opponent. The man had sunk down in his seat, a sodden lump of inanimate human flesh. And

Nikky, whose business, in a way, was killing, was horrified. The chauffeur wakened, ten minutes later, to find himself securely tied with his own towing rope, and lying extremely close to the edge of death. Beside him on the ground sat a steadyeyed young man with a cut lip. The young man had lighted a cigarette, and was placing it carefully in the unin-

jured side of his mouth. "Just as soon as you are up to it," said Nikky, "we shall have a little talk."

The chauffeur muttered something in the peasant patois of Karnia.

"Come, come!" Nikky observed. "Speak up. No hiding behind strange tongues. But first, I have the letter. That saves your worrying about it. You can clear your mind for action." to overcome him. But a hasty search Suddenly Nikky dropped his mocking revealed that he had lost his knife in tone. He was in earnest, grim and

the letter was not everything. To "to take that letter of yours on to its know its destination would be impor- destination. But what that destination

down the steps, not stealthily, but clat- sardonically. "You know better than tering, with the ring of nails in the to ask that," he said. "I will never tell you."

dark enough to conceal him, but Nik- a businesslike fashion he turned the ky's was a large body in a small place. prostrate prisoner on his side, so that However, the chauffeur only glanced he faced toward the chasm. A late in which the air flowed swiftly. And He headed for the open country. having thus faced him toward the next Very soon his passenger knew that he world, Nikky, throwing away his was in for a long ride possibly, a cold cigarette because it hurt his lip, put a ride certainly. Within the city limits stone or two from the roadway behind the car moved decorously, but when his prisoner, and anchored him there,

"Any news?" he asked, at the end His prisoner said nothing. He was thinking, doubtless. Weighing things, His long legs ached. The place be- too-perhaps life against betrayal, a family against separation.

Nikky examined the letter again. It was addressed to a border town in puzzled, and he hated being puzzled. Livonia. But the town lay far behind He was unarmed, too. He disliked them. The address, then, was a false one. He whistled softly. Half an hour.

"Come, come," said Nikky flercely. 'We are losing time." He looked the luck that had left his revolver at flerce, too. His swollen lip did that. home. Still he had no plan but to And he was nervous. It occurred to watch. Two hours' ride, at their pres- him that his prisoner, in desperation, ent rate, would take them over the might roll over the edge himself, which would be most uncomfortable.

But the precipice, and Nikky's fierce see, he was not unpresentable. Well chine drew up at the frontier. Here lip, and other things, had got in their was a chain across the highway, with work. The man on the ground stopped But before he started he looked the two sets of guards. Long before they muttering in his patois, and turned on Nikky eyes full of hate.

"I will tell you," he said. "And you will free me. And after that-"

"Certainly," Nikky replied equably. "You will follow me to the ends of the earth-although that will not be necessary, because I don't intend to go ly: "Now, where does the letter go? I have a fancy for delivering it my-

"If I tell you, what then?" "This: If you tell me properly, and all goes well, I will return and release you. If I do not return, naturally you will not be released. And, for fear you meditate a treachery, I shall gag you and leave you, not here, but back short distance, in the wood we just passed. And, because you are a brave man, and this thing may be less serious than I think it is, I give you my word of honor that if you advise me correctly, I shall return and liberate

"I have only your word." "And I yours," said Nikky. The chauffeur took a final glance around, as far as he could see, and a final shuddering look at the valley of the Ar, far below. "I will tell you," he said sullenly.

The crown prince and Princess Hedwig wait in vain for the return of Nikky, whose disappearance they are unable to understand. Watch for the next installment.

(TO BE CONTINUED)