

a dagger. But before the blow could fall her eyes fell upon the half-hidden portrait. That instant she paused. Then the arm was slowly lowered. The wild light died from her eyes, and into its place came another — past and present seemed to be struggling for the mastery in her mind. She passed a trembling hand across her eyes. Then, with a rush, as of a mighty torrent, reason and memory came back. It was her portrait, and she was *not* Lonia Romanoff. She was his wife. And she had come there to murder him. "Oh, God!" and the dagger fell clattering to the floor.

Leopold started to his feet like a flash. But an instant his glance rested upon the face of his visitor. Then, with a glad cry, in which the pent-up longing and passion of years found expression, he moved toward her.

"Elda," he said, in a voice of infinite tenderness, "Elda, you have come back to me — back from the dead," and he tried to take her hands.

"No, no!" she whispered hoarsely, drawing back. "Do not touch me. Look, Leo, I would have murdered you." And she pointed to the dagger where it had fallen. "Oh, Leo, let me escape; let me go back. I cannot stay with you. I am accursed. I am a Nihilist!"

She paused a moment, breathless. But he did not heed her passionate words. In spite of her protestations, he caught her in his arms and kissed her reverently.

"You are my wife, Elda," he said, "and I love you." And she knew that her paradise was regained.

Then, while the firelight danced and played on the walls, she sat upon the divan, with his protecting arm about her, and told him the story of her life during those eleven long years. How a blow from a flying timber had destroyed her memory of the past; how she had been carried away by the stream and cast up on the sand bar; how she was found and adopted by a peasant family; how she journeyed to St. Petersburg in search of employment; and, finally, how she became associated with the Nihilists and was chosen to kill him. As she finished a spasm of fear crossed her face.

"Oh, Leopold," she cried, "I have broken my vow. And death is the penalty. Your life, as well as mine, is in danger."

"Have no fear, little one," said Leopold. "We shall escape them yet."