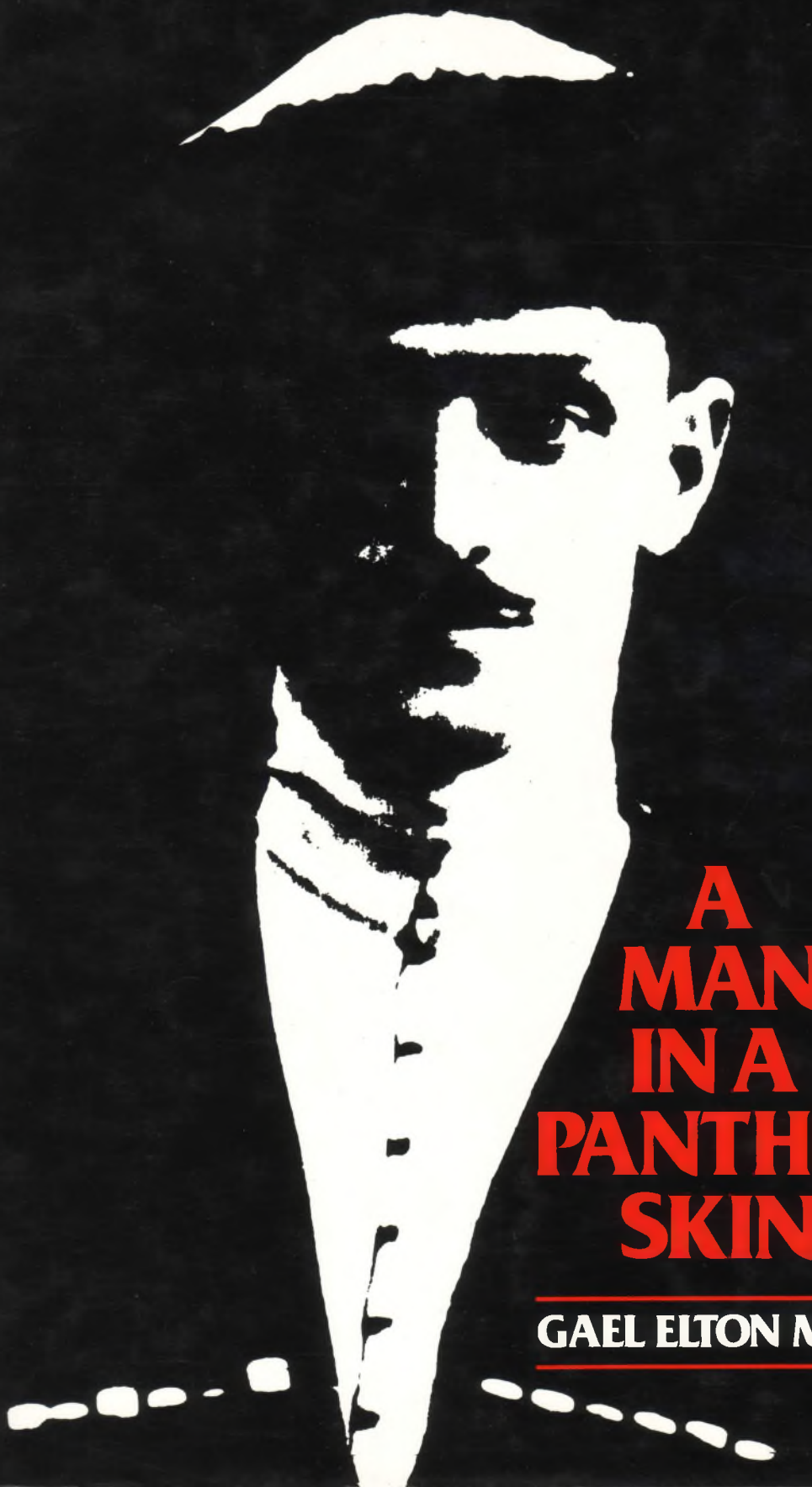
GAEL ELTON MAYO

A MAN IN A PANTHER SKIN



A MAN IN A PANTHER SKIN

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THE KENSAL PRESS

A MAN IN A PANTHER SKIN

The Life of Prince Dimitri Djordjadze

by Gael Elton Mayo

დიდება გაუმარჯოს

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The London Library, without which unique institution I would have been lost.

John Sandoe, who obtained for me the seemingly unobtainable Moscow edition of *The Knight in the Tiger Skin*. It was in this second volume I read, that the illustration of the Knight, Tariel, struck me with its uncanny likeness to Dimitri Djordjadze, after which I started to reflect on their other traits in common.

It may seem odd to be grateful to a person who has been dead for eight hundred years, but the discovery of Rustaveli was indeed a revelation - for though he has millions of readers in China, Japan, Sweden, Russia and many countries apart from his own, I have never known anyone in the west who has read him, other than scholars. The Georgian Irakly Abashidze calls him a genius who awakened man's faith in his own power and the triumph of good. Konstantin Balmont calls his love poem a rainbow, a fiery bridge linking heaven and earth.

His ecumenism and generosity are somehow reassuring, his ideas are universal and their need is great today. At the time when he wrote, western Asia and the Mediterranean were linked in a renaissance of literature and religion ... a forerunner of east-west hopes? This is too large a subject (perhaps too great a hope) for my small book - but I am indeed thankful to have met Rustaveli, while learning about Georgia.

G.E.M.

What you give is yours forever, but what you keep is lost.
Rustaveli

Ratz ginahar vaghat nahar.
Whatever you have seen, you will not see again.
Rustaveli

Frontispiece Prince Dimitri Djordjadze of Georgia, as a young man in Caucasian tcherkeska.

Prologue

This is the story of a Georgian. His life has been and still is outside any ordinary experience, or even anything easily imagined. He is 'timeless in time', like some of Rustaveli's characters. He is in fact a Rustavelian man. Before his story begins, the poetic conception embodied must be explained.

Shota Rustaveli (or Shot'ha Rust'hveli) was a Georgian poet who lived in the second half of the twelfth century. It is not known where or when he was born, but he retired towards the end of his life and died in the Monastery of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem. His most famous poem is *The Knight in the Panther Skin*, translated from Georgian into many languages including Japanese and Swedish; one English version by Katharine Vivian (The Folio Society 1977) uses the word 'panther', but the Russian version calls it 'tiger' skin. Yet another version translates *Vephistksani* as 'wearer of snow-leopard skin'. On the later manuscript dated 1646 at the Institute of Manuscripts in Tbilisi, the man is wearing a spotted leopard skin and cap. 'Tiger' is plausible, since part of the story takes place in India, but Rustaveli refers to panthers so frequently that I find panther most likely and prefer this version, also because in medieval Georgia they hunted with cheetahs (very swift and specially trained).

Rustaveli loved the Georgian queen Thamar passionately and wrote the poem for her. She is certainly the princess Tinatin in the poem, whose 'radiance outshines the sun'. Rustaveli says, 'I have composed this work for her whom a multitude of hosts obey. I lose my wits, I die. I am sick of love for there is no cure from anywhere ... (unless she give me healing or the earth a grave).'

The man in the panther skin is a 'knight who disappeared'.

He was seen by the Arabian king Rostevan and his men when out hunting. When pursued he became fierce. In his rage and desire to be left alone and not followed, he 'sliced heads apart' with his whip in the violent fury of a terrorist, then galloped on a fast black charger into invisibility, mysteriously gone 'like a swan on the sea'. Yet when later he was tracked down and discovered to be called Tariel, and approached with patience and understanding by another knight, Advantil, he swore brotherly love to him forever. His anger, misery and flight were because he lost his love. He was an idealist. Love for a lady was *majum*, love-madness. And, love-possessed, 'my heart runs wild like the goats on the plain,' - but loyalty to another man was placed even higher.

Rustaveli was a humanist, probably influenced by Sufism (the most generous religion, respecting all others as the 'shadowing forth of the great central truth,' open to people of all conditions on their way from earth to heaven.) He was educated in Georgia and studied in Greece, where there were Georgian foundations such as the monastery of Athos. He spoke Greek, Arabic and Persian but wrote in Georgian.

This language (which is not a Slav language) has no affinity with any other. It has great phonetic richness and its own strange alphabet. In his poem, each of the four sections of a line contained four syllables. This makes its own music, quite apart from the poetry of the words: *sunlit night, timeless in time* ... Women had the grace of a *panther gathered to spring* - young, handsome men were compared to newly grown cypress trees. There is humour: *a rose looks no better on a crow than horns on a donkey* (always provocative visual images). There are wild love and shining truth that will dominate trouble, there is nobility of thought. *The moon dims in presence of the sun* is the knight's description of his lady. *The moon awaits the lion* is the message taken by the maid to the lover who has come to call. Woman is *the crystal in which all colours are reflected, a light too brilliant to bear*, yet these loved ladirs wait, sometimes several years, for their knights to accomplish missions for each other first, before there can be a happy ending in marriage.

There are seven stars in the Georgian coat of arms, the sun, the moon and five planets. Rustaveli's world was circumscribed by their orbits. *Zual*: Saturn, the planet of adversity. *Mushtar*: Jupiter, the planet of justice. *Marikh*: Mars, the planet of war and vengeance. *Aspiroz*: Hesperus, Venus, the planet of beauty and healing. *Otarid*: Mercury, the planet of learning. The advice of old King Rostevan to his daughter Tinatin when she is crowned animates all the poetry: 'We benefit from eating and drinking, not from hoarding up good things. What you give away remains your own, but what you keep is lost.'

It is rumoured that Rustaveli and Queen Thamar were lovers. Certainly in the poem, when the knight Advantil says of his fiancée, Princess Tinatin, 'through her radiance all things were transformed', Rustaveli alludes to Thamar. She, Thamar was famous not only for her beauty but also for her wisdom and humanity. She abolished capital punishment and torture – this at the time of King John in England, three hundred years before the Spanish Inquisition. She presided over a renaissance, when Georgian literary achievement reached its summit, with the odes of Chakhankhadze and Shavteli ... all this three hundred years before Shakespeare – at the time Notre Dame was being built in Paris, Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire, and the troubadours singing in Provence.

Many of us may be men in panther skins. Tariel, the knight in leopard-skin (who had discarded his brocades and jewelled robes to live in a cave) lamented his lost love, despaired of finding her, searched for purity and truth and preferred to die rather than compromise. Yet at a gleam of light he would spring again into hope, and he was transformed by friendship.

> Lost love is purgatory.
> Love only is really worthwhile
> brotherhood between men is the highest value.

The poem contains two love stories. Undying friendship between men overcomes all obstacles. And the friendship of men for women who are like sisters is celebrated against the

background of the merciless treatment of treachery and brotherhood – *the value of the team.*

Perhaps the man whose life I am writing in this book is a true Rustavelian, for he was fearless, brave, loyal and he lost his love. Unlike the knight in the panther skin he did not find her again, though they did not stop loving each other. There have been times in his life when he 'had to wear a panther skin'. Yet he lives today and is not cast down. He may not be a medieval knight, for he is a twentieth-century man, but he is a true Georgian prince, and Georgians are a people apart.

Chapter One

There is a man who can occasionally be seen in the streets of Monte Carlo who stands out from the crowd, who carries himself in a special way. He was perhaps a superb rider. But more than this, there is an atmosphere about him, a presence, an aloof pride in his very tall, straight carriage, so that the passing people, even the tourists looking through their car windows in traffic queues wonder . . . who is he?

A prince. One of the last deserving to be so called. Dimitri Djordjadze is from the old departed world but still very much in this one. Recently he narrowly avoided being run over by a huge BMW motor bicycle; by doing a Nijinsky leap (for he was always agile and quick as a snake, famous for the speed of his pistol draw in duels) he escaped, but fell on landing on the curb. He was taken to hospital. When the doctors asked, 'How old are you?' he answered, 'Mind your own business.' When they could not believe he had no broken bones, he said, 'Don't you know that Georgian bones do not break?'

Dimitri Djordjadze is not a Russian but a Georgian prince; he speaks Russian with an accent and recalls being teased for this at Russian Military School when, aged only eight, he arrogantly flicked his whip at other boys to keep them off, like so may flies. The Georgians have always considered themselves different (and indeed their culture has no bearing or relation to the Russian). Georgia is a small, beautiful country, wild, exotic and yet it was proudly civilized long, long before it was annexed by Russia.

Medieval Georgia was an independent mountain kingdom. Today its slightly reduced frontiers are the Black Sea in the west, to the Autonomous Republic of Daghestan in the east.

In the north rise the mountains of the Caucasus. The southern frontiers are Turkey and Soviet Armenia, with the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan in the south-east. East and west Georgia are the Iberia and Colchis of ancient times. Georgians are justly irritated by the general public's lumping them together with Russia, even if they are now - as a satellite - a part of her empire.

Prince Dimitri first told me about the book he wanted to write in Monte Carlo in 1983; it was to be a record of his life, into which are woven the lives of many others - and though greatly encouraged by his friend Princess Grace before her tragic death, who said she would give a celebration party for his book, he could not seem to produce it.

He lives in Monte Carlo, fairly pleasantly marooned after a tumultuous life all over the world; he came there for the first time in 1927 as a racing driver, in his Lancia, at the end of the Gibraltar-Monte Carlo rallye.

His talk becomes a long string of reminiscences from Tzar Nicolas II to King Vittorio Emmanuel III or Ronald Reagan, and I ask questions and try to untangle the pattern, and we return to the distant past (though he prefers the more recent one) for it is essential to learn first of all about Georgia before the Russian Revolution, and his family, and the fortress of Singhkachi where he was born . . .

While we talk old Monte Carlo continues to be torn down around us and modernised, villas crumbling to dust like old memories (though his own recollections are not dusty but sharply clear, except that there is no tense. They have lost their time sequence and are all just *there*, a huge permanent tapestry.) Giant palm trees are lifted into the air by cranes. He chats about race-horses, racing cars, beautiful women, the Duke of Windsor (so sad), Marilyn Monroe (pathetic) or, Clark Gable, the Romanov Grand Duke Dimitri Pavlovitch (whose divorced wife he married and whose son by the Grand Duke he brought up), the adored horses he bred in Virginia. He likes to recall his cousin, Prince Dimitri Amilakvari who was a hero in the Foreign Legion, among the first to defeat

Rommel, much praised by de Gaulle (he was seen polishing his boots on his last morning alive, and when asked why take such care before a battle, he answered, 'Since it is likely I meet my Maker, I must be clean to do so.'

These fragments crowd round, and I understand how hard indeed to sort them into a shape, and I coax him away to start to the beginning, in Georgia, to the view down the Kaheti valley, to tea on the balcony there instead of on his cement terrace in Monte Carlo.

The Singhknachi fortress was one of his family's four homes, the only one in stone. The others were wooden houses with lacey verandahs, somewhat like American colonial houses. They had been built onto former fortresses, to replace them with more comfort.

We enter this picture now as if we are there, the focus changes and the past is the present. There are roses, and vineyards where lines of vegetables alternate with the grapes. The small boy Dimitri, looking down on this immense valley, with snow mountains beyond and the Alazan river running through the green slopes below, asks his father what are all those dark patches moving across the land like black shapes? He is told they are shadows of clouds. These continually moving patches are one of his first memories. So many clouds were to come.

Singhknachi was in a strategic position. The Caucasian mountains were crossed and invaded continually in the Middle Ages by Mongols and Turks crossing through to the west, killing and looting on the way; they were devastated by raids, Persians, Khazars and nomad tribes from the northern steppes. Georgians were fierce fighters, as indeed they had to be, each generation training the next one to be as fierce, as proudly patriotic. Fitzroy MacLean describes them as a 'handsome, hawklike race,' famous for their lordly bearing and their beautiful women. It is said by some who knew him that Dimitri Djordjadze was one of the most handsome men in the world, also a great Don Juan. He was brought up from the age of eight to know how to fight, to know the traditions

handed down in his ancient country where turmoil was almost as much a habit as luxury living.

During the crusades already the Georgians protected the Crusaders on their way to Jerusalem. Georgia was Christian since the fourth century, converted by the miracles of a woman, St Nino of Cappadocia who became their patron saint, arriving in Georgia at the time of Constantine the Great. Their first ruler, King Bagrat, succeded in the tenth century, while Russia was overrun by hordes of primitive barbarians. (It is to be remembered that this was seven centuries before the first Romanov dynasty.) Dimitri, like all Georgians, has an icon of St Nino beside his bed.

But Georgia did not remain happy ever after St Nino, like in the fairy tales. The land became a battlefield again, where Persians and Byzantines fought for two centuries. There was an Islamic conquest which submerged Transcaucasia in 654, and Georgia became a dependency of the Arab caliphate. This lasted four centuries in Tbilisi, which was a centre of traffic in furs and silks as well as ideas and the learning of many faiths. The south and west were more independent. At the end of the tenth century Bagratid III established a united kingdom bringing east and west together; his throne was in one of the oldest cities of the world, Kutaisi, the capital of west Georgia. Tbilisi remained under Arab emirs a century longer - recovered in 1122 by King David IV, surnamed the Builder. Being an outstanding commander, David started a form of warfare which mixed guerrilla with field battle. His system suited the mountains and forests. In 1121, with 60,000 men, he vanquished 600,000 Arabs and Turks, if chroniclers' figures can be trusted. Tbilisi then became permanently a Christian city. Thamar was the great granddaughter of this king.

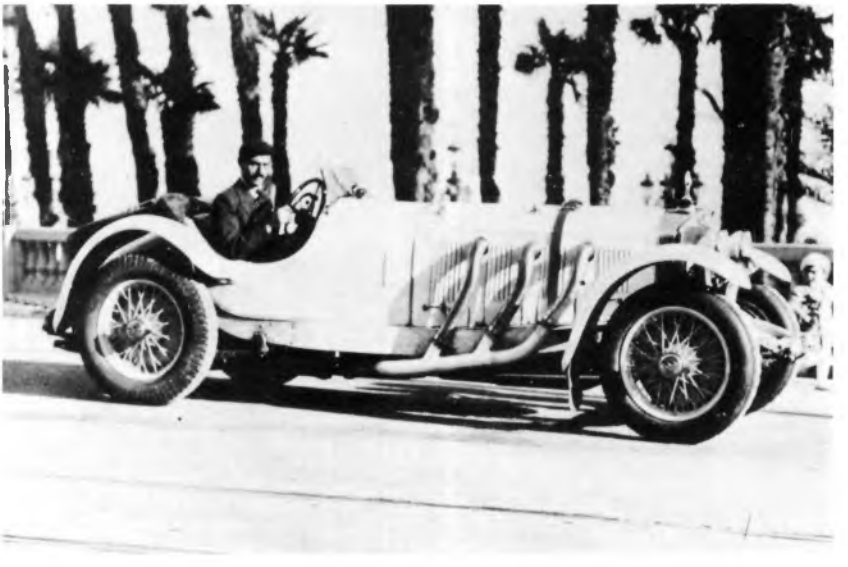
From Thamar's time onwards any Georgian bride, whether princess or peasant, has taken a copy of Rustaveli's poetry with her as part of her trousseau, just as any Georgian, educated or illiterate can quote reams of Rustaveli's verse, which has been handed down orally, along with folk legends across the land and across the years. Manuscripts were lost,

2) *Grand Duke Michael of Russia. He changed Dimitri's life.* (*BBC Hulton Picture Library.*)

3) *Grand Duke Dimitri of Russia, a tragic figure born under an unlucky star. Photo: Private collection*, Chanel and Her World, *Edit. Nlle du Chene*

Above: 4) Prince Dimitri Djordjadze aged about forty.

Below: 5) The Prince as racing driver in Mercedes. '1932: le prince Djordjadzé . . . Il va pulvériser le record.'



RACING FORM

Takes Measure of

Thoroughbreds Big Business For Prince Dmitri Djordjadze

Says Sport as Now Staged Offers Fine Field for One Understanding Its Phases

By TEDDY COX

ARLINGTON PARK, Arlington Heights, Ill., July 29.—If thoroughbred horses were linguists, Prince Dmitri Djordjadze probably would have the best understanding of their varied moods of any horsemen in the United States. Born of royal blood in the Russian satellite country of Georgia, the Prince has roamed the face of the earth and during his extensive travels has picked up numerous languages, from Arabic to "pig latin." Presently, however, he specializes in English for he has become an American citizen and is intent on earning an important place in thoroughbred racing and breeding circles. He is master of the Plain Dealing Stud at Scottsville, Va., owns a formidable string of horses in training at this track, and has a number of other horses in France.

Although he is interested in several speculative enterprises, he insists that his main business is the breeding and racing of thoroughbred horses. He claims that the sport, as conducted today, is a lucrative field for a man who fully understands all of its phases and that he intends to build his holdings to a point where he ultimately will become one of the nation's leaders.

Prince Djordjadze has been leading a

PRINCE DMITRI DJORDJADZE

6) Prince Djordjadze, clipping from 'Racing Form' magazine when he was horse breeder in U.S.A.

burned, re-found in fragments, so the oral tradition is, in every sense, vital. The Georgian scholar, Irakly Abashidze, tells us that people are still found today in the inaccessible mountains of Georgia who know all 1,500 verses of Rustaveli's poem by heart.

Thamar was equally famous for her courage. She ruled the state in person. The edicts were 'by command of Thamar'. She reigned from 1184 to 1213.

Georgia was a feudal monarchy until 1801 which was the date of the first Russian annexation. Thamar was still cited then as an example of bravery to Russian soldiers in training.

We are interrupted as tea is brought in and I find myself back in Monte Carlo. Dimitri puts honey into his glass of tea with its silver holder (the only one left, he says). Looking now across this other balcony at this other urban sea-front view, he says wistfully, 'I remember the old Metropole here, they are going to pull it down. Friday was the great day, it was the start of the weekend, people used to come down on the Train Bleu from Paris specially. The Grand Duke Andrei and his wife the ballerina Kchechinskaya were regulars at the casino, they owned a villa on the Cap d'ail.'

But I drag him back to those other three houses so far away, to the scent of roses and coriander leaves, where his childhood was spent. For the moment he seems to wish to leave Singhknachi. So the others, then?

One house was at Sabue, surrounded by acres of walnut woods, with a view of the highest commanding peaks of the Caucasus, Elbruz and Kasbeg. Teams of water buffalo went up the mountains at night when it was cool, and fetched ice from the snow near the summits. When they brought it down it was buried behind double walnut-wood doors, in a cavern which served as a frigidaire. The mountains are snow-capped all year round, from the Caspian to the Black Sea; this ridge is just above Sabue, towering and sheltering, menacing yet protective, making the frontier hard to penetrate. There are only two passes which can be driven across, the rest are goat-

tracks, or for smugglers or escaping men. Along these ridges there are ruined castles of timeless date. Below there are tumultuous streams, seldom bridged, and everywhere orange groves, walnut orchards, for the land is fertile, rolling and green. There is also gold, silver and manganese – small wonder the Russians coveted it for centuries. There are nearly a thousand thermal springs.

Ninety-five percent of the tea drunk in Russia (where it might be considered the national beverage) still comes from Georgia. The vineyards at Sabue were sulfated with pony-drawn machines, which in 1913 was considered advanced. The wine was stored in terracotta jars underground. Today in 1985 it is still famous, though it now has a Russian name and a Moscow label. Originally the label read: Kaheti Wine. Vineyards of Prince A.L. Djordjadze.

Dimitri remembers playing and sleeping under the fruit trees in the hot summer afternoons with his cousin Merab, but not with his two sisters, who were by tradition kept apart. It was not done for Georgian boys to be much with girls, nor were they allowed to see too much of their mothers. All feminine softness was suspect. They were brought up to be tough, never to be petted, never to cry or need soothing. They were future fighters from the cradle. One wonders how the mothers felt about such masculine despotism. They were nevertheless revered as women and cherished as mothers of sons, 'matrons enthroned', their domain the house, but the pattern must have been austere. The system of sequestering the boys from any softening influence is found all over the Caucasus, notably among the Moslem tribes of the mountain regions, where it was the custom for a boy to be handed over to an *atalyk*, a kind of tutor, who took the child to his own aôul or fortified village, teaching him the manly arts of horsemanship and shooting, far removed from domestic life. This arrangement also ensured that the child would form no profound emotional ties, though the *atalyks* were in no way terrifying, bringing up their charges with honour and understanding. The boys were returned to their families at about fifteen or sixteen years of age, when a ceremony of

feasting and dancing marked the event. Those were tribal mountain ways, and in Dimitri's case it was less severe, less harshly interpreted. Though his family did work on the same principle, 'We were civilized,' he says, 'and also – we were *Christian*.'

The family cooks, who were men, were Russian. So also were the *nyanyas*, or nannies. Georgians did not like to be servants. The outdoor workers were always Muslims. 'They did not drink,' Dimitri says, 'so it was safer. And they were splendid with horses.' Thus, hanging about the stables Dimitri learned the Tartar language early. These men apparently occasionally bedded the *nyanyas*, and there were dramas.

Another family home was in the capital, Tbilisi. It possessed a beautiful outside staircase and a carved wooden verandah overlooking the old town. A large flower and vegetable garden was part of the property. Still another house was in Karaize, in the lowlands on the Kura river. This had a curious, specially built platform like a tower, to which the whole family climbed at night, to sleep safe from the deadly mosquitoes that (curiously) did not fly above a certain altitude, but whose bite bred swamp fever.

The Russian servants were left behind in these houses when the family went to Singhknachi or Sabue, because they did not speak Georgian. Nor were they always wanted: there was a great slur on being Russian. Other caretaker farmers stayed permanently and lived in the mountain estates, being regarded not as servants but as part of the Georgian family where all was shared. Produce and food were there to be enjoyed. Accounts were not kept. It took two days by horse-carriage to reach these remote properties. Dimitri's mother did not always go, or rather, she was often intentionally left behind for reasons I discovered later, reasons going back to an ingrained prejudice ages old, too deep to uproot. They must have been cruel for her, but her family were unaware, seemingly the kindest of people. There was another estate at the Azerbaijan border.

★ ★ ★

But now it is evening in Monte Carlo and it is 1983 at our first interview, not 1913. It is time for drinks, which to Prince Dimitri means champagne. There is news on television, of which he is an avid watcher. It is the Silverstone race in England. He says he regrets never going to Silverstone, but remembers racing at Brooklands with Tim Birkin, Whitney Straight and Max Aitken in 1932. Tim Birkin, who wrote a book called *Full Throttle*, was every schoolboy's dream of what motor racing should be. He was known as the Bentley boy, he drove with a silk scarf flying out behind him in the breeze - the epitome of a driver, as also was Whitney Straight. Dimitri follows Silverstone intently, knowing all about the latest new cars (for he is a modern man, 'timeless in time'), and we are off with a screeching of tyres, now back into memories of the several Mercedes championships he won, after escaping from Georgia during the revolution and Soviet occupation, and reaching Italy where his uncle Prince Matchiabelli was ambassador of Georgia. But all that was before he met Audrey.

Audrey? Who was she? 'The love of my life,' he says, and will say no more about it tonight.

So many contrasting memories like a rich but sometimes incoherennt patchwork, all contained in his present vision. *Audrey*: did she wear the rubies of Badakhsham and sparkling crystals, like a Rustavelian princess? But then she would not have been called Audrey ... To sort the pieces of strewn jigsaw and fit them together needs many long interviews, and I accept his invitation to stay on. And so we continue our journey, shuttling in and out of the past - dinners and dinner-parties, but not the Palace in Monaco, nor the Ahalzihes Officers Club nor the old fortress near the Black Sea, scene of a blood-curdling drama - because now something has reminded him of another place, another time, and he switches abruptly and talks of Louis Bromfield who lived at Senlis and hated dogs.

'I used to ride over on my horse and visit him when I lived at Chantilly,' the prince says. 'He loved his garden and was

always pottering in it. He loved and spoiled his daughters yet he used to kick dogs!' Dimitri exclaims, a horrified animal-lover. 'However I taught him to like one dog. I ordered a special boxer from Germany. He was called Rex, and I spent the night with him in the Astoria Hotel in Paris and drove him out to deliver him in Senlis. He leapt from the car straight into Louis's arms, who loved him at once and said, 'Rex, where have you been all my life?' A happy ending to an unexpected fairy tale. The prince's store of anecdotes is full of them.

Since we are off on this new tangent (and I am trying to hold the steering wheel, how will I ever manage the sorting?) I ask him if he ever read the most peculiar and least known novel that Bromfield wrote, *The Strange Case Of Miss Annie Spragg*? 'No,' Dimitri says, 'I am not an intellectual.' He is charmingly humble, all the more because Louis Bromfield is not exactly intellectual reading. How much does he read then, this man of action?? 'My cousin Merab was brilliant,' he continues. 'He was the intellectual one. He went to Moscow University.' Moscow? I ask him, why not Georgia? There are no Georgian universities, Dimitri tells me, no national institutions using the Georgian tongue. 'Russification' continues.

I also learn that though Georgia produced such great literature, after the thirteenth century it went into a decline. Education had in any case always been in the monasteries; Rustaveli had been taught philosophy, geometry, arithmetic, rhetoric, grammar, astronomy and natural science.

Now just when we are back again into Georgian discoveries the housekeeper comes with dinner, announcing that the prince likes only raw meat and cakes. A paradoxical contrast – so distinguished a man, yet so wild. Both the bearing of a king and the violence of the mountain-people in his background. (Raw meat and sweet grapes, relished under the tree with Merab, or sitting by a fireside after a long trek on horses?)

The raw meat we eat for dinner turns out to be entirely lean, with lemon juice and chopped onions ground through it;

there is no other seasoning, not even salt, and it tastes almost like flowers, bearing no relation to what in the west is called Steak Tartare. Apart from its lean quality, the meat must be entirely fresh, eaten within an hour of being ground. This leads us back to Georgian food ... and so we return to Kaheti.

Meat is roasted or grilled, chicken is steamed with quantities of coriander leaves and onions. But there is never any fat in the cooking. Perhaps this is the reason people are reputed to live to be over a hundred. One of the puddings consists of walnuts strung on a string, soaked in grape juice, dried in sunlight, then kept coddled in blankets. This is called *Tchurtahalla* - each house has its own secret recipe and there is great competition. Is or was? We are in the present permanent-tense - it is alive to him - it is happening - probably today the same traditional food is being prepared while some of the people (he says) still refuse to speak Russian. It has always been a love-hate relationship, for Dimitri admits that when the Russians took over, Georgia was exhausted from a long chain of invasions, a state of turmoil and wars through hundreds of years (they had even known Roman rule). Thus the Russian administration came as a relief, yet its people were disliked.

Russian Military School was considered the best in the world, and the young Georgian boys of good family were all enrolled there. It could be said that officially Georgia was Russian, but ever insubordinate. The Imperial Russian way of running the country, of which Dimitri approved, ended with Nicolas II and the revolution. The Tzar had Cossack bodyguards who betrayed him. The six Caucasian regiments commanded by the Grand Duke Michael, who loved Georgia, did not arrive in St Petersburg in time to stop the revolution. They were machine-gunned or hanged, among them Dimitri's cousins.

But Dimitri says his country was lost long before - in reality ever since the time when Tzar Paul I betrayed the treaty prepared by his mother, Catherine the Great, and signed for her by her lover Potemkin in 1783 with King Heraclius of Georgia. Russian protection promised relief from the incessant

attacks since the crusades by Armenians, Turks and others. Dimitri judges Catherine the Great as 'clever in her understanding of Georgia, and fair'. But her good treaty did not last, because of her son.

The country became briefly independent again in 1918 before the Soviets took it over in 1921. But the old imperial rule, in spite of love-hate, in spite of people *officially* not liking the Russians, above all feeling they could not possibly *be* Russian themselves, proved to be stabilising. Yet ... while approving ... Dimitri dislikes Russians and has few Russian friends, though two of them played a large part in his life. He is devoted to the memory of one, tolerates the other. He resents their trying to pretend Georgians are really just another sort of Russian, trying to make them lose their character and language, when they are in truth so different and so much older a people. In this instance, as we sit in 1983 Monte Carlo, imperial Russians and Soviets seem to play the same part.

And now, as a very light cake is brought in with the coffee we are back to the discussion of Georgian daily life and local products. Walnut oil took the place of olive oil when it was (rarely) used in cooking. Dimitri only recalls seeing olive trees on reaching Batumi. Everything else in Georgia grew rather as in the Mediterranean, the climate being similar, though cooler at night with fresher air and higher mountains. When they were riding on campaign or on long journeys, raw meat was put under the saddles of their horses in bags. There was no time to cook it. Smoke from fires would attract attention. This was probably the origin of the name of Steak Tartare.

There is so much in the life of this man who drove a four-in-hand across steep mountain tracks, or crossed and re-crossed the Caucasus in Indian file and was attacked by brigands long before he drove racing cars in Europe, or bred horses in America, or went to India and Argentina on 'big business'. He has had to escape, to kill, to forge his own passport to reach his exile - to fight in wars and to fight duels. He has galloped along cliff-edges of mountains on a horse shod with

nails in its shoes, in order not to slip on tracks that crossed sheer precipitious slopes. In Paris, after the revolution and some years of wandering, he recruited Georgian patriots and helped them to become a team of taxi drivers, who left impulsively to fight in Spain with dramatic results. His life was fire until he lost his love. With his women he was always chivalrous, it was in the Georgian tradition. A resplendent Don Juan – yet not so, for he could be gentle and when the affair was serious, he was faithful.

As he talks of his memories and the blue haze of evening settles, he stares out at the view and I see his profile silhouetted against the light on his balcony. He has perfect bones, their beauty in no way lessened with time. It is a disturbing face: sad, yet humorous, capable of being fierce, dangerous when opposed, yet also tender with a certain melancholy, for he is now entirely alone. Alone by choice, that is the thing that strikes, even though the telephone often rings. Why are there no children or family to visit this man who in old age has such stories to tell? But he does not seem conscious of his solitary state. Later I was to discover the reason why he had no children or grandchildren of his own.

As he gazes with his green-brown eyes across the Mediterranean, through and beyond it, the Black Sea starts to come into focus, a steady focus, I hope, this time, that may remain while we talk. It is not a black sea but very dark blue. It is called black because of its dangerous currents. He recalls his very young aunt, a great beauty whom Rachmaninov loved. The renowned musician he remembers only dimly as a dark-haired figure burning with passion, who advised his father that the boy should learn to play the piano. The beautiful aunt had a brother, Uncle Arthill, (another 'intellectual') educated in France, who fascinated Dimitri as a child, but he was not allowed to approach him because he had 'the evil thing', tuberculosis. This uncle was condemned for his liberal politics and sent to Siberia by the Tzarist government. He escaped but his arm was shot off by the guards. On the occasion of the three-hundredth anniversary of

the Romanovs, the Russians pardoned him and he returned, with his stump-arm, from exile in France. His beautiful sister nursed him, caught tuberculosis herself and died.

The tapestry of Prince Djordjadze's life has threads of many colours, sometimes garish, sometimes soft, but seemingly in a vast tangle; now I hope to sort them out chronologically and begin where it all began: in Georgia.

Chapter Two

Dimitri's father, Alexander Djordjadze, volunteered to fight in the Russian-Turkish war when he was only seventeen. He achieved this in spite of opposition from his father and grandfather, the latter being a commanding officer. He returned three years later with grey hair, and a strange sad look in his very blue eyes. These eyes were famous. Apparently when he was angry they changed colour and turned grey. They held great power, their look could make a person tremble. Once he gave a horse such a look that even the horse trembled. During the war, in the Nijigorosky Polk regiment in which he fought, conditions were fearful, the men ate the same food as the horses. He was awarded the cross of St George and promoted to lieutenant.

The Djordjadze family life was not in the usual Georgian pattern: Dimitri's mother was considered to be half-Russian, and because of this, and in spite of the fact that her own mother was a Georgian princess, she was never entirely accepted even by her own family. Her Russian father was second-in-command of the administration in the capital Tbilisi. He was embarrassingly powerful. And she was living there with her parents when Alexander Djordjadze met her, the young girl called Domenica Naumenco, and found her exceedingly beautiful. Her brother was an expert in the Esperanto language. That is an idealist's distinction. He so fell in love with Georgia that he bought a whole hill and built a house on it. But they 'did not see much of him'. He was half-Russian, too.

Domenica brought with her dowry remarkable paintings and a piano which she played beautifully. There are no letters or family papers to tell of her thoughts, but she never learned

to speak Georgian, which can be interpreted as a sign either of sadness or rebellion at being treated as an outsider, all the more unfair to her thinking perhaps because she was only half-Russian, and Ukrainian at that – and the Ukraine was a south-western nation with its own characteristics, so she was not merely a Muscovite. But to Georgians it was the same, their anti-Russian feeling was pathological and went back over a hundred years. The fact that it was 'not fair' could not be discussed, it was irrational. Added to this there was the normal tradition of bringing up boys without allowing them to be close to their mothers, and in her case the Russian element intensified this trait. Dimitri's tone of voice when speaking of his father is warm with admiration; about his mother his voice grows flat, there is little to be said, though he is proud of the fact that her hair remained black into her eighties, as his own has done; there is no disloyalty, but lack of interest. He would stand apart from her in a train as a boy. He would feel compromised if seen sitting beside a woman, any woman – but specially his mother who was not only a woman but Russian as well. He was ashamed. When asked by other boys who his mother was, he would skip over the question and say, 'My grandmother was a Palavanishvili', alluding to the princess who married a Russian administrator. Telling this in 1983, thinking back, he says, 'The Russians had an inferiority complex, we were the best athletes, the best fighters. General Bagration defeated Napoleon.' So it worked both ways, each side felt superior or inferior or alien in its fashion. It does not occur to him to be sorry for his mother: she was Russian, this let him down, it lowered his self-esteem and gave him something to hide. He is not responsible for this feeling, it is inbred. 'I did not see much of my mother,' he says, 'since I was eight when I was sent to Military School, and also she lived often upstairs.' This evokes a tragedy, but of which he is still unaware. (Upstairs? Why? Was she ill? And is it not precisely *before* one is eight, the importance of the mother's role?)

However Domenica was presumably loved by her husband to whom she bore four children. She was the exceedingly

beautiful matriarch of his estates and his household, yet she was usually left behind on the trips to the mountain estates where only Georgian was spoken. She was loved by her two daughters Vera and Tatiana, to whom she spoke Russian, and probably in a detached way by her son Dimitri, who spoke Georgian with his father. The girls did not learn Georgian – it seems the man lived lives greatly apart – in spite of family meals all together. Leran, the younger brother died of cramps when only a year old, after eating a vast quantity of green grapes.

Dimitri tells of his father kissing him on his arrival from military school for the holidays; his father 'never raised a hand to touch him.' He loved his youngest sister Tatiana, 'she was so little'. This did not mean she was a playmate, though it was the nearest he got to ever playing with a girl; he would carry her about on his shoulders like a toy mascot.

Domenica remains a sphinx. What did she really think, sitting at the head of her table, eating the Satsivi or sauce made of walnuts ground with saffron, garlic, cloves and spices? She doubtless knew of Georgian cooking from her mother, and must have taught their Russian cook the recipes, because Dimitri describes so vividly the *Georgian* cuisine, which was evidently more delicate than Russian. He remembers the food of his childhood in Proustian detail more than sixty years later. Yet he says reflectively, 'I think ... my mother was not a good housekeeper ...' It is hard to know what he means, for it chokes in a memory-block. His memories are all lucidly clear except for those concerning his mother, which are fog. But her beautiful black hair and the sound of her piano echoing through the house, these are her loved image. Perhaps the servants were not kept in order, this is what he half-remembers – when the nannies were bedded by the outdoor men. What of these Russian Orthodox *nyanyas*: did they shiver when they heard the howling wail at sunset, was it not just a muezzin at prayer, but also the call of a different sort of man, those men with the fierce stare? The *nyanyas* were indoor servants, the men outside were somewhere in the wild, their embraces perhaps specially virile.

Domenica was allowed to cuddle her daughters; presumably the women led a life of their own; one they accepted, and maybe enjoyed.

The pattern of Dimitri's life changed completely as a child because of an unexpected event: the Viceroy of Georgia asked Alexander Djordjadze to organise a hunt for the Grand Duke Michael of Russia, Mikhael Alexandrovitch, younger brother of the tzar and a great sportsman. Two of the Dordjadze houses were on the Kura river, one in the capital Tbilisi and the other at Karaiazi, two hundred kilometres below. This was on the border of Azerbaijan and very wild: deer, game, rivers full of fish. It was still a little-known region and invaded at times by equally wild Mongols and Persians.

Dimitri remembers the Grand Duke arriving by rail for this hunt in his private carriage; at the same time there was an Ashura procession in progress: people wearing white sheets and bleeding profusely all over their gowns, having slashed their heads with daggers. This Islamic rite took place on the tenth day of Muharran, the anniversary of the death of the prophet Hussein, grandson of Muhammed. He was killed in battle at Karbela, and revered as a martyr, but the Ashura was only performed by the Shia Muslims. To Alexander it obviously seemed heretical, and so to avoid his children seeing it, Dimitri and his sisters were locked away in their quarters at sunset. The Grand Duke's carriage was also diverted so that he would not witness the spectacle.

The hunt took place the next day. Alexander Djordjadze was an officer in the crack Caucasian cavalry regiment. He had given his guest a highly strung Georgian horse, as a favour, but now he noticed that the Grand Duke could not handle him. The horse had the bit in his teeth and was bolting straight into a ravine. Alexander outrode him, turning both their horses just in time to save the Grand Duke's life, only a few yards before his horse would have gone over the cliff. But Dimitri's father fell and broke his leg so badly that he could never ride again. In Georgia, where all men were both military and cavaliers, it was the end of his traditional career.

They took him to Karaiaze in the Grand Duke's train, then to the military hospital in Tbilisi. No mend was possible. His leg was only just saved from being amputated. Georgian bones could break after all – but it took a dire force to do it.

To a Georgian, riding was as essential and as natural as walking. To gallop the wildest horse was done without thought, the horse and the man were as one. But Alexander would ride no more. He would have to leave his regiment. He never complained, but his eyes took on a distant look, still greater than they had before.

When the Grand Duke came to say goodbye he was overcome with emotion and remorse. He saw a small boy playing and asked who he was. On hearing it was the young prince Dimitri he ordered that he should be enrolled in the Russian Cadets' School for eight years prior to being an officer, at his expense. This gesture of gratitude was a turning point in Dimitri's life. But there was a second disaster that day: in the commotion of the accident the nannies forgot to put the boy of five into the 'high-platform' sleeping quarters for the night, safe from the venomous mosquitoes. He caught malaria. Perhaps this traumatic memory is what he means by his mother being a bad housekeeper.

As a result of this illness he was considered fragile but there is no mention of a consoling maternal figure. Instead he was put into the charge of his father's cousin, Uncle Sico – an *atalyk* in a way, but one who came to live with them in their home. Georgians are a robust race, and with their roasted red meat, green vegetables, water from mineral springs, sauces of red beans mixed with plums, any fragility must have been short-lived.

Uncle Sico taught him many things, after the first year of gaining confidence. As the next years passed the most striking achievement was the way he learned to shoot with a pistol; he was such a talented pupil that his sure aim became fearsome and he was famous for it for the rest of his life. This is not surprising, because his teacher, Uncle Sico, had fought thirteen fatal duels, only one with a sword. He was a 'sure killer' and was a very special fellow indeed, as can be seen by the

following incident in his life: At a time when he was stationed in Warsaw, he received a telegram from his older brother Taté, who was stationed in Kars, two thousand miles away, asking for him to come immediately because their sister had been insulted. Georgian women, though apart, were held in high esteem. These two brothers had quarrelled as young men and *never spoken since*. But this was a call for allegiance to blood ties, the family honour was at stake. He undertook the trip, arived, reported to his brother who told him a Cossack captain had 'mortally offended' their sister Olga, and could be found at this moment in the officer's club. Taté, being colonel in the regiment could not fight the duel himself because a superior in rank had not the right to fight his junior. Sico (who was merely captain) set off at a quick march, found the Cossack captain and challenged him, adding that he was in a great hurry: the duel must be early next morning as he had a reservation on the train back to Warsaw. The duel took place and the Cossack died. Sico caught his train without more ado and did not even see his brother, which made their family allegiance the more remarkable.

The duel in question became legend. Nicolas II heard of it and was not pleased. In spite of the Tzar's reputation for weakness, he had character. He was a humanitarian and viewed with distaste duels among army officers. He complained, saying, 'If the Djordjadze brothers ignore my protest, I shall in turn ignore their next promotion.'

And so it came about that though they were both heroes in the Russo-Japanese war, both wounded and highly decorated, they remained only colonel and captain in spite of their medals for bravery - for they did ignore the Tzar's protest and continued to fight duels. Of such stuff was Dimitri's tutor made.

After the accident, Alexander took to swimming the Kura river, across and back in spite of the current. He regained strength but walked with a limp and a cane. Having lost his normal career, he was persuaded by the Russian administration to become a negotiator for peaceful relations between the

Russian Viceroy and the Georgians. His friend Prince Sumbatovshivili helped him in this and together they tried to be diplomats. (Later Sumbatoshivili was the first Georgian ambassador to the court of St James.) The job was exceedingly difficult and delicate with undertones of trivial jealousies and dislikes. They proposed to build a major railway, necessary for the export of wine and minerals, but Russia was against this plan. (Against progress for Georgia?) There was manganese, but they were not allowed to exploit it. People took sides, some tried to be friends but there was massive irritation. Many Georgians did have Russian friends (that is, they liked *some* Russians), yet were annoyed by the feeling that they were occupied by another power who took their decisions for them. Why not the new railway? If, as it was said, Georgia was part of Russia, then all the more reason. It could only help Russia. The Russians also had a 'Georgian complex', though not the Romanovs. The Grand Duke Michael was commander of a Caucasian regiment and loved Georgians, all Georgians, including his small protégé. The Tzar had Georgian bodyguards. Yet the administration was full of hate. The situation was a mess.

Colonel Arnold, the Russian Chief of Police in Kaheti whipped and beat the people who did not obey. He believed in harsh discipline. Prince Alexander Djordjadze intervened, *diplomatically* and also kindly, with the intention of helping Arnold understand and protecting him. He warned him, 'It is dangerous, it is ill advised,' he said, '*You are not supposed to hit Georgians*. They will react with honour if treated honourably, but like cheetahs if insulted.' But Arnold thought he knew better. He did not heed the advice. And so a Georgian killed him with a dagger through the heart.

Dimitri was sent away to Cadet School which was in Russia but near the Georgian border. He left home when he was only eight, and his arrival at the school as still a very small boy was greatly helped by his Uncle Sico's upbringing, the more so because although he grew later, at eight he was under-sized and therefore teased. It was now that he learned to flick his whip at bigger boys, and chase them off with

surprising dexterity, calling them bluebottles and dung-flies in his foreign-accented Russian. Their surprise turned to esteem.

The school had a severe routine: crying would be unthinkable. No one even knew what crying was. The glory of the 'best military school in the world' was all that mattered. Smoking was forbidden. But there was beauty as well as severity. The school buildings, even the barracks containing six hundred cadets were 'more beautiful than any Palladian villa,' Dimitri says. The Tzar often came to review his troops when on his way to the Turkish border; Nicolas II was much loved by the men and worshipped by the young boys.

Dimitri returned home for memorable holidays, where he found Uncle Sico again, who had stayed on and lived with the family. They continued their shooting lessons. 'They teach you with rifles at your school,' Sico would say meaningly, 'but pistols are *useful*,' and his eyes would twinkle. 'Rifles are just for war . . .'

The years passed and Dimitri started to grow tall. One day in the school when he was fourteen, another boy showed him how to roll leaves with dubious tobacco - and they were caught. An officer (who was also Georgian, there were about ten percent of them in the school, admired by the Russian chiefs of staff) summoned Dimitri to his rooms. To Dimitri's surprise, instead of punishment he asked him to sit down in a comfortable armchair; the officer opened an elegant leather cigarette case and offered him a cigarette. Perplexed and slightly shaken, Dimitri accepted. The officer showed him how to inhale deeply and instructed him to do so - to such an extent that he felt 'smoke was coming out of his ears.' He offered him a second cigarette, and when Dimitri refused he was ordered to smoke it. This was repeated, three cigarettes, four cigarettes . . . until Dimitri was sick and dizzy. He half-fainted and was sent to the hospital. He never smoked again for the rest of his life.

When the Tzar came to review the cadet troops there was a parade and a two-hour church service, for the Tzar was very devout. Once on a tour of inspection he stopped in front of

Dimitri for what seemed a long moment. By this time Dimitri was sixteen and very tall. Was this the reason, or could the Tzar have remembered that Dimitri's father had been under his command in the Russo-Turkish war? This was impossible, though Dimitri longed to tell him. He stood silent, at attention, devoured with excitement while the Tzar looked at him, receiving the gentle but profound look from the Tzar's very blue eyes until he passed along the line. It could not have lasted more than a moment, but it seemed infinite. Dimitri was seized with emotion. He says, 'I would have died for him.' He never forgot the compelling yet soft appeal from those eyes. Nicolas II was an excellent rider and no one could beat him across country. The cadets also liked all the other members of the imperial family who came to visit, except the Grand Duke Boris. For him, they resented the way they were made to stand for two hours on the military highway waiting to greet him, and then when at last he came, there would be dust on the horizon, a roar, and the Grand Duke would whizz past and be gone without a glance, having overslept, late for the next appointment. Boris was a great carouser.

Meanwhile, in these years, anguish was creeping into the atmosphere of the glittering balls in Moscow where other carousers danced, alarm at the increasing hold the 'demon servant of the Antichrist' had over the Tzaritza. What would it lead to? He was running Russia through her.

But the newspapers distributed to the cadets did not mention Rasputin by name, they referred to him as 'the person'.

Chapter Three

Dimitri Djordjadze's first encounter with a girl took place one Easter when he was on his way home on leave. To reach home meant crossing a high ridge of nearly impassable mountains, so the train went round them and along the Caspian shore towards Persia, taking thirty-six hours. Four young cadets were somewhat bored in their compartment. In the corridor outside a young woman passed, then returned, stood by the window in the passage and looked at them. The train was stopping at country stations, crossing rough land with peasants in the fields, but the girl looked unexpectedly fine, with small features, blonde hair, and celestially blue eyes. Each cadet made gawky unsubtle advances without success. Then she smiled and beckoned to Dimitri to come to her. To him it had the quality of a dream, all the more because he had not yet had a woman. There had been a governess at military school who took the children of one of the officers for walks in the woods. Dimitri, who was now seventeen, used to watch her, trembling, wishing they could be alone in the densest part of the forest.

He joined the girl who was making signs to him, who looked like an angel. And he stood in the passage looking down at her, searching for words. When he finally spoke she did not answer, she just went on quietly smiling. His courage grew, he started to talk – but whatever he said, she just smiled or opened her eyes wider. She only communicated in signs. But the signs were clear: she pointed to him, then to herself, then outside the window to the fields where there were calves in the lush meadows by a river.

The train slowed and stopped in a station; perhaps the stop would be long, anyway they got out. They walked away,

looking at each other and blushing, through the tall grasses, the greenweed, saffron, sage and madonna lilies, through the narcissi and violets into the woods. It was spring. In the shade under the trees there were more flowers, the small white anemones like stars that grow where it is dark and cool. A stream was bordered by black trunks of acacias with their white blossoms hanging down over the water, the scent was heady, Dimitri's whole body was shaking - this surpassed any of Chakhankhadze's odes of dreams of Eden and could not be really happening. Yet it was so, this silent lady who he realised now was a deaf-mute - this stranger-creature who could not speak or hear, could see and feel his hand holding hers, his arms round her body, their faces pressed together into the ferns - this sprite was Dimitri's first woman.

When they went back to the station bats were flying and it was dark, the train had long gone and no others were due until the morning. She took him home to her house where her mother and sister greeted him; they were preparing dinner: grilled meat, pickled beetroot, lettuce salad with walnut sauce. They dined all together and talked and laughed, for the mother and sister were not mute. Dimitri drank much wine; he was delirious, he felt he was flying.

The next morning he returned home on a slow train and arrived a day later than expected. His father made no comment; Dimitri's friends had told him of the delay with laughter and a little envy. Dimitri remembers his father's reserve with appreciation. There was neither scolding for being late, nor teasing for his manhood. Nothing was discussed. The fasting of Lent, which had been obeyed by the very orthodox Djordjadzes, was over, the celebration of Easter was in preparation, a piglet was being roasted whole on a spit. Dimitri flopped down under a tree and fell asleep; when he woke he joined in the feasting.

The holidays were the opposite to the Russian military life. Apart from Sico other uncles would often be there, and Dimitri's young cousin Merab. Uncle Arthill had returned from his exile in France, looking older, frail - kept always at a

distance because of his malady. This man was an idealist who founded the National Georgian Socialist Federal Party. Dimitri says that if he had not died of tuberculosis there might possibly have been no Stalin; an intriguing statement that he does not follow through. Presumably had Arthill lived, and being the founder of his party, he might have been the Georgian that Lenin chose to represent Georgia as a federal minority. Or a further possibility: he might have been appointed Minister for Minorities, which was the ironic title of Stalin's first post, and been responsible for all the many minorities of Greater Russia.

Sometimes Alexander Djordjadze took the young men, Dimitri and Merab and their friends to the steam baths in Tbilisi. They were large marble halls and are mentioned in the tale of Jason and the Argonauts in search of the Golden Fleece. The men would spend several hours in these baths. First they soaked, then they were rubbed with loofah gloves and massaged. Bells were there to press for any requirement, sweetmeats or drink or a girl. At the end of the day they would eat a huge meal, grilled trout or *chokhobili* (Stalin's favourite dish): chicken steamed in onions and tomatoes with coriander leaves and garlic and many herbs. They only went home in the evening to fall sound asleep. Thus when the men decided to go to the baths they would spend a whole day away in each other's company, a day of talk and jokes and sensual pleasure, an outing they shared and enjoyed, an all-masculine habit like the way Englishmen go to their clubs – if not quite the same.

One afternoon, returning to Tbilisi on a long journey with his whole family, riding in a coach and four, Dimitri grew bored and to pass the time he climbed onto one of the horses and rode it, hanging bells round its neck. They were attacked by robbers. All their money and the women's jewellery were taken, though Alexander repeated, 'What is this? Don't you know who I am? Leave us be!'

Two days later Dimitri was sitting in the garden in Tbilisi when a famous and much dreaded brigand called Georgik came to visit. 'Tell your father I want to see him,' he ordered imperiously. Dimitri, still young enough to be terrified, ran to

fetch Prince Alexander. When he came, Georgik produced all the stolen possessions, which he returned. 'My profound apologies,' he said. 'My men did not know who you were. Because of the jingle bells they *thought you were Armenians*!!' Both men then laughed at this height of insult: Armenians were despised by Georgians and still are.

But the life of steam baths and flowers was a mirage and not to last. Repercussions of the Great War in the outside world started to affect Georgia. In the evenings the uncles would talk sadly and darkly together about the rumours of disbelief and disappointment in the Tzar, who had been foolish enough to discharge his commanding officer, his six-foot-six inches tall cousin Nicolas Nicolaievitch and take over command himself with disastrous results. Nicolaievitch had returned to Moscow a broken man, it was said. He had been leading his troops to victory and could not understand the change of command. It was a farce that cost thousands of lives. It was said to be due to the influence of Rasputin over the Tzaritza. The devil was at work. There were simmerings from the cauldron of revolution. 'Can I visit the front?' Rasputin had asked in a message sent to Nicolaievitch, so the gossip went. And the reply had been, 'Come by all means and I'll make sure you are killed.'

Merab and Dimitri observed the mutterings and gloom of the uncles, huddled together in apparent distress in corners of the garden, but did not realise yet the import of what was happening. One afternoon they had lunched alone under a tree, lolling on cushions round a silver platter of cheeses and fruit, drinking wine, Dimitri idly taking an accurate shot at a snake with his pistol. In Georgia snakes are hated and called 'the animal without a name'. They were just drowsily settling down for a siesta, when they were roused by a clattering of hooves and barking of dogs. It was a visit from yet another uncle who lived far away and whom they seldom saw, George Amilakvari and his suite of men, dismounting from their horses. This visit was another forewarning sign, though in the aftermath of wine and lunch the boys did not guess it to be an unusual event – like the leaves of the tree they lay under,

trembling in summer lightning.

Alexander Djordjadze was not at home. Uncle Amilakvari said he was on his way to Daghestan to hunt, and asked Dimitri to go out and buy some dogs for him, as he needed dogs. There were already many dogs barking and running about. However, Dimitri was told to choose any horse he liked and gallop off on the quest for more dogs. He was still boyish enough to be delighted by an unknown beautiful horse and went off without guessing that he was really only sent in order to spread the rumour that the uncle was engaged in an ordinary pursuit, merely hunting.

The next day, though his father was still away, and therefore without permission, Dimitri set off with his uncle on what he still thought was a hunt. Merab stayed behind. He had poor eyesight which caused him to miss many sportive outings. As the journey wore on, taking many days through the mountains, Dimitri realised that his uncle was escaping.

They reached the point where Persia and Daghestan join, and it was here that the uncle asked Dimitri to ride with him alone, ahead of the men, so they could talk. Now Dimitri learned that relatives in the Amilakvari neighbourhood had been attacked and some whole families murdered. He listened to his uncle telling him that the old world they had known was going to die and nothing would ever be the same. As they rode they were nearing a frontier on the other side of which lived a boy who was in military school with Dimitri, and whose father was an eminent Persian to whom Amilakvari wished to deliver a letter. It was important, secret and urgent. Would Dimitri please undertake to do it? Chilled with foreboding Dimitri now understood: *revolution*. He was in his cadet's uniform and still young enough (the uncle hoped) to look too innocent to be questioned. Nevertheless, after receiving full instructions, Dimitri took the precaution of going the long and wild way round, making it even less likely he would meet anyone. The uncle waited in an aôul, in one of the fortified villages where he knew the mullah.

As Dimitri rode across the mountains he mused about what his uncle had told him. It filled him with awe - far more than

being alone in the wilds, this he did not mind. The mountain horses were specially bred, sure-footed and shod with flat shoes that had protruding nailheads in order not to slip on the sheer slopes. They were supposedly more than usually intelligent. Dimitri found that his horse had balance almost as great as a mountain goat, and would have enjoyed leaping and trying it out if he were not gnawed by his uncle's revelation and the importance and responsibility of the letter he carried. This was a new feeling. But on the high passes he felt no danger, though anyone else might not have liked the howling wind or the dark nights sleeping alone beside a strange animal. The horse did not remain strange for long - horses were his kin, it was as if he could speak with them. Dimitri knew no fear, his horse nuzzled him and woke him in the mornings, they slept in caves and became friends. These things felt familiar. The feat of delivering the letter, which he achieved succeessfully and easily, took him three days - but it was a long three days because during the entire time he had been dominated by a new anxiety, calculating how long the murders would take to spread and reach his own family. The Amilakvaris lived far away, but how soon?

After the letter was received, the uncle was able to cross the border legally with his wife and children and escape. But the incident had been a precursor.

When Dimitri returned to military school this time, he knew. The Russian Revolution had truly started and was spreading. The uncles and their world would soon be gone forever.

Vera Djordjadze married a Russian. To her brother Dimitri this was unforgivable. Even though the Djordjadzes had Russian friends and good relations with the administration (though this was not to last) it was still shaming to Dimitri for his sister to marry one of 'those people.' (What of the Grand Duke then, a Romanov to the core and a family friend? I ask in 1984. That was different, he loved Georgians, he was a special man and a special case. And the Tzar, for he loved Georgians too ... so perhaps Vera's fiancé loved Georgians?

But the blinkers were still on all the years later, which shows the incredible depth of the feeling.) When Vera asked Dimitri for congratulations on her engagement and her future husband, he laughed and said, 'I am looking for the tree to hang him on.'

We are not told what Domenica thought.

Vera was devout and had previously thought of entering a convent. She gave up the idea when she met her Russian so he must have made great impact. They married and she moved away with him to Moscow where she lives still today.

In 1918 Georgia became independent. Dimitri was still in Russia in his cadet school; he saw independence as trouble and arranged to receive a fake telegram to get himself out. It simply read: Your father needs you. He went home, where his father was surprised to see him but did not dwell on it, as chaos was reigning and he had other preoccupations. The Turks had attacked Russia from the Black Sea.

One day in this frenzied time, a certain Princess Abkasi was having a fitting for a gown (social life went on, paradoxically) in the house of her dressmaker, a young woman called Svanidze. Suddenly a man entered the room through the window opening into the balcony outside, and rushed to hide in a cupboard. The man was Stalin, Svanidze's lover, who had had to flee Siberia and was hiding in Tbilisi. Shortly after the police arrived, searching for a terrorist. On being questioned, Svanidze was afraid; the princess spoke up and gave her word that she had seen no-one enter. The police held this lady in great respect because her husband was Marshal in charge of Nobility and much admired. They accepted her statement and left. (But later, in 1924 at the time of a Georgian revolt, Stalin ordered Princess Abkasi to be shot, in spite of the fact that his life had been saved by her.)

Dimitri volunteered to join the Georgian Muslim Cavalry and took part in battle on the side of the Turks, defending Batumi. One can visualise him charging into his first fight, young and fierce with a black moustache newly grown,

unafraid. The Great War was over but now the Revolution was in full spate. In the upheaval of Russia, the surrounding small countries started to fight between themselves, like waves rippling to the outer edge of a whirlpool: Turks and their immediate neighbours – anyone, anything – without being clear as to what they were doing, the world amok, a horde of snarling dogs. In breaking up forever, the old civilization also produced surprisingly trivial but dire personal quarrels between individuals. One incident started as a skirmish and ended in the death of a prince who was second in line to the Georgian throne.

Since joining the cavalry Prince Dimitri was living in a house on the outskirts of Ahaltzher, sharing quarters with a captain of his regiment. One evening some officers were celebrating their regiment's anniversary of a former victory over the Turks. (Ahaltzher itself was in a region alternately taken over by Turks then freed again by Georgians – always an excuse for a banquet.) The dinner took place in the summer gardens of the Ahalzihes Club, part of an old fortress, its tunnels and battlements surrounding smooth lawns and towering rose bushes. Officers were sitting with ladies at their tables. The evening was starting well with glamour and smouldering glances, when suddenly Dimitri, who was presiding over a group of his own men, noticed that the lovely creature at the end of his table was the sister of his first mute lady – and that she was being molested by an officer from an adjoining table, not of their party, whose advances were aggressive and rather coarse, if also insistent. He would have objected to any officer behaving like a boor, even to an unknown woman. But this lady was well known to him, for since his first adventure she too had shared his bed. Dumbfounded, Dimitri then saw that the officer was Prince Constantine Bagration-Davidov, second in line in the Georgian royal family; this made it the more unacceptable, even if he was drunk. An officer should be able to hold his wine.

Prince Dimitri stood up to his immense height, and said, 'At my table are seated two princes Tchvadzes, Captain ..., but Prince Constantine interrupted before he could finish and

said in scalding disdain, 'In our day princes like you were herding the geese . . .'

Dimitri would not slap him in public or cause a vulgar brawl, but he said he would send his seconds in the morning. His companions knew his accuracy of shot, and in some alarm tried to pacify both men. Prince Constantine rose, white with anger, and went away. Wine, music and dancing resumed, but the evening had been spoiled.

Two or three hours later when dawn was breaking, Prince Constantine returned casually with one hand in his pocket, and said to Dimitri, 'Let us have a talk.' The friends were pleased, hoping they would make up their quarrel, and urged Dimitri to agree. 'Go ahead and let him apologise,' they said.

The two men went out into the gardens, Prince Constantine indicated to Prince Dimitri to take the tunnel of the fortress which led to the main building; it would seem he wanted to talk in the big hall. 'You go ahead,' he said to Dimitri, who obeyed and walked in front of him in the dim new daylight – and then he heard a click behind him. He whirled round instantly with animal speed: Constantine Bagration was still holding out the hand that had aimed at Dimitri's back, but the gun, by a mischance, had not fired the first time. His finger remained on the trigger and in this second Dimitri drew his pistol and shot first; in one more second Constantine would have fired again.

The whole event had happened in less than one minute. Dimitri had had no thought, just reflex action. Constantine, on the other hand, had *thought*. He had planned. Dimitri was shattered but did not linger. He stepped over the dead body, walked back through the garden and returned to the party; he went straight to the table of the commanding officer and said, 'I have just killed Prince Constantine.'

'You don't know what you're saying young man,' the officer answered. 'Go home and get some sleep, it's late . . .'

It was daylight, the sun would soon rise. Dimitri went to his house and told his orderly to keep watch; he put a khaki greatcoat over his bright blue uniform, took two revolvers

and some grenades, for he was not going to be shot without defending himself. But before there was time for further preparation the orderly announced that men were coming up the hill with guns. This closed Dimitri's escape into the town, so he climbed out of the window onto the roof garden, and then jumped from there, roof to roof, over the pattern of gardens and terraces, over the flat-topped houses of the city, skimming away in flight as swiftly as a Rustavelian *kadji* (his panther skin pulled tight), until he reached the outskirts and was out of Ahaltzher.

The last house was facing a steep slope. He knew the territory as he had taken it for the Turks a few months earlier. He climbed the slope and sat down on top of the hill, which was in a good defensive position, but he had no idea what to do next. He knelt and prayed. After praying he felt peace, entirely alone with the hill and sky, he quoted aloud a line of Rustaveli: *the day of one's death is as Fate decrees and nowhere on earth can man escape it.* At once he fell into a deep, stupefied sleep.

He was woken by hundreds of huge fleas biting him all over his body inside his clothes, driving him mad, he could not reach them or ease the itching even by rolling about. He calls this the miracle that answered his prayer and saved him: the fleas made him get going again. He went down like a diver bird over the edge of the hill that dropped away in loose stones, a nearly sheer cliff of scree. He clambered and rolled and fell down this height, arriving at the bottom in a tattered bundle and crazily still trying to scratch. He had reached a Moslem aôul on the plain below; he sought and found the mullah and told him that he had had an accident. The mullah looked at this tall young officer in his shredded coat, panting, his tongue hanging out like a dog, grazed and bleeding; he took him to the vegetable garden and plunged his head into a brass kettle of cool water; after this Dimitri lost consciousness.

Later his own officers found him. They came for him leading an extra horse for him to ride and escorted him in safety to the prison in the town. The commanding officer in the Ahalzihes Club, after realizing the position, had been afraid there would be fighting between infantry and cavalry

regiments and that the incident would cause slaughter brought on by men taking sides. He needed to be sure Dimitri was out of the way, but also wanted to protect him and so had given suitable instructions.

Dimitri spent two months in the prison and was then transferred to the fortress of Tbilisi in the officer's quarters, where after being court-martialled, he spent another six months in the company of murderers. At least, so he felt at first, having nightmares about whether he were one himself. Then shame, for what was wrong with self-defence? Uncle Sico would laugh at him for even giving it a thought. The man was a bastard to shoot him in the back – but the second in line to the throne? ... It rankled, until gradually he settled into prison life, playing cards with the future Marshall Shaposhnikoff, a red spy disguised as a White Russian.

An added factor which helped him to settle, was an unexpected visit from his father. 'You surprised me,' Alexander told him, referring to the duel, 'and I admire you. I didn't think you had it in you. I thought you were just a lover of horses and dogs.'

After the visit, Dimitri basked in his father's pleasure. Alexander, the man who never scolded, was one thing – but to go so far as to *compliment* him for killing a man, this Dimitri had not expected. 'After all,' Alexander had said, 'he was a skunk.'

In the library Dimitri found a book about hypnotism, which he studied to pass the time. This was the only period in his life where he did much reading, but alas the library was limited. One day he thought he would try to put the hypnotism into practice, and he concentrated with force on the small, rather mediocre man who was walking in front of him on the prison exercise rounds; after a time the man turned uneasily and looked back – so the spell had worked? The man was Beria, of the future Soviet K.G.B.

Dimitri was acquitted but obliged to change regiments after the trial, in order to avoid feuds that might break out on his return; he was sent to Batumi where he was made a member of the administration and worked with the police. The chaotic

disorder that continued in the outside world put his internment into small perspective: Russian deserters were entering Georgia. Turks were trying to occupy Batumi. Armenians took the chance of general confusion to attack in order to enlarge their territory, and to try to spy for the Soviets, Dimitri says. The Revolution was still ricocheting into all surrounding minorities and Georgia was fighting small local wars to protect herself.

In 1920 when the Bolsheviks were fighting the Poles, they decided to attack Georgia at the same time; Georgia beat them, and they found the Georgians to be terrifying fighters. Dimitri fought in this battle.

But in 1921 Soviet Russia attacked again, this time with the Turks as allies, and Georgia was defeated and occupied.

Already three years earlier, the Georgian bodyguards of Nicolas II had been hanged, Dimitri's cousins among them, in the Caucasian regiment commanded by the Grand Duke Michael. The Grand Duke himself was then shot by the Soviets, the first of the royal family to be killed and long before the dragged-out deaths of the others: the Soviets considered him very dangerous – a born leader, loved by his men, and as strong as Nicolas was weak. 'If he had remained as Tzar instead of his brother, history might have been different,' Dimitri remarks.

Now it was the end not only in Russia of hundreds of years of Romanovs but also the final end of Georgia as it had been.

Alexander Djordjadze was taken to a concentration camp. His wife, Domenica, because she was Ukrainian was left at home. Tatiana was sent to Siberia. Some who were lucky were evacuated. Dimitri, owing to the fluke of being sent to Batumi after killing Constantine, was invited by the Italian captain of the last ship to leave the Black Sea, who offered him a passage to Naples. He obtained £20 in English money, a useful currency, and going abroad otherwise possessionless, except for a few now possibly worthless shares, he sailed on the *Franz Josef Ferdinand* and left his country. However, killing Constantine had now saved his life twice.

What did Domenica Naumenco Djordjadze think, left at

home alone, where she lived her solitary life into the old age where she kept her black hair until she was eighty-six? Thamar was famous for her jet black hair; Perhaps Domenica inherited this from her Georgian mother. Dimitri is proud of her beauty. It must be stressed that he could not help his attitude, for it went back many generations. He heard by some rare grapevine that she remained lithe and active into her last years, and he tells this with filial love.

What of Alexander and his concentration camp, with his limping walk and his very blue eyes, the patriarch of the men's society of uncles and cousins and his son ... all dispersed and gone? Was he allowed to write to his wife? There is no way Dimitri could know. No letters or papers remain.

After reaching adolescence, Dimitri remembers his father as being harder to talk to, though always kind and fair. But what had seemed wonderfully tactful and discreet when he was a boy – making boys' blunders that were never scolded – became later, man to man, a distant aloofness and too-great reserve. It was hard to communicate, he did not feel quite at ease. This had made his father's unexpected visit to him in prison all the more affecting. Perhaps with the sad expression Alexander already brought back from the Russo-Turkish war when he was twenty, he had premonitions of what would befall them all.

Tatiana was liberated after eight years, but has only recently returned to Georgia. What happened in the years of her youth between? Dimitri cannot know more than a few corroborated facts: she lives in the remaining family house in Tbilisi, where her mother died – but it is Soviet property and she pays rent for her one room. Their other family houses were burned and torn down. It is sixty years since he carried this little sister on his shoulders.

Their ancestor Nodar, head of the family and cousin of the king, saved Kaheti from destruction in 1600. But in 1921 Dimitri sailed away, lost his family and turned his back never to return to the land that in 1985 still runs like blood through all his veins.

'A home is something you lose,' he was to say frequently throughout the rest of his life.

Chapter Four

The *Franz Josef Ferdinand* was a steamer that had formerly belonged to Austria. As she sailed away at sunset, not only a sunset of that particular day but a whole era, there was a varied mixture of escaping people on board. It was the very last departure. The children of General Midvani, Governor of Batumi and former A.D.C. to the Tzar had left two weeks earlier. There was a Georgian lieutenant, Kandelaki, who shared Dimitri's cabin, and talked ceaselessly about the new League of Nations, wondering whether it might request withdrawal of troops from Georgia. There was a man who stood out rather glaringly, wearing a white uniform and many medals, who seemed to have a large amount of luggage, including rolls of carpet. He caused Dimitri to wonder. Dimitri made a mental note to investigate. He had recently been engaged by the 'special services' branch of the police in Batumi. Investigating had become a habit. But later - it could wait. For the moment he leant over the rails on the deck, savouring his escape from the confusion and arrests that were left behind, the dispute over the possible alliance between Turkey and Communist Russia - the seething precarious state that normal life had become and he watched with interest the ships of the British fleet that were also leaving port, having been in the Black Sea to negotiate a load of bauxite. He knew this because the affair had been with his Djordjadze and Karalov cousins. The affair would surely not take place now, since the communists claimed that underground minerals were to become national property. The British ships were taking no passengers. As he looked at them, England occurred to him for the first time as a possible destination, and he was curious. The east receded and night came down. The man in white

7) *Illustration by Toidze of Russian version of* Knight in Tiger Skin, *bearing a striking resemblence to Dimitri Djpordjadze.*

Above: 8) Prince Dimitri with Horatio in Virginia.

Below: 9) Prince Djordjadze, photographed. October 1984.

10) *Audrey Emery, the great love. Drawing Cecil Beaton.*

11) *Lady Ashley, an impulsive mistake.* (*BBC Hulton Picture Library*).

12) *Ilona Massey, Hungarian actress. The Lady who was a Gentleman.*

uniform passed on the deck. He looked too good to be true, dressed for an opera, maybe.

Dimitri went to the dining-room and was invited to the captain's table. The White Uniform was nowhere to be seen. Perhaps he had ordered dinner to be sent to his cabin. Some members of an Italian circus troupe were sitting at the next table. Among them was their star performer, Rita Rocca, a blonde who rode bareback on wild horses and also walked the tightrope. Dimitri had met her before when one day she had seen him exercising his black stallion on the beach and asked him if she might ride his horse. This had amused him; he agreed, and she rode so well that the following day they had a picnic together, both riders of wild horses and then wild laughter, unexpected happiness, eating Kotmis Satsivi and shashlik, lying together in the dunes while their world continued to collapse and explode in the land beyond.

Here she was on the same ship, returning home to Italy with her companions. It was an agreeable surprise, yet he felt only despair. This outward bound voyage was a fortunate escape, but so sad. After dinner they walked on the deck together. All passion had gone from them. They were tragic. She was quiet and soothing, a familiar to hold to - he held her muscular body tightly all through the nights trying not to think of his lost family and their burning homes.

Before embarking on the ship Dimitri had been travelling with a Georgian passport which had a visa for Constantinople only. When the ship docked there he went ashore to see the Italian consul, presuming he would be given an Italian visa. But when the consul saw the passport he refused. It would be necessary to apply for permission to grant the visa to his foreign office in Rome; this would mean waiting. The *Franz Josef* was lying at anchor in the bay, but for how long? Dimitri was afraid she might sail without him if his visa were not granted in time. The Italian consul was adamant, there was no alternative but to wait for permission. Dimitri returned to the ship feeling exceedingly gloomy.

At dinner this night he sat beside an Armenian who asked

why he seemed so depressed when they were all so luckily escaping, and on hearing Dimitri's story, he said, 'But you Georgians are not business men, you are not practical. I am Armenian but I also have a Georgian passport with many visas, I can go all over Europe.'

Dimitri found his kindness condescending and thought his preening odious; but he decided he could obtain this passport for himself which would be handy indeed – the next day he could simply switch the photo for his own. There was no time to lose, the ship would not stay long in port.

His mood improved. It was such a night, full moon, why talk business? After dinner he suggested to the Armenian that they go up and stroll on deck. The man duly agreed; but once there, Dimitri manoeuvred them so that they were in a dark corner and then told the Armenian he had no business to carry two passports, specially a Georgian one, that Armenians could in no way ever be Georgian. This fanned an old hatred. The Armenian became apologetic, but said feebly, 'You have no authority to order me about.'

'How do you know?' said Dimitri, growing angry, 'I might report you to the police. I have been working with them.'

His anger seemed to add to his height, which was already considerable. The Armenian felt that this man looming over him in the moonlight on the deserted deck must have a reputation for ruthlessness, that he should have guessed.

'Give me the passport, or I'll throw you overboard,' said Dimitri. 'That will teach you to show off.'

The Armenian, by this time appalled, said. 'All right. But the passport is in the luggage of my older brother.'

Dimitri produced a pen and some paper and made him sign a message, then he called the steward and gave it to him with one of his pound notes. In 1921 this was a handsome tip. The message read: 'Authorities request passport control.' Ten minutes later the steward returned with the passport, which Dimitri grabbed, bade good evening, returned to his cabin and went peacefully to sleep.

The next day he went ashore and had a photograph taken. In order to unglue the old one and replace it he went to a

Russian tea room and after eating *boublichki*, and again giving the waitress a pound note, she took his passport to a back room and steamed off the old photo, replacing the new one for him. There remained a seal to be applied ... Constantinople was known for numismatics. He found a shop with Georgian coins, and told the shopkeeper that he wished to buy a coin for his uncle's birthday but would like to show it to him first. So (producing another pound note) he contrived to borrow the coin to show his imaginary uncle. He then bought a stick of sealing wax, went to restaurant where he heated the wax in shishkebab embers and put the Georgian seal from the coin onto the photo. He returned the coin to the numismatics shop saying his uncle was undecided, and went back to the ship. He was in such good humour that the reappearance of the man in dazzling white uniform did not annoy him. He even nodded a greeting and wasted no more time wondering about his fancy dress. But he did not go in to dinner that night, he had indigestion from all the *boublichki* and sweetmeats his passport had required him to eat.

When they stood in line to disembark at Naples, Dimitri was second in place. He ignored the Armenian, who knew better than to complain. *'Avanti!'* shouted the Italian voices, and Dimitri was away into his unknown future, landing on Italian soil with a splendid false passport and still fifteen pounds with which to start. The Armenian's brother (a first-class passenger) was detained; Dimitri noted also that White Uniform went ashore with apparent diplomatic immunity and no customs, though he had so much luggage that most of it was left behind to be fetched later. Dimitri's irritation with this man momentarily returned. There was something ...

He took a room in the Hotel Cavour and sent a telegram to Rome where his uncle Prince Matchiabelli was ambassador, asking for a proper passport to be sent to him with some money. And then ... what could he do but wait? And so he did, strolling about in Naples, eating in the cheapest places he could find, in the days when ten or twelve pounds could still last if a person were careful. But now the truth settled around him. He felt out of place. The ship's voyage had still

been a high point of escape. But here he was in a world where he was merely observer and took no action. It was anti-climactic - miraculous, yet foreign, unreal. What was he doing here?

Washing was strung up across the streets, there were flowers in window boxes giving out a heady smell of petunias, specially in the evenings when their scent comes out. But there was also a stench of urine and drains, occasionally mixed with garlic when passing a restaurant. Urchins in bare feet scampered about, begging from him with grubby outstretched palms, there were shouts in Napolitan dialect, melodious voices singing Napolitan songs with guitars, donkeys braying. And all the while his own country was disintegrating. The urchins did at least belong here. Where was his place to be?

One evening after a dish of pasta and some rasping wine, Dimitri was walking back to his hotel when he saw Rita on a street corner being attacked by a man who was trying to tear her clothes off while another man did nothing to help, but watched in amusement; he was presumably a friend. On seeing Dimitri, Rita cried, 'Here is my husband!' which caused both men to turn. Dimitri slapped the aggressor and then socked him, laying him flat.

'How dare you!' shouted the indignant Italian, getting up from the ground, 'I am a cavalry officer.'

'So am I,' said Dimitri, phlegmatic, 'and that is not how cavalry officers behave.'

'I challenge you,' cried the Italian, carried away, and not believing for a moment that Dimitri was the husband. He was a mere tourist spoiling the fun.

'Quite all right,' shrugged Dimitri, unimpressed, duels were his *specialité maison*, as he frequently liked to say. He took out his card and scribbled Hotel Cavour on it, and then added rather carefully, 'I shall choose the weapon.' He knew Italians were good fencers.

'D'accordo!' shouted the man excitedly. But when Dimitri announced it would be pistols, he was horrified.

'Pistols are dangerous!' he protested.

Dimitri smiled. As if all duels were not dangerous. These

people were absurd. In that case they should not attack ladies. Only boors did so.

'At what distance?' asked the Italian, visibly subdued.

'Twenty-five metres,' answered Dimitri.

'So close?'

Dimitri ignored the question, but said that he was alone in Naples and had no seconds; the Italian undertook gallantly to provide two witnesses; he put Dimitri's card in his pocket and watched him return to his hotel arm in arm with Rita.

The next morning the concierge announced that two men were asking to see him. The witnesses were in the lobby dressed in black. They had come to arrange the procedure and had taken on a somewhat lofty attitude. 'Their brother officer demanded satisfaction and decided not to take seriously the demand to fight with pistols.' Dimitri showed them his finger that had a war wound which made it difficult to hold a sword. This was true but also fortunate for him. They went away but returned an hour later. There was much coming and going to Dimitri's annoyance for that morning also his passport had arrived with some money and he was impatient to leave this boring town. Arrogant and true to the form of Uncle Sico, he said the duel must be that same afternoon as he was catching the six o'clock train to Rome. The seconds went away bearing his message, returned again, and having failed to negotiate an 'honourable settlement between officers,' which was what they had hoped for, they grew fatalistic, but still played for time by bringing him an invitation to lunch together first. Dimitri had nothing to do. He accepted.

In the course of the meal there gradually grew a form of respect and politeness. By the time of the *grappa* they discovered they were all interested in horses. They had more *grappa* and escorted him to the station with shouts of goodbye (*adio per sempre* they hoped with relief, rather than *arrivederci*, never again) and so the Italian's life was saved (by horses) whereas Uncle Sico's Cossack had died.

During the drive to the station White Uniform passed them in an open car with a *carabinieri* sitting next to the chauffeur and an officer on each side of him in the back seat. Dimitri

asked his companions who this person was, and they said, 'The Crown Prince of Georgia Avtandil Djibi, with his aides-de-camp.' Dimitri was furious, but eager to catch his train. Avtandil indeed! How dare he use that name? He would look into this matter in Rome.

A car waited for Dimitri at Rome station. He stayed with his uncle in the embassy, who welcomed him warmly. But he had no occupation, though an elegant uniform. So his first job was to stand about at the front door, jangling keys - and during this time to learn the language properly, beyond the smattering mixed with French he had got by with in Naples. After two months he became fluent. He took the opportunity of leisure to check on the identity of White Uniform with the police, and discovered him to be called simply Djibi, born in Constantinople of an unknown father to an Armenian mother who ran a high-class brothel. He had grown up in comfort surrounded by pretty girls, learning all the languages of the countries surrounding the Bosphorus. During the White Russian evacuation, when many were escaping with their jewellery and silver, Djibi had opened a pawn shop in Tbilisi, before occupation by the Soviets had taken place. He prospered, and escaped before they came, taking his treasures and loot with him onto the Italian ship. So clever, and then such a fool. The need to show off was a human weakness. If the wretch had only been wise enough to lay low ... Dimitri rubbed his hands and waited.

The ambassador said to him one day, 'Wear your medals and look your best, we are summoned to present credentials to the king.'

The two towering Georgians arrived in the palace of tiny King Victor Emmanuel III, who took the ambassador aside for a quiet chat. Matchiabelli emerged later looking amused. The message had been merely that the king was very sorry about the fate of Georgia and wished to express his sympathy - and therefore would like a Georgian coin as a souvenir. 'Do you happen to have any, old chap?' the uncle asked.

Dimitri telegraphed the shop where he had borrowed the coin for his false passport, so the shopkeeper had his customer after all.

The king had also invited them to a White Russian Charity Ball at the Hotel Excelsior. Dimitri and his uncle attended this with a veritable bevy of other Georgian nobles: Prince Alexander Bagration (Grousinsky in Russian), Prince Givy Abhazi, Prince Artchil Andronikachvili, Prince Paul Toumanichvili, Prince Michael Soumbatchvili and many more.

In the midst of this ... at last ... Dimitri's long-awaited pigeon walked in, resplendent in his white *tcherkeska* with gilded sabre and dagger, accompanied by two aides-de-camp and carabinieri. The bird was netted. As he entered the salon with sweeping flourish, the ambasador asked the president of the ball, 'Who is that man?'

'You should know,' came the reply, 'he is your own Crown Prince.'

Since Matchiabelli knew his own crown prince, he hardly needed Dimitri's information. They descended on White Uniform, closing in with their pack of true princes, tall, splendid ... and they jostled him out of the main entrance into the street. His aides de camp, instead of helping, rapidly became invisible. This time the score was settled; but after seeing him outside, it was Dimitri alone, man to man, who knocked him down.

Djibi, the poor deluded foolish fellow, returned to Naples and was expelled to Constantinople. He lost all his possessions, since he had not paid customs duty and had to leave them behind.

Soon after the ball the Locarno Pact was signed and the Soviets closed the Georgian Embassy in Rome. Prince Matchiabelli retired to his villa in Florence, to the arms of his actress-wife, Maria Carmi. (She was the other madonna with Diana Cooper in Max Rheinhardt's first production of *The Miracle*.) Later he left for America and told Dimitri there was no future for them in Italy.

However Dimitri stayed on alone.

Chapter Five

At the Russian church where Dimitri went every Sunday, he met a war hero called Captain Shirkoff, decorated for bravery. This captain had bought himself a car (by selling his wife's jewellery) and was contriving to become a successful driver of limousines for hire for tourists, like his friend Zaniratti, to whom he introduced Dimitri. Zaniratti had been the chauffeur (then the lover) of a Princess Davidov, who had bought him a garage where he represented Isotta Francini. Subsequently, after this good start, Zaniratti had become the famous racing driver he was then known to be. When he met Dimitri he told him there was a museum-piece of a car for sale: the Lancia that had belonged to Gabriel d'Annunzio. This was to become the first car of Dimitri's life. He bought it with a promisory note based on Georgian petroleum shares but in fact paid for it later with his earnings. Zaniratti taught him to drive, and he learned so well that he in turn eventually became a racing driver too. But that was many years later; at first he chauffeured tourists like his friends Zaniratti and Shirkoff, and these were not his only new friends. When Prince Matchiabelli left Rome, he had left Dimitri in the charge of a sort of tutor, Colonel Zborominski, a refugee who was an amateur actor with bit parts in films. Zborominski unexpectedly asked Dimitri to do him a favour: he was acting in a film where he was supposed to ride a horse, but could not do so owing to his wounded knee. The understudy who did this for him was sick. Could Dimitri replace him and take his part? It consisted of riding in tricky circumstances but only amounted to one shot. Dimitri was ready to take on anything, even without knowing what was required of him or having any experience of acting. He was delighted and agreed. He

tried on Zborominski's uniform and fortunately it fitted, the colonel was also tall. The star in the film was Tulio Carminati, but he did not meet him. He found himself being photographed as a rider who must deliver a bag of money with a message inside it into a moving train. It happened that the railway line was banked up on the edge of a steep slope, with barely room for the horse between the rails and the sheer drop; Zborominski had omitted to mention this. But Dimitri said to himself, 'Remember the Caucasus!' and galloped alongside, catching up with the head carriage. He flung the bag successfully in through the window. As he did so the horse shied, reared, and in spite of being nimble he slipped on all four legs which spread wide. Dimitri managed to right the skid in a fearful blast of snorting and flying stones, and the shot was more that any cameraman had hoped for or could have conceived - the only shot in the film that did not require a re-take. Many years later Dimitri met Tulio Carminati in Mrs Vanderbilt's house in New York. 'Remember your film *Fiori Nel Vaso*?' he asked him. 'I was the horseman!' They both shouted with laughter.

Dimitri started to race, fitting it in between his chauffeuring trips, for which he only did big jobs, such as all the way to Paris or Vienna - but as the years passed he was able to give these jobs up altogether. In time, and true to his own standards, he won the *Grand Prix de Vingt-quatre Heures* for Mercedes; this took place at Spa in Belgium. It was 1931. Italy had begun to feel too small, and Mussolini made it uncomfortable. He moved to Paris.

In Paris he found Merab again. With what joy they hugged each other. Merab, his beloved first cousin with whom he had lain under trees in the warm afternoons of that other life of their childhood. Merab, with whom, as they grew into young men, he had gone on escapades at night to find Russian girls, for Georgian women were untouchable but 'the Ruskis were a pushover'. Now after ten years they were reunited in Paris, each excitedly telling the other his adventures.

Merab's poor eyesight had not prevented him from

attending the St Cyr military school, nor had it prevented him from joining the resistance and being in the first squadron against the Soviets when the time came. Dimitri calls Merab a 'Russian liberal while at Moscow University.' He also calls him a romantic. Merab had escaped across Turkey and had now joined a group of patriots in Paris led by yet another national hero: Colonel Kakoutza. But neither of them had any money. Dimitri borrowed, but this time his Georgian petroleum shares were known to be worthless, since the Russian annexation. Fortunately he had retained a few other shares, that he had dug up in the garden, in a small metal trunk, on instructions from his father, when the troubles had first started. With money thus obtained he bought the lease of a garage and several second-hand taxis. It is well known that in the thirties Paris was full of penniless Russian princes driving cabs, but Dimitri's were different: he recruited any of the men under Colonel Kaboutza who wanted to join. Eventually he had a fleet of taxis all driven by Georgian resistance patriots. Once they were organised, he left them under the supervision of Merab while he continued his racing. Their unexpected end came later.

The time of Dimitri's arrival in Paris was during the famous years of the thirties, dazzling with contrasting personalities; Gertrude Stein, Max Ernst, Picasso, Scott Fitzgerald. Aragon and Eluard were writing surrealist poetry. And the banquets ... Dimitri did not specially like dancing, but nevertheless attended the balls, where he was usually a striking figure. Various ladies swooned at the sight of him. He could have had anyone for the taking, which he often did - but - as often - did not. He was never a cad, but gallant, a man who sent flowers and held women in great respect. He could be fierce (as to the terrified Armenian crossing the Black Sea) but equally, and usually, he was kind. So into the very European Paris of those years, there entered this Eastern prince, who became somewhat of a landmark, even to those who did not know him. Who was he, they wondered, fascinated and intrigued - for he had such noble bearing, and he was so tall. He looked like a medieval legend.

At this time there was also a young cousin of the prince's in Paris, a small boy of fourteen years of age - who was later to take part in a tremendous lawsuit against the capitalists who bought Baku oil from the Russians and did not compensate the rightful owners. (This lawsuit is still in progress today.) The boy, Djamlet Guazawa, remembers his astonishing older cousin as seeming to be always involved in charitable enterprises; specifically he recalls a ball he gave with the great English beauty, Lady Dunderdale, to raise money for the campaign against tuberculosis. Dimitri's favourite uncle Arthill died of tuberculosis, as did also his aunt who was loved by Rachmaninov - so he had personal reasons to care specially for this cause. But he also joined many others - and Djamlet, telling this in 1985, laughs kindly, saying he sees Dimitri as most glamorous, very good, but also a little naïve ... the true idealist, standing with sword raised in honourable defence while his unguarded pocket is picked (which indeed happened in the in the years to come).

One day in 1934 Dimitri found himself in the Pyrenees, on his way back from a car race, sitting in a café by the road, when he saw what appeared to be a vision. He had always appreciated a good horse and a beautiful woman, and what he saw now was a combination of both: a very lovely woman rode past the café on a superb, thoroughbred and obviously dangerously nervous horse, but she rode carelessly, side-saddle, dangling the reins and smoking a cigarette in a long holder. He watched her pass in silence, petrified with surprise, and after she had gone he asked the owner of the café who this could be?

She was Audrey Emery, he was told, the daughter of an American millionaire. Her mother owned the Château de la Rochefoucauld near Biarritz and the horse was a favourite of Bendor, the Duke of Westminster, who had sent it to her as a gift but her mother refused to let her accept it. And so he lent it to her to ride. The *patron* of the café knew all the local gossip: Audrey was a *jeune fille* who had been strictly brought up and sent to a convent (having shown a tendency to

wildness) – there was to be no nonsense about presents from men.

He sat on for a time in the cafe by the road, musing on the impact this rider of unearthly beauty had made on him – like a figure outside time, and yet very much part of the world – for here he was, in the mountains, and he could hear the occean in the distance, the roar of the great breakers of the Atlantic, the dangerous Basque coast that lay below with its currents and undertow beyond any power of man's control. The way the noise carried meant there would probably be a storm. He wondered what would happen in his life – but only briefly, he was a man of action, not given to lengthy abstract reflections. Yet this woman, so unconcerned, so at one with her wild horse, had thrown him into reverie.

The vision remained with Dimitri through the next years, her ghost was always there when he met other women, they were never as pretty, they did not have her outlandish strangeness, he was haunted. Yet she had only been a glimpse. 'Oh moon, whom even the sun can not outshine,' he used to recite to himself at times. Rustaveli's Advantil was smitten after only seeing Tinatin once.

He became successful, he made money with his racing and took an apartment near the Parc Monceau which he shared with an Italian friend, the Marquis Strozzi. There were two terraces and beautiful furniture. His taxis prospered for the time being. He continued his life in the Paris heyday, among a wild, jumbled mixture of people. One of them was the Grand Duke Boris, who Dimitri remembered keeping the cadets waiting at military school, but now they often sat together in nightclubs, Boris recounting his times spent with gypsy girls on his way to fight on the Russian front. He was the first cousin of the Grand Duke Michael, Dimitri's patron and murdered friend. The Grand Duke Andrei was also a Parisian; he had married the ballerina Kchekinskaya (former pre-marital love of Nicolas II) who had escaped from Russia with a fortune in diamonds and gambled it all away in Monte Carlo. Her gambling was a sickness that lost the Grand Duke his villa

in the Cap d'Ail and brought them to ruin. They were trying to open a school for ballerinas.

One evening Dimitri came upon his uncle Matchiabelli in the bar of the Crillon, just back from America where he had become a business man – a cosmetic company had been founded under his name. He told Dimitri that the previous night there had been an attempt at robbing him as he was leaving the Monseigneur nightclub; he had been saved by the headwaiter who knew him and called all the other waiters to the rescue. It had been a brawl. Dimitri was indignant, they drank a bottle of champagne rather angrily together while he told his uncle an equally irritating tale of a girl he had taken to dinner who said he was the second Georgian prince she had been out with that day. In asking who was the other, he discovered the usual Armenian fraud. They recalled the time of Djibi in Rome ... and this is how the *Société de Noblesse Georgienne* was founded, by Dimitri and his uncle in the bar of the Crillon, to 'protect Georgia from phoneys'. Dimitri could have shrugged it off and laughed, but he did not find it funny. Phoneys angered him to fury. The *Société* became an organised concern later (followed by other Georgian nobles) with an office. Dimitri is still its vice-president today.

But true princes or false adventurers, the life of Paris glittered, and was described recently in retrospect by a younger and poorer Russian, Eugene Rubin, Vogue photographer, as *luxe vieil or*. It was the last round of the *belle époque*. And it was in this milieu, in these irridescent days that he met Audrey-again.

Several years had passed since his vision; he remembered her person but not her name, which in any case had changed.

One morning the ex-wife of one of his cousins telephoned asking him to take her to lunch with a friend called Audrey.

'Audrey who?' he asked.

'Don't you know? She is the wife of the Grand Duke Dimitri and great fun.'

'It sounds like a bore,' Dimitri said. But all right, he would meet them in the lobby of the Plaza.

When he arrived, he did not realise that the person with his

old friend was his vision of the years before. Perhaps she did not look the same, or perhaps her appearance in his memory had grown its own image, unchanged ever since, whereas people change. It was only gradually during the lunch that he realised who she was. The *hors d'oeuvres* and the first glass of wine were strained, but by the end of the meal there was talk of a car race. Audrey looked admiringly at Dimitri on hearing he was a racing driver and had won the Grand Prix at Spa. His friend asked him to take her to the race which Dimitri had been planning to watch as a spectator.

'Oh do take me too!' cried Audrey, childish and endearingly excited. 'I have never seen a race and I am so *bored* with Paris and bridge.'

Dimitri had been looking forward to going alone in his two-seater sports car and meeting the crowd once he got there, but he felt obliged to be courteous; they drove off all together in Audrey's Cadillac with her chauffeur. Dimitri was intrigued by her company but embarrassed and therefore distant, partly because she was married, but also because of his memory of his ghost, that other person on the little wild road in the Pyrenees - was it really the same? He had kept her apart from the world, she did not seem to belong here, now, to this mundanity. The whole day felt unreal.

During the next weeks he found himself increasingly in the same group of friends. Though Audrey had born the Grand Duke a son, she appeared to be a somewhat lone-figure wife and it seemed an uneasy marriage, for her husband was never there. He spent most of his evenings in the Traveller's Club playing backgammon. So Audrey had joined a bridge club. What was he like? one asks Dimitri. 'Handsome,' comes the answer, 'but spent.'

How could he not be spent? Dimitri Pavlovitch was a tragic figure born under an unlucky star. He had known little happiness. His mother, a beautiful Greek princess, adored by her husband, had died giving birth to him. His father, the Grand Duke Paul, son of Alexander II, had remarried morganatically and was banished by the Tzar; he lived with his second wife in Paris. So Dimitri Pavlovitch had no

memory of parents. He was brought up by his uncle, the Grand Duke Sergei, brother of Alexander III, he lived in the Kremlin and at Illyinskoe, their country house outside Moscow, until Sergei was blown up; after that the Grand Duchess Elizabeth took charge, but in reality he and his sister were brought up by nannies. He was also a sickly child, suffering from frequent nauseas. He adored his older sister Marie but pined for his father and longed to see him. And this was forbidden. The Tzar, who was his older first cousin, loved him and treated him as a son. He was the darling of the Winter Palace; when he grew up Nicolas made him his aide-de-camp but it did not fill the grief of Dimitri Pavlovitch at having no mother and a forbidden father. It did not fill the hollow of his and Marie's lonely childhood.

This was not all. Later, after being involved in the murder of Rasputin, he was turned out of his regiment, debarred from the palace, disgraced in St Petersburg. He was saved by Georgian officers who were stationed and fighting in Persia, who sent him a telegram asking him to join their Georgian Cavalry Regiment. He accepted, and was very popular. The exile in Persia also saved his life, sparing him the fate of the rest of the imperial family since he was not there when they were murdered. At the revolution he was evacuated through India to England where he had a disappointingly cool reception. And so he went to France.

In the words of Edmonde Charles-Roux (in her biography of Chanel) he arrived in Paris, 'extraordinarily handsome but ruined and exiled.' He was befriended by Coco Chanel, who had started with 'nothing' herself and knew what it was like to be poor. Dimitri Pavlovitch had started with 'something' indeed, but his world and his people were gone. He was a Romanov, so what? They had all been murdered. Edmonde Charles-Roux describes Gabrielle Coco Chanel as having a 'vibrant inner quality'. She was the first friend when he came to Europe, the first who understood him.

His banishment at the time of Rasputin's murder left a profound mark. The true assassin was also in Paris, but was not traumatised in any way. Or was he? It is ironic that

Yousupov, who killed a healer, was obsessed by healers for the rest of his days. He was a gay dog (in every sense) already wild and wearing make-up in Moscow – but the older he grew the more hooked he became on healers – a sort of punishment perhaps. His luminously blue eyes would fix any stranger at a party, he would buttonhole them and force them to hear the address of his latest find, a new healer, whether or not they wanted or needed one, and this until his death in the 1960s.*

Yousupov had a magnetic attraction, not unlike the man he murdered. This is apparently the reason the Grand Duchess Irina, niece of the Tzar, married him. Such an unlikely homosexual husband, yet so compelling. And so rich, owning vast estates.

When the Grand Duke Dimitri married, Audrey was given the title of Princess Illyinska. 'She is my wife but she will never be a Romanov,' he said. This might sound unkind, but possibly to him being a Romanov may not have been a blessing. Illyinskoe ... the big, rambling white country house, with woods and a lake where he had spent his childhood with his much-loved sister, was at least one fairly happy memory. Morganatic wives of grand dukes were never grand duchesses anyway. These were only of royal blood. Audrey had a gracious title. Yet after his marriage he became an aloof figure, seen in the Champs-Elysèes always wearing the tie of his Georgian regiment, perhaps his only other sentimental memory. He was popular in the Travellers' Club, the way he had been popular in his regiment, yet he was enigmatic and no one knew him well. At home he would sit quietly writing at his desk, in a fur-lined brocade dressing-gown (these had much inspired Chanel): not the most suitable husband for a warm, young, extrovert wife.

He took no part in Audrey's groups of friends. But if Dimitri the Grand Duke was 'spent', Dimitri the Prince was not. So it was inevitable that he and Audrey were to soar

* The author was submitted to one of his healers, who was forcibly sent to visit her in her home, for no need or reason and with no result.

away together, though not for many months yet, and not without difficulties.

They were never alone, but always now in the same crowd, growing more and more aware of each other, each searching out the other on arrival at a party, and if he or she were not there, the room would be empty in spite of the chatter of voices.

Their first day truly alone was due to a cousin of Dimitri's, David Shashlikavili, on 'forty days and forty nights' rumbustious leave from the Foreign Legion – which he spent in Paris. After the beginning of the race they all attended at Le Mans, he suggested to Dimitri that he should take Audrey back to Paris in his sports car, as she had never been in one. He thought this would be a lark for her. She was bored going everywhere in her six-seater Cadillac. So said cousin David. Audrey said nothing but her eyes shone and she smiled conspiratorially. So, for the first time, they were alone.

Audrey suggested that they drive through Normandy because she would like to take him to her château and show him her son. They talked and chattered with no strain; her voice was deep and rather husky, she told him hair-raising stories with an angelic expression and then burst out laughing. After the months of tension, it suddenly seemed so easy. They found they both loved anecdotes about horses and dogs. When they reached the château it was night, there was a full moon and roses cascading over the walls.

By the time they returned to Paris they both knew what was going to happen. In her house at Neuilly they found guests playing bridge, but no husband.

From this time on they went everywhere together, no longer embarrassed about her husband, who obviously was not interested, he had acquired the habit of disconnecting himself from life.

David Shashlikavili invited them both to join him and his wife on a trip to Austria. Dimitri borrowed a large Mercedes for this purpose. He preferred to drive himself rather than be driven by Audrey's chauffeur.

One afternoon they were sitting on the terrace of the hotel

in Feldafing that was famous for its sunsets, when Dimitri heard the noise of his huge, heavy motor which was parked round the corner. Slightly concerned, for the car did not belong to him, he got up and went to see what was happening. A similar Mercedes had arrived, filled with unsmiling, rather grim youngsters in leather jackets. The door was held open for a funny little man who stepped out, and as he did so he stared at Dimitri with the eyes of an animal trainer. It was Hitler.

Dimitri joined his friends and sat down. Hitler and his men entered the hotel. When they passed through the terrace, the whole Austrian crowd stood up, but Dimitri's group remained seated. Hitler again gave him the extraordinary stare that he never forgot.

A sinister chill passed. The black time was coming, but not quite yet. The four friends returned to Paris, to Garland Wilson playing jazz in the *Boeuf sur le Toit*, to Colette, Chanel, Salvador Dali very young and handsome, glittering banquets, extraordinary clothes, Russian violins in Sheherazade. But it was 1937. The undercurrents were coming to the surface and had already burst in Spain where the Civil War was raging. Jews were being persecuted in Germany, sending their children away to school in England and America. Hitler's hysterical voice was starting to hypnotise German crowds. Edward VIII had abdicated and become the Duke of Windsor. He liked to talk to Dimitri in quiet corners at parties (he did not seem to enjoy parties). He was gentle and looked kind, but already wore a sad expression, the particular set of the bags under his eyes made him look like a shooting-dog whose master had deceived him.

Inevitably Audrey was to change her withdrawn, reserved Grand Duke Dimitri for another vital, high-living Dimitri, a prince from an older land.

Before the final steps were taken, however, Dimitri surprised her; he said he thought that they should separate for a time. He explained: it was to make certain – and to be decent. Decent? To his Rustavelian side, the Grand Duke was another knight, and knights must be loyal to each other. Was

this also what Dimitri Pavlovitch wanted? he said. 'Who could ever know what he wanted, through his impenetrable reserve?' Audrey argued, exasperated. 'How can I stay married to him while loving you?' she cried, upset. 'Guilt is a bore and a waste of time.'

But Dimitri was firm. They must really be sure of each other, before embarking on possibly hurting others. It should be proposed to the Grand Duke, and then he should also have time to reflect. He reassured her: he loved her to a point of obsession, of *majum*. It was just that they must have a little space.

Audrey obeyed, anxiously and without understanding. She went away to stay with the Duke of Aosta. Dimitri passed the time with an old friend who consoled him, she was the Hungarian actress Ilona Massey, engaged to marry an R.A.F. pilot (who later died a hero). He liked her company, he told her. 'You are a lady I can call gentleman.' Yet when Audrey heard, she was jealous, for Ilona was very beautiful.

One night Dimitri willed Audrey to telephone, he willed it with all his strength, and went to sleep. Strangely, it worked, for her call came through at four o'clock in the morning. She implored him to let her return - and of course he agreed, he could not be without her either. They were both miserable. The test was proved.

'How can I wait to see you through all the long journey?' Audrey asked. 'Will you come and meet me half way?'

He would indeed, he would go to Marseilles. 'I will meet you half way any time,' he said - and he meant also in their understanding of each other through their lives. It should be their motto.

And so the divorce and re-marriage were arranged amid the usual amount of gossip, but easily, for it had also become clear now that the Grand Duke was not only amenable but quite indifferent.

There was a gale warning however that Dimitri did not heed, for he did not recognise it as such: Audrey's uncle was sent from America to inspect this second Dimitri, to judge whether he were worthy. He came to Paris and they met at

Fouquet's. Dimitri laughed, taking it as a joke, saying, 'What about my seeing if *I* accept *you*?'

It was carefree and happy then, for he could not guess that Audrey's family were an empire, nor the hold they had on her, nor the sorrow it might bring. At this time the couple were flying high, still in their rainbow-lined clouds. But the colours of daybreak and twilight are sometimes the same.

Chapter Six

The wedding party - the wedding feast in Georgian - took place at Leeds Castle in Kent, which was the home of an American friend of Audrey's and her English M.P. husband, Olive and Adrian Baillie. The castle stood on its island in a shimmering lake - it was a fairy tale, and in veritable fairy tales a wicked fairy must appear.

An hour before they were to leave for the registry office, prior to the banquet, a curious scene took place: two American lawyers arrived and asked to see the prince privately. Dimitri brushed them aside in irritation, saying he would see them later, it was not the moment. But no, this must be *before* the wedding, they had documents for him to sign. Why had it not been discussed sooner, why now at the last minute?

They represented Audrey's family. There were many conditions to adhere to concerning her trust fund, also a clause relating to children, they must be brought up according to certain conditions.

Dimitri was stunned. Who did these Americans think they were? Were these toads actually telling him what to do with his children, he who descenced from Nodar?

When he realised this portent, rage divided him with conflict between his two persons - the wild, angry Caucasian and the infinitely distinguished seigneur. The duel this time was within, the enemy was his other self. The Caucasian would have called off the wedding - albeit so carefully arranged, with the church ceremony to follow, the jewelled icon of St Nino ready to present to Audrey. No matter, he would have swept away from the entire scene, but the seigneur won. He had given his pledge. Also he was in love,

he had never loved like this before. She was so magnetic a person, apart from her beauty, she was a bewitcher. The Rustavelian seigneur reminded the Caucasian that a loved woman is a 'crystal in which all colours are reflected, a light too brilliant to bear'. Life would be forever dark without it.

They were married. The banquet was held, and the religious service subsequently took place in the Russian Orthodox church in Brussels. Dimitri refrained from ever telling Audrey what the lawyers had made him do, and so she never knew. But the seigneur vowed to the Caucasian that he would never have children, not if he had had to sign rules with American lawyers, probably from the lower east side. He would bring up Audrey's son by the Grand Duke instead. He would have done so anyway, but *as well*, not *instead*. He had given the boy much thought already: Paul, this half-American child, son of Dimitri Pavlovitch, grandson of Grand Duke Paul, great grandson of Alexander II who had freed the serfs, who by way of thanks had murdered him. Such a heritage on his father's side. Maybe the boy would have liked a brother. The legal men had done him down too. He lived in a lonely cocoon. Dimitri started to hate American lawyers from that day on, with a deep hatred that has never left him, and turned into hatred of all lawyers, anywhere.

Audrey's father was dead and her mother had re-married the Hon. Alfred Anson, but there was not much English influence in the family, little respect and no permission for people to lead their own lives. But the new marriage was a true love-match and remained idyllic for the time they stayed in Europe, where the family could not quite reach.

Their first home was in Chantilly where Dimitri kept his horses. Paul went to boarding school at Sunningdale in England. But this peaceful pattern was not of long duration.

During Dimitri's amorous activities, his fleet of Georgian taxi-drivers had been fretting in Paris, they were satiated and disgusted with their nightclub life, and since Georgians grow bored without action, they decided they would go to fight the war in Spain. Merab led the group of twelve men who made this decision. Audrey was excited by the adventure, which she

financed, ardently wishing to somehow become a patriotic Georgian herself.

Once in Spain however, the Georgian's vision was thrown out of focus by the many foreign idealists they found also fighting with all their different doctrines, which confused issues. The Georgians fought for Franco, believing they were fighting Communism, having lost their own country to the Soviets. When Dimitri heard this he was embarrassed, he did not want to get involved in foreign politics. It was his country too that had been lost, so be it, let them all make a new life. He had organised his friends to drive cars, not to take sides, and perhaps mistakenly at that, for what was Franco but another dictator?

Before he had even been able to consider this implication quietly, the picture changed again: he heard that not only had they decided they had taken the wrong side, but now they were going to fight for the dispossessed Carlist branch of the monarchy - for the 'split issue'. They were diving headlong into a fearful, over-excited muddle. Without time for Dimitri to register the new situation, there was yet another intrigue: a rumour had started that a Georgian group had been sent by Stalin to kill Franco.

A hornet's nest. It had to explode. Dimitri's men were arrested, and only through connections with Colonel Alec Amilakvari and the British ambassador were they allowed to return to France rather than go to prison. They left Spain the way they had entered it, across the mountains with the same guide. But the trouble had only just started.

When they checked into their hotel near the Place Wagram, the concierge telephoned Dimitri and told him the manager would like to speak to him. Dimitri did not go until the next day, by this time the men had already been collected by the police and taken into custody, they were awaiting trial but would probably be deported. The manager was in a state of panic. Dimitri telephoned his monarchist lawyer, Sholain-Sevigné, who intervened, but he only achieved a hopeful delay, and he warned Dimitri for himself. 'Someone must guarantee their support,' he said. 'Can you not do this, since you are

their leader?' Dimitri explained that he was not their leader, he had just tried to help them.

'Then I advise you to leave France before you too are expelled,' his lawyer said.

Dimitri owned a villa near Ste Maxime: he drove down to the south of France in his two-seater Rolls-Royce (a car he had bought for 'next to nothing' and re-constructed himself) accompanied by his right-hand man-Friday, Basil. He had a cruiser in port, a Despujol, flying an American flag. He instructed Basil to put his luggage on the boat, assemble the crew of two sailors and take the boat to Monte Carlo. He then returned to Paris, to learn that in effect the Georgians were already being deported to Luxembourg, and without trial.

Audrey reminded Dimitri that the brother-in-law of his friend Princess Margaret of Denmark was the Prince of Luxembourg. Perhaps he could pull some strings? Dimitri sent a message, but without waiting for the outcome he got into another of his cars, a Maybachk (made by the company that made engines for zeppelins and very fast) and drove to Luxembourg, hoping to beat the train.

He instructed Audrey to drive to Ste Maxime while he was away and install herself in the villa. She was driven down by the new chauffeur Dimitri had found for her, Shachiko, a war hero with a fragile appearance, and accompanied by her English ladies, maid, Lily. Audrey was uneasy about Dimitri. She liked adventures provided they were together, and was anxious alone.

By the time Dimitri arrived in Luxembourg the train had beaten him by half an hour. His lawyer met him and told him an expected tale: the Georgians had been marching along the platform, led by Colonel Amilakvari - in low spirits, since they knew that even if they were not arrested, they would be sent back to France where they would spend six months in prison, then undertake another train journey to the frontier, be returned to prison and shuttle *ad infinitum*, since that was the pattern for those expelled from France.

They had therefore advanced along the platform downcast

though fatalistic, and been met (as they feared) by the Luxembourg Captain of Police. But to their astonishment he saluted and announced, 'His Royal Highness is expecting you for breakfast.'

Dimitri's message had arrived. After a moment of amazed silence, the station had resounded with whooping noise. Residents' permits were granted the men, but they were not allowed to work; so later they were gradually smuggled into Belgium, Merab among them. In a café in Brussels Merab met a Russian princess Sherbatov, fell passionately in love at first sight - and they were married.

It was 1938. Dimitri returned to Ste Maxime, but Sholain-Sévigné had advised, 'For God's sake stay aboard your ship.' So he rejoined his boat in Monte Carlo while Audrey stayed more comfortably in the villa and came on board for picnics and to spend the day. The Germans were talking much of Danzig and their Polish corridor; they were planning to sweep easily over Europe. Churchill foresaw the doom that was approaching, but was still labelled a war-monger. The picnics on the cruiser at Monte Carlo had a slightly queasy quality, as if eaten in storm-light before an earthquake. Basil was an excellent chef, but ...

Various English politicians who had homes in the south of France decided to leave. This was the year of Munich and the war scarce, falsely allayed by Chamberlain (known to the French later as *J'aime Berlin*). But in order not to cause alarm or attract attention, they arranged to go unofficially with no goodbyes, in fact to *partir à l'anglaise*. One such person was David Margesson, who was Conservative Chief Whip. He employed an original method for his 'unnoticeable departure': he gave Dimitri a rendez-vous in the sea. When they were swimming in deep water far from eavesdroppers, he said, 'I have a reservation on the train to Calais but I took it out in your name. Would you do me the favour of going on board old chap, this evening, then getting off at the next station. I will take your place? Also - I advise you to leave now too. I will help. News will follow.'

The English were certain war was about to break out – which indeed it did, but not till a year later.

Two days after the train's departure Dimitri was in the bar of the Carlton at Cannes, when the barman handed him a telegram, the colour for official diplomatic messages. It read: 'Present yourself at any port in England. No passport required. This telegram is enough.' It was signed Geoffrey Lloyd, who was under-secretary of state at the Home Office, and so in charge of foreigners. Both Lloyd and Margesson were friends of Olive and Adrian Baillie.

Action was now necessary. Dimitri made arrangements. He drove away again in his two-seater Rolls but this time with Audrey, heading for Boulogne. The Cadillac followed with the luggage, Sachiko driving Lily Blakely, the treasured maid who had packed all their personal effects. Audrey was thrilled. Life with Dimitri so far had been a great contrast from the opiates of châteaux and bridge.

Despite two tyre blow-outs, to which Dimitri attended himself, the convoy arrived in Boulogne. Shachiko remained in France, as he had no visa. He waved goodbye to the steamer and they never saw him again. English Lily (whose husband was a major) crossed the channel, the Rolls also was put on board. They were met by a chauffeur from Leeds Castle, with a car for Lily and the luggage.

But they could not dwell indefinitely in someone else's home. Dimitri decided to buy a yacht large enough to live on. Audrey's old admirer, Bendor the Duke of Westminster had a first cousin, Lord Stalbridge, who owned a 175-foot schooner called *Sitonia*, but he had not used her since the death of his son in a car crash. The ship had been the boy's great love. He was more than willing to sell her and hoped never to see her again. Dimitri made a part exchange with his Despujol cruiser and bought the *Sitonia* well below her market price, for he thought her engine not powerful enough and that it should be changed. He successfully transformed the petrol engine to a larger diesel motor, enabling the ship to cruise at seven knots. He changed her name to *Mariana*, which was Audrey's other

name. It was Audrey, with her love of plans, who now enthusiastically took on the job of decorating: the ship was to be their home. She floated like a world apart, their world. It was still their rainbow; but at the end of the rainbow, instead of treasure, war was declared. They had to go to America, for they could not live on a ship during a war. From that time on, surreptitiously at first, but gradually and surely, the rot set in. Audrey had painted her last picture, experienced her last enthusiasm.

Later the *Sitonia-Mariana* was sailed to the United States. The Djordjadzes used her for weekends at first but later when America also came into the war she was used as a listening ship. 'She looked so harmless,' Dimitri said.

Chapter Seven

When the Djordjadzes reached America, they found that Audrey's mother was living in three different homes. Her older brother had been shell-shocked in the Great War, he had had several wives, handled his own finances and become the richest of all. But he took no orders and kept himself apart. The younger brother, Jack, played an active role and was close to Audrey. He was a sort of team master for the organization of the affairs of the other members of the family; he lived in Cincinnati (the town of origin of the father's fortune.) He was handsome. Dimitri says, 'He made money in the depression,' so one supposes he must have been clever. But on asking further, it appears 'all he knew how to do was criticise. And he always said no.' So money was made by taking no action. He did not need to be clever, he already had millions to start with. The Emery empire was in chemicals and real estate and the father had made their colossal fortune for them. Dimitri is ambivalent about Jack, he calls him attractive and a 'gentleman'. He liked him at first – yet when Jack suggested that he and Audrey come to live in Cincinnati, Dimitri refused. It was a boring idea, not only Cincinnati but taking orders and doing business in the family mould. He wanted to continue to make his own way as he had in Europe. When he refused, Jack bore him a grudge.

There was not what might be called a family gathering or a home to which they could go, in spite of the millions. They were not invited to any of Mrs Emery's three houses. When they arrived in New York they lived in a hotel. Many Americans live in hotels, but Dimitri was not used to this and did not find it welcoming. One night they ran into some friends in a restaurant, the Kitteridges, who lived in South

13) Paul Ilynski Romanov in U.S. Marines. The son of Grand Duke Pavlovitch, stepson of Prince Dimitri Djordjadze.

14) *Princequillo, world champion stallion.*

15) Plain Dealing Stud Farm in Virginia. 'a home is something you lose'

16) *Prince Djordjadze with Audrey in old fashioned buggy.*

Carolina. On hearing Audrey say they were homeless, the well-meaning friends asked them to come and stay and look for a house. Audrey jumped at the idea, and Dimitri thought it was the first sign of hospitality. So it was decided; they were all only slightly astonished when Dimitri said he would travel by car and join them later. 'But it will take two days!' they exclaimed. Of course, that was the point, he wanted to study this new country and was in no hurry: it was all ahead. They found him eccentric; Audrey left with her friends and he drove alone.

During their stay with these friends the pattern of their life started to change. The schedule was martinis at eleven in the morning, bridge all afternoon, and Audrey took to chain smoking. At Chantilly she used to ride; here in the Carolina climate it was too warm and muggy. And she had always ridden side-saddle and felt reticent about trying 'the American way', astride.

Dimitri neither smoked nor played bridge. He had his first drink at sundown. He was passionately interested in discovering the new trees and ferns and animals. He was touched by the lavish hospitality of the American friends, and their kindness, but he couldn't help finding he danced to a different rhythm. He removed himself and Audrey to a hotel.

Audrey 'went shopping' and found a house. She fell in love with the house and said they 'had to have it'. When Dimitri went to check it out he found that everything leaked. It was picturesque outside but mildewed and mosquito-infested. There was not much land and the trees had Spanish moss hanging down on them like beards. He had already learned that this eerie and rather beautiful plant was a parasite and a sign of decay. What would he do there while she played bridge? There was no room for horses or animals. He said firmly that he would look for another house for the same price, which at the time was $150,000 dollars. This was their first quarrel. In Europe she had taken orders, he had been the boss. Here, suddenly she seemed to be giving them. 'You're spoiling my fun,' she said. 'You're a bore.'

He set off accompanied by an Irish agent. They found an

old homestead, a wood and brick house re-built onto an older plan with wide verandahs. It was set in seven thousand acres of land with a forest of evergreen oak. The trees were a hundred years old. There were two rivers on the property and at high tide there was a sea coast nearly all round it, as it stretched into a long peninsula. At low water the land became ten thousand acres with vast sandy shores; it was possible for a yacht to come up river and find good mooring. This house was priced at $450,000 dollars. Dimitri told the agent he was offering $150,000 and gave him until the following Tuesday to give an answer. He said he had another farm in view farther north.

As he was at the desk in the hotel lobby a few days later, settling bills, the agent arrived in a rush and exclaimed, 'Sir! You win! Boon Hall Plantation is yours!' So it was here that they first lived, and this was Dimitri's first successful transaction in America.

The air was lush and balmy. Dimitri, stirred to the depths, felt giddy. There had not been so much space since Georgia, and he now planned a proper family life. The first thing was to send for Paul, who had returned to America with them and his English nanny, and had been attending a school on the Hudson river. But he was not keen on his studies, and in this he was not helped by his nanny, who said, 'Why bother dearie? Your father is a cousin of the king of England and your mother is a millionairess.'

Dimitri sent the nanny home and Paul came to live with them and went to school in Charlestown. Now at last this boy not only had a home but for a brief time also companions his own age; the Mountbatten children Pamela and Patricia (who shared Romanov relations) were sent to stay during the war. Dimitri bought Paul a horse and he learned to ride, following his stepfather everywhere. The prince adapted the stables and the old coach house, setting to work with fervour. But it gradually became apparent that he had made a mistake and acted too fast at the outset, for this climate was not healthy for horses. It was puzzling, since there had been stables here, but

perhaps just for buggy hacks. Prince Dimitri was planning to breed. This meant thoroughbreds, and the right conditions, green pastures, cooler air. It meant they could not settle here after all.

He set off again to house-hunt farther north in Virginia. Near Charlottesville he found a derelict farm. The land seemed like a vast mud puddle, the soil depleted by tobacco growing, but there was a charming seventeenth-century clapboard house with panelling, which delighted Audrey, who came out of her miasma and excitedly took interest again. 'A wonderful idea,' she said. 'I have been so *bored* down here.' She was famous for her great good taste and loved arranging houses. Their low key went upwards; she bustled about ordering curtains, choosing furniture, finding treasures in rosewood and elm, early American and also some French antiques, 'going shopping'.

Dimitri put a certain genius into turning the waste land into fertility: first liming the soil, then growing crops in rotation of blue grass, orchard grass, lespedeza. He put up seven barns and designed a special training barn with fourteen stalls, a tack room and feed room with rollaway doors that opened at each end of the building. The property had woods but no fencing. He cut down most of the trees, while leaving enough for ornament; he sold the wood and also used it for fencing. The clearances took him forty days, but the whole venture many years. Three years after they settled he bought the adjoining property very cheaply for it was also run down. Its name was Churchill Farm. In time his place grew to be famous: Plain Dealing Stud, written about in the thoroughbred journal *Record*. In 1948 there was to be a 'cover girl' photo of one of his brood mares, *Who* and her foal *Flushing II*. But now it was still the beginning. This future was as yet unknown. And first came Pearl Harbor.

He volunteered for the American Army but was not yet an American citizen (as he was to become later, adopting the language so faithfully that friends like Prince Serge Obolensky, the oldest parachuting colonel in the U.S. Army, were referred to as 'buddies'). So he was told to wait. He might be

attached to a Mediterranean command, but it seemed doubtful. Being told to wait was disappointing. He had fought in battles for his country since he was nineteen. This was now a major war - this was to be his new country. The old Georgian fighter inside him was restless and wanted to take part.

Once their house was organised there did not seem to be much for Audrey to do, and life sagged on her again. Dimitri regretted that she did not want to try to ride astride, she who was such an excellent rider. He found it hard to understand. He felt tenderness and pity that her heart no longer seemed to be in anything. He bought an elegant old-fashioned buggy for her to drive, and sometimes he rode on the carriage horse, going out with her.

He continued to supervise closely Paul's education, in the tradition of Georgian males, the way his uncle Sico had done for him. Audrey was pleased that he was teaching Paul to be a good rider, but she relapsed into chain smoking and morning martinis and Jack was always on the telephone. After his calls the atmosphere was worse, Dimitri began to dread Jack's calls . . .

One weekend Dimitri went to New York, rather vaguely to see about his possible mobilization, but since there was nothing he could do about it, he went in truth because he felt restless. Only later did he discover from Colonel Bob McKay the reason for the delay: a message from Stalin had been received at a staff meeting in the Pentagon: former Russian citizens must only have minor posts. Yet the Pentagon admired Dimitri's insistence to join the U.S. Army and were trying to find him a suitable assignment. Eventually he was trained for overseas duties, owing to his knowledge of languages. He might have been in the staff of General Mark Clark in Africa, but events decided otherwise.

In New York he ran into a girl he knew called Honeychile Wilder and invited her to spend the weekend on the Sitonia-Mariana with her current boyfriend, Horatio Luro, an Argentine. By coincidence this man was a horse trainer,

excitable and enthusiastic. For Dimitri, talking about horses was a cure. It lifted him out of his aimless depression caused partly by wondering what was wrong with Audrey, and why they could not seem to discuss it together (and yet she could converse for hours with Jack on the telephone). His untypical gloom was also caused by the knowledge that this was the first war he would not take part in. He was so pleased with Horatio that he returned home with him in tow.

Audrey found him dubious from the start. 'Who is this bastard?' she asked almost as soon as they came in the door, and indeed her instinct was right, he turned out to be so. But he inspired Dimitri usefully first. 'He is drawn by the smell of money,' Audrey said.

It was on Horatio's advice that Dimitri started racing. The first time was in Canada, where Horatio said it was 'easy to win', the second time was in Miami. He knew the ropes. By following his advice they won. As a result, Dimitri, carried away, suggested Saratoga, the grandest of all racetracks. But at this Horatio, who was anxious and insecure, lost his nerve. Saratoga was not only grand, he explained, but they *knew* about horses, unlike the other two places where nobody knew anything. Though clever and sly, Horatio was small-time, he liked to get by the easy way, he liked to be safe.

Dimitri, unruffled, fascinated in his new venture, wanting nothing but the best, *specially* the best, said of course Saratoga was the place for him. The more Horatio was against it, the more excited and determined he grew. Saratoga was the top, that was where they were going. He hired another trainer, Withingham, who had more experience than Horatio, but he retained Horatio as second. This was like a return to the former days in Chantilly when he had been in partnership with a Captain Petit of the Spahis. This was more like his true rhythm again and from this time on, the stables of Prince Djordjadze grew famous in the United States.

He improvised a new way of selling horses. There would be six groups of two horses each. Buyers were only allowed one horse from each group so that no one could claim they were getting the worse of a sale. In California, to his amused

surprise he found two Cossacks on the Hollywood racetrack. They were inseparable, belonging to the same tribe, and in spite of 'not being keen on Russians' he hired these two men as stallion man and a groom. They came from a world he knew and he respected their understanding and handling of horses.

Horatio, aiming at being cunning, pointed out the well-known fact that the blood of French horses was a good mixture with which to outcross American strains. Dimitri (who knew this already) started importing winners from France and it was now that his Stud Farm started to boom.

A year after Pearl Harbour, Montgomery defeated Rommel at El Alamein. To achieve this English, Australians, New Zealanders, Greeks, Poles, Free French and the Foreign Legion all fought together. In the battle, Dimitri's cousin Colonel Prince Dimitri Amilakvari was killed, among the first to die, cited and decorated for bravery posthumously by de Gaulle. He fell precisely at El Himeimat, shot in the head only a few hours after his famous remark when seen adjusting his uniform and rubbing his shoes, that 'when one is about to appear before God, it is proper to look decent'.

Though Dimitri was used to death through battles ever since his childhood, he was desolate at this news. Feeling downcast and futile himself, he donated his ship to the government for the duration of the war. What else could he do? He was a military man but unemployed as such.

He rented Elizabeth Arden's 'cottage' at Saratoga for the racing season. Here he saw the two-year old stallion Princequillo for the first time and immediately placed a claim for him. If the owner of a horse needs money, there is a 'claim race'. The buyers submit their offer with a cheque before the race and the highest bidder claims afterwards. Dimitri won Princequillo who became a star in his firmament as well as in that of the turf world. He won the Jockey Gold Cup at Belmont Park, the Saratoga Cup, the Questionnaire Handicap, the Merchants and Citizens Handicap. He won all over America. He was a beauty and probably the most loved horse

of Dimitri's life. Horatio grew dizzy but also devious with the atmosphere of success, Dimitri caught him fiddling, switching horses in the groups, trying to swindle the payments, accepting bribes. He had to sack him. He formed a partnership in Princequillo with a new man, Hancock, who was the best known trainer in Kentucky and wanted to start a breeding horse farm of his own in Virginia. The partnership was 75%–25% for Dimitri had learned much from Horatio's behaviour and was no fool.

At this time he was beginning to be much spoken of in the racing journals and turf newspapers. Audrey felt irritated by the press always speaking of Dimitri and his horses, the prince's stud farm, the great stables of Djordjadze - and never of her. She told her husband she wanted to be involved and that she would like to buy horses too. Dimitri was pleased.

They went to choose her horses together, and he carefully selected four brood mares for $100,000, for which she paid with her own money, so they remained her separate property. But since the animals were all in the same stable, she and her husband were now in partnership. This should have made life complete, and Dimitri greatly hoped it would revive the old enthusiasm for which she had been famous. But her brother Jack claimed that her horses were family money invested, and so from now on he would also be part owner and must be consulted on all decisions. Jack knew nothing of horses, he was an invading amateur.

Until this time Dimitri had invested his own money from winnings on his own instinct and all had gone well. His horses were champions. It had touched him to choose for Audrey. But when Jack entered their married life stamping the room and talking of his rights, and Audrey started taking orders from this ignoramus when she knew far better about horses, it took on a different aspect. Jack produced a paper for Dimitri to sign transferring half of his farm to Audrey's name. He did so easily and carelessly. To him business had been a side issue before, not the real point. He shrugged and lost interest. A rift was beginning. His good deed had been a mistake.

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He started selling his horses in California. His first buyer was the actor George Brent. Following this sale there were more demands. He hired a stable and made a new invention: in order not to sell through a middle man or an organization, he went to California himself, taking horses that had been born, raised and broken in his Plain Dealing Stud stables in Virginia. Instead of selling them at once on his arrival, he entered them to race, and to win. After they had won he sold them for $30,000 dollars instead of $2,500. (Business was business, but not mixed with family.) For this he stayed in Hollywood for two months at a time, two weeks before the race and six weeks afterwards for negotiations.

During these visits he lived in the Bel-Air Hotel, where he met Clark Gable one night in the bar, and they became good friends. Clark Gable gave parties where there were the gorgeous girls Dimitri refers to as 'sizzlers'. Gable's home was on one of the avenues leading into Sunset Boulevard. They would stroll down this famous street together in the mornings, after an American breakfast, arm in arm with George Brent. If the less famous actor Ronald Reagan should pass, Brent would hail him kindly calling out, 'Hello farmer!' Dimitri was busy with his horses but not the entire time. Clark Gable's life greatly amused him. He did not like starlets, he found them pretentious and provincial. But he liked the unknown sizzlers, and refers to Clark Gable as a 'man's man'. Jane Russell was statuesque with big feet, not feminine but a good tough girl who became a friend. Marilyn Monroe was often around. She had a Gable fixation and worshipped him, and so was at most of his parties. For a long time after the death of Carole Lombard, Clark Gable remained inconsolable and took no further great interest in women. It was observed that he spent more time talking to the dog. Marilyn Monroe was pathetic in her continual need for reassurance. Her pouting mouth was appealing. The way she looked so vulnerable made a man feel protective, yet he did not find her pretty, except one special time when he saw her 'organised' to go onto the movie set.

This was the way Dimitri liked the everyday world to be, beautiful women about the place, evenings with vibrations of

music, but specially the male comaraderie pleased him. He had not realised how much he missed this quality in the atmosphere he had known at home with his uncles and Merab. He was happy in the Hollywood life, selling his horses and away from the introspection of Jack and Audrey in their closed-circuit world. He saw it as a holiday and it did not occur to him that it might be an escape.

There were troubles, however. After firing Horatio for changing the horses in their groups at Saratoga he discovered more serious trickery in the book-keeping. He had to go further and sue him, much to his distaste. Firing was simple, it finished a situation, but suing meant lawyers (his bogey) and was only a beginning.* Hancock was also being too clever. Dimitri revolted so much against intrigue that he would have liked to continue alone, but he could not train, sell, run the business entirely by himself.

In some ways he was a Peter Pan. He was simple. He had had an upbringing that, though luxurious, had also been austere in discipline. It had been straightforward and frank, honest like the name he had given his stud farm: Plain Dealing. When he left his wild, beautiful but also small and logical country of militarily trained men, he discovered the complexities of the world outside. There were shades of grey between enemies and friends. An enemy could not just be labelled entirely black and removed in a duel, a friend could have treacherous streaks but still remain likeable. He *liked* Hancock. A disillusionment. But here in Hollywood the simple life reasserted itself. He fell into place as if at home. Will Rogers had a polo team, he made Ray Bell into a champion cow rider for rodeo - this was living. Then Will Rogers crashed in his private plane. Fred Astaire started buying Dimitri's horses - it was to occupy himself because his wife had died. Dimitri went out with sizzlers, he laughed and ate steak tartare with Clark Gable (who was '100% clean'). Ronald Reagan's films (he was a 'buddy' now too) always ended well, with the baddies killed. It made sense. Even death; for Dimitri had killed in duels and would accept himself if he

* He won this lawsuit, but it lasted four years.

lost. Life to be lived was the point, one could see about death when it was death's turn.

When he went back to Virginia he sometimes asked Audrey to come on these trips, but she did not want to. She would say, 'Hollywood? Never, it's so vulgar,' but inside there was another reason, something indefinable about it made her afraid. But of what? Tall, slender Audrey with her bright brown hair and hazel eyes ... what did she have to fear? She was used to being queen, perhaps that was it. Was she beginning to lose her looks? Sables and white mink ... Paris clothes ... where had all those other kinds of parties gone? The château life had not been so bad after all, and when looks faded, there was elegance.

One morning in May it snowed. This was a freak occurrence in California. Dimitri woke to find his horses shivering. While he was anxiously rubbing them down and attending to them himself (everyone had been fired now except for his two Cossacks) a telephone call came through from New York from his brother-in-law asking him to meet him at once in the Ritz-Carlton where he was staying. Dimitri was perplexed. What could be so urgent? It was family business, Jack told him, and added, 'It's later than you think.'

When he arrived Jack was sitting in a gilt chair in the salon of a suite. There was also another man who Dimitri recognised as the family attorney. He told Dimitri abruptly and without any preamble that it would be best for him to accept a divorce. (What have *you* got to do with it? Dimitri wondered.) Like the auctioneer's hammer coming down in a sale room: this object now disposed of.

Dimitri had liked Jack once, he had thought him a 'gentleman' (who had had it all made for him by his father) – a good retriever dog trained to go after dollars, but what had dollars to do with his divorce? Had he somehow affected their empire? He had never asked anything and was busy building an empire of his own. Perhaps it was this very thing that Jack

resented. And why was this proposition from Audrey's brother, and not from herself? Jack then explained, or rather did not explain coherently that the 'family' thought it would be a good thing, and that Audrey agreed. He sat smugly in his reproduction French antique armchair, fixing Dimitri with the famous vapid stare from his grey-blue eyes; the head of the family. Had Audrey's mother been consulted? Dimitri wondered, but only out of passing curiosity since he would not consider her opinion. They hardly ever saw her, she was always far removed in the limbo of one or other of her three homes, going to the hairdresser and playing bridge. The older brother counted even less. He had (wisely) disappeared into his own world long since. There was the uncle who had been sent to Paris. But did the family exist in a true sense? Or was it just at board meetings? Or was it just Jack? In any case the Emery family did not concern him, he was not married to a consortium or was he? His only concern was Audrey. At this thought, Dimitri grew ever more bewildered. He was mystified that she had said nothing herself. This was the only point that mattered. Had it been brewing in his absence? He was aware of the failure between them, but so suddenly, so final? Then all this time she and Jack had been plotting, and Jack was her emissary? Signing half his farm to her had been an impulsive gesture from the heart. But for them it had evidently been planned from the head. Their two heads. Audrey held the controlling interest in the Emery Industries. Was it of that now that Jack wanted to gain control? Or was it to please Audrey and at her request, since she was sitting at the farm growing bored?

He could try to see Audrey and talk with her ... but then ... since they had been back in America they had never really talked any more. Not for years now. He had been so disappointed by this that now he no longer felt like putting up resistance. He had already lost his family and his country before. And yet she was his lady. Had this lady made a board decision about him?

Suddenly he felt overwhelming disgust. He was angry. He was sad. He was everything at once, as if a red curtain was

descending across his view, like blood in the eyes. He could no longer think. He could no longer see. *He was blind.*

He stood up, and all he said was, 'It's a fine May day, I have three horses running and no time. Agreed then.'

Jack's jaw dropped. 'But we must discuss it,' he said; his pleasure (and his power) were gone.

'There is nothing to discuss,' Dimitri said disparagingly, haughty, not lowering himself. 'You know what is hers and what is mine.'

'Just sign here then,' said Jack, deflated, pushing a paper from the attorney's briefcase across the leather-topped desk in front of him. During this time the attorney had said not one word, he had just witnessed and watched.

Dimitri signed and left, an Uncle Sico departure, off to the races (or to catch a train) in any crisis and no time to waste. He did not read the paper, it was quite obvious what it was.

As he crossed the hall in a boxer's knock-out of a dream, he caught sight of Audrey lying on the bed in the adjoining room. *Audrey?* For one second he froze, like a shooting dog pointing, and then walked on and away without showing that he had seen her, not wanting to know she must have been listening all the time. Languorous Audrey lying there smoking with her long holder ... God Almighty ... A coward? A deceiver? Perhaps she did not have the moral courage to go through with it, yet it suited Jack. Perhaps ... Yet it could not be so. Neither did he want her to know he had seen. It might not be the truth if not admitted. Yet he had seen. It was the truth.

Chapter Eight

After receiving the Emery's cold shower and leaving the Ritz Carlton, Dimitri went as he had announced straight to Belmont Park. All he thought was: horses. He did not think the obvious thoughts, he staggered into the grandstand and watched the race.

Two of his horses came in first and one fourth. He received the money in a stunned and dazed condition, and it was luckier than he realised, because though in the eyes of the world Prince Djordjadze may have married a rich woman, he left the Ritz Carlton with two hundred dollars in his pocket, his pride and his disgust. It would have made no difference to his urge to get away, but it was a break that brought him sudden money. He would never go back to his farm, the affairs would have to be settled without his presence. Lawyers again.

He returned to New York, took a room in the Plaza, ordered champagne, and could not sleep. For now he started to think. As the double-take crept over him he was indignant. The Emerys had given him the sack like a servant, he who was Nodar's descendant. When his uncle Sico left the scene, he was always the victor. But this time Dimitri had been *had*, in American language, *betrayed* in Georgian, the worst of crimes. Signing for Jack ... first when he made over half his farm. Now - making over his wife? Jack's revenge? From the start Dimitri had not wanted to join the family and live in Cincinnati. *But Audrey.* Then she must agree, they had arranged it together. *He had lost Audrey!*

Gradually he became dizzy with fruitless thoughts, fury against Jack, despair about Audrey, until clouds of his failure to understand their ways enveloped him. Yet also there grew in him a need to explode. He wanted to fight, to shoot, to

gallop away – but lay as if tied in chains to the bed. Where was Tariel's black charger?

It had never happened to him before to have insomnia, not even after killing a man. This new experience was hateful, he could not handle it. He got up, dressed and went out, not seeing where he was, hearing disputes inside his head, wishing for a whip to lash with as Tariel had done. Advantil and Tariel would seek death for traitors.

He wandered distractedly across the street and found himself in the Hotel Pierre opposite, answering like an automaton when a very beautiful girl in the lobby seemed to know who he was, and hugged him.

A certain Count Adlerburg from the Baltic provinces was sitting in the lounge of the Plaza in the afternoon, listening to the violins playing while he waited for a friend he had invited for tea. He recognised Prince Djordjadze crossing the hall – an acquaintance – their fathers had been friends until Adlerburg's father, who was governor of St Petersburg, had been shot by the communists. He started to raise his hand to wave but then refrained, seeing that Djordjadze was in the company of one of those incredible creatures that New York produces, and evidently on their way upstairs. Since he had heard that Djordjadze was married, he found it more discreet to stay still. His friend arrived and he waved the hand he had raised to him instead. They had tea, enjoying rich fruit cake and talk of the old world. When the friend left, the Count lingered a while, listening to one of his favourite waltzes which filled him with old memories. When it was over he sighed and stood up to leave, almost colliding with Djordjadze as he reached the lobby – he had appeared again with the girl, and they were busy greeting yet another beauty. When Dimitri caught sight of the Count he hailed him warmly and introduced him, asking if he would care to join them for dinner and make a fourth? 'But first come up to my suite and have some champagne,' Dimitri went on, before he could answer, talking rather fast and yet looking strangely vague, the Count thought.

Adlerburg had nothing special to do and was of a philosophical nature. Up they all went to drink the champagne Dimitri 'always kept iced and ready'. The Count was only slightly jolted when yet a third even more striking girl came out of the shower wrapped in a large towel and appearing quite at home. This one had a date and would not dine with them. She was a friend of the others but the hotel had mistakenly not booked her a room. The Count grew mildly bewildered: the girl he had first seen was called Hilda. She was chattering and telling him that she was half Irish and half Spanish and she was Miss Maryland. She had known the prince for two years – since Hollywood. And she had just run into a friend from her home town in the lobby, was it not a coincidence? The friend was here on a modelling job, but there was no room in the hotel and the prince had offered her hospitality.

Dimitri seemed distracted and did not appear to listen, to the Count he referred to Hilda as his sister of hard times. Rustaveli had been instilled into his thinking, he had been brought up on him orally as a boy – and he had a tendency to forget that other contemporaries of his world did not always know the context. 'Asmat,' he said to the count, 'remember? The girl who befriended Tariel in his cave when he was stricken with grief. She was the maid of his lost lady. She knew his story and took care of him.' When Dimitri had entered the Pierre the other night, he had *had* to talk, to tell someone, anyone, and she had been standing there. She was Hilda, she was Asmat.

Adlerburg drank his champagne gloomily. He could not 'remember Asmat', understood nothing, and began to regret accepting the dinner invitation. He only gathered that his old acquaintance Djordjadze was wilder than he had imagined and seemed to be suddenly released from his marriage vows.

When they dined at the Colony the Count grew rather bored. Dimitri spoke of Saratoga. One of the beauties asked, 'What is that? Is it a drink?'

For a short while he conversed pleasantly with Dimitri about the Romanovs, at which point the second girl said, 'Say who are these bores you talk of all the time?'

'A family who were all murdered,' the Count informed her icily.

'A whole family murdered - was that by the Mafia?'

Count Adlerburg decided he would go home right after the coffee. He lived far away and Dimitri said he would drive him. They took Hilda home first, and the Count was not lucky, for she asked them to wait while she unlocked her door - and there was a man standing just inside who threw his arms round her, she screamed and struggled. Dimitri leapt to the rescue, sprang at the man and started a hassle. It was entirely out of hand, thought the Count, escaping from the car by the door on his side and going off to find a taxi. He could not guess that Dimitri was living in the skin of Tariel, alternating with Advantil, that he felt like a cheetah with a head full of screeching noise, was glad to find a man to hit. Indeed the man never knew *what* hit him, the impact was so great. The girl left sitting in the car was no sister. (Advantil took Lady Farmaton to bed though he did not really want her and was betraying his lady.) But Dimitri's lady had betrayed *him*. (Though Farmaton was very pretty, Advantil had asked himself, 'Why am I here like a crow on a rubbish heap when I was a nightingale with a rose of my own?') Dimitri had not slept for three nights, he did not know whether he was Tariel or Advantil. Hilda thanked him and said goodnight; the man he had hit got up and limped away, rubbing his jaw. ('I'll be faithful until you do something I can't forgive,' he used to say to Audrey.) As through stained glass, he now saw the colours to which he had been blind while he had his own rose, he saw the girls but they were blurred and rather lurid. This time the *majum* was not for love, but sorrow. He was wearing his panther skin. The girl in the car was beautiful. They drove to the Plaza. He did not notice the Count had gone. To have without wanting ... Two girls - three girls, what did it matter? 'I am sick of love for there is no cure from anywhere.' He fell asleep at last in a fog and woke up to a room he recognised as Tariel's cave. The beautiful girl had gone. He slept soundly again.

When he woke Hilda telephoned. 'You're a fine one,' she

said, 'I know what you've been up to and I shan't feel sorry for you any more. You haven't even been answering the telephone these last two days.'

'Asmat my friend, how are you?' he said, and of course she did not know what he meant. Her Asmat role had started when she had been a listener in the time he needed to talk. She found him incomprehensible but so quaint. There was nobody like him.

'I am cured, thanks to you,' he said, and as he said it, it became true and he laughed when he rang off, and stretched, feeling well and rested. He recognised the room now as most comfortable. He ordered breakfast: fried eggs, cereal, coffee. He was not going to languish when something was past. Then he rang Hilda back, calling her now by her name, and invited her to come with her boyfriend and spend the weekend on his small boat in the Bahamas.

After they returned, he set about organising himself a new life, since the old one was finished. He returned from his boat trip as from being away with a sickness.

He took a flat in New York and sent for his belongings from Virginia. He could not breed and sell without a farm, so this would be over with his divorce. It was the first step to be taken: to sell his stud. Fortunately his disgust with the turf world had been running parallel with the love for his animals. To sell out would give the unscrupulous Hancock and Horatio a jolt. He did not waver, nor listen to an inner voice that saw it differently: but you've *lost* your *horses*! Dimitri understood horses with more than knowledge, for they in turn recognised him with a sort of animal kinship. They *knew* he knew them. At this farm one of the mares called *Winning Bid* would cross the field when she saw him, and put her head on his shoulders. If another mare should also approach she would bite and kick and send her cantering off. In the New York newspaper *Racing Form*, reporter Teddy Cox wrote: *If thoroughbred horses were linguists, Prince Dimitri Djordjadze probably would have the best understanding of their varied moods of any horseman in the United States.* Horses were perhaps his main

love, his creatures in a near-magic way. Women were loved too, but their love came to an end. A horse would remember for life.

Yet he accepted calmly that his horses would be gone forever. He had lost his country. He knew how to lose. So would the turf world be gone, and that at least he would not miss. Riding in the Caucasus with his uncles, there had never been any cheating. He sold all his stable by degrees - and therefore also Princequillo. (A picture of this horse hangs today in the apartment in Monte Carlo, not the whole body, just the head and neck, like a family portrait.) Later, too late, this beloved horse became world champion. And later still, after hurting himself, he was put to stud and became the highest paid international leading sire there had ever been. He held his place at the top for five years and only bred with approved mares. The fee for his service was $20,000.

'A home is something you lose, 'Dimitri often remarked to his friend Serge Obolensky. For the first time an undercurrent could be felt in the words of this man, words said before but differently. He had known many misfortunes and accepted them as fate, without nostalgia, as he thought he was doing now. This time the problem was that he did not know what to do next and entered a vacuous, unfamiliar phase of wondering. Obolensky was the famous Russian prince who had launched the St Regis Hotel in New York. In fact he was half Georgian, Dimitri would not admit to having Russian friends. On his advice Dimitri acquired a small house on Long Island. He led an empty social life waiting for a Sign. The great redeeming feature was his continued supervision of the education of Paul, for Audrey had left him entirely in his step-father's charge. Paul truly had two fathers of the same name, one of blood and one of the heart. Dimitri loved him as his own, as the son he never had, and busied himself persuading him to join the U.S. Marines. He advised and followed the boy through all his career.* His own life still remained empty.

*In 1985 Paul Ilynski Romanov is a retired American Marine Colonel, married with grown children, living in Palm Beach.

He had been used to surfing on a high wave like a roller that never broke - but after the divorce and selling of his share in the farm, the wave broke. The world grew ordinary. He was perplexed as to who were his friends, after the lawsuits with Horatio and Hancock were over. There is a Georgian proverb: scold friends to their faces, enemies behind their backs. He took this to mean: spring the lawsuit on them by surprise. But in the Russian army duels had been simpler. He prayed to the icon of St Nino by his bed, in the tradition of most Georgians, who include good living with faith.

He went to Florida to stay with Madame Balsan, a legendary beauty remembered in America as Consuelo Vanderbilt and in England as the Duchess of Marlborough. Her husband, Colonel Balsan, had known Dimitri's father in St Petersburg and he was also a friend of Coco Chanel. These people reminded him of old times in Europe, which is perhaps why he went. On this visit he met another house-guest, Winston Churchill, who had come out from England after not being re-elected. Their meeting was the beginning of a change of heart. When they were introduced, Churchill looked Dimitri up and down, rather, he says, 'as I myself would have judged a horse'. Then suddenly Churchill smiled, and when he held out his hand with more warmth than the usual handshake, Dimitri felt he was saying, 'Welcome to my horizon.' At that time, in their different ways, they both felt they had failed.

The house Dimitri had acquired on Long Island was a stable and coach house, converted, and had a garden. Serge Obolensky lived near and gave parties with very gorgeous sizzlers. Since Dimitri felt there was still not much purpose in this pleasant but lukewarm life, Serge suggested to him that he should join the army as a career, for at last he had become an American citizen. The idea pleased Dimitri. He had been trained originally in the military academy in Russia and had a military background. He followed the suggestion, and the army accepted him. So less than a year after acquiring his house (rented with an option to buy that could now be sold) he put it on the market.

One muggy day when he was feeling restless, Dimitri noticed that the corner of the garden was blocked with some strange growth. The gardener, a black boy called Sam was away, so to prepare for prospective buyers Dimitri set about scything it. It was peaceful, good exercise and the rhythm gave him physical pleasure. Afterwards when he burned the rakings in a huge bonfire he was contented for the first time in over a year, though the rakings were green and the smoke was strangely pungent.

At this moment Sam arrived back from his day off and ran to him through the garden crying, 'Don't burn that or yo'll lose yo eyes!' and he stopped the fire, beating it down, and led Dimitri away just when he had been enjoying the weird smoke and the manual fatigue. He followed Sam, though he thought it sounded like superstition. He says now that had it not been for Sam he might have been blind.

That night Serge gave a going-away party for Dimitri where he drank more than usual. When he got home and went to bed, feeling slightly dizzy, he had the strange feeling someone else was in bed with him. It was creepy. He lifted the sheet and saw his left leg swollen to an enormous size, yet he could not feel it, it bore no relation to him, it had lost all sensation and was like a body apart. He was told by the doctor the next day that it was an unprecedented case of rare reaction to poison ivy. There was risk of gangrene. He thought this was doctor's nonsense, but not so: he remained an invalid for nine months and did not join the army after all.

He was sent to the Bahamas to recover. During the convalescence and enforced quiet period, he remembered the steam baths in Tbilisi and through the vaporous mist in the marble halls he saw Merab's face. He started to think much about the past. Dear Merab, where was he now? Lying under a tree anywhere would always remind him of the other tree under which they sat together, eating cheese and fruit out of the traditional silver platter. He thought of the peculiar magnetism of Merab, how when later in the villa in Ste Maxime (where Merab always had a room) he had such a following of girls and also men, that they eventually put up

tents in the grounds with camp beds. Dimitri calls it the beginning of *le camping*.

Whenever Merab is mentioned he shines through Dimitri's story as a compelling and sad figure. His bad eyesight was a great handicap. He was in the front line in the revolution and again in the war in Spain, though he could hardly see. He appears like a Georgian Pierre in War and Peace. He went to St Cyr and graduated at the age of twenty-three, but could not be accepted because of his eyesight. He was a good fighter by instinct, Dimitri says, but always thwarted. His life had been spoiled when young by his mother, who made him soft (soft? this does not seem in keeping) the mother was therefore not in true Georgian tradition. Dimitri tells with a certain scorn that she would send a manservant after him with money when he went out, to make sure he was safe. His father had been a liberal and educated in France, like Arthill. Merab could have a book to himself. He was embarrassed about his eyesight and tried to avoid wearing glasses: one day he had arrived at Ste Maxime on a bicycle and ridden straight into the swimming pool. He had had a great romance with Louise de Vilmorin who called him *'mon prince georgien'*; they had a mutual *coup de foudre*; they were both intellectuals, he greatly admired her writings; to her he had a hypnotic appeal that was near magic.

For many months Dimitri rose late, went swimming, recuperated. During this time he dwelled much on the past and realised how much he missed Merab. He would miss him always, more than anyone else in his life. He disliked Merab's Russian wife intensely. She always knew everything better than anyone else and said so, she even informed Dimitri about horses. It was a contented marriage but without the ecstasy Merab deserved; also it had kept him far away in Brussels. Dimitri would dearly like to be able to see him again. But Merab had died of cancer.

Dimitri lay in his deck chair, swathed in old memories, not trained to sit about doing nothing and not liking it, it was like sliding downhill. Where had all the good days gone? He was far from his lost, ancient country; he had made a new life

which seemed to have stopped. He reminded St Nino of Cappadocia to help. It was 1954, he told her, he must get moving.

When he recovered he went back to his flat in New York and started to get about again. He dined often with Serge in the St Regis, and it was there that one night he saw Sylvia Ashley. She was an old friend from his racing days in Europe at Le Mans. It was rare for a woman to know about cars and to take such an interest that she used even to follow the races. He was terribly glad to find her, a warm friend from Europe, a person who had known him in the days when he was a winner. They started to spend much time together. He noticed that she had almost the same nose as Audrey - it was uncanny - absurd, but there was a resemblance in the shape of the face ... Could she become more than just a true friend? He lost his senses enough to think so, for he married her, encouraged by Serge and Mrs Hearst, who approved. That was enough. Perhaps they just thought he was lonely. In fact his compass had come unstuck and was whirring aimlessly in all directions. Since his divorce he was at a lost loose end.

Lady Ashley's compass however was securely fixed, pointing always at a good deal. And she was certainly a woman who liked variety, having started life as a poor London girl, Sylvia Hawkes, and having already got through four husbands by the time she married Dimitri: an English lord (Ashley), a Hollywood actor (Douglas Fairbanks Senior), another English lord (Stanley of Alderley) and another Hollywood actor (Clark Gable). So why not now a Georgian prince? It was a fatuous and pathetic marriage and lasted only six weeks. Afterwards Dimitri felt vaguely ashamed. He said to Serge, 'For God's sake help me to do something about my life.'

Chapter Nine

In 1955 Serge Obolensky suggested that Dimitri should accompany him on a trip to Texas, where he had business to attend, as he ran a chain of hotels. He even thought it might interest him, but on seeing his dubious expression he said, 'Don't sneer, come down anyway for the ride.'

After they arrived Dimitri indeed became filled with curiosity; he was always interested in what was happening, wherever he went, and also disliked to be inactive. He did not long remain a spectator but was soon checking the kitchens of the hotels, the purchasing, and the public relations – these things amused him. He stayed on. And Serge laughed.

This situation lasted many months and turned into a year. One day an oil magnate called Merlyn Christie arrived, asking if he could buy shares in Serge's hotel chain the Ambassador International. 'Why shares in a hotel when you are in oil?' Dimitri questioned. 'Just convenience,' came the answer. 'I want to make sure I have the same room every time to go to the St Regis in New York. If I am a shareholder, they can keep me a permanent suite.'

At this Dimitri laughed. Christie considered him and wondered. He had heard many things about the prince, but they were in no way connected with running hotels. Yet he was told Djordjadze had now become general manager of another group of Serge's hotels in Ciudad Trujillo. He found it somewhat of a come-down. He said in an aside, 'Serge loves dancing, hotels are in his line, but you . . .'

'Sabotage?' asked Dimitri, still amused.

Christie came to the point. What he really wanted was a concession for oil from Dominica. Could this be arranged, could he get it for him, would it not perhaps be more in

Dimitri's line to be in the oil business? Intrigue seemed to be rife and Dimitri was increasingly amused. He telephoned the Palace in Ciudad Trujillo and asked for the prime minister, then arranged a lunch with various men. Christie was impressed by his speed, but even more amazed, after the lunch was over and an agreement had been signed, that Dimitri did not ask for a commission. He told the prince that in his view he would do better to forget hotels and gravitate to bigger things. Dimitri agreed with alacrity. No time was wasted thinking it over. He would 'give big business a try'. But he made it sound like learning a new game, a sport perhaps, as if he did not really care. Yet not so, for Christie was surprised again when Dimitri said he would start from the bottom.

Instead of returning to Long Island for his holiday, he went to Houston and to west Texas in high summer when the heat was broiling. He sat on oil rigs in the blazing sun, learning, observing. Christie, who could not quite fathom the mixture of simplicity with efficiency and earnestness, was impressed. He gave Dimitri an office in Dallas, and now a true assignment. And so Dimitri found himself in a room with blue walls and piped music. He thought of his ex-brother-in-law Jack and wished he could see him now, but then immediately chided himself for foolishness. What did he care about that double-crosser? In the years that had passed he had run into Audrey several times. The first time after the divorce she had said, 'How could you have done this to me?' Unreal. What could he say to *that*? He said nothing and just gazed at her. She was still lovely, he could still tremble, and after the initial encounter they remained friends. When he told his lawyer, the lawyer said Audrey was Jack's Pavlov dog, whatever that meant. She even implied that she might take him back, would *like* him back. He was deeply troubled, until he heard that Jack had been saying, 'Don't worry about Dimitri, he'll marry a rich widow.' He would never stop loving Audrey but in a sort of rage. She shared Jack's views, or why else had she followed them? Or did she not know her own thoughts? Since leaving Constantinople with £20 he had made his own way, before he met any Emerys, whereas all

Jack had ever had to do was grow rich in his sleep. He had never made his own money. The rich seem to think people need them. Jack could have the blue office any time, it was in his line ... piped music, sitting at a desk, pretending.

But Jack never did see the office (even had Dimitri wanted him to) for he did not keep it. On his next visit to Ciudad Trujillo Dimitri found Clark Gable there with his new wife Kay Spreckels; also Dimitri's ex-wife Sylvia Ashley 'down for a weekend with Portfirio Rubirosa' – and he found himself back in a group that he recognised and knew well, but to which he felt alien now. He had entirely grown away. Clark Gable was still a good friend, but the others ... Trujillo was too small, Dallas and his blue office were even smaller. Café society and gossip. A New York glamour girl interested him briefly. She was one of his old girlfriends and was staying with a former Russian cavalry officer from Azerbaijan. Finding the mixture intriguing he asked them both out to dinner. But the Russian could not come and they dined alone. She proceeded to tell him in detail all the things the Russian was saying about him, things he had merely picked up from the grapevine but recounted with relish. She seemed to think Dimitri should know what was being done to his reputation and told him in order to help. He should have been above caring, but he could not quite manage to be after the Emery treatment, the more so because even now the slander came principally through Jack. He had taken pride in making his own way, in cherishing and trying to protect his wife. He was uninterested in money as long as there was enough. He gave it away. It was not the point of life. But to hear that he was spoken of as a fortune-hunter made his hackles rise. The small world followed him all the way south, with its claws out to scratch. And for this he had lost his wife, his love he had married in church? It brought back the memory of Jack's jealousy that he could succeed on his own, the grudge Jack bore. He must not *care*. His own logic escaped him, but then it often did. It was weakness to care what cads thought. But it led back to Audrey. He was cross at his own anger and tried to feign indifference, but did not succeed. His eyes blazed at

his dinner guest, though she had been well-meaning - just a pretty, probably rather silly girl. In Georgia, he could have fought the Russian rumour-spreader in a duel, for slander. In Georgia, he could have fought Jack. But the Russian was small and old and could not be challenged. Should he sue him? He wanted to leave this milieu now. It conjured so much that was best forgotten. But first he would get even.

He could *not help* caring. It was inconceivable to this prince who had had Rustaveli's philosophy engrained into his collective Georgian sub-conscious for the last eight hundred years - their creed of behaviour.... To Dimitri Jack was abnormal, sub-normal, and above all - inexplicable. He could not understand. Yet he could; and he would fight back. Rustaveli said, 'he whose form is like the cypress and whose heart is like iron - he speaks aloud to comfort himself. The narcissi thunder, it rains tears ...' What did it mean, the narcissi thunder, he wondered for the first time. Perhaps the strangeness of his feeling. Indeed his heart was iron.

He wrote a letter to the Russian officer, and sent copies of it to the various influential 'tzars of petroleum,' accusing him of libel. To his surprise he received a letter of apology and a gold-lettered invitation to a party to be given 'in the honour of Prince Djordjadze'. Suddenly he laughed. The right sense of proportion returned. They knew he was not to be fooled with. At the party he and the Russian made it up politely.

He continued to plan his departure. 'Thanks for telling me,' he said to the glamour-girl (perhaps wishing she hadn't.) 'It decides my next move. I was going to leave anyway but this fuels the take-off. What can I do to thank you?'

She blushed and looked at him with sloe-eyes, so he took her to bed. He was not pleased with this form of generosity. The way he behaved, he was no better than the others. Yet she wanted it. Women were a smokescreen which hid the source of his impulses from himself. They were tiresome with their ogling and man-crazy behaviour. His looks, perhaps at times unfortunately for him, caused him to be every woman's dream. He loved America and wanted to belong. He was proud of his citizenship, yet he had remained an outsider: a

contradiction. He would not stay longer, there must be other sorts of Americans somewhere else. No Texan seemed to have any idea where or what Georgia was, apart from the American southern state. Or possibly a type of English architecture. It accentuated the way Georgians always feel different, wherever they are.

Part of Dimitri's life seems to have run on a series of chance happenings. It is a pity he appears to have always remained with the same group of people of only one dimension, not by choice but by chance – and not noticing, taking the world as it came. He accepted what 'happened to happen', until his first stirrings in Dallas, but he was not a seeker. He enjoyed and was even curious about anything that fell into his path. He would fit into place with it accordingly. He was gifted in making good. But he did not go out and search for what lay beyond. It is a pity he did not travel to Arizona (for instance) and see the astonishing Spanish churches, or run into someone like Alistair Cooke who could have told him and shown him so much, opening to him other American milieus. As a young man he had been fascinated by the 'intellectual' side of his uncle Arthill and of Merab. At this time of his new and more acute awareness of being a Georgian outsider, he did not require a panther skin, but something else that he never found even to this day. There was a whole unexplored region inside him, but he never knew he missed it consciously, only in this temporary unease, which was soon to be dispersed by the action of his next moves.

A useful incident of fate occurred a few days after his upsetting dinner: a friend telephoned from Buenos Aires asking to whom he could apply for oil concessions. Frondisi was president of Argentina, the country possessed its own oil fields but big companies wanted no competition, so the Argentinians preferred to buy oil abroad in spite of their reserves and they borrowed a million dollars a year from America for this purpose. When Dimitri's friend told him that they had run short of dollars and needed concessions he knew they were heading for disaster.

He had been wondering where to go. Now it was decided. It would be South America.

At the airport he ran into the Russian Cavalry officer who was alone. He had evidently got rid of the girl. They had a drink together and told each other stories. The Russian told of an incident that had happened in 1905 when the Imperial Tzarist fleet had been in the harbour of Monaco: the commander had gone ashore to the casino in Monte Carlo and gambled away the entire money of the fleet. Going back on board he decided to shoot himself, then suddenly changed his mind. He returned to the casino, asked to see the manger and demanded the money back. Otherwise, he said, he would point the guns of all the ships onto Monte Carlo and open fire! Dimitri roared with laughter. The world was all right again, the way a small thing can change the whole view. He was off on a new adventure, to see a new country, he had even made a *Russian* friend, for by now a true camaraderie had started between them. The loud speaker called their flight and they were away together.

After the news of his departure spread, some of Merlyn Christie's executives followed him, thinking they might be on a trail; the prince always seemed to be in the right places without really trying.

Argentina was a discovery: Dimitri liked new things. He stayed on. Astonishingly soon he became a rich man. With $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ on every oil transaction, it was easy. He was a millionaire in pesos. What to do with pesos? What else but buy horses, for the pampas was horse country. But then it would become business again. He remembered Horatio and Hancock. He did not want business. His cleverness at it was by a sort of fluke, it came to him and followed him yet he did not really care and did not look for it. Though whatever he did succeeded, he had to disentangle himself from the result – a man of paradox. He would buy no more horses.

Jack Kennedy sent his foreign secretary to Argentina to make a report, recommending him not to lend more money. 'If money is withheld,' he said, 'they will be in a tight spot

17) *View of the Causasus from Sabue, one of the Djordjadze family homes.*

18) *The 175 ft yacht, Sitonia.*

საფრანგეთში მყოფ ქართველთა ხათვისტომის გამგეობა

გთხოვთ, კეთილი ინებოთ და დაესწროთ;

საქართველოს დამოუკიდებლობის აღდგენიდან

60 წლისთავის აღსანიშნავ საზეიმო ღონისძიებას,

რომელიც გაიმართება შაბათს, **26** მაისს საღამოს რვა საათიდან,

dans les Salons de l'Aéro-Club de France

6, rue Galilée, PARIS-16e - Métro KLEBER

პროგრამა:

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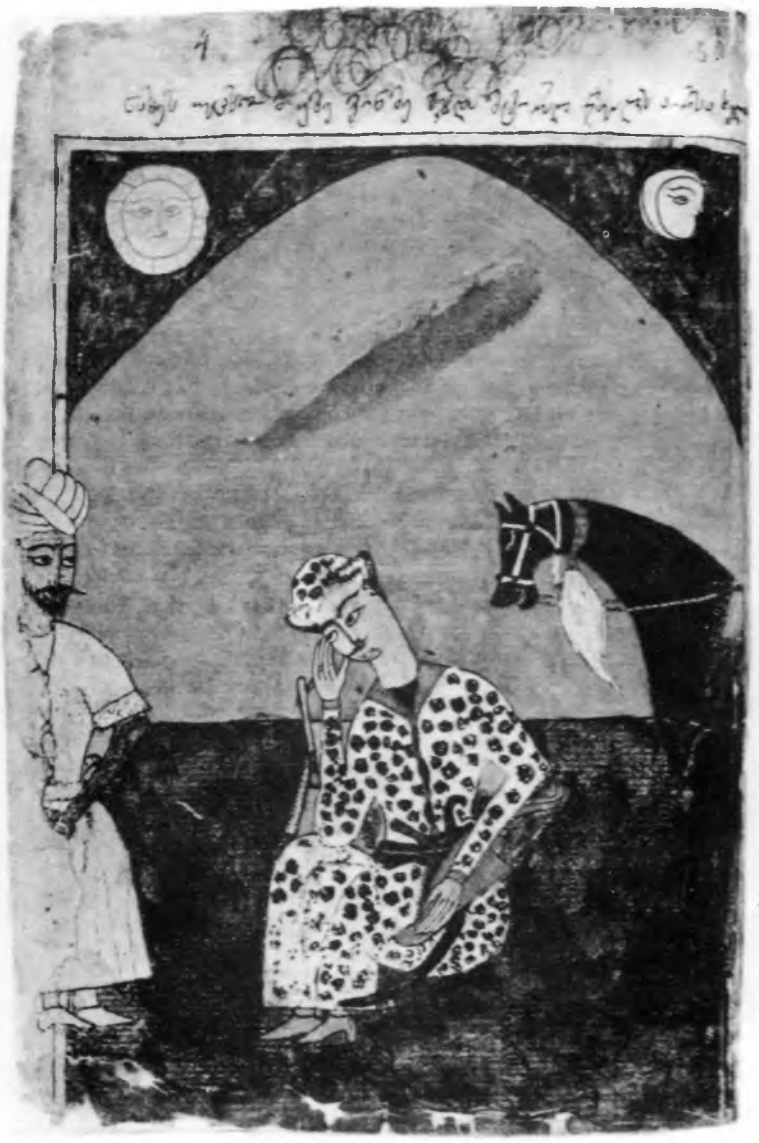
Tenue de Ville Sombre

M

19) Invitation card for the commemoration that takes place each year in Paris for the never-forgotton independence of Georgia in 1918.



20) Illustration of 1646 manuscript from Thilisi of Knight in a Panther Skin *from English version, Folio Society.*

and it could be useful.' Not what was expected of the human rights advocate.

And now Argentina began to pall on Dimitri, it was no longer new, the interest of discovery had worn off and the unease he had felt in Dallas returned worse than before. He ceased to concentrate. He grew abstracted and dreamy. Small things took his mind far away, like the observation someone made that Americans were so keen on iced water. It was necessary to them at every meal. This caused him to remember how in Sabue the pure drinking water from the mountain stream was carried up the steep cliff path by donkeys, in terracotta jars. He thought increasingly often of the view down the Kaheti valley, of the taste of their own wine, the taste of *Tchurtahalla*. He was deeply depressed, and because he had taken a dislike to his surroundings he dwelled increasingly on the old days of his youth. He missed having animals. His favourite dog, a Labrador called Milord (the name shows that Byron's fame had reached the Caucasus) had been a dreadful thief, always caught lingering behind, on an outing, and once found actually sitting on a table and tucking in, in a peasant's house. In the end he had been shot by an angry victim. 'I loved that old fellow, that no-good,' he always said, when telling Audrey of the dog's adventures. One of his games now was to imagine himself in a Georgian restaurant ordering a meal, for he had longing for Georgian food. In Paris there was a little restaurant where he used to go, La Toison d'Or, the Golden Fleece. He might start with *soulgoumi*, a ewe cheese that was sometimes grilled. Or *lobio*, red beans in a coriander sauce, or beetroot with walnuts. Then ... as a main course ... *tabaca*? Half a small chicken on a brochette. Or *caourma*, lamb stewed in herb sauce (his favourite sauce was *tkemali*, made of wild green plums), or *romi*, a yellow wheat sauce ... or even that peasant beef dish, *khartoko* ... but then he would shake himself and look round at his surroundings and remember where he was. This was just a game, not a solution. Eventually he left Argentina and returned to New York, and retired to his house with the garden on Long Island.

But his feeling for horses still drew him at times to the racetrack. On one occasion he was invited by the Argentine ambassador, and among the guests there was a Dutchman called Dr Hebo who had invented a product he named protein flour, based on cottonseed meal. It contained all the amino acids, he explained excitedly: lysine, threonine, valine, cystine, glycine and five or six others. *Glycine* means wistaria in French, Dimitri thought the list sounded like a garden of dancing girls.

'Could you push this?' Dr Hebo asked Dimitri at their first meeting, sensing some dynamic force in the tall, dark prince with his black moustache and green-eyed gaze, at times piercing, at times absent. He gave an effect of power, lazy, natural power, like some wild animal at rest. Here was Dimitri's magnetism again drawing business men, operating so unfortunately against his wishes. But he kindly wanted to help the Dutchman who seemed so eager and in such need.

'America is already overfed,' he found himself answering, giving advice. 'The Third World would be a more likely place to sell.'

And so they were off. He remembered he knew the son of a general in Pakistan. He was back in business *malgré lui* with Dr Hebo – but glad the activity this time was at least in an entirely different domain. His curiosity about new things, once they fell visibly into his path made him quite pleased at the idea of a visit to India.

A telegram was sent to a connection of General Ayabkhan's son in Pakistan, to start with. India would follow once Dimitri arrived in the east. A month's option was given, and he was sent to negotiate.

Dr Hebo was tremendously excited and grateful. 'He sure wastes no time,' he said. 'I knew the minute I saw him that he had the spring of a panther inside.'

In Lahore the prince was invited to dinner at the house of the prime minister whose name was Firohz Kahn Noon. He went to a sweet shop during the day before, and ordered a box of chocolates to be sent as courtesy to Noon's wife. He had heard the rumour that the prime minister had left his

dowdy oriental first wife for his scintillating English secretary and married her, quite madly in love. In the chocolate shop when noting the address, the salesman asked, 'Which lady do you mean, Mrs Noon or Mrs Afternoon?'

It was a New Yorker joke! Dimitri chuckled and was happy. Again a small thing opened up a new view. He felt he would like Pakistan, it ran on his rhythm. He dined in Lahore, watched polo, signed a contract successfully with no trouble and loved the people. He thought India should follow but unfortunately she was at war with Pakistan so this plan could not proceed yet. There was no hurry, no western rush. And he did go to Bombay.

'How is the racetrack?' he asked as soon as he arrived.

'Would you like to see?'

He settled at once into his old horse-life, but with a difference, he was a spectator and no longer responsible. He ate a curry lunch in a box in the grandstand with an Indian who had been at Sandhurst and his many friends, watching and evaluating the horses that were parading before the race. The Indians were being rather important about their knowledge of betting, and were excited. 'We know the grooms and the trainers,' they told him mysteriously and sounding impressive. 'We will leave you for a few moments while we place our bets.'

Dimitri sat alone in the box, and while waiting he made careful and minute scrutiny of the horses. When the men returned, after making their decisions, they asked him as an afterthought, 'How about you, would you perhaps like to bet?'

'After you,' Dimitri answered.

'We have already placed our bets. But how will you know which horse?'

'Put a bet on the grey for me,' was all the prince said.

'But he is unknown!'

The grey horse won.

The Indians were staggered. 'When a horse is ready to run,' Dimitri told his astonished host later, 'he has a special face. I can tell when he is ready. I noted his nostrils, the special

degree of trembling. I was watching them all. The horse in form always shows it in different ways.'

And so in his offhand fashion, Dimitri started an Asian life. He loved joking with the Indians and the different atmosphere from Trujillo and oil and Buenos Aires where it had been: get there fast and gyp if necessary. In India there was detachment and charming manners, and if one 'did not get there at all' no matter. It was not the entire point. There were many others, subtle and deep. The feature of this prince mistakenly involved in business, referred to in the American press as *born of royal blood in the satellite country of Georgia*, was that he had the magic touch. After starting in the Caucasus riding on horses with nails in its shoes up sheer mountainsides, and leaving his country nearly penniless, he succeeded in everything he undertook. Except his marriage, but that was fate.

From the time of his Pakistan trip onwards the eastern rhythm suited him. It was a different business world entirely. And so the years passed, with no further perplexity.

In 1963 he rented a flat in Monte Carlo, his old love with so many memories and which is also a base in the centre of the world, half way between India and the United States, and he has returned there ever since, from the faraway places.

In 1971 Audrey died. He heard by chance that she was ill. He was staying with friends in the Basque country. He wired Cincinnati to find out where she was living, then telephoned and spoke to her in her new home in Palm Beach. When she heard his voice she implored, 'Oh do drive down to see me, I am dying.'

She did not know he was ringing from Europe but he caught the first plane, and knowing she always exaggerated he hoped to find her all right. He arrived too late. Her last words to him on the telephone had been, 'I'm still your girl.' Twenty years later.

Poor Audrey. Poor Dimitri who loves her still. 'It was the environment,' he says. Georgians are taught not to cry, but when he repeats her last words his eyes change colour. In truth it was her mesmerising family who clipped her wings to

serve their own purpose. But their money was sick and only brought them suspicion where it was unwarranted.

It is odd that Audrey did not stand up to their dominance, perhaps did not see it. Many-coloured butterfly Audrey, flying free in Europe, caught in a net at home. After their divorce, each going their separate ways, neither of their lives reached the same high pitch of happiness again.

She was such a personality of Europe in the thirties, perhaps her ghost still walks in the garden at Chantilly, or gallops Bendor's horse in the Pyrenees, or is planting periwinkles in the villa at Ste Maxime because they were flowers that grew wild all over Georgia. To Georgia her heart was truly given, albeit for a short but indelible time. Her ghost might also be walking down the Avenue Montaigne in Paris in an outfit made for her by Lanvin, who dressed her free. Poor little rich girl (did she *need* to dress free?) like Barbara Hutton, who was an equally unhappy friend.

What did she die of? Smoking too much? Burning herself out? Too much money? The physical cause is not clear and could perhaps have been avoidable. She could not breathe, was all they said. She had emphysema. But there are oxygen machines. There are drying-out cures. No reason. She was bored. Audrey died of Nothingness.

Chapter Ten

Since 1963 when Dimitri returned from his first trip to India and took his flat in Monte Carlo, his life has flowed like a river where he was his own kingfisher. He drove about in his Mercedes to Rome or to gala dinners everywhere and anywhere. During this time there were two sad events. the death of Audrey, which was logical and to be expected, in its fashion, as nothing was done to prevent it - and the death of Princess Grace, which was the opposite. Her dignity, her natural beauty and her luminous presence have left an emptiness in Monaco which will never be replaced. And also in Dimitri's life - for she was his very great and dear friend - a light has been turned out.

Audrey was an enigma. If she had not died one wonders how she would have adapted, had she come to stay with him in his comparatively unluxurious flat. She might well have done, since they remained friends. She never travelled in Europe without a ladies' maid. It was normal in the thirties (for some people) but how would she manage now? She had never been known to cook anything, and Dimitri has no service other than an episodic housekeeper (frequently fired).

She did not like opera or music or dancing or jazz - yet they were young in the zenith of Astaire and Rogers and Fats Waller. Nor painting; she did not go to exhibitions or take interest in Impressionists, or have a hobby, or visit ruins, or start a collection. Dimitri says these things bored her. After being known for her gaiety and jokes, she seemed later to specialise in being bored. It is odd that she could not adapt to the idea of riding differently, in America. She seems not to have wanted to do anything *enough* to try it, after their return.

'You're so normal it's disgusting,' she once told Dimitri.

'You're never bored. You can't understand how horrible it is to be so *bored*.' The first time she said this she laughed with her deep voice, but it was not funny in the end. It was a sickness that killed, a canvas where the paint faded. One laments the passing of Audrey's beauty, her sense of adventure, her wildness as a young girl when she had to be supervised, for to what did it lead?

Too much money. But physically to *die* of boredom (as she apparently did) – a disease that seeps into the body and kills? It seems an astonishing puzzle. John D. Rockefeller founded the Rockefeller Foundation for Research with 'too much money'. There is plenty to do. To be able to conceive of such things would be to most people like a springboard. Audrey's friend Barbara Hutton had a hobby, she wrote good poetry and she died naturally, though she was also a sad person. But one could almost say Audrey's was an 'unnatural death'. The mind flies high with possibilities at the idea of too much money. But the Emerys were known for their thrift.

Dimitri is never bored. He does not read or know about painting either, but unlike Audrey, to him this does not matter, they are not recipes. He says, 'I went to the University of the World.' He lives by instinct. Often he does not know the context. He is not an academic. But with his newspapers and few books he gets by on enthusiasm. His loyalty is entire. He is glad 'his old friend Reagan is in charge of the world at present.' He is easily amused and loves to laugh. He will always help anyone in need. There is something simple about him that is a sort of greatness. His sayings are at times like proverbs. His virility was famous.

When his life collapsed after his divorce he never complained, though he could well have done so, he had brought so much with him when he first arrived full of faith in the United States, after losing his own country and hoping to find another. *Oh my America, my newfoundland*, – a wife, a home – a citizenship. 'One cannot be happy in America,' he says, reflectively, at times. Yet he loves it still and would quite like to return.

★ ★ ★

Recently a strange event too place: a young couple came to call out of 'blue nowhere'. The wife is French. She worked for the *Affaires Étrangères* and during her time there was sent to visit Georgia. She fell in love with the country and also with the Georgian who is now her husband. How did they come to ring the prince's doorbell? By a coincidence: in Tbilisi they met his niece, the daughter of his little sister Tatiana, last seen by him in 1920. So they came to bring him news of his family. They suggested he write a letter for them to take on their return.

Dimitri was nonplussed. He spoke in Georgian with the young man. But how to write after so long, and to a niece he had never met? Where to start? Best write to his sister, it would be easier. But when he started the letter, the Georgian reminded him to write in Russian, and he stopped writing, lay his pen down and looked at the young man, bemused. This revived the old resentment: his sister does not speak Georgian. She left for Siberia as a child and their mother only spoke to her in Russian. After such a long time this made him sad rather than angry. He resents his sister not knowing Georgian because it is beautiful, that is the only reason, it is no longer political. And it is not a dead language, but continually spoken, as he has just done with this young man. It should be recognised and not discouraged by the Russians. A person should know their origin. Not to be able to read Rustaveli in Georgian in its own text! Imagine!

'But my hatred has gone,' says Dimitri in 1985. 'It is just that it is such a tragic waste. So many small countries are striving to be independent, and Georgia is one of the oldest, yet so little known.'

The couple stay to tea; the young man writes some notes for the prince in their unique writing with its strange-looking alphabet. They suggest that the prince could go to Georgia for a visit. Go to Georgia! What an idea! He is troubled to the depths of his being. The young man's handwriting is in a beautiful script. Later Dimitri keeps it on the table after they have gone and looks at it frequently.

He stresses again that he is no longer anti-Russian, for this is

an important achievement. He has had to overcome the dark patch inside him of what he calls Russification – the forcible implanting of Russian, the muffling of an old identity. He hopes it is obsolete and absurd of him. He looks questioningly at the young man. Is it? Alas, he is informed that his niece does not speak Georgian either. The young man and all his friends do so however, and in the mountain regions there are indeed still people who do not understand Russian, and who know all the 1,500 verses of the *Knight In The Panther Skin* by heart.

It is fruitless for Dimitri to continue to be troubled. I remind him of his Russian loves, the Grand Duke Michael, his mother (dear, dead Domenica and what jet black hair too, like Queen Thamar) of whom he grows increasingly proud, Paul, his true son, among others. 'And anyway,' I add, 'you are a quarter Russian yourself, Dimitri.' The frown passes and he smiles, he tells us a story he had not thought of for forty years. When he first became a racing driver in the thirties, the Soviets printed it proudly in their newspapers, calling him 'their driver'.

'How do I know what I would have believed, if I had been born in other circumstances?' he says. The hope of his own east-west understanding is restored, too late for his mother but in time for his niece. He has learnt the shades of grey.

The unfairness surrounding Domenica remains an enigma, for she was not even a true Russian – the Ukrainians felt they had lost their country quite as much as the Georgians. They also have a language of their own, and are proud of their writer, poet and painter, Taras Szewczenjl, who died in 1861. He created Ukrainian literature. Ukraine proclaimed independence and was equally angry that Russia 'took' their country and made them either leave or accept central government from Moscow. Domenica probably lived with an inner tragedy; she seems to have accepted her lot, from all accounts, she did not defend herself or point out the fallacy. Her father took his orders from the administration in Moscow, here probably lies the stigma. But what of the Georgian princess, her mother, her other half? It remains a

mystery that she could be loved and yet looked down on by her family, who considered themselves honourable people, but with an ancestral animosity to the Russians – irrationally held against a virtually non-Russian – with whom, if anything, they should have shared affinities of the same sorrow.

After the couple have gone, he sits turning over in his mind the idea of going to Georgia. The eerie strangeness of their visit has left its mark.

He remembers seeing green plover near Bombay, he tells me now, when his Indian friends drove him into the countryside. These were the same birds as in England and Russia. If the same birds can live peacefully in different countries then why not men? This is one of his proverbs.

As he ponders, sitting on his balcony, the spell of ancient Georgia reaches out at him like tendrils. The project for a book has been spoken of and has acquired a reputation all the way to Tbilisi, since his little now-old sister Tatiana has somehow guessed about it. She told the couple. She knew many strange things must have happened to her brother, and was sure someone would write his tale. She waits now for his book, his story, the tale of the brother she lost, to know what happened to him. It is even as if Georgia is waiting.

Dimitri received a postcard from the couple after their return, it is of the view looking north from Sabue, the Caucasus mountains seen from his old home. He gazes frequently at this card. I ask him if he really might go there, since it is no longer politically impossible. He does not answer but looks up from the precious postcard on his lap, out to sea, and he sits quietly in the small, adequate flat which he loves, as if he is waiting. This man, who was used to miles of land in Georgia or America is quite content in a confined apartment because there is an immense view across the sea. The decision will come by surprise, by itself, he does not have to make it, he knows there will be a sign.

The telephone rings frequently from some glittering aged prince, but often also a younger man, a Serbian of sixty who is fascinated by Dimitri's knowledge of horses so that even

now, enclosed in his flat and away from the racetrack he can often pick a winner, to the Serb's advantage and delight. After shrewd scrutiny of the turf newspapers he can guess. There ensues a plan like a mathematical chart, a list of horses and advisable odds, three to one here, ten to one there. The Serbian arrives and drinks coffee with him while they discuss the plan, the prince usually eating cakes with his coffee. The Serbian then goes off to one of the bars in the town where the P.M.U. (turf accountants) hold their seat. Amidst more coffee and calvados and chatting with other betting folk, mainly men, the dies are cast. The old pro Dimitri, sitting at home says, 'Of course I could judge better if I could *see* the horses.' And yet, nearly always the horses he chooses win. He can surmise almost like a medium. The weather enters his betting, the history of the horse and structure of the hoof, which is hereditary. The degree of trembling nostrils, we remember from Bombay – these are things he says he could judge better if he could see them. Perhaps all horses tremble before a race, but not in the same way. He knows the difference. He studies the horse's record. He has an intuition. he can tell. For who was he once but master of the Plain Dealing Stud at Scottsville, Virginia, owning what the newspaper *Racing Form* called a *formidable string of horses in training at his track, and a number of others in France.* And this is only the sophisticated explanation. There is another; his famous kinship with horses that is like that of a gypsy or a Tartar. ever since he was a boy and spent the night with a strange horse in the mountains, unafraid, charged with his uncle's mission.

He is indoors because of an accident, from which he has taken time to recover, but it is a state that will not last. Soon he will be going to the Russian church on Sunday mornings with his Serbian friend, and then to one of the P.M.U. bars where they will drink a glass of wine and place their bets together.

Another frequent caller is Djamlet Guazawa, the 'little cousin' who was fourteen when Dimitri first arrived in Paris in the zenith-years, and who lives in Paris still. He paints, sculpts and is also actively engaged in a lawsuit so complex that I asked him to explain, for he had given me a pamphlet

hard to understand: After the revolution, various international companies bought oil from Russia, which was dimly viewed by the rightful owners of the oilfields, as 'doing business with Soviets'. With an aim to appear generous (in truth only a psychological publicity stunt) these companies announced that they would pay 5% of their profits to the ex-patriates who had been dispossessed. To the impoverished exiles, it appeared like the hand of providence stretching down from heaven to help, and was received with joy. It also conveniently resulted in more business for the companies trading in Russian oil. Lloyds distributed the sum of (initially £200,000 which in fact dwindled to) £140,000, in 1928 – it had to be divided among two hundred claimants – and it was paid only in the first year, and even this gesture had come about after a threat from the *Sociétés Naphtifères de Russie* in 1927. Later the plan grew elusive and faded entirely.

Many years later Djamlet took the matter in hand, in indignation at its discovery, and started a lawsuit against Royal Dutch. This suit is still in process, and *has been going on for twenty-four years.* There is a written report: *Les Spoliés de Bakou* by G. Guazawa. To read, it is a labyrinthine account of the ins-and-outs, sometimes of villains, at others of heroes – names like Deterding, Samuel, Montefiori ... secret sales under the name of Bishopsgate Nominees ... the deciphering of it makes the head reel and grow dizzy.

The name Djamlet comes from the Greek, Zam Nexis and means 'Dare To Defy' – so this enterprising man is well named. The day we had lunch in Paris he was accompanied by a beautiful, sleek dog, but had lost its lead, and so instead was using a piece of electric flex which still had a light plug at one end. 'Plug in the dog for news,' was the comment of the waiter in the restaurant. Djamlet does everything, including building his own chalet in Chamonix, and owning a tame deer in his garden in the country; it arrived one day from the surrounding woods, and stayed on.

He is constantly in touch with Dimitri by telephone, and occasionally pays visits. Dimitri's life, so unlike Audrey's, is never – for one moment – dull.

This book has taken many visits to the Prince since it started. The first time I came I thought he might be a lonely old man. I have discovered now that he leads a very full life in what may seem (only at first) an empty apartment. How does his story end? Since Georgians live to be a hundred he has a long future. Shall he go to Georgia, I ask him, before writing these last pages. And he springs a surprise: there is another plan. He might start a new life in Spain! Dimitri's cousin, Bagrat Bagration Irakly, is also the first cousin of King Juan Carlos. His father married the sister of Don Juan, exiled king of Spain and Juan Carlos's father. If there were a monarchy in Georgia today, Irakly would be king. He came to see Dimitri recently to suggest that he might like to come and live with them in Spain. He is thirty-eight and has young children. Dimitri was brought up with uncles and likes the idea of becoming one himself. The *fée Carabosse* who came to his wedding has been outdone after all! He may not be a grandfather but he is a great uncle.

He looks at me with eyes that twinkle, telling of his alternative plan, which visibly pleases him. Georgia or Spain? He has other cousins there, Spain is full of friends and relations, more than are left now in Monte Carlo. Old age is the time for discoveries ... his Sign will decide, but there are many possibilities, many places where he might go. Or if he stays here, he will continue his 'project', as he calls his plan in his American-English, to organise help for the church. His Georgian church is the same as the Russian church in Menton (in Paris it is separate) with its very beautiful green and gold dome, unfortunately half hidden now by blocks of new cement buildings. It needs money for repairs, it needs a certain control over choice of priest ... The prince is devout and cares deeply about his church.

His stepson Paul also visited lately, all the way from Florida, and brought his own son, the great nephew of Nicolas II, tall, dark and wearing a diamond in his ear. Paul has remained devoted to his English nanny and always visits her when he comes to Europe, so they left Monte Carlo for London before returning to America.

Dimitri now shows me a letter from Hilda, the one girl who remained chaste during his spree of despair at the time of his divorce, when the ceiling fell down on his dreams. She always remembers him and his quaint allusive conversation that she did not understand, his hospitality later on his boat. She has kept in touch, for there was no-one quite like him in her life. She suggested coming to visit him, but he refused. In 1985? So long ago ... There are many letters, he has a secretary to answer them all. There are many callers.

There is something touching about this Don Juan who has grown mellow. He could almost be called 'cosy', until his housekeeper makes a bad dinner or talks without respect, and then he can grow frightening with princely fury. One imagines how the Armenian on the Italian ship must have quaked. But his hospitality is great and his appetite that of a young man: smoked salmon and vodka, champagne and cakes, three proper meals a day, also afternoon tea. And it is not only his appetite but also his behaviour that is that of a young man. When he stayed with me in London, a friend of his came to tea but preferred whisky in vast quantities and grew out of hand. Dimitri told him to leave, whereupon he warmly kissed me goodbye. Dimitri rose behind him, tall, slim, towering, with blazing eyes, furious at the 'lack of respect for a lady in her own home', he took him by the shoulders and literally threw him through the front door and down the staircase (where he rolled) - brushing his hands afterwards like a professional bouncer.

We cannot finish his story for it is not over, but before we finish this book I ask him if he has any special views on women, since he has been such a specialist. He says at once that he is a *man's man*. Of course - the uncles, Merab, the male chatter in the steam baths, the hunting trips, the loyalty, 'buddies' in America, the pleasure of life shared with men. But he does add wistfully, somewhat mysteriously, as if conjuring private and untold memories, 'Women though ... they are the beautiful thing.' (*A crystal in which all colours are reflected, a light*

too brilliant to bear? Rustaveli said. It would have been dark without them.)

No one's life can be entirely told. Princess Tinatin, Queen Thamar, these were his ideal. In his own life, before Audrey, after Audrey, there might seem now to be private ghosts that have entered here, in the way he recalls the beautiful thing. Audrey was the love of his life, he was true to her, but life is long and varied. There were other voices perhaps, in other rooms. We are not to know the whole story.

On the subject of marriage he informs me that the Georgian and Russian Orthodox religions allow marriage in church three times, unlike Catholics.

And then dreamily and far removed, he says, 'I was married in church once . . .' and he stares out across the Mediterranean horizon, retiring into the most precious of his memories alone.

A biography could go on and on – there could be so many more memories, conjured from a forgotten recess in the mind . . .

As I read the proofs of this book in a little house in Sussex, sitting by the log fire during the cold winter, a record is playing of the Tsisperi trio singing; three men and a guitar, and I hear their ancient songs, which have a sort of permanence, and see their very dark eyes and fatalistic faces as they sing, beside their fires in the Caucasian mountains, like the men who escaped with Dimitri's uncle Amilakvari into Turkey. Dimitri is not an old man in Monte Carlo but a part of the view from Sabue or the music of these people, with their deep voices, songs called *a leaf*, by Ramishvili, *a recollection*, *winter*, *midnight sun* – and somehow there is no end or beginning to this biography, or his life, or their world.

Epilogue

Prince Dimitri Djordjadze goes walking about the town the way he did before – past all the familiar sights, the old Metropole Hotel he knew so well, derelict at the start of this story, is now pulled down. He accepts this and does not mind, he accepts change. But where now are the grand dukes in their white ties and the gala nights? He is settled and serene, his panther skin is no longer needed and has been put away in the cupboard of his mind for good.

He can be seen in the streets holding himself erect, carrying himself in his special way, observing the world with the quizzical gaze from his green-brown eyes, as alert and quick as he always was. The older Monégasques all know who he is and greet him with reverence, a Monte Carlo landmark, a personage. Friends, like Lord Colyton, call him Uncle Mito. The younger or the passing people do not know, and it is they who feel the atmosphere about him and pause to wonder, seeing him – who is he? Someone extraordinary is passing...

As he walks through the year 1985 with his elegant cane, debating his next move, whether this timeless-in-time man goes to Georgia or Spain or into the cosmos, he will not be seen much longer in the streets of Monte Carlo. He is one of the last left: his sort of person has passed from this world – and this, if you see it, you will not see again.

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