

## CHAPTER XX ONE GIRL'S WITS

As she entered the hotel Josie encountered Joe Langley, the one-armed soldier back from the war. She had taken a great interest in this young fellow and admired his simple, manly nature, having had several interesting conversations with him at the Liberty Girls' Shop and at the drills. Josie felt she needed an ally at this juncture, and here was one who could be trusted.

"Joe," she said earnestly, drawing him aside, "are you going to be busy this evening?"

"Yes, Miss O'Gorman, I'm busy every evening now," he replied. "I've taken a job, you know, and my loafing days and social stunts are over. There wasn't any bread-an'-butter in telling the society dames about my war experiences, so I had to go to work. I'm night watchman at the steel works, and go on duty at seven o'clock."

Josie was disappointed. Looking at him musingly, she asked:

"Are they making munitions now, at the steel works?"

"Of course; it's practically under government control, they say, but is still operated by the old company. They make shells for the big guns, you know, and they've ten car-loads on hand, just now, ready to be shipped to-morrow."

Josie drew a long breath. This was real news and her active mind jumped to a quick conclusion.

"Are the shells loaded, Joe?" she inquired.

"All ready for war," replied the soldier. "You see, a night watchman in such a place has an important position. I guard those shells by night, and another man does nothing but guard them by day."

"Where are they stored?" was Josie's next question.

"In the room just back of Mr. Colton's office--the big main building."

"So Mr. Colton is still the head of the company?"

"He's Vice-President and General Manager, and he knows the steel and ammunition business from A to Z," asserted Joe Langley. "Mr. Colton represents the government as well as the steel works. The President is Mr. Jaswell, the banker, but he doesn't do anything but attend the Board meetings."

"Joe," said Josie impressively, "you know who I am, don't you?"

"Why, you're one of the Liberty Girls, I guess."

"I'm from Washington," she said. "My father, John O'Gorman, is one of the government's secret service officers; I'm working on a case here in the interests of our government, and I may want you to help me foil a German spy plot."

"Count on me!" said Sergeant Joe, emphatically. And then he added: "I'd like to make sure, though, that you're really what you claim to be."

Josie opened her hand bag and from a side pocket drew a silver badge engraved "U. S. Secret Service. No. L2O1." That was her father's number and a complimentary badge, but Joe was satisfied. He had to glance inside the handbag to see it, for the girl dared not exhibit it more openly.

"If you want to know more about me, ask Colonel Hathaway," continued Josie.

"No," said Joe; "I believe you're on the square. But I'd never have suspected it of you. Tell me what I'm to do."

"Nothing, at present. But should a crisis arrive, stand by me and obey my instructions."

"I'll do that," promised the man.

When the girl had regained her room in the hotel, she sat down with a businesslike air and wrote upon a sheet of paper, in her peculiar cypher, the story of her discoveries and the conclusions they justified up to the present hour. This was to fix all facts firmly in her mind and to enable her to judge their merits. The story was concise enough, and perhaps Josie was quite unaware how much she had drawn upon her imagination. It read this way:

"Disloyal circulars have been issued from time to time in Dorfield, designed to interfere with sales of Liberty Bonds, to cause resentment at conscription and to arouse antipathy for our stalwart allies, the English. These circulars were written by John Dyer, superintendent of schools, who poses as a patriot. The circulars were printed in the basement of the Mansion House by Tom Linnet, a night clerk, who was well paid for his work. Papers found secreted in an old desk from the attic of Dyer's house prove that Dyer is in the pay of German agents in this country and has received fabulous sums for his 'services,' said services not being specified in the documents. In addition to these payments, there were found in the desk notes of the Imperial German Government, for large amounts, such notes to be paid 'after the war.'

"Dyer is clearly the head of the German spy plot in Dorfield, but the person who acts as medium between Dyer and the Master Spy is an alleged suspender salesman calling himself Abe Kauffman. This Kauffman makes frequent trips to Dorfield, giving orders to Dyer, and on one occasion Kauffman, who stops at the Mansion House while in town, hired Tom Linnet to place a bomb in the Airplane Factory, causing an explosion which destroyed many government airplanes and killed several employees. The sum paid Linnet for this dastardly act has made him rich and he has bought or is about to buy a cigar store. Kauffman now has another bomb in his possession, doubtless brought here to be placed, when opportunity arrives, to do the most possible damage. Indications are that he may attempt to blow up the steel works, where a large amount of shells are now completed and ready for shipment to-morrow--meaning that the job must be done to-night, if at all. Perhaps Linnet will place the bomb; perhaps Kauffman will do it himself. Dyer has lost his incriminating papers and notes and is on his way to Washington in an endeavor to recover them.

"Associated with Dyer in his horrible activities is Mrs. Augusta Charleworth, occupying a high social position, but of German birth and therefore a German sympathizer. She is clever, and her brains supplement those of Dyer, who seems more shrewd than initiative, being content to execute the orders of others. Dyer was educated at Heidelberg, in Germany, which accounts, perhaps, for his being pro-German, although I suspect he is pro-anything that will pay him money. Dyer and the Hon. Andrew Duncan, while political pals, are not connected in this spy plot, but I suspect that Peter Boyle, the proprietor of the Mansion House may be one of the gang. I've no evidence yet that implicates Boyle, but he harbors Kauffman as a guest and ought to know that his night clerk is printing traitorous propaganda. So far, the evidence incriminates Kauffman, Mrs. Charleworth, Dyer and Tom Linnet. I believe Mrs. Dyer to be innocent of any knowledge of her husband's crimes; otherwise, she would never have parted with that important desk--the desk that will prove his ruin and ought to cost him his life.

"My plan is this," concluded the notation, "to catch Kauffman or Linnet in the act of placing the bomb to-night, make the arrest, round up the other guilty ones and jail them, and then turn the case over to the federal officers for prosecution. A telegram to Washington will secure Professor Dyer's arrest on his arrival there."

Josie read this through twice and nodded her red head with intense satisfaction.

"All clear as crystal," she asserted gleefully. "I have proof of every statement, and the finale can't go very wrong with such knowledge in my possession. To-night, unless all signs fail, will prove a warm night-- warm enough to scorch these dreadful, murderous tools of the Kaiser!"

And now Josie skipped over to the police station and had a somewhat lengthy conference with Chief Farnum, who knew her father and treated the girl detective with professional consideration. After this she hunted up the two government agents--old Jim Crissey and young Norman Addison--who knew her well as "John O'Gorman's clever kid, the pride of her doting Daddy." They listened to her with interest and genuine respect for her talent and not only promised their assistance whenever it might be needed but congratulated her warmly on her good work.

This concluded Josie's afternoon labors, and it was with a sense of triumphant elation that she returned to her hotel to rest and prepare for the expected crisis.