



JAELELENAVA

ON LIFE IN *SCHTURMING*

I F YOU'VE READ all those fascinating newspaper stories about the strange events in western Nebraska in the summer of 1920, then you know that what you mostly hear about is the prodigious cunning and pluck of Colonel Bonney Livingstone—owner of the late Extravagant Flying Circus. You might also catch a few lines about the small but integral role played by Captain Hitch Hitchcock. But unless you are an unusually intrepid researcher, you're not likely to have found much about the woman who was arguably responsible for it all—the woman who was born and raised in *Schturming* and who was, in fact, key in its ultimate defeat.

This is one of the reasons I am particularly keen to be the first to “officially” interview her. Unfortunately, she fails to show up for our meeting at Dan and Rosie’s Cafe on Main Street, so I have to track her down.

Finally, I find her in the Carpenters’ apple orchard. She is sitting in the shade of a stubby tree, her back to the trunk, as she munches a red apple. She watches my approach with what seems to be both open curiosity and a habitual touch of wariness.

I sit cross-legged in front of her, in the shade, and pluck my pencil from behind my ear.

I’m sorry to interrupt you, but you may remember we had scheduled an appointment for an interview?

Oh, yes. On—what you are calling this thing? [She holds the

hand with the half-chewed apple in front of her mouth and the other up to her ear.]

The telephone?

Yes, that is it. I have sorrow I was not able to be hearing your words to me. [She swaps the positions of her hands.] I thought part is that going here was going there. [She grins.]

Ah, well, no harm done. So, actually, my first question is simple. What was it like living in a flying colony like *Schturming*?

It is having much difference from Groundsworld, yes? It is ... like living in one very large house for all of your life. You cannot be going outside, but there are windows, and you can go to top of *aerostat* to stand in air. That is good. [She raises her face to the warm autumn breeze, as if comparing the difference.] And there are other good things also. There is safety—for most of time. There is... [She scrunches her face, searching for another word.] What you are calling when everything is as you always know it will be. Fam...?

Familiarity?

Mmm, maybe. I am not having certainness.

Do you remember your parents at all?

Of course. They were not having death until I was old enough for place where children are to be learning.

What happened to them?

[Her face stills. She twitches her mouth to one side.] There is fire—which is having much danger to all in *Schturming*. My father is researching something—even now, I am not having all details—but something to do with *dawsedometer* and *yakor*. And lightning is giving death to him and my mother. [She pulls her mouth further to the side.] And after that, I am *nikto*. I have no place, no home, and must ask for food from every door.

That seems really harsh.

[She shrugs.] In *Schturming*, there is very little room to live, yes? No room for *nikto*, and if they are banished, maybe they take their final fall on purpose—and then there is more room for others. But I am having much fortune because Nestor in Engines was friend to my father—and also he wanted *yakor*, I think. He knew more of what it was for than I did.

But all that is behind you now. How are things going with Hitch?

Going? [She gives me a blank expression, but there's just the faintest twinkle in the back of her eyes. She knows *exactly* what I'm talking about.] How are you thinking it is going with such impossible man? He is having thoughts all of time that he is knowing best. How are you thinking I am able to stand such as this every single day of my life?

Riiiiiiight.

[The smile sneaks out, and she gives up the deception with a shrug.] Never mind. I am having new decision. [She takes a last bite from her apple, tosses the core, and gets up. Still with that twinkle in her eye, she looks at me straight.] I am having decision that I do not like these things you call interviews. May I be showing you to where you can find my employer Col. Livingstone?