

Angel & Dragon

by

Meriol Trevor

Letzenstein Chronicles Book III



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THE LETZENSTEIN CHRONICLES

The Crystal Snowstorm
Following the Phoenix
The Rose & Crown

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*To Peter Sharpe
and the young people of Bethlehem Community
in North Dakota, U.S.A.*



FAMILY TREE OF THE GRAND DUKES OF LETZENSTEIN

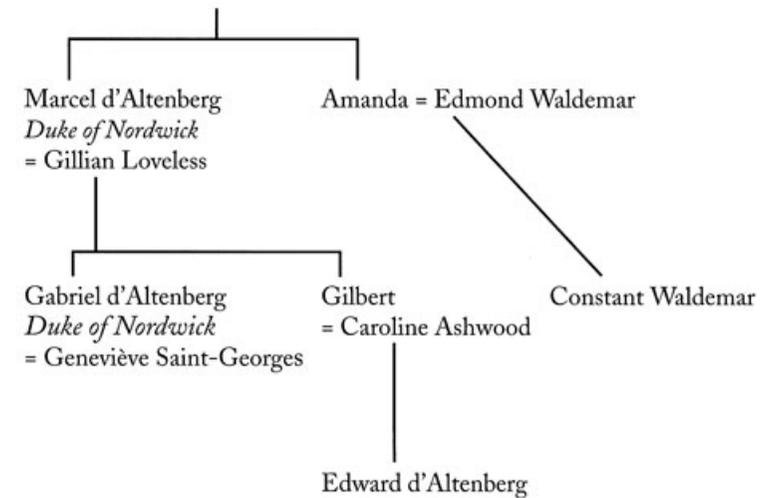
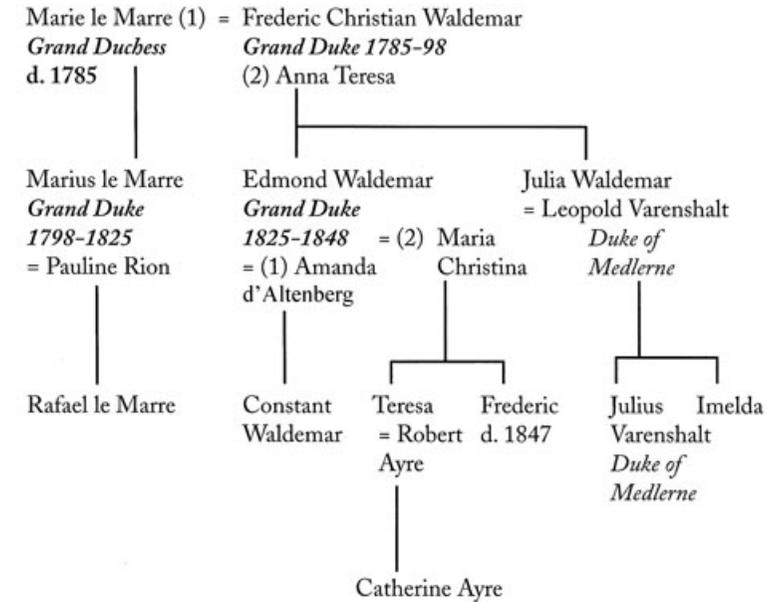


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1. Encounter in Trier: 1849

GILES AND CATHERINE sat at one of the little tables outside a café in Trier, drinking lemonade. Afternoon was drawing towards evening but the August sun was still warm and after hours spent looking at old churches and ancient Roman walls they were quite glad to sit still and wait for Giles's father to return from calling on a friend. Giles Hawthorne and Catherine Ayre were cousins and they were both fourteen, but they did not know each other well.

Sir Walter Hawthorne, having spent some time in Brussels on a diplomatic mission, was now taking a holiday, travelling first to Aachen and Cologne on the Rhine and then visiting Trier, which was on the Moselle.

"I like Trèves," said Giles, giving the town its French name. "It makes Caesar come alive to think that this was where the Treveri tribe lived, when he was conquering Gaul."

"I like it too," said Catherine, "but I wish we could go on to Letzenstein soon."

Letzenstein, a small independent state between France and Germany, was just across the river, westward.

"Nothing historically important has ever happened in Letzenstein," said Giles. "I can't think why you are so keen on it, considering that last year you seem to have spent most of your time running away from revolutionaries."

Catherine, who looked so quiet and shy, happened to be the daughter of a princess of Letzenstein who had made a runaway marriage with an English officer. She could not remember her parents, who had died in India, leaving her to the care of an old great-aunt in Kent. Until she was thirteen she had not been in her mother's country, but then she had been summoned by her formidable grandfather, the old Grand Duke Edmond Waldemar, and had found herself a pawn in the political power game there.

"It's not just the place, it's the people I like," she said. "My uncle Constant and his cousins—except Julius. I didn't like him at all."

Giles had heard how the Grand Duke had disinherited his son Constant and had tried to make his nephew Julius Varenshalt the Regent for Catherine, on his deathbed. In spite of this, Constant

had succeeded to the title, to the satisfaction of the people and to Catherine's relief.

Because Catherine said she did not like Julius, Giles instantly decided that he was probably the only sensible member of Catherine's foreign family.

"I daresay the old Grand Duke knew who would make a good ruler and who would not," he said. "Your foreign uncle sounds a muddler to me."

He always called them "your foreign uncle" and "your foreign cousins" and this annoyed Catherine, who felt more at home with them than with her English relations.

She did not know Giles well because it was not till her great-aunt had died, last spring, that she had gone to live with the Hawthornes in their big London house. Aunt Eleanor was her father's sister. Giles was at Eton and often went away in the holidays to stay with friends. He had two grown-up married sisters, but he was the only son. Although he was a month or two younger than Catherine, he was taller than she was, a self-confident, active, intelligent boy, brown-haired and grey-eyed, and, it seemed to Catherine, determined to know better than herself about everything.

Catherine was shy, rather thin, with straight brown hair and ordinary brown eyes; her eyebrows lifted at the ends: it was her only noticeable feature. But under her quietness were strong feelings, which she had first become aware of that time in Letzenstein in January 1848. In April that year she had expected to go back for her uncle Constant's wedding, but her great-aunt's death had prevented it. Afterwards there were so many revolutions in Europe that Sir Walter Hawthorne would not allow her to go abroad.

This year there were revolutions in Italy but northern Europe appeared to have settled down and so the Hawthornes decided that it would be the proper thing to take Catherine to visit her uncle. But they travelled without hurry. Constant Waldemar might be a Grand Duke, but it was of a very small country.

"I don't believe it's as big as an English county," Giles had said, when he saw it on a map. He had decided Letzenstein was a joke before he had ever been there.

"Well, even in a county a lot can go on," Catherine had said then. "And Letzenstein is truly a country, with its own people and traditions."

Now, when Giles teased her about the foreign uncle he knew she was fond of Catherine refused to be drawn into argument. She drank her lemonade in silence, gazing out at the river.

Seeing that she would not rise to his teasing Giles dropped it and looked about him. Presently he said, "What funny people one sees in foreign places. Look at that artist over there—he looks like a tramp, a regular scarecrow. Drawing people for the price of a drink, I suppose, as he's just sent his little boy over to another table with a sketch and they're giving him some money."

Catherine looked round and saw, some distance off, the back of the artist, who sat at a table by himself with a drawing block under his hand. Something about that thin back and big black hat looked very familiar.

"Can it be?" said Catherine, jumping up. "I believe it is!"

She went quickly across, threading her way through the tables so as to come out in front of him. And there was that unmistakable long narrow face with the close-set startlingly blue eyes.

"Rafael!" Catherine cried joyfully, running up to him.

"What? Is it Catherine? Here in Trier? What a nice surprise!" He spoke in English, but with an accent. He flung out his arm and pulled her close with an affectionate hug. "But Catherine, how tall! Like a young lady, almost. What a long time, *chérie*, since I saw you.

Catherine was smiling; at the same time she felt she was nearly crying. "Oh, Raf, it is *so* long!" she said. "But why are you in Trier, not in Letzenstein?"

"I'm on my way home from Venice," he said. "And if you wonder why it is I come through the German states, it is because a kind German going to Cologne brought us from Switzerland for nothing, in his own carriage."

It was such a typical way for Rafael to travel that Catherine began to laugh. Then she became aware that Giles had come up and was staring at Rafael with suspicion, not to say hostility.

"Who is this, may I ask?" he said in his clear English voice.

"It's Rafael le Marre," Catherine said. "One of the cousins, the one who is an artist; he found me when I was lost in the riot, in the snow. Raf, this is my English cousin Giles Hawthorne."

"And he is English!" said Rafael, smiling at Giles. "How very English!"

Catherine had forgotten about the little boy Giles had seen, but now he came up, glancing at them from a pair of lively hazel eyes, and held out a grubby hand to Rafael, with a silver and a copper coin in the palm.

“The penny is for me, the lady gave it to me for myself.” It was another English voice.

“Keep it then, Toby,” said Rafael. He hailed a waiter by name and called out an order in German. “Dinner for Toby!” he said in English. “Now we have money to pay for it.” He spun the silver coin and then gave it to the waiter as he came up with a plate of meat for the child.

The little boy climbed on to a chair and set to. Then he looked up. “*Ma, Raffaele, niente per te?*” he said.

“I am not yet too hungry,” said Rafael. “And first I must draw someone else to earn the money. Eat, Toby, eat all there.”

“Why did he speak in Italian?” Catherine asked. “He sounded English.”

“He is English,” said Rafael. “That’s why I brought him along. I found him running wild in Venice. His papa went away in a ship and came not back, he says. He was left with a grandmother, but she too is gone.”

“*La nonna* went to the hospital and never came out,” said the child, glancing at Catherine from under his thatch of fair hair. “Anthony Reynolds is my name but I’m called Toby. I’m six.”

Giles said, “How could you be in Venice recently? It’s been held by Italian revolutionaries all the summer against the Austrians.”

“Not revolutionaries—republicans,” said Rafael. “Yes, you have it right, Giles. We have been besieged and that was no joke, I can tell you. We have held out longer than the Roman Republic. But now the end is coming for the Republic of San Marco, I fear.”

“*Evviva Venezia!*” piped up Toby.

“Toby is a patriotic Venetian,” said Rafael, smiling. “And I too. They are a brave people.”

Suddenly, at a table a little way off, two men began shouting at each other. Everyone turned round to look. A man and his wife, sitting at a table, were being abused by a youth who was standing up, leaning over it towards them. The attacked man jumped angrily

to his feet, knocking over his chair. He shouted in German; the young man was shouting in Italian.

“*Peste!* It’s Gaetano!” said Rafael. He put his hand on the table and got up. He walked through between the tables, moving awkwardly, but quite fast.

“No stick!” Catherine cried, in surprise, for when she had known him before Rafael was recovering from an accident in which he had injured his back and nearly always used a stick to help himself balance.

He heard her cry and glanced back at her with a smile. “I’m better, you see!” he said.

Toby seized the bone from his dish and ran after him. Catherine followed, not heeding Giles’s protest.

The young Italian was beside himself with rage. Catherine had always thought of Italians as dark, but Gaetano had a mop of curly tawny hair and grey eyes; she thought he looked as beautiful and as arrogant as a renaissance prince.

“*Basta, Gaetano! Basta!*” cried Rafael, as he approached. “Enough! Stop now.” He laid his hand on the young man’s shoulder. Gaetano shook it off.

The shouting match now became three-sided, almost four-sided, since Rafael joined in with Italian to Gaetano and German to the man he was abusing. If Catherine had not known he was trying to stop the quarrel she would have thought Rafael was taking the most active part in it. This was just what Sir Walter Hawthorne thought as he came to pick up the children and saw his niece apparently involved in an international incident.

“Catherine!” he said in shocked tones, coming up behind her. “Come with me at once.”

And he took her arm and hurried her away, Giles falling in beside him. Catherine twisted half round but Rafael had not noticed. Toby had, though, and she called out to him, “Toby! We are staying at the Hotel Imperial.”

She saw Toby nod before she was scolded anew by her uncle.

“What do you mean by telling that little beggar where we are staying?” he demanded. “Have you taken leave of your senses?”

“But that’s my cousin Rafael le Marre—not the boy, the man with dark hair,” Catherine said, for Raf’s broad-brimmed hat had

fallen off and was hanging by its strings at his back. His dark thick hair stood up in a crest on his head.

Sir Walter swung round. "What! That fellow with a week's beard?" he said. "He doesn't look the sort of person I should wish you to associate with. Come along."

And he firmly hurried Catherine away from the scene.

Giles told his father of the meeting. "And he's been with the Italian revolutionaries all the summer, in Venice. That young man is probably one of them. But the little boy is English."

"We don't want to get mixed up in a public quarrel," said Sir Walter. "That would not do at all."

Lady Hawthorne, when she heard of the incident, was surprised at her shy niece's involving herself. But it confirmed views she had already formed of this foreign cousin of Catherine's.

"Altogether an undesirable character," she said, as they sat at dinner later that evening. "It is true he is the Grand Duke's cousin, since their fathers were half-brothers. But his mother was a nobody; it was a morganatic marriage and she was never recognized at the Letzenstein court after the restoration in 1815. Although his father was Grand Duke, the son inherited nothing. His uncle, Grand Duke Edmond, took him into his household but he turned out badly, ran away and lived in Italy, threw in his lot with the revolutionaries long ago."

Aunt Eleanor always knew everything about people; everything, thought Catherine, but what they were really like. "Raf's not a revolutionary," she said.

"Raf?" said her uncle, with a chuckle. "Good name for him! Never seen such a raffish fellow in my life!"

As they left the dining room one of the waiters attracted Catherine's attention. She thought he was retrieving something she had dropped and turned back. But he handed her a crumpled note with a glance that counselled secrecy.

Catherine immediately recognized Rafael's pointed foreign writing and held the note inside her hand.

Lady Hawthorne, who had rested in the afternoon, now wished to take a stroll outside in the warm summer evening and was waiting for Adèle, her French maid, to bring her wrap. But when Catherine said she was tired her aunt told her she might go upstairs at once. "But do not retire for half an hour after eating," she admon-

ished her. Aunt Eleanor had decided opinions on health, digestion and behaviour.

Catherine meekly climbed the stairs, passing Adèle on the way. To her the Parisienne was a formidable person who, she felt, disapproved of her as the worst kind of English miss, shy, thin and unfashionable—so unlike her aunt, a stately figure, always dressed well and never at a loss. Eleanor Ayre had been older than her brother Robert, Catherine's father. She and Sir Walter were both middle-aged, imposing, distinguished people.

Catherine went into her bedroom, turned up the lamp and opened Rafael's note. Since he spoke English mostly by ear, his command of the written language was eccentric. He had written this note with a black crayon.

Catherine my dier, can I see you one moment? I wait you in the glass house of plants.

Raf

Catherine sighed with relief to think her uncle and aunt had gone out; she could go to the conservatory without exciting any notice. But she waited till she heard Adèle pass her door on her way back to Lady Hawthorne's room before she went downstairs again.

A few of the guests, none English, were in the conservatory. Rafael was sitting on a seat there. A long thin person, he looked even longer and thinner with his legs stretched out, leaning back with his eyes shut; evidently, waiting for Catherine, he had fallen asleep. She thought he looked very tired. She went and sat down beside him and he woke up at once.

"Catherine, you come! Excellent!" he said, sitting up straight.

"I didn't like to go away and leave you in that quarrel," Catherine said. "But Uncle Walter made me. What happened?"

"Oh, I made Gaetano apologize in the end," said Rafael. "Silly boy! Quite harmless Austrians they were and he must attack them as if they were responsible for the siege of Venice. What a problem are these national feelings! At home Austrians are nice people, but in Italy they are not wanted."

"Who is Gaetano?" Catherine asked.