

The Crimson Tide: A Novel

Robert W Chambers

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On the 7th of November, 1917, the Premier of the Russian Revolutionary Government was a hunted fugitive, his ministers in prison, his troops scattered or dead. Three weeks later, the irresponsible Reds had begun their shameful career of treachery, counselled by a pallid, black-eyed man with a muzzle like a mouse—one L. D. Bronstein, called Trotzky; and by two others—one a bald, smooth-shaven, rotund little man with an expression that made men hesitate, and features not trusted by animals and children. The Red Parliament called him Vladimir Ulianov, and that's what he called himself. He had proved to be reticent, secretive, deceitful, diligent, and utterly unhuman. His lower lip was shaped as though something dripped from it. Blood, perhaps. His eyes were brown and not entirely unattractive. But God makes the eyes; the mouth is fashioned by one's self. The world knew him as Lenine. The third man squinted. He wore a patch of sparse cat-hairs on his chin and upper lip. His head was too big; his legs too short, but they were always in a hurry, always in motion. He had a persuasive and ardent tongue, and practically no mind. The few ideas he possessed inclined him to violence—always the substitute for reason in this sort of agitator. It was this ever latent violence that proved persuasive. His name was Krylenko. His smile was a grin. These three men betrayed Christ on March 3d, 1918. On the Finland Road, outside of Petrograd, the Red ragamuffins held a perpetual carmagnole, and all fugitives danced to their piping, and many paid for the music. But though White Guards and Red now operated in respectively hostile gangs everywhere throughout the land, and the treacherous hun armies were now in full tide of their Baltic invasion, there still remained ways and means of escape—inconspicuous highways and unguarded roads still open that led out of that white hell to the icy but friendly seas clashing against the northward coasts. Diplomats were inelegantly "beating it." A kindly but futile Ambassador shook the snow of Petrograd from his galoshes and solemnly and laboriously vanished. Mixed bands of attachés, consular personnel, casuals, emissaries, newspaper men, and mission specialists scattered into unfeigned flight toward those several and distant sections of "God's Country," divided among civilised nations and lying far away somewhere in the outer sunshine. Sometimes White Guards caught these fugitives; sometimes Red Guards; and sometimes the hun nabbed them on the general hunnish principle that whatever is running away is fair game for a pot shot.



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