

1956 LOVE & REVOLUTION by J. A. Boulet

EXCERPT

It must be the AVH, the State Protection Authority. She had her documents with her but was always fearful of the AVH. They could do anything to Hungarians, it seemed, without cause. They even confiscated anti-communist families' homes and sent the people to camps. The AVH was no better than the Gestapo.

Elona stayed in the shadow of the alleyway as the officers appeared, walking casually down the deserted street. There were four men in full uniform with differing colours. They were smoking cigarettes and chatting amicably. Her heart skipped a beat as one man looked directly in her direction.

She tried to keep as still as possible while the men continued their conversation.

"Imre Nagy needed to go," one man said. "He's nothing but trouble to this country."

"We have enough trouble just doing our jobs to keep the peace here," another man countered. "After Stalin's death, our entire society is beginning to unravel."

The third officer nodded but didn't add to the conversation. He was quiet and reserved, with an almost intelligent look to his face.

Elona was fascinated by his face. She stared at him from the dark corner of the alleyway and found herself entranced by his mannerisms. He had a gentle but strong gait. Something about him told her that he was in charge. He must be a Colonel or something.

Elona grimaced and chastised herself. She was a married woman! She shouldn't be gawking at an officer!

"You are quiet tonight, Colonel Laszlo," the fourth policeman said. "Nothing to add? You are always so reserved about politics."

Laszlo nodded down the street. "I think there is someone in that alleyway, Jozsef."

All four men glanced in the same direction.

Elona knew she had to do something. She couldn't just stay in the alleyway, and she couldn't run. So she grabbed her bucket, stepped out onto the street and began to confidently walk home. Her back felt like it was on fire from all the eyes on her. She continued walking, once slowing down to adjust her mop so they could clearly see that she was just a cleaning lady.

The first tall officer shouted. "Halt! Get your papers out."

The four men approached her as she stopped and fumbled in her bag nervously. She had nothing to be nervous about, Elona told herself. She had been stopped before at 4 am.

The group closed in. She had her documents ready, and her arm stretched out with the papers in her hand.

Laszlo was in the lead and stopped directly in front of her.