The Scourge of Damascus

A Story of the East...

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CHAPTER III.

Love in Danger.

A bright, beautiful morning, with a gentle breeze sweeping down the fragrance of flower and shrub from the mountain slope. Ulin had eaten her breakfast, and, with Albia by her side, sat upon an open window, gazing out upon the park of fountains. As she thus sat, the slave woman Calypso entered the apartment and announced that the robber wished to see the Lady Ulin.

"What robber?" asked the princess.

"The same one that came yesterday."

Ulin did not stop to think whether the visit would be pleasant or otherwise. The man had signified his purpose, and as he was master in the palace, she had no idea of opposing him. Calypso withdrew, and presently afterwards the robber entered. He came in with the same noble step and bearing, the same pleasant, genial face; and with the same look and salute of reverence and respect.

"I trust that the Lady Ulin has passed a quiet night," he said, in deep silvery tones.

"I have rested well, sir," she replied.

"Good. I am glad of that. I feared you might have had dreams."

"Not many, sir."

"Ah, and have you been so much troubled with dreams?"

"Not so much."

"You mean that I have not dreamed much."

"No, sir, I do not mean that. I do not know that I have dreamed of him."

"Then I have not been in your dreams?"

"No, sir. It was—"

"The maiden hesitates lest she should troubled, but her visitor came to be a assistant."

"Never mind, lady. I mean not to inquire into the secret workings of your mind. I only hoped that I had not been unfortunate enough to excite the apprehension of your slumbering fancies."

He smiled as he spoke, at the same time moving a step nearer, and then added:

"I am glad you have not suffered from our coming, for I have the more courage to ask you if you will see Julian."

"You said you would accompany him, sir."

"Yes."

"Then I may as well see him at one time as another. You may inform him that the lady Ulin rests her safety and honor in his manhood."

"He has been so informed, fair lady."

"Then let him come."

"Gentle lady, pardon me if I have led you upon a fanciful way of thought. I am Julian. I am he whom men call the Scourge of Damascus. And now I crave your indulgence; but still I shall bow most humbly to your commands. At your word I leave this apartment, yet I should like to speak a little further. I should like to explain more fully why I am here."

"Was Ulin frightened?" Not at all. She was startled when she first knew that the man before her was the dreadful Scourge, of whom she had heard so much; but it was an emotion of astonishment. At first she could hardly believe that she had heard the truth.

"Yes, Julian," she murmured, gazing into his face.

"Aye, lady." And then he added with a smile, "I suppose you expected to find me black and ugly, like the foul genii whom Solomon imprisoned in the sea. Am I right?"

"I did not think you were Julian," the maiden said after some hesitation. As she spoke she seemed to gain new confidence and composure, and presently she added, "I had heard so much of your terrible deeds, that I expected to find a—"

"A monster," suggested Julian, helping her out.

"Not exactly that," returned Ulin, with a smile, "though I am free to confess that I should not have been so much surprised as I have been, if I had seen a worse looking man."

"Thank you," cried the robber, laughing. "I shall take that as a compliment, and lay it up among the most precious of my recollections. I understand you, so upon this point. I need only assure you that I am Julian, and that I must own the somewhat dubious title which has been bestowed upon me. And now, lady, may I ask you for a few minutes of your time?"

"Yes, sir," Ulin had [illegible] [illegible] like [illegible] [illegible] leave [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]