

common and formal. He seemed to redouble his vigilance. The woman rose to her feet, as if to obey his directions, then staggered and fell. "My strength is gone," she cried. "Lead me to the temple."

The King looked yet more intently towards a certain tree that stood by itself in the glade in an oval space of green-sward. It was an aged oak towering and massive. He thought he saw a movement in the trees that encircled it at a respectful distance, like courtiers about a king. For all answer to the woman, he cut her to the earth with a single sweep of his sword, and bounded forward.

The movement that he had seen turned instantly to frantic flight; but those long limbs had paced every alley of the wood by night and day for many a year; the fugitive had no chance of escape. Before he had gone twenty yards, the king was on him; a sword-thrust pierced him back to breast, and he fell headlong. The other never stooped; he was sure of his sword-work; he turned instantly on his heel and resumed his restless pacing.

Yet presently an idea seemed to strike him; he dragged the bodies into the open; and, drawing a piece of cord from his garment, swung them from a low branch of the great oak. He gave a low grim laugh; then settled himself at the foot of the tree; in a moment he was fast asleep.

II.

Elsewhere there was another man on guard that night, but he took his duty less seriously. He was a short burly slave, immensely strong, with a round brutal head and thick bull neck, his hair so short and curled, and his complexion so dark, that one might have guessed an admixture of Afric blood. He leaned on the short Roman pilum with its broad blade and heavy shaft, and he was frankly bored with life. From time to time he sat down and rested on the steps of the villa which he guarded, and looked across toward the moon over the woods that lay below him. He could just see the lake and the temple upon the terrace above it, for the moon lit them to life, although they were some miles away. But he had no thought towards them but as scenery; he had no idea of the tragedy even then being enacted in those distant groves.

So dull was he that he lost all sense of his duty; he was awakened smartly by a light touch upon his shoulder. Before he could turn, a figure wrapped and muffled in a dark robe flitted past him from the house, and made toward the woods that sheltered it upon the west. He followed it with his eyes.

The figure turned, made a single gesture of beckoning, sped on to the shelter of the trees. The slave hesitated. He looked up at the villa; all was dark. I'll risk it, he thought, and moved swiftly toward the shadow where the mysterious one had now disappeared.

Before he had taken three paces within the darkness, he came up with it. A white hand came from the vestue, caught his and pressed it, led him some ten yards further where a statue of Pan stood in a circular basin in which a fountain played. Around the basin the ground was terraced, and thick grown with moss. The figure moved to the one spot where moonlight fell, and took a seat, drawing the slave down also. There was a moment's pause.

The slave seemed bewildered; the other evidently enjoyed the fact. Then, with a sudden movement, the white hand drew away the cloak from the face, and showed it. The mouth moved in three words: "I have thee."

But the slave grovelled on the moss in an ecstasy of terror.

He could only murmur "Lady! Lady!" again and again. "I am thy slave," he gasped out at last.

The face of the lady, that was even and rounded, with crisp ringlets set about it, and an expression of sternness and even harshness fixed on the thin firm curled lips of her long mouth as from strong habit, softened with laughter. "Am I not thine, rather?" she said softly, and, stooping down, caught the head of the slave in her arms, and began to eat it up with kisses. . . .

Suddenly she perceived that dawn was about to break. She disengaged herself, and went swiftly and silently to the house. On the steps she staggered twice.

The slave had slept. He woke in consternation to find the sun up, and he away from his post. He dashed back; there was nobody stirring. Discipline in that house was lax, now that the master had been away a month at the war. When he was at home, dawn saw every man at work; things were easier now.

The slave's mind went back to the events of the night; he cast his eyes to the distant temple. Diana save me! he cried; I have had a wondrous dream.

III.

It was the first of many such dreams. Night after night, in one way or another, the lady of the villa pursued her fancy. As the summer grew on the woods, she seemed to wax in her infatuation, but the first leaves that fell were no warning to her. Rather she glanced at the fruits that ripened in the orchard, and took them for the omens of her perfected passion. There was only one hint of winter in her year, a rumor that news had come to Rome of a great battle in the North, and of the utter defeat of the barbarians.

Intrigue has many demerits, and is (besides) morally indefensible; but it has this advantage, that it makes men proud, and, so, ambitious. Many a career has begun with an infringement of the moral law. So, as the summer passed, the slave became unhappy in his happiness.

Till now he had been contented to be a slave; he had never considered the possibility of any escape from that condition; but now, although the Lady Clodia had managed to confer many a sly favor, he was ill content. Her very gifts only served to quicken the new-born spirit of freedom. But she never spoke of asking for his freedom when the master returned; he knew instinctively that she would not dare to do so; and the rigid social system of the Republic gave no hope of any issue from his strait by any efforts of his own.

One passionate night in September the lovers were again by the fountain of Pan where first they had given and taken all that heart would. The nightingales were silent, though, and the moon, far in her wane, was not yet in the East.

The slave was melancholy, and the quick insight of her strange love understood.

"I am the slave of a slave," she whispered in his ear, so low that the fountain flowed in her words like an accompaniment, "and I would be the slave of a king."

"You have made me a king," he answered, "I have all the passions of a king. I can hardly hold my hand when Caius orders me to do his bidding." "I am glad," she said simply. "I knew you were worthy. Listen: I am going to hurt you. I have had bad news. Letters came to-day from the army; my lord is on his way home after the victory; he will be here in two nights more. If you dare, you shall be a king!" The slave looked up in sudden horror. "Oh, no," she laughed, "we are not to play