

made a movement as though to say, "Ah, there you are, I can't escape from you."

Her mind regretting him had still, in a vague way, resented him. The surest sign of the hold he had upon her.

Oh, he knew at once and for truth that she wanted him, that she had thought of him, that he had been in her mind ever since that day at Serajevo, and the fact, not spoken yet hinting of itself as the sky colour hints of dawn, made him suddenly bashful as a child.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HOTEL OF THE WINDS

HE had started out after her, led by Lust. Stein had thought right when he considered him a person over-reactive to environments.

The talk of that gendarme coming after his dream on the hill-side had coloured his mind. To the gendarme all women were animals, good mostly for one purpose.

Well, he had pursued her in a sort of way, now energetically, now half-forgetfully, now held back by the decent and cleanly minded person that was perhaps the real Him.

He had pursued her, led by the animal, and lo and behold! the animal had broken away and raced off, and left him with her and Desolation.

Titi, the old wise dog, had helped to drive it away, and Cavani, the tenderly cared for, asleep in the sunshine, the story of their wanderings, their helplessness, herself. She was well guarded.

Then came this new knowledge, strange as a flower in a winter landscape.

A shrill cry, like the cry of a child, broke the stillness. An eagle from the far-off hills had stricken down a hare and was rising now with the body clutched in its talons. Jean stood up and with shaded eyes watched the great bird in its flight.

Karan rose also and stood looking at the old man asleep.

"Are you going?" he asked.

"No," said she, "we shall stay here awhile, he is tired and this is as good a place as anywhere else, better than the Han, we have food and there is water enough in that flask. We will go on tomorrow."

"But you cannot stay here alone—there may be robbers."

"They would not hurt us."

"But if it rains?"

"It will be fine—it is better here than in a Han."

"Tell me, is it because you do not wish to have me with you on the road that you stay behind here?"

"No," said Karan; "but it is better not."

"Better not that I should go with you—why?"

"You are not one of us." She spoke with her eyes cast down, but without any bashfulness. She seemed communing with her only Mother—the Earth.

"I do not want to leave you," said he.

She raised her eyes and they looked full into his. She did not speak.

He took her hands and a little shudder ran through her, and her eyes, still gazing into his, half-closed.

The dancing girls on the tombs, and the horsemen of those fantastic horses, and the warriors all but washed away by the sun and wind and weather,

alone saw them as they stood now against the background of the sun-lit plain.

Her head was resting upon his shoulder. She had given herself up to him without a word and he had taken her without a word.

So does a man meet his fate when it comes upon him sudden, resistless, inevitable.

Then she moved away from him. He did not attempt to hold her, but stood watching as she knelt down and began to rearrange the haversack, tightening one of the straps as though preparing to continue her journey.

The old man was still peacefully sleeping, and the little drum near him glittered in the sunlight.

"Karan," said Jean; "you are not going?"

"I don't know," said Karan, "or why I came."

What did she mean by that?

"If you go," he said, "I will go with you, but better stay here a while. I will go back and get some food from the Han, and we can go on to-morrow. I will be only a few hours gone, you will wait for me?"

She placed the haversack by the little drum.

"You will wait for me?"

"Yes."

"Dear Karan!"

He moved towards her and then paused as she rose and leaned against the tomb, her eyes—the eyes of a gipsy used to roaming wide spaces—were gazing away across the plain.

"Let me be," said she as though talking to the distance. "Leave me alone to think."

"You will wait for me."

"Yes."

She turned and resting her arm on the stone, hid her face on it.

He stood for a moment, then he left her, reaching the road and turning back on it in the direction from which he had come that morning.

He looked back once. There was nothing to see, only the tombs. The journey would take him several hours. He did not think of that. His soul was stirred and troubled.

It was not only Karan that had him in her grip, but these great spaces, this vast wild plain, this silence broken only by the wind and the cry of the bird; they all seemed part, with her, of a world into which he had suddenly broken, absolutely alien to the world he had always known.

Yet that morning coming along the road he had felt nothing of this, the infinite stretches of broken stones, unfruitful bushes and distances merging into the tilt of blue mountains had been impersonal like a landscape seen from a train, but Karan, the wanderer, had altered that. This was her country and linking himself with her he had linked himself with this.

This was her country, a mysterious land that had no borders and lay wherever waste lands were; the plains of Austerlitz, the landes of France, the hills of Bosnia; the roads leading to cities, the streets of cities where she was an alien divorced from social life, that was the country of Karan, that said to him, "You must not enter here, between Sirius and the earth the distance is not greater than that which divides you from her. The cave woman is not farther from you than this wanderer who has neither home nor social state, and who is marked apart from you indelibly."

And the country of Karan might just as well have talked to the eagle on the rock as to the man now footing the road, filled with the fires of youth,

his head in a dream; yet, all the same, troubled like a strong swimmer who finds himself in the grip of unknown currents.

He paused and wiped his brow.

He had gone a long way and the tombs were out of sight, yet there was no sign yet of the Han for which he was seeking. Yet that morning it had seemed but a little way. The road had lengthened somehow since then and when at last, far away on the hill-side, he saw the speck for which he was making, it seemed to him that he would never reach it.

Now, the man who kept this shack of an inn was a Turk; he had been dragoman to some house in Vienna and could speak French. He was so old that he could remember the Sandor and his wild ways, and old grandfather Metternich and Pauline Sandor who married Prince Richard Metternich—"Notre Dame de Vienne."

Ah, yes, he could remember all that, and last night talking to Jean he had dug up old memories, delighted to have some one to talk to other than "these Barbarians" who came to the Han for bread and wine, and who could only grunt like pigs.

His brother had been dragoman at the British Embassy at Belgrade, and had worn the lion and unicorn in gold on his fez. Dead long ago, whilst he, Hamid, had remained on in the world here where he had been born. Yes, he had been born here, his father had owned the Han—that was getting on for eighty years ago, his younger brother had succeeded his father and had died only five years back.

When Jean reached the place the old man was asleep on a mat. He was greatly surprised at the return of the traveller and made to get coffee ready, but Jean only wanted bread and a bottle of wine,

and some hard-boiled eggs, if Hamid could supply them.

"But you will stay here the night," said the innkeeper, "it is late in the day now, and you will not reach the Han at Blag by dark and there is none other on the road."

"I am going to sleep in the open," said Jean; "the weather is fine and warm, and I can reach Blag by midday to-morrow if I start early."

"In the open! But there is no shelter in all the plain, besides, there are djinns; why, the peasants will not pass along that road after dark. Have you not seen the tombs?"

"I do not mind djinns," said Jean; "and there will be a moon."

"Ah, well"—he set to and lit a kerosene stove to boil the eggs—"as you will, monsieur; but there are also the gipsies and the road wanderers who also do not fear djinns, but are quite capable of slitting a man's throat, let alone his purse. But as you please, as you please, but let it not be said that you could not have had a clean and comfortable roof and bed. However, a guest is his own master and if he only wants a cup of coffee the innkeeper must not grumble:

" Je suis une guerrière
 Au cœur, au cœur joyeux;
 La vi, la vivandière
 Des Turcos bleus."

He hummed the old song of the Sandor as he clopped about in his slippers fetching the bread and wine, and doing them up in a parcel to be easily carried. It came to Jean as he watched him that even here the social line was drawn, that this old

fragment of it, blown here from Vienna, was set between him and Karan.

"And road wanderers who do not fear djinns, etc."

Even here !

CHAPTER IX

NIGHT AMIDST THE TOMBS

"AND there you are, monsieur, and bon voyage, but beware of the djinns."

Jean laughed.

Half-way down the hill he glanced back and nodded to the keeper of the Han, who lifted a hand in acknowledgment and then turned to shuffle about amidst his pots and pans, and his dreams of Vienna and old times.

The day was getting late, the bushes and the rocks were casting long shadows. The air, miraculously clear, showed the far blue hills, the rim of a landscape mellowed and warmed by the rays of the westering sun.

There was no one on the road, not even a peasant driving a mule, and in the sky there was nothing but a moving, circling dot—an eagle questing for food.

Then a rise of the ground showed the tomb, and in the air, close to them, a spiral of smoke.

She had built a little fire from bits of dry brushwood and she was standing by it when Jean came up. Away across the plain a figure was roving, Cavani. Moving here and there slowly and aimlessly like a strayed horse, tapping his way with his stick.