

THE MARK OF THE BEAST

By

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CHAPTER TEN

A LEBANON ROSE

WITH the disappearance of the two witnesses there came a gradual darkening of the heavens, until in the space of a couple of minutes, the whole district became as dark as it had been when the sacrifice in the Temple courtyard had finished.

Thunder and lightning accompanied the darkness, and this time heavy rain. Baffled by the darkness, the multitude ran hither and thither, aimlessly, wildly, in search of their homes. Presently the vivid lightning flashes gave them fitful direction, and gradually the crowds melted away.

George Bullen had swerved from his homeward way, to reach the crowd about the "two witnesses." The gleaming lightning gave him his direction now. He was already drenched to the skin, for the rain was a deluge.

As he moved on through the black darkness, (illuminated only with the occasional lightning flashes) he stumbled over something. Some instinct told him it was a human form. Stooping in the blackness, and groping with his hands, he made out that the form was that of a slender woman. There was no movement, and in response to his question, "are you hurt?" there came no reply.

The face, the lips which he touched with his groping fingers, were warm, so that he knew it was not death, though the form was as still as death.

"Whoever she is," he mused, "she will die in this storm if she is left here." So he stooped and gathered the drenched form up in his arms. Her head fell upon his breast, her limbs were nerveless in his clasp.

Another, a longer, a more vivid flash of lightning, came at this instant, and showed him his path clearly. He was close to his lodgings.

Two minutes later he had reached the door of the house. It was on the latch, and he entered with his burden. He found his way to his room, laid the warm, breathing form down upon a rug upon the floor, and lit the lamp.

By the light of the lamp he saw that the poor soul he had rescued, was a sweet-faced Syrian girl, by whose side he had found himself standing on the evening before, when he had stood in the throng on the Temple mount. They had exchanged a few words of ordinary tourist-interchange, and he had been surprised to find that she could speak good English, though with a foreign accent.

But realizing now that she needed immediate attention, if she was to be saved from taking a chill, he lit a tiny hand-lamp and carrying it with him to light his way, he went in search of the woman of the house.

As recorded on an earlier page, the people with whom he had found lodgment were Christian Syrians - a husband and wife.

He went all over the premises, but though he shouted several times, neither the husband or wife answered or appeared. There was no sign of them anywhere.

"They were probably caught, as I was, in the storm," he told himself, as he returned to where he had left the rain-soaked Syrian girl.

He had a bottle of mixture, which he always carried on Eastern travel, as a preventive of chill. He poured out a little of the warming stuff, and raising the unconscious girl he poured a few drops through her parted lips.

She drank by mere instinct. He repeated the experiment, and she caught her breath sharply as she swallowed the second draught. A faint sigh escaped her, her eyelids trembled, and, a moment more they unclosed.

At first her gaze was unseeing, then slowly she took in his anxious face. "Where-am-I?" she murmured brokenly.

"You are safe, and with friends!" he replied. "I stumbled over you in the road, you had fallen, somehow, in that dreadful thunder-storm."

Her eyes met his, and for one long instant she seemed to be searching his face. Then a weak, little smile trembled about her mouth, as she said:

"We met last night - I remember I thought how true your face was - I can trust you, I know."

A sigh, more of content than aught else, escaped her, and he felt how she let herself rest more fully in his supporting arm. He gave her another sip of the cordial, and she thanked him as some sweet child might have done.

For a moment she lay silent and still, then she spoke again, in a vague, speculative way, as though she was searching her mind for the clue:

"Ah, yes, I remember now. The great darkness came on, after those good men of GOD had spoken. And the crowd got frightened and ran hither and thither, - to find their homes, I suppose- and in the darkness some rushed against me, knocked me down, and - and -"

She shuddered, as she added, "I believe some others kicked me and trampled upon me, and -,"

"Are you hurt?" he cried anxiously. "Do you feel as if any bone was broken, anywhere?"

She smiled back into his anxious face: "Hurt? not much! Certainly no bones are broken. But I feel bruised and sore, and-so-"

She shivered, as she added: "so cold!"

He awoke to the immediate necessity for her to get out of her wet clothes, and gently lifting her until she stood upon her feet, he said:

"Can you stand alone, do you think?"

"Let go your hold," she answered, "and I will see."

Very reluctantly George released his hold of her, though his eyes were anxious, and his hands were stretched out within reach of her, lest she should give way.

She put her hand to her head, as she said: "I feel a little dizzy, but that will pass off."

"When did you eat anything last?" he inquired.

"Oh, I had a good breakfast, before I started out this morning. If I could lie down somewhere,- and sleep - for I slept but badly last night - I think I should soon be all right."

He explained that he could not find the man or wife of the house, but, (pointing to a room beyond) he said:

"There is a bed there, and there are female clothes hanging in a recess (they were there when I occupied the room) go in there, dear child."

She seemed but a child, to him, so sweet and innocent was her face.

"Divest yourself of every rag of your wet clothes (drop them out of the window, and I will gather them up, and get them dry for you) chafe yourself with the towels you will find in the room, then wrap yourself in one of the sheets or rugs, and try and sleep."

"Ah, kind friend! How good you are!" she said, softly, a deep sense of what she owed him, (for he had doubtless, she realized, saved her life) moving her heart strangely.

With the shy, tender grace of a child, she caught his hand and kissed it, leaving two great warm teardrops upon it, as she cried:

"May GOD reward you! You saved my life!"

Her long silken lashes held great quivering drops upon them. Her hair - what swathes there were of it - had become loosened, and hung about her in long, thick, wet tresses. Her cheeks were warmed to a vivid tinting by the cordial, the excitement by the deep emotion that filled her, so that, in that moment she looked very beautiful.

He led her to the room he had indicated, and glancing around to see that the towels were in the place, he said, "what is your name?"

"In English?" she asked. Then without waiting for him to reply, added: "Rose!"

"Mine is George!" he returned. Then with a final word of: "Sleep, if you can!" he left her.

When the hanging over the door-way had dropped behind him, and he was alone in his little living room, he tried to think out the many wonderful things that had happened since he had sallied forth at half-past six that morning.

Taking his note-book from his pocket, he tore the sheaf of short-hand notes he had already made, along the perforated line, and began to compose his message for the "*Courier*" in the code that had been previously arranged.

It took him an hour and a half to complete the work, as writing in code, took longer than the ordinary method.

By the time he had finished, it was past noon, and he wondered at the stillness of the house. Once more he made a tour of the other part of the premises, calling the names of both the man and woman of the house.

They were still absent. It was very mysterious! He could not know that they were among the scores of those who had been trampled to death in the horrible darkness on the Temple mount that morning.

Passing back to his room, he listened at the hanging over that inner room, where the rescued girl lay. He could hear her softly, regularly snoring, and decided to get his message off while she slept.

He was a little dubious about leaving the house door unlocked, yet feared to lock it lest the man and wife should return.

He was gone an hour. Both going and returning, he had been struck with the general desertedness of the streets, but realized that in all probability everyone would be resting after the scenes of the morning.

Entering the house he found it exactly as he had left it, and beginning to feel hungry, he hunted about for the wherewithal to make a meal.

Deciding that his protégé might soon be stirring, he carried into his living-room all the materials for a meal. When he had spread his table, he remembered the clothes for his protégé (he had spread them in the sun to dry, having found them where she had dropped them, by his instructions, out of the window).

Passing quietly back to the hanging between the two rooms, he listened again. This time she was awake and softly humming the air of "*The sands of Time are sinking.*"

Lifting the hanging a few inches at the bottom he thrust the clothes underneath, and called:

"Do you feel well enough to get up, Rose? If you do, I will make coffee, and we will have a meal!"

"Thank you, thank you, good George!" she cried, with the naiveté of an innocent child. "I will dress and come out, for oh, I am so hungry and thirsty!"

He smiled to himself at her sweet child-likeness, and hurried away to make the coffee. Whether the aroma of the coffee reached her senses and hurried her, it would be impossible to say, but certainly, in an incredibly short space of time (for a woman) she drew aside the hanging a little, and asked:

"May I come, please?"

He flung aside the hanging, his smile, as well as his voice saying: "Come!"

Then as she appeared before him, bright, fresh from her sound restful sleep, her hair carefully groomed and coiled in a crown of her head, her cheek glowing with the prettiest, tenderest blushes, he thought how beautiful she was!

A woman, evidently, in years, (as she would be judged in the east) yet a pure child in character and manner.

"How do you feel little Rose?" he asked, taking her hand in greeting.

"A little stiff," she answered, "but that is more from the bruises than ought else, I think, for—"

Her cheeks warmed to a deeper tint, as she said:

"I have a dozen or more bruises!"

"Let us sit down," he laughed, "and we can do two things at once, eat and talk."

Half an hour passed; they ate and drank, and grew almost merry as they exchanged a few notes. When, however, in response to her question:

"But you are English, George?" he replied.

"Yes! Though as I speak Syrian perfectly, and Hebrew fairly, it seems better for me not to appear to be English, hence my Syrian costume. I feel I can trust you, Rose, my new little friend, so I do not mind telling you that I belong to a great English newspaper, and as many of those now in authority are opposed to our paper, I am passing as a Syrian, that I may better get my reports, for our paper, through to England."

She had started when he began to speak of his connection with a great English Newspaper. Now she interrupted him, saying, in a cautious whisper:

"Are you Mr. Ralph Bastin?"

It was his turn to start now, and in amaze, he cried:

"No, I am not Ralph Bastin, but I am his representative. But-"

His voice grew hoarse with excitement, as he added, low and cautiously:

"What do you know about Ralph Bastin?"

She glanced frightenedly around, then with her finger raised, she whispered:

"The very air seems full of spies here, as it was at Babylon."

She leant towards him until her lips almost touched his ear, and whispered:

"Lucien Apleon, The Emperor, has decreed that Ralph Bastin is to be slain!"

"Tell me more, Rose, trust me absolutely, dear child!" His voice was very hoarse as he spoke.

"How do you know this?" he added. "But perhaps you had better tell me who and what you are, dear child!"

He leant to her that his voice might be a whisper only, for he realized her warning of a moment ago. "Do not fear, dear child, I shall hold as sacred as my faith in GOD, anything that you tell me!"

She laid her pretty little plump hand in his, and looked at him confidingly out of her great Eastern liquid eyes, as with a beaming smile, she said:

"I could not be afraid of you, good George, you saved my life, and-"

She sighed, and there was a sound of supreme content this time in the sigh. "No," she went on, "I could not be afraid of you, my saviour from death. And I can, I will, confide in you, for I sorely need a friend, and I feel, I know I can trust you. I had been asking GOD, yesterday, to help me, to guide me to a friend, and I feel that He has sent you into my life at this point when I, a lone girl, need most a friend. Someday I may be able to tell you all the story of my life. It will be enough here, however, to tell you that, for two months, I have been in Babylon, with my brother - my only living relative, as far as I know. Babylon-"

She shuddered as she repeated the name, and her face flushed scarlet, then paled as swiftly, while a look of horror leaped into her eyes, and she gazed fearfully round as though she feared some terror of the foul and mighty city might even here have pursued her.

"No tongue dare, no tongue can tell a thousandth part of the abominations of that sink of iniquity. I came here with my brother three days ago, and he has joined hands with 'The People of the Mark.' He is clever, very clever! They know that, and because he will be useful to them, he has been placed in high office among them, and-"

She paused abruptly, and with another frightened glance around, whispered:

"Do you know what 'the mark' is, and what it means?" "Is it what has been flying over the 'Eternal City' here, in the center of that great white flag that floats over the Apleon Palace? I think you must mean that, and if so it is the two Greek characters for the name of CHRIST, with a crooked serpent put between them!"

"Yes!" the one word came in merest whisper from her, then leaning closer to him, she went on: "But do you know, George, the import of the foul Mark?"

"I believe I do!" he whispered back. I believe it is what our Scriptures call the 'Mark of the Beast.' If that be so, as I am convinced it is, it is the brand of the Antichrist-and-"

He, too, seemed to feel the need of increased caution, for he glanced fearsomely round, as he added:

"And I believe I know who the Antichrist will prove to be."

She shot a swift glance upwards to the casement window, and with upraised finger, leant towards him until her warm lips touched his ear, as she repeated what she had said once before:

"The very air here, seems full of spies. It was so at Babylon! Lucien Apleon IS THE ANTI-CHRIST."

Again her frightened glance travelled to the casement. Then she went on:

"My brother always confided everything to me. And in telling me the secret of the Emperor Apleon - though exactly how he learned it, I cannot say - he never dreamed that I should have any scruples about serving the Antichrist. But I love GOD! I missed the great 'Rapture,' when GOD's true children were taken 'into the air' with their Lord, but, though it cost me torture, or my very life, during these coming days of awful persecution, I can do no other than cleave to our Lord."

In an unconscious gesture of loyalty to her GOD, she had drawn herself up to her full height, while her vow of fidelity had been uttered aloud.

For a while longer they talked on together of Babylon, of "The Mark," of Antichrist, of the probable coming days of horror and persecution, then a chance question of his as to how she came to learn to speak English so well, led her to say:

"Shall I tell you my story? The sun is too hot for you to go out for another two hours, and--"

"Yes, tell me, Rose," he cried, not giving her time to finish her sentence.

He glanced towards a low Eastern couch on the other side of the room, as he added: "But before you begin, I want to see you lying upon that couch; after all you have passed through, and in view of unexpected contingencies that may arise, any hour, you must rest all that you can."

He made her comfortable, with cushions, on the couch, then seating himself cross-legged on the floor by her side-the posture was a favorite one of his, and had been acquired, long ago, during his residence in the East - he bade her go on.

"I was born," she began, "in a little village at the foot of Lebanon, but when I was only six years old my father got work in the neighborhood of Trebizond, and we migrated thither. Within a week of our arrival, at our new home, I became a scholar in a lady Missionary's class of native children, where, among other things, I learned English. When I was eleven, my father and mother died of small-pox, and I became a little waiting-maid to my dear American missionary teacher, Miss Roosevelt, living in the house, with her, of course.

"My brother Hassan, was eight years older than me, and he lived with a schoolmaster, in Constantinople. I had also a dear old grandmother, my mother's mother, who lived about four miles from the tiny mission where I lived, and, now and again, I was allowed to visit grandmother for two or three days at a time.

"My life was an even, regular, but never monotonous one, for I was always busy. Then, a year or more ago, there came an awful event in my life. I was sixteen, and I had gone to spend a few days with dear old grandmother, and--",

There came the faintest click in her voice, and she glanced toward the lemonade carafe. His watching eyes saw her need, and he reached the carafe and a glass, and poured out a draught. She took a big gulp, then sipped more slowly. And while she drank, he watched her and he realized more than ever, how true and sweet as well as how beautiful her face was.

Young as she was, in development she was a woman, as is invariably the case of maidens born under tropical skies. It is true that her beauty was, as yet, of the tender, budding type, but it was the full bursting bud of the queen of flowers, and already foreshadowed the wondrous brilliance of the full-blown blossom.

Eastern though she was, she had blue eyes-forget-me-not-blue-though the long silken eye-lashes, and the thin, arched, penciled-like eye-brows were raven black.

When she had finished her lemonade, and had replaced the glass on the table, she went on with her story.

"It was the first evening of my home-coming to dear grandmother. The sun was setting, and the roseate gold of his departing glory was illuminating everything. How lovely it all was! The gold of that sunset - I shall never wholly forget it, I think - was everywhere. It glittered among the tree-tops, gilded the hill-crests, changed the eastern horizon into a molten sea of warmest gold and color; and-"

"Transfigured Rose, eh," he broke in, with a smile.

She laughed merrily as she said: "I am afraid I was forgetting myself, talking so much description!"

A shadow passed over her face, as she went on:

"How quickly everything was to be changed, though! Grandmother's voice called me from inside, Come, Rose, my child, and we will give GOD our evening chant!

"I am afraid I sighed, as I turned from watching all that sunset loveliness. It was not that I disliked our evening devotions, but somehow felt that evening - as I have often done, in fact - that I would fain worship GOD with all His evening miracle before my eyes, and would fain then have lingered on in the glorious after-glow, though that after-glow lasted all too short a time.

"I turned into the house, but I did not close the door, for it would have seemed like sacrilege to have shut out all that glory. I took my place by grandmother's side, with my hands folded across my breast, as, together, we chanted 'Our Father who art in Heaven! Hallowed be Thy name.'

"How it all remains with me, and ever will, all the little items of that last night of dear grandma's life! I can seem to hear her voice even now, she was very old, and it quavered and quivered like one of our hill-country dulcimers!

"Our chant over, grandmother prayed, she prayed extra long that night and our quick night had come down before she had finished. I lit a little lamp, and we went to bed. Then-"

A shudder passed through her beautiful, reclining frame, as she continued, and her voice had a new note in it, a note of pain:

"It was about midnight. The whole country slept. There were sixteen small houses in our little village. They all huddled close together, (for once there had been a wall enclosing them) suddenly there was a sound of gun-fire. I leaped from my bed - Ah, me! I cannot describe it. In half-an-hour the awful tragedy was completed. Every old man and woman was killed, slain with a sword, or hacked to death, or speared. Babies, and little children were brained against the walls of the houses; strong men - fathers, lovers, sons - had been murdered with every wantonness of savagery conceivable. The only persons spared had been the budding girls, and one or two of the best looking of the women.

"Everything of value, that was readily portable, had been seized, each raider keeping his own lootings. Then, at last, at a given signal, the murderers and robbers reformed themselves into a solid company, and rode away, setting fire to the village in half-a-dozen separate places before they left.

"I was, of course, one of the girls whose life had been spared. The man who had seized upon me, when, in my fright, I had run from my bed to the cottage door, had flashed the light of a torch upon me, and even now I can recall the fierce delight and satisfaction that leaped into his greedy eyes, and the manner of his mutterings:

"Good! Good! She'll sell well!"

"He stood over me while I dressed warmly, then hurried me out into the open again. Grandmother had made no sound, given no sign of waking, and I wondered. I wanted to go into the little room where her bed was, but my captor would not let me - I never saw her again, and can only fear that, if GOD had not already taken her in her sleep (and sometimes I think this must have been the case), she was slain with the rest of the old people.

"Of the next week I have no distinct remembrance. I believe I travelled, travelled, travelled, ate, drank, slept, but all my faculties seemed numbed, and my mind was largely a blank. It was when I was being taken into Constantinople, that I began to arouse from my strange mental and physical stupor.

"It was through the cool mist of the morning that I got my first glimpse of the city of which I had heard so much. Santa Sophia, rising like some beautiful dream-structure, with the points of its four light, airy, minarets flashing in the sunlight. Then, little by little, kiosks, tall sad-looking cypresses, sycamores, and the other thousand-and-one wonders of that city of beautiful and revolting contradictions, took shape and form.

"By seven o'clock we were in the heart of the city, and breakfasting. My captor had treated me with a certain rough kindness through all the journey, and done his best to hearten me. He had told me my fate - to be sold into a harem - but he had pictured it as glowingly, as glitteringly as his rough eloquence would let him. And, with all the blood of countless centuries of Eastern races coursing in my veins, and in the more or less stunned, stupefied condition in which that awful night-tragedy had left me, I yielded, for the time, to the fatalism with which we Easterns are familiarized from our babyhood.

"My captor was no novice at the business of selling a girl, neither was he a stranger to the house to which he had taken me. For, after breakfast, he showed me into a little room with one quaint, Arabesque window. In this room there was a bath, and every toilette requisite, while, from a tin box that he brought in, he took out a number of most exquisite outer and under garments. Telling me to make myself as beautiful-looking as I knew how, he presently left me.

"I am afraid that for a time I was too overwhelmed to do more than weep. Then as I remembered that it would be the worse for me if I angered my master, I bathed and anointed myself, though I remember how once I paused, as I scented my body, and said, through my blinding tears: 'This is like preparing myself for a sacrificial altar.'

"I was sitting an hour later, on an ottoman in the room outside the bath-room, when I heard voices, and steps, and a moment later my master, accompanied by a little tub of a man, with fatted-hog kind of face, greasy-looking, and wrinkled with fat, out of which peered two tiny black eyes - like currants stuck in a bladder of lard - and twinkling most villainously, entered the room.

"He was very richly dressed, and bore the name of Osman Mahmed, and, as I afterwards learned, he was very high in office and in favour with the Sultan. He was fabulously rich, and, excepting the Sultan, had the most extensive harem in the city.

"I had, as a child, learned the Turkish tongue, and had no difficulty in following all that passed between the seller and buyer. Then after being lightly pinched, pressed, and squeezed, and ogled, the bargain was struck, the money for my purchase was paid, and my captor was instructed to take me, veiled, to the purchaser's palace at two o'clock that afternoon.

"I was taken, as arranged, to the Palace, and given in charge of the head eunuch. A few minutes later, two female slaves took me to a large dressing-room. Here I was bathed again, and sprayed with a very valuable perfume, a curious blending of rose and patchouli.

"I have three crosses tattooed on my body. Each cross consists of eleven blue dots, one on each of my shoulders, and one on my breast, and I noticed a look of horror come into the faces of the two slave-women who were attending me, but neither of them asked any question of me.

"My hair was well-groomed, and beautifully dressed, and strings of gold sequins, and glittering jeweled stars were twisted amid the swathes of my hair. Then came my robing in garments, so rich, so wonderful, that they almost took my breath away. When the very last touch had been given to this wonderful toilette, one of the attendants gave me a *cachou* from a box to sweeten my breath.

"Then, for a time, I was left alone, a strange and awful fear of some coming evil stealing over me. For I could not forget the looks of fear and of terror of the slave-women, at the sight of the crosses on my arms and breast.

"Wondering what type of place I was in, I got up and looked out of the casement. A marble court lay just below the window, and, in the center of the court was a most beautiful marble basin, quite twenty feet across, from the heart of which there rose a fountain, with a graceful *jet d' eau*, flinging its spray high in the air. Two flights of balustraded steps led down into the basin. A few white doves fluttered about the steps. Flower borders and beds were artistically dotted about the court; and cool-looking, shady bowers clung to the high walls like swallow-nests to the house-eaves.

"But the beauty of all I saw could not drive from me the strange sense of dread of some coming disaster. Suddenly, a huge Sudanese eunuch appeared, and signed for me to follow him; and a minute later I was ushered into a room where the chief eunuch, and that hideous little tub of a Vizier, who had bought me, were.

"The fat, greasy face was distorted with rage, the eyes were blood-shot and fierce, and his voice was almost a scream, as he cried out to me:

"'What is this they tell me of you, you Lebanon beast? Are you one of those dogs, the Christians?'

" 'I am!' I replied.

"The fat little beast on the dais spat at me, the foul expectoration falling short of my robe by barely a foot. " 'Your body, the body I bought,' he yelled, 'is damned by the cursed sign of the cross, they tell me.'

"I gave him no reply, and he yelled, 'I will see for myself.' Then to the two eunuchs, he yelled: 'Strip her!'

"The men did his bidding, and nude, and shamed, I stood before that foul tyrant.

" 'Bring her closer!' he yelled, and the big Sudanese lifted me bodily, and dropped me upon my feet on a mat not a yard from the Vizier.

"He glared at the tattooed cross upon my breast, then with a fearful curse, he spat full into my breast, the vileness running down the sacred sign. Then, as a fiendish look filled his face, he ordered the chief eunuch to send me for sale in any market that would be open for such carrion.

"At a word from the chief eunuch, the big Sudanese snatched me up in his brawny hands, tucked me under his arm, as a father might laughingly carry his five-year-old boy, and bore me off.

"The rest of the story is all too wonderful for more than the merest outline. I was being taken through the streets, veiled, of course, to a dealer in girls, when suddenly I saw my brother Hassan, coming towards me. My veil, of course, would prevent his knowing me, but tearing off my veil, I leaped towards him, crying:

"Hassan, Hassan, save me!"

She paused in her recital, her voice choked with deep emotion for a moment, then, as she recovered herself, she went on:

"How wonderful are GOD's providences! His ways are past finding out!"

"Hassan was walking - when I met him - with an officer of the American Embassy - Hassan was clerking for this officer - and though the eunuch tried to make a fuss, when he knew who the officer was, he scuttled back to the Palace as hard as he could go.

"That night, Hassan and I left the city, lest there should be any attempt to seize me, and-"

She paused suddenly, and he leaped to his feet at that same instant, for, from the direction of the city, there came sounds of loud and prolonged hurrahing.

"I will go out and see what is going on!" he said. "Perhaps," he added, "in these disturbed times, it would be well for you to fasten the doors, while I am gone. Whether the people of the house or I, return first, you can easily ascertain who it is, before you open. Meanwhile, find your way to the other parts of the house, and make yourself coffee or anything else that you may need - and,"

He held out his hand:- "Good bye, for the present, and, another time, you must tell me the rest of your wonderful story, and especially how it came about that you knew so much of Christianity and yet did not share in the 'Rapture' of CHRIST's own."

With the warmth of her Southern, Eastern nature, remembering how he had saved her, she lifted the hand he gave her, to her lips, and kissed it passionately, leaving two heavy tear-drops on it, when she dropped it.

A moment later she was alone. She had barred the outer doors, when he left.

~ end of chapter 10 ~

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