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WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH



Lynne Foster is Dead!

By SEABURY QUINN

The strangest adventure that ever befell a mortal man happened to the handsome young American after that ill-starred traffic accident in the streets of Cairo

How sharp the point of this remembrance is!
—Shakespeare.

ABERNATHY gazed about him with a feeling of resentment, almost of disgust. Tonight the new Egyptian wing of the museum had

been opened with appropriate ceremonies, and a mob of "select guests"—selected with a view to future contributions—had listened for an hour to fulsome speeches of acknowledgment. Now they were loosed among the dis-

plays, and it seemed to him that there was something vaguely shameless in the whole procedure. Merchants, lawyers, bankers, men whose sole criterion of value was the price-tag, gazed stolidly at things upon which none could set a price. Behind the plate-glass panels of the cases were bits of art-work wrought in gold and bronze and silver, lapis-lazuli, celadon, papyri setting forth in picture-writing secrets never dreamt by modern man, dessicated bodies of kings and priests and princesses whose intrigues had shaped nations' destinies in the days when history was an infant in its swaddling clothes—and these money-changers from Mammonish Temples looked at them with eyes devoid of interest as those a wandering cow might turn upon the Taj Mahal bathed in a spilth of moonlight. But if the bored indifference of the men was irritating, the "ohs" and "ahs" of their women drove him to a state of madness verging onto homicidal frenzy.

"For God's sake," he entreated Doctor Conover, "let's get out of here. I want a drink and shower. I feel as if I'd seen a gang of ghouls go picnicking down in the cemetery!"

"Pretty ghastly, isn't it?" assented his companion. "But money's where the layman is, my boy, and we have to throw these parties every once in a while for Holy Contributions' sake. Shall we go get that drink?" He turned upon his heel, but Abernathy's quick grip halted him.

"Conover," he breathed, "who is she? Lord, but she's beautiful!"

She was walking slowly toward them past the rows of glassed-in mummy-cases. Not tall, but very slim she was, sheathed in a low-cut evening gown of midnight velvet which set her tapering arms and creamy shoulders off in sharp relief. Her eyes were amber and her

honey-colored hair was drawn back from a widow's peak and a high, candid brow. A pale gold seemed to underline the whiteness of her skin. In contrast to her hair and eyes, her brows were vivid black, her nose was small and slightly hawk-beaked, her full and sensuous mouth was like a moist red blossom on the unrouged pallor of her narrow face. One slender-fingered hand was toying with a rope of pearls, and as she stepped there was a glint of golden links beneath the gossamer silk encasing her left ankle. Clouded but unhidden, the jewel-red lacquer on her toenails shone through filmy stocking tips exposed by toeless satin sandals. Oddly, she seemed aloof and lonely as she walked through the crowded gallery with eyes cast pensively upon the tessellated pavement. She was oblivious of the chattering men and women as if they had been shrubs and flowers in a garden where she walked alone.

Now she had come up to them, and Abernathy heard Conover's soft, attention-calling cough. She raised a startled glance, and he heard dully, as though from far away, "Madame Foulik Bey, may I present Doctor Abernathy?"

Fringed lids swept up from plumbless eyes, and he saw her pupils expand like a cat's, spreading till they seemed to stain the amber irides like drops of ink let fall in tiny pools of clear-strained honey. Her red, moist lips were parted as she drank a sudden gasp of breath, and in her throat a small pulse wavered underneath the pale-gold skin. Her left hand, slender, rose-tipped, delicate as something molded out of Saxon porcelain, fluttered upward to the soft curve where the little palpitation quivered. Soft fingers closed upon and soothed the quaking flesh as one might soothe a trembling, frightened bird. Then she mastered her emotion, and

laid her hand in his. "Doctor Abernathy!" she acknowledged softly.

Something of the woman's malaise seemed communicated to him as the softness of her fingers lay against his palm. He felt a psychic current run through him, pervading heart and brain and body with a kindling glow. Strangely, unreasonably but resistlessly, he was drawn to her, knew that here he faced a riddle, unsolvable, perhaps, but one which he must puzzle over till solution came.

"Madame Foulik is Egyptian," he heard Conover explaining; "she must feel at home in this display, although her own *Musée des Antiques*—" He waved a faintly deprecating hand. "Well, it must be pleasing to see things that take you back to home and childhood memories."

The woman looked past him, and her black-fringed, golden eyes seemed pleading, as for understanding sympathy, as they caught and held Abernathy's. "Everything about America takes me back to home and childhood, Doctor," she answered in an almost voiceless whisper; then, laying a light touch on Abernathy's arm: "My car is waiting outside. May I help you home?"

"Oh, no, thanks," Conover replied. "I'm on the committee—have to stay and mingle with the guests and all that sort o' thing, you know. Abernathy has no strings on him, though."

"Then I shall have the pleasure of your escort, Doctor?" In the European manner she laid her hand on Abernathy's cuff.

HE EYED her covertly as the big Cadillac slipped down the avenue, tires barely whispering against the asphalt. Despite the harmony produced in her by art and nature's blending—skilful

make-up skilfully applied to perfect skin, a costume tuned to her complexion as the cello's strings are tuned to match the violins' tones in a great orchestra—she seemed strangely contradictory, enigmatic, and inharmonious. There was character a-plenty, and to spare, in small, firm chin; the kestrel nose might stand for cruelty or acquisitiveness, but the cleft that marked her chin and the luscious, full, red lips were soft and passionate and made for kissing, while the long, slim, lissome lines of her, the childishly small hands with tapering, fragile fingers, the tiny, narrow, high-arched feet, were almost fairy-like. Not very young, he guessed, yet certainly not old. Her chin and throat-line had a cameo-sharp clarity, her skin was rose-leaf smooth, her breasts full-blown, high-set and outward-pointing. She might have been in the late teens, the middle twenties or early thirties; he could not decide, but if she were maturely young, or if youth still persisted in maturity, one thing was certain: she drew him to her as no woman ever had. He could feel his pulses quicken and his breath come faster as she leaned toward him when the big car whisked round a curve and the subtle, spicy scent which she affected wafted to his nostrils.

Odd how perfumes resurrect dead memories, he mused. A whiff of honeysuckle blown through car windows as you drive alone at night, and the palimpsest of time is wiped clean of the overlay of years, and you're a high school junior once again, strolling through the shadowed streets with your first sweetheart . . . the scent of fresh-turned earth as you walk through the park, and once again perspective shortens, and you are on the farm in summer, with the plowshare tearing through the black, lush topsoil . . . that heady per-

fume in her hair, upon her flesh, where had he smelled it? The Street of Perfume Sellers in the *souk* at Tugurt: "*Parfum ravissant, ya Sidi? Mais oui.* Here is attar of wild roses gathered from the Prophet's gardens—on him the Salute!—essence of carnation from the always-snowy mountains, orange blossom and sweet jessamine, musk and ambergris, the veritable scent with which Queen Sheba enmeshed Solomon the Son of David, on whom be peace! Ambergris, to stir the passions as the evening wind stirs up the dust-flecks!"

He was being boorish. Common courtesy demanded that he talk to her. "Is this your first trip to America?" he asked.

For a moment she withheld her answer, and he heard her draw her breath in with a little sucking sound. Then, "Yes," she answered softly.

"You speak English perfectly, not as if you'd learned it from a textbook or from tutors——"

"I have my English from an American."

"Well"—he puzzled over the locution for an instant—"she surely did a creditable piece of teaching. Anyone would think that you'd been born here."

He could not be sure, but it seemed to him he saw the glitter of a tear on her long lashes as she answered, "It was a man who gave me English, not a woman."

A little tremor of uneasiness ran through him. There was something eerie, not sinister, but vaguely strange, in the scented darkness of the speeding limousine. Obscurely, as one perceives but does not see an object from the corner of his eye when his face is turned away, he had the odd impression that the woman struggled desperately to tell him something—to make him understand by indirection something which

she dared not say outright. Somewhere he had heard that spirits on another plane fight frantically to crash the barriers which separate them from our world, seeking futilely to make the flesh-bound feel their presence; finally, with the desperation of despair, attempting to transmit their messages through psychic mediums. So, it seemed to him, it was with Madame Foulik. Strangely, and a little terrifyingly, he had the impression he was riding not with a lovely living woman, but with a suffering ghost encased in lovely flesh.

He laughed to cover his embarrassment. "Of course! I'd forgotten women in the East have Western freedom nowadays."

"I began life in an orthodox harem, and was married from it to an even stricter one. Until a year ago no man except my father and my husband ever looked upon my unveiled face."

Again that psychic signal of alarm seemed beating against Abernathy's inner consciousness. Madame Foulik spoke English idiomatically and with a strong New England accent, yet she said, "I began life" rather than "was born." No lack of fluency accounted for this choice of words, he felt. The ambiguity—if ambiguity it were—was purposeful, not accidental.

Impulsively he laid his hand on hers. "You're trying to tell me something, aren't you?" he asked. "Can't you do it?"

She winced from contact, almost as if his fingers burned, then let her hand lie quietly beneath his. "I—I can't," she faltered with a dry, hard sob, "not now, Hugh; maybe, when we know each other better——" Slowly, reluctantly, it seemed, she drew her hand away, raised it to her face and pressed cold fingertips into her cheek. Her lips quivered as if she tried to smile

and mentally he praised her courage, for she was pain-racked, but ignoring it.

"Until we know each other better?" he echoed. "That won't be long, if you will let me call. May I come tomorrow?"

"If you wish," she bent her head in assent.

It was not until they'd said good night and he was half-way home that realization filtered through his thought. "Not now, Hugh," she'd denied him when he pleaded for her confidence. They had met less than an hour before, he and this woman from a Cairene harem; he was certain Conover had not used his Christian name at introduction, yet she had known it, she had called him Hugh; his name had dropped unbidden from her as she struggled to control emotion.

INTIMACY ripened quickly between Hugh Abernathy and Ismet Foulík. It began next morning when he called to take her riding. Smiling and frankly glad to see him, she looked younger and much smaller, almost child-like, in her breeches of white gabardine, white silk shirt left open at the throat and long boots of black kid which cased her high-arched, narrow feet and slender legs. In place of a belt she wore a brilliantly embroidered orange scarf twined three times round her waist; her bright fair hair was covered with a silken kerchief blocked in orchid and pistache, edged with seed pearls and twisted like a turban.

She rode with practised ease, which amazed him. How could a woman born and bred in the seclusion of the harem have learned the art of horsemanship so thoroughly in one year of emancipation?

He saw as much of her as his work at the museum would permit, and each

succeeding meeting added to his fascination, and his wonder. She was in his blood like some unconquerable drug; her beauty and her perfume made his senses reel when he was with her; the vision of her cameo-clear features and her sometimes merry, sometimes pleading, often frightened eyes swam between him and his books and manuscripts or the tiny, priceless things he catalogued.

Ismet . . . Ismet. She seemed the axis upon which his life revolved. Ismet in a backless, strapless evening gown, dancing with him on the roofs or at the supper clubs; Ismet in printed crêpe with white suède gloves and a pert, small hat which might have graced a Watteau shepherdess smiling her slow smile at him across the luncheon table; Ismet on the tennis court in shorts and halter, her glowing golden skin as vital as the sun that kissed it; Ismet in a molded lastex bathing-suit, diving like an otter and swimming like a seal.

Every day her mystery increased. She would be laughing, gay almost to recklessness; then suddenly her mood would change and the laugh-lights vanish from her eyes as the pupils seemed to swell and spread with fear until they were like disks of ebony—dull, lusterless, opaque, expressionless. Sometimes as she spoke blithely she would halt abruptly and look round her with an apprehensive glance, and at such times he could see the tremor of horripilation ripple through her vibrant skin as though a sudden gelid wind blew on her.

One evening as they strolled along the boardwalk after dinner at the shore the band burst into a quick medley of school songs. The music brought him memories of a hundred football games, of nights of study, nights of dancing,

of friendships forged for lifetime service with the underlie of mutual interest for an anvil and the thousand incidents of college life for hammer-strokes. Abruptly through the welter of mixed music came the strains of Abernathy's *alma mater* song, and he squared his shoulders as involuntarily as the veteran soldier comes to attention when he hears a bugle sounding To the Colors.

It was not until the verse had been played through and the rousing, stirring chorus sounded that he realized she was singing. The words came naturally, unbidden, spontaneously as breath. In a high, thin, sweet soprano—her voice, even in speaking, was so high it would have seemed an affectation in another woman—she was humming:

"O, Amherst, brave Amherst—'twas a name
known to fame in days of yore,
"May it ever be glorious till the sun shall
climb the heav'ns no more!"

He looked at her, astounded, and she caught her lower lip between her teeth like a little girl discovered in a naughty prank. A quick flush, bright as ripened quince, stained her throat and cheeks.

"You—you know 'Lord Jeff'?" he stammered.

She nodded, slowly.

"How did—did the American who taught you English teach you that tune, too?"

A change came over her flushed face. As if it were a pondering thing she dropped her mask of gayety, and the effect was swift as sunset in the tropics. For no apparent reason she was trembling; so weak she leant against him for support.

"Take me home, please, Hugh! I'm tired," she whispered.

HER personality possessed as many facets as a diamond. Save for the Saracenic cartouche cut in celadon which graced the little finger of her right hand, there was nothing of the Orient about her. Her costumes were the smartest to be had from Molyneux, Mainbocher or Schiaparelli; the stark simplicity with which her hair was done spoke hours of consultation with the *coiffeurs* of the Ritz; her speech revealed the sometimes slurred, sometimes sharp-cut accent that is peculiar to the cultured native of New England. Yet at times her dress and speech and manner seemed to be a scrupulously adjusted masquerade which sometimes lifted for an instant and revealed another being. Her eyes, particularly. Once, as they rested between dances in the King Cole Room, she laid her hand across her mouth and chin while patting back the vestige of a yawn, and instantly her whole aspect changed. Above the creamy, rose-tipped fingers looked the eyes of a veiled woman of the harem, languishing, seductive, passionate—eyes such as he had seen above the *haiks* of Arab women in the *Kasbah* of Algiers or the *souk* at Tugurt.

She took frank pleasure in his company. Never did she put him off or plead business or indisposition when he asked for an appointment, and when he called she met him with a smile and ready handclasp; she always seemed regretful when they parted. But though she showed her liking for him openly she shrank from all but formal contacts. She laid her hand in his at greeting, gave it to him when they said good-by, melted pliantly into his arms when dancing, but never had she laid her hand on him in animated conversation. When once or twice he impulsively took her fingers into his as they walked she had gently disengaged the grip, not re-

provingly or prudishly, but with an unobtrusive, quiet definiteness which discouraged further demonstrations of affection.

Glowing summer burned itself to embers. Chestnut venders replaced flower sellers at street corners; leaves came fluttering to the sidewalks or changed their greens for ardent reds and browns and yellows. Haze lay on the Westchester and Jersey hills and a hint of frost was in the air. They stood listening to the lipping gossip of the waves against the sand while silence lay across the purple, silver-dusted sky where a few stars were enmeshed in gauzy light like dewdrops in a web. As yet there was no moon, but a pale radiance glowed out of the horizon, and the argent of it lay upon the tangled skeins of white-capped wavelets creeping tiptoe-quiet up the beach.

"The night is calm and cloudless,
And still as still can be,
And the stars come forth to listen
To the music of the sea.
They gather, and gather, and gather,
Until they crowd the sky. . . ."

Softly, almost breathlessly, the words fell from her lips, and Abernathy turned on her, face blank with amazement.

Longfellow! "Ismet, for heaven's sake, tell me!" he begged. "You come from Egypt, yet you speak like an American; you know 'Lord Jeff,' you know Longfellow——" He stopped, the breath blocked in his throat as suddenly as if a hand had been laid on it. Her eyes, tear-misted, pleading, came up to his beneath their long, curved, golden lashes, her face was white as if she had been dead an hour, and her full lips, so mobile usually, hung limply parted, yearning, slack with longing almost past endurance. She swayed to-

ward him a very little, like a young tree bent before a sudden wind.

He caught her in his arms. "Ismet!" he whispered. "Ismet darling!"

But before his lips could find hers she had bent her body backward, taut as a drawn bow, one little hand pressed desperately against his chest, the other held across her mouth to shield it from his kiss. "*Bismillah irrahman errahmin!*" she gasped chokingly. "Who can escape what is written on his forehead?"

She was crying now, almost inaudibly, with short, dry sobs as hard and quick and tortured as the breathing of a spent runner, and the fingers of the hand against his breast were clutching at the rough tweed of his jacket as though they closed in *rigor-mortis*. "No, Hugh—no!" she begged. "You mustn't kiss me, mustn't touch me!"

"But, my dear, you love me, don't you——"

"*Awah!*" The orientalism sounded strangely out of place . . . and yet . . . Then, taking sudden mastery of herself: "Yes, I love you; love you as I never thought that I could love, but"—she pushed him back until she stood free from his arms, and her tear-filled eyes besought him—"but you mustn't say that you love me until I've told you who I——" Her voice broke like a shattering glass, and another spasm of sharp sobbing shook her.

"Ismet!" he entreated. "This is what you've tried to tell me ever since we met, isn't it? Can't you—won't you—try to tell me now?"

She stepped back quickly, dodging deftly from the shelter of his outstretched arms, and it seemed to him her face had hardened till it was an ivory mask with the mouth outlined in blood. "Come to me tomorrow night," she bade, lips moving stiffly, awk-

wardly, as though she drove them to pronounce the words by a supreme effort, "and hear the story that I have to tell. If you still want me when you've heard it I will give myself to you, but"—he heard the castanet-sharp clicking of her chattering teeth as a shivering tremor shook her—"it is more likely you will loathe me, never want to touch or see or think of me again."

"Ismet——" he began again, but—"Please, Hugh!" she begged.

Throughout the ride back from the shore she sat beside him silent, hands clasped in lap, all feeling gone from her face. Once while they waited for a traffic light to change he leant toward her and saw her eyes, fixed, fearful, set, as though they stared at something just beyond their range of vision, something dreadful, nameless, horrible.

For the first time since they'd met she did not give him her hand in farewell; instead she offered him a little smile so sad, so frightened and so pleading that his heart ached at it.

TRY as he would Hugh could not force his feet to hasten as he dismounted from the bus and turned down the side street where Ismet lived. Fear, vague and formless as the specter of a specter, haunted him; dull dread seemed treading on his heels; he felt the icy touch of Nemesis upon his inward consciousness. An undefined but sure sense of impending tragedy was on him. Ismet loved him, she had told him so; yet not only had she refused to marry him, she had forbidden him to touch her till . . . what could it be, this thing that she had tried to tell him since the night they met? Something dreadful. . . . "You may loathe me when you've heard," she'd said. He searched his memory for some clue, but

found no hint to help him. She had been introduced to him as Madame Foulík. Perhaps she was still married, not widowed or divorced. He smiled a trifle grimly. If that were all! Did she think he'd let some miserable, misguided follower of the False Prophet stand between them? Perhaps she'd fled the harem with a lover; he'd heard of such things. . . . The thought chilled him an instant, but he brushed it by. He had been with her all summer, he knew her as he'd never known another woman; he'd stake his life on her innate purity. "And even if she has been indiscreet, I love her as she is, not as she was," he told himself aloud.

Across the west the last faint rays of sunset soaked and spread through a streak of gray cloud like blood that stains a sodden bandage. Lights flashed through the purplish fog of autumn twilight and the dry leaves of the street-side trees beat on each other with a crackling rustle like the folding of a newspaper. From the corner came the stutter of a hurdy-gurdy rendering a song favorite:

"Thanks for the memories
Of candlelight and wine. . . ."

"We did have fun,
And no harm done. . . ."

It was not the chill of autumn evening that made Abernathy shiver. "No harm done?" If what she had to tell him kept them from each other, left him only memories of their five months together, he knew that even if he moved and talked and carried out the business of life he'd be a *zombie*—a body moving without heart or soul or hope or will to live.

His breath came faster as he neared her door, and he felt a wave of panic weakness spreading through him, swelling from his heart until it reached his

hands and feet and throat—an unfamiliar, long-forgotten feeling he had not experienced since years before when as a lad in first long trousers he had paused irresolute upon the steps that led up to his sweetheart's house.

The curtains had been tightly drawn across her windows, but here and there a little ray of light seeped out, and through the draperies came the soft, light tones of a piano. She was singing the *Chanson Solweyg* from *Peer Gynt*, and her clear, high voice went rippling through the long-sustained *cadenza*. Somehow the flute-like, faintly grieving notes made him think of someone walking barefoot and erect and esthetic beneath a flooding radiance of moonlight.

Candlelight and firelight mingled in the drawing-room and shone on loved, familiar objects—Chinese and Copenhagen porcelains, mahogany and brocade, ash-trays of cloisonné, sandalwood-and-silver cigarette containers, Persian rugs, the baby grand piano enameled *à la Greuze*. Like moon-radiance the blended light shone on the woman who rose from the instrument as he paused at the threshold.

HE HALTED in midstride as if he had mistaken solid wall for doorway, and he could feel the pupils of his eyes expand as he looked at her. Nothing but her name had ever hinted Ismet's Eastern origin; her clothes, her speech, her manner were as Western as the Boulevard des Italiens, New Bond Street or Park Avenue. The woman who stood facing him was an Oriental of the Orientals, completely Eastern as an odalisque who never in her life had stepped unveiled outside the confines of the *haremlik*. More, she would have been a challenge to St. Anthony.

Beneath a Nile-green overdress of

filmy, shimmering sheerness she wore a *kaftan* of pale golden tissue which clung sheath-like to her slim figure; pear-shaped emeralds trembled in her ears; above the little feet in bright red slippers stitched in seed pearls which peeped beneath the amorous golden folds he saw the gleam of heavy golden anklets. Circling her head was a gold chain composed of alternating small and large links like a slave bracelet, and from it six pendants hung down her forehead nearly to her brows—turquoise, garnet, opal, beryl, topaz, aquamarine—pear-formed and glittering they caught and held, then threw back, gleams of candlelight and fire-glow; a diamond solitaire at least three carats heavy gleamed in the nose-stud fixed in her left nostril. The heavy fragrance of ambergris, like a breath from the seraglio, hung about her like a cloud.

"*Es-salaam, ya Sidi!*" She gave the greeting gravely, her eyes downcast, and he noted that her lids were stained a grapeskin purple and had the luster of old silk.

His pulses jumped like startled rabbits; a wave of weakness, almost sickness, ran through him. Why this masquerade . . . yet was it masquerade? Was not this the real Ismet, and the other whom he knew and loved a passing interlude, a summer whim which had been put away with autumn's coming?

He laid his hand upon the doorpost. His scientifically trained mind, usually so orderly, was scrambled as a trash-drawer, there was a tightness in his throat, his head felt larger than his scalp. By her pose and manner, no less than by her clothes and jewelry, she had put a gulf between them wider than the distance from New York to Cairo. "Ismet," he muttered, and his

voice came thickly, almost croaking. "Ismet!"

She stood quite still. Only her left hand moved slightly, and with a start he saw her palms and nails were stained a brilliant red with henna, and each finger dyed up to the second joint with the red juice.

He could see the small pulse throbbing in her throat, knew that she was fighting for self-mastery. At length: "Won't you take your usual seat?" she begged, motioning with her painted hand to the big wing chair he was wont to sit in when they talked.

Stepping slowly, like a man who wades knee-deep in water, he found the chair and stood irresolutely, waiting her next move.

Again she motioned him to sit and moved toward him with an effortless, gliding walk, turning her flat hips but slightly, and at each step he heard the soft *clink-clong* of golden anklets. Across the fire from him she halted and slipped off her heelless scarlet shoes, then dropped cross-legged to the hearth rug. As she turned her feet palm-upward he could see that they were painted like her hands with henna juice, heels, toes and soles stained brilliant red.

Her face was bloodless, almost livid underneath its overlay of make-up, and her hands were clasped together in a gesture seeming to entreat his mercy. For a long breathing-space she sat and stared at him, her large eyes seeming to probe deep into his very soul. Mysteriously beautiful with that thin white face and darkened eyes and scarlet lips she was, and when she smiled a little it increased the mystery of her countenance. A passage from Petrarch flashed through his mind:

"I am whatever was or is or will be,
And my veil no mortal ever took up. . ."

Her clear, high voice recalled him. "Si Abernathy, you see me as I have been for the last five years." Then, as he made no comment: "For five years, till a little while before I met you, I had been like this."

More from instinct than from reason—he had no faintest notion why he said it—he replied: "And before that, what were you?"

She threw the answer at him like a missile:

"Lynne Foster!"

"Lynne Foster?" he repeated, not so much in question as bewilderment.

"Yes, Hugh, I was—perhaps I am—Lynne Foster."

SOMETHING evil, slimy-footed as a monstrous snail, seemed to creep into the quiet firelit room, filling it with ghastly chill, dank, cold and leering. There was no seeing it, but—there it was. He had the answer, now, and as he grasped it the abysmal iciness of realization seemed to spread paralysis through every nerve and fiber of his body. This was it, then: She was mad. The summer was a lucid interval, but with the prescience the insane sometimes have, she had realized obsession might lay hold on her at any moment. Here it was. He felt his fingers tighten on the chair-arms, in his chest beside his heart there was a frantic, suffocated feeling, he was breathless, choking, smothering. . . .

"You knew him, didn't you?" Her question called him back across the borderline of consciousness.

He had to humor her. You could not reason with a lunatic. "Yes, we grew up together, went to school together——"

"And went swimming in Paint Creek on Old Man Mosher's place, and once old Anton Schilling caught us in his

melon patch. You got away, but I was collared and had to work for him two days a week the rest of the vacation to keep him from denouncing me to Aunt Malvina."

Amazement conquered Abernathy's fear. Never, so far as he remembered, had he or Foster told of that unfortunate experiment in petty larceny; yet this Cairene woman mentioned it as casually as if it happened yesterday and she had been a party to it. "Do you recall the names of any of our—my classmates?" he stammered.

"Yes, there was Charley Ellis—Froggy, everybody called him. He went to Harvard Law School and was making a big name in practise out in South Dakota when I last heard of him. Then there was Dickie Walker who sang bass in the Glee Club—one night he let out the air from Prexy's tires and was caught at it—and Stinky Davis who won seven dollars from Jack Oberman by eating nineteen hot dogs at a sitting. Jack had promised him a dollar bonus for every one he ate above a dozen, you remember? They had old Stinky in infirmary for a week. . . ."

The chill had gone from Abernathy's back and stomach, but little freezing ripples chased each other up his neck and through his scalp. Ismet, his beloved, bore a tantalizingly faint likeness to his boyhood chum and college roommate.

Where Lynne's hair had been sandy hers was palest gold, her eyes were amber while his had been light hazel, her mouth was soft and slightly bulbous-lipped and passionate, where his had been firm-set and rather humorous; but there was resemblance. Not close enough for her to be his sister, but possibly a cousin. Could it be that—

"Tell me all you know about Lynne

Foster, especially what you know about him now," he heard her saying.

"I don't know anything about him now. You seem to know as much, and more, than I. We went to grammar school and high school, called on the same girls——"

"Sue Carberry and Elsie Bradshaw," Ismet interrupted. "Sue married Willie Bates and went to live in Indianapolis; Elsie took graduate work at Hopkins and married an instructor there—Phelps, I think his name was. Go on, please."

"We matriculated the same year at Amherst and took our P.G. work at Harvard. I came to the museum as assistant Egyptologist, he went out to dig near"—deliberately, he falsified the name—"near Dashur——"

"Saqqara," she corrected quickly, and he flinched inwardly as he realized how accurate her information was. Then:

"The last time Lynne was heard of was when he went in to Cairo on a two-days' leave. Police reported that a white man was involved in some affray down in the native quarter, and the car he drove was later found; but no one, neither the police, the sirdar's office nor our consul, ever found a trace of him. Most likely he was robbed and killed, then thrown into the Nile, where crocodiles disposed of any evidence of the murder. Can you supply the ending of the story?"

"Here is the ending!" She knotted her small, painted hands to fists and struck herself upon the breast. Her head was thrown back and her eyes were flushed with tears. "I am, or was—I don't know which—Lynne Foster

"You must believe me, Hugh!" She leaned toward him and turned her eyes up pleadingly. "You must believe me, Hugh, you must, you must; you *must!*

Only if you believe my story—every word of it—and still love me the way a man should love his woman can I come to you, my——” She broke the title of endearment off half uttered and rocked back on the rug. Her shoulders bent as though the weight upon them was too heavy for their lovely frailty, and as she spoke there was an eery undercurrent to the tone that sent a shiver tingling up his spine. More like a person in hypnosis who relates impressions to an audience than a waking speaker she impressed him, for her words were unaccented and mechanical, as though an unseen hand were playing on a gramophone whose sounds were relayed through her lips.

WE'D been probing all the land around Saqqara for three months (she began), for Prendergrast who had charge of the expedition had a theory that a Middle Empire tomb was hidden somewhere there, and had visions of a find to make Lord Carnarvon's discoveries in the Valley of the Kings look like the sweepings from a kitchen midden. Marenteh never drove the Israelites as Prendergrast drove us, for our funds were running low and he had to show some definite signs of progress if we were to get a fresh appropriation. Everybody in the camp, Arabs, *fellaheen* and white men, were fed up with the ceaseless grind, and when I got my week-end leave I almost stepped upon myself, I was in such a hurry to dash down to Cairo. Loughbury lent me his old Sunbeam, a rattletrap of missing parts and rusty iron with brake bands almost worn away and an engine suffering from incurable asthma, but faster than a camel and fairly easy on the driver, if his nerves were steady.

The winter season was in full flood,

but I found a room at Shepherd's and luxuriated in a real bed, a tub-bath and fresh linens. All Saturday I did the rounds, the service clubs, the hotel bars, and the nine-hole golf course. I slept late Sunday morning, then went out to fill up all the gaps I could, for heaven only knew how soon I'd get another leave. I think I'd taken several whiskey-sodas too much when I realized how late it was and hustled into riding-khakis, cranked the engine of my bag o' junk and set out for Saqqara in a rush. Traffic was so heavy on the boulevards that I was almost frantic, for every time I stopped my engine died, and as my starter wasn't in commission I had to get out and hand-crank it, risking a smashed wrist from backfire. Finally I swung into the native quarter, where, though the streets were narrower, the traffic was much lighter and everybody moved aside each time I blew my horn.

I was tearing through an empty alley, doing forty-five, or maybe fifty, when right before me drove an old-time hack—one of those one-horse black boxes like they used to use at funerals in America before the war. An Arab driver sat upon the box, and with him was the biggest, blackest, fattest Negro I had ever seen. I recognized him as a *kapusi aghasi*, or guardian eunuch, and by that token knew the coach contained a woman from some wealthy Cairene's harem. "Look out!" I shouted as I blew my horn. "Pull over to the left—the left, you fool!" But the coachman jerked his reins and drew his carriage to the right, turning it broadside to me. I cut my engine off and jammed my brakes down hard, but the worn-out bands refused to hold, and with a crash of smashing glass and splintering wood I cannoned full-tilt into the old carriage.

I was stunned and shaken, but not hurt by the impact, and had small difficulty in climbing from the wreckage. The broken cab was lying on its side, its frosted windows shattered and its door staved in. Horse and coachman were nowhere in sight, but inside the carriage I caught a glimpse of huddled black silk, the woman's *faradje* or over-mantle, and a little flash of white which was her face-veil. As I leant across the opening of the broken window to assist her the black eunuch rushed at me with a drawn saber. "*Allah ijjiblah rehba rama!*" he shrieked at me in a high, sexless falsetto—"may Allah send an earthquake to destroy thee!"

He was so fat he waddled like a duck and shook like a great bag of mush each step he took, but if he was ridiculous, and his high, thin, piping voice was comic, there was nothing droll about the scimitar he swung at me. I'd seen those things in action at our diggings. Razor-sharp and freshly honed each morning, they sheared through almost anything they struck. They could cut a three-inch hempen hawser as easily as if it had been twisted putty, and I knew if he got in one stroke at me I'd turn up with a missing hand, perhaps a missing head.

I dodged his blow and reached down for my crank-handle, which providentially was in the emergency. Then we went at it hammer and tongs, he intent on killing me, my only thought to tire him out. Finally he drew his saber back as if it were an ax, and I knew I'd have small chance of dodging it; so I swung the iron handle to his stomach, hitting him with every ounce of strength I had. He went down as if he'd been a blown-up bladder which I'd punctured, hugging himself with agony, his face thrown back, mouth squared, eyes goggling horribly, and I turned

to run, but found my every exit blocked.

The street which had been quiet and deserted as a country churchyard at midnight was boiling full of mad humanity, Arabs, Negroes, Copts and Jews, and some who blended all four races in their blood. They pressed on me from every side and I realized I was in deadly peril. "Swine, dog, *feringhi!*" I heard them screaming. "Drunkard, killer, *oudj al-ghass*—countenance of misfortune!" Here and there a knife showed, and some of them had picked up stones, but I might have fought my way through them with the crank-handle, though I should have been pretty well hacked up. Just then, however, I saw the top of a *tarboesh* come bobbing through the mob, and caught the hail: "Make way, O Moslems, give way, thou sons of noseless mothers, naughty sisters' brothers!"

The insults might seem comical to Western ears, but the insulter was no laughing matter. He was a "Gyppie," a Cairene policeman recruited from the giant Sudanese, and to fight him off would be impossible as wrestling with a wild bull-elephant. Also, he represented law and order, and would undoubtedly arrest me. I had no way of knowing how much I had hurt the woman in the carriage, but I realized she belonged to an important household, and the scandal they would raise would be terrific. I was not drunk—not very drunk, at any rate—but the fact I had been drinking when I drove a car would weigh against me at the hearing. I looked around me panic-stricken, and the voice that whispered in my ear seemed like that of a messenger from heaven: "This way, *effendi*, ere the policeman arrives. I will hide you so no one can smell you out, though he call upon the seven mystic names of Allah in his search!" He seized me by the

wrist and dragged me through the doorway leading to a flat-faced house.

It was dark as moonless midnight in the place, but my guide knew the way. We could hear the shouting and the tumult in the street outside, but it faded every second as he led me down a zig-zag passage choked with utter blackness, through a door that creaked and whined on rusty hinges, and out into a narrow lane between high walls that reeked with dreadful smells and was paved with better left unguessed-at debris. We stumbled through the muck a dozen feet or so, then brought up at a dead-end.

"What's this?" I cried. "There's no way out! We're trapped——"

For the first time I had a good look at my conductor. He was a giant Negro, and no eunuch. A brown burnoose of camel's hair was wrapped about him, and from its updrawn hood his broad face with its startlingly white teeth and liver-colored lips grinned at me like a fiend fresh out of Erebus. In one wide short-fingered hand he held a square-cut length of rhinoceros hide, and I saw the blow descending even as I saw the weapon. "This is the ending of thy pathway, O eater-up of helpless maidens, O murderer, O infidel!" It seemed to me I heard the slapping impact of the rawhide on my temple, but I can't be sure, for when it struck I ceased remembering anything.

I WOKE up in a big room, windowless and vaulted like a tomb. Two brass lamps lighted it, and from a pair of censers incense spiraled lazily. I was lying on a cotton mattress upon the floor beside the wall; by the other wall upon a similar pallet lay the body of a young girl wrapped in a white winding-sheet. She had been a pretty thing, with curling russet hair, white, creamy

skin and small, cleanly cut features. Across her temple was a gash which might have been a sword cut, or a cut from splintered glass, and another half-closed wound showed in her throat. Facing me, between the body and the mattress where I lay, an old man squatted cross-legged.

He was dressed in a white cotton *djebba*, and on his head he wore a turban wound with green which marked him as a pilgrim to the holy places and Mecca. His face was pale, lined, ascetic; the beard that hung down to his waist was almost white as his bleached robe and seemed to have a silky, almost iridescent texture. As I whimpered with the pain of waking he looked at me. He did not turn his head, but just moved his eyes, and I quailed before his glance as from a physical attack.

Yet there seemed no anger in his look; rather it was reproachful, infinitely sad and, it seemed to me, a little puzzled. They were strange, violet-blue eyes he had, and I wondered at their lightness until I recalled many Egyptians have Turkish blood, and Turks are often blonds. "Behold thy handiwork, O *quelbi*," he commanded, gesturing toward the body with a motion of his eyes. "She was my sole remaining child, my soul, my heart, my eyes, and thou hast brought her to the grave. Is it not enough for thee to drive thy devil-wagons through the streets where women walk unveiled and men are drunk on the forbidden wine? Must thou also come into our quarter, scattering death and misfortune?"

I got up on my elbow rather weakly, for the knockout blow had left me faint and dizzy. "I'm terribly sorry," I apologized, "but it was not all my fault. Your coachman turned the carriage right before my car, and it was impossible to stop. . . ."

His old hypnotic eyes were on me with a fixed, unwinking stare, and I faltered in my excuse, but I had to go on talking. This was a gentleman of the old school I was dealing with, fanatically Mohammedan and believing without question in the justice of the doctrine which calls for blood to wash out blood. The lack of anger in his manner didn't fool me. My carelessness had killed his only child; he was duty-bound to get redress, and the duty which he owed the code by which he lived was narrow as the grave, and as inexorable.

"She was my sole remaining child," he answered passionlessly. "My sons are wed, my wives are dead, and if they were not—I am old and full of years; can a man of three score and a score beget fresh children? Can a blind man pleasure in the sunset or the naked tear his clothes?"

He fell silent for a little, ruminating on the cud of bitterness, and my apprehension grew.

"I'm willing to make any reparation that I can," I offered. "I'm not a rich man, but such property as I have is yours——"

"*Wah!* What would I do with thy property, *ya guelbi?* What would a dog do with more fleas? What need has the desert of more sand? Thou hast made my face black as an oath-breaker, O murderer of maidens!"

"How is that? What oath——"

"The small piece of my soul that men called Ismet was affianced to my friend and boyhood comrade, Foulík Bey. He is of my age, and four times has he had the four wives which the Prophet—on him the Salute—permits. I have put him off from year to year—aye, and from one month to another—now he is determined that I keep the pact, for a dead man takes no wives, and the

time approaches when he joins the blessed ones in Paradise. The deeds are signed and witnessed, the amount of dowry fixed; thrice by the *ka-bah* have I sworn that she should wed him on the sixth day of *Zuihijjah*. *Rajab* is nearly sped and she, his promised bride, the dispenser of delights in his old age, lies lifeless by thy hand. How should I deal with thee for this, O infidel?"

It was as hot as only Egypt can be in that closed-in room, but suddenly I felt a chill. The Arabs are ingenious and the Turks are more so when it comes to the invention of slow deaths, and the old gentleman seemed to be of Turco-Arab ancestry. Unless I thought fast I'd be wishing I were dead ten hours before I breathed my last.

"I wish I could suggest some satisfaction," I temporized. "I'd gladly take your daughter's place if that were possible, but——"

"*Ya Allah! Rabbi ma ighleg bab hataa iheul bab*—God does not close one door without opening another!" he exclaimed.

"What d'ye mean?" I asked.

"If thou wouldst truly make amends thou must sign documents to show thou dost it of thy own free will, for it will not be lawful—or possible—if thou dost it otherwise."

Still in the dark, but willing to do anything to appease the sinister old man, I signed the document he drew in Arabic.

It was a handsome piece of lettering, artistic as the center of a Persian rug, and just as meaningless to me; for my Arabic was strictly limited to the modern bastard tongue while this was couched in the old classic language, and as far as I could make out it referred principally to the greatness of the house of Yousouf Pasha, the beauty of the Lella Ismet and the great

munificence of Allah the Compassionate and Merciful.

As soon as I had fixed my signature upon the scroll the old man changed completely. He was now the urbane, gracious host, solicitous for my comfort, anxious that I do his poor house the honor of accepting entertainment.

We dined together, eating *kous-kous*, flat, small bread-loaves baked with poppy seeds and anise, pastries made of sweetened dates and ground pistache beaten into soured milk, and innumerable cups of almost mud-thick coffee. All through the meal and the postprandial coffee my host talked fluently, almost garrulously, and—surprisingly, in view of his bereavement—the subject of his discourse was the education of the high-caste Moslem woman according to the orthodoxies of the faith. The reverence due to man by woman, the duty of a woman to her father and her husband, the admonition of the Prophet—on him the Peace!—against letting women learn to read, were dwelt upon at tiresome length, and before an hour had passed I felt my eyelids growing heavy, despite the coffee I had drunk. A black slave entered with profound salaams and whispered to his master, “They have come!” but I was so sleepy I could scarcely understand his words. Neither did the sudden flash in Yousouf Pasha’s eyes warn me that I was in any way concerned in the message.

“If only I could rest my eyes a minute,” I remember thinking, and experimentally I closed them. . . . Too drugged with sleep to offer any fight, I felt a pair of hands grasp me beneath the arms and other hands upon my ankles. Somehow, I couldn’t raise my lids to see where they were carrying me, but as I swung between my bearers like a hammock I heard old Yousouf

Pasha’s voice raised in a pæan of triumphant praise:

“*Ya Allah! Thou All-Knowing, All-Compassionate! Thou healer of the wounded heart. . .*”

THE next thing I remember I was lying in the vaulted room where I had first wakened, and the body of the dead girl had been moved so close to me that we were like two people lying in a bed. The brass lamps had been taken out and in their place a torch of fat wood blazed with a dull, smoky light. At the foot of the pallets on which the body and I lay, a tripod with a charcoal brazier stood, and before it knelt a pair of the most precious vagrants I had ever seen.

They were a man and woman dressed in positively filthy rags, mat-haired and grime-encrusted, almost incredibly wrinkled, but without a shred of the dignity old age usually imparts. As they blew upon the charcoal in the fire-pot they wheezed and moaned a sort of singsong chant, and when their lips snarled back I saw that they were almost toothless, but retained a tusk or two apiece, creating an effect far more repugnant than bare gums would have made.

A single word flashed through my brain: “Torturers!” Somewhere I’d heard or read that an ancient punishment for murderers was to sew them up in sacks with bodies of their victims and leave them there bound tight against the putrefying corpses. I tried to rise, to scream, to curse them, but the drug that Yousouf Pasha had administered in my coffee made me helpless as a paralytic.

Now the necromancers rose and wound long bandages of sopping cloth around their faces, covering nose and mouth, and if volition had not gone

from me I should have retched, for the cloths were wet with thick, red-brown liquid. I feared it was blood, and the torment of the sickness which I felt, but which I could not give way to, almost made me faint.

The man reached underneath his ragged, filthy burnoose and fished out a palmful of coarse powder, reddish-gray and flaked like bran, which he threw upon the orange-glowing charcoal. Instantly the room was filled with a thick, penetrating vapor, sweet as musk and acrid as peat-smoke, which eddied to the vaulted ceiling, then seemed to pour back down again, almost like a liquid.

I did my best to hold my breath, but presently I had to inhale, and the incense—if it could be called so—stung and cut my throat like acid. I was slipping off into a state of anesthesia. My eyes were watering, my nose seemed plugged with cotton, my throat was clogged with phlegm. My heart was beating wildly, and I could not breathe, yet somehow I retained consciousness.

The withered hag produced a leather sack about the size of a tobacco pouch and thrust her hands in it. They came out greasy, dripping fat. She took the man's hands between hers and rubbed them till they glistened with the rancid unguent; then round and round the room they marched with an awkward, goose-step sort of pace, clapping their hands with a sliding motion, as if they had been cymbals, and reciting some strange gibberish in a kind of syncopated singsong.

They marched so many times around me and the body that I lost count of their circlings, and it was something of a shock when they abruptly halted, the man before the dead girl, the old crone at my feet. Then with a leaping pounce

they jumped and landed full astride us, the man upon the dead girl's chest, the old witch straddling mine. She ran her greasy hands across my brow in the same place that the girl was wounded, and I felt a searing pain as if she'd scored me with a red-hot iron. From the corner of my eye I saw her male companion follow suit, and as his grease-smearred fingers touched the dead girl's wound it seemed miraculously to heal, leaving smooth white skin where there had been a livid, gaping wound a moment before. In another instant she had marked my throat in the same spot where the girl was wounded; again I felt that burning torment and once more saw the girl's wound close beneath the greasy fingers of the man.

Now they both fell chanting in a slow but ever-quickening tune, and the old witch drew a needle-bladed dagger from her girdle. A sort of phosphorescence seemed to shine upon her hands where she had smeared the fat on them, and this was transferred to the knife, for I saw blue sparks fly from it like friction-stars thrown off by an emery wheel.

She began to stab me, not deeply, but with a quick, pecking motion, so her fiery dagger seemed to dart as if it were a sewing-machine needle, or the tool of a tattooist. Deliberately, as though she found the task pleasant and meant to savor every possible delight in it, she drove her dagger through my ear-lobes, pierced my left nostril, then, speeding up her strokes, traced a swirling line of arabesques across my cheeks, over my chest, up and down my arms and legs and stomach. The pain was almost past endurance, for the dagger burned as if it had been heated to a white glow, but I was powerless to move, or even flinch beneath the tor-

ment. I could not hear the words the man was singing, but the woman's voice came to me thickly through the muffings of her imbrued bandage. With her hideous face pressed close to mine she screamed:

"As the sufferings of the damned shall never cease when Allah makes their faces black at the last day, so shalt thou remain henceforth clothed in this form we give thee till thy flesh has crumbled in the grave, *ya bent*—O daughter!"

Dimly and indistinctly, as we sometimes conjure up resemblance to a living creature in a cloud-formation, it seemed to me the greasy, writhing incense snaking lazily from the charcoal was blending in the semblance of a female form. It was vague and undefined, but I thought I could make out the length of limbs, the swell of hips and breasts, and, above, the hazy outlines of an up-stretched neck.

The burning pain from the blue-glowing dagger was almost more than I could bear, but the nearness of the hideous old witch's face, the stench of blood upon her filthy bandage and the foul odor of her dirt-encrusted hair and ragged clothes were worse. A wave of utterly soul-racking nausea welled through me, and with a gagging, choking cry I wrenched myself upon my side. The smoke that filled the room seemed to have turned from gray to black, and through it I could see the torchlight burning feebly, outlining the half-definite female fog-form like a silhouette cast on a window-blind by a weak light. Then even that was lost to view and I was shrouded in a cloud of pitch-black darkness. Perhaps I fainted then, perhaps it was a little later, but I was so weak and sick and utterly miserable that the borderline between oblivion and consciousness was lost. The

last thing I remember was the unvoiced thought: "If this is death, I'm glad of it."

I WOKE to such a sense of physical well-being as I had not experienced since the crew broke training when the rowing season ended and I'd had a chance to go to bed as late as I desired with a full meal underneath my belt. They'd taken me into another room, much larger than the torture chamber, and as I looked about me lazily I catalogued its furnishings with something like the pleasure I'd have taken in an art gallery. Through marble fretwork set in windows shaped in narrow Saracenic arches, sunbeams slanted and laid arabesques of gold on umber tiles and on the silky rugs and leopard pelts which strewed the floor. Sunk in the pavement was a small pool in which I saw the gleam of swimming goldfish. There were no chairs or sofas, but there were pillows in profusion, peacock-green, maroon and lemon-yellow. Under me there was a mattress stuffed with down and covered with a silk pelisse striped violet and orange. The air was heavy with the scent of musk and ambergris, and silent with the stilled hush of a church when all the worshippers have left, except that somewhere in the house a wooden drum sobbed softly. A one-stringed guitar lay upon the floor; beneath a window stood a wood embroidery frame with a square of tapestry half finished; by the arched door, hung with violet-and-silver curtains was, incongruously, a gilded grand piano. There were no pictures, naturally, but facing me upon the farther wall was a gilt-framed mirror six feet wide and ten feet high.

I could see reflections of the curtains at the door sway lightly as a whiff of breeze came wafting up the outside cor-

ridor, and as I watched the softly undulating motion of the draperies I became aware of something else shown by the looking-glass. Stretched on a pallet laid upon the floor, and looking straight at me, was the most lovely girl I'd ever seen. But I could not see my own reflection.

"Did they really do me in last night, and have I gone to Paradise because they killed me in a Moslem house?" I wondered. "Is this one of the Prophet's fabled *houris*?" Involuntarily I put my hand up to my forehead.

The looking-glass girl did the same.

"Good Lord!" I exclaimed as I kicked the striped silk cover off. There was a chime of silver anklets, and the mirror-girl kicked off her cover, displaying one of the most charming forms I'd ever looked at. She was quite undressed; for, as I was later to discover, the habit of "sleeping raw" just now becoming popular with Western women has been in vogue in the Near East since Alexander's soldiers introduced Greek customs. I moved slowly toward the mirror and the girl walked toward me. Arm's length from the looking-glass I halted and put out my hand. The mirror-girl's slim hand came up to meet mine and touched my fingers tip to tip, but instead of warm flesh I encountered cool, hard glass. I laid my palms against the glass; the girl behind the speculum did likewise. We might have been a pair of children playing "pease porridge hot, pease porridge cold." I even turned to look behind me. Besides me, there was no one in the room.

You remember that old song we used to sing in college:

"How does it feel to be so beautiful,
You great, big, beautiful doll?"

I suppose I'd sung that foolish verse

ten thousand times. Now I had the answer. It felt queer—creepy.

The girl's reflection—with growing consternation I realized it was mine—was beautiful. I—or she—was much shorter than I had been, barely five feet tall, and utterly exquisite. Her—my—face was perfect oval, neither white nor tan, but warmly shaded, like Parian marble with a light reflected from a golden mirror on it. Where my hair had been a sandy blond the reflected woman's was light as clear-strained honey, and very long and fine, plaited in long braids and wound in disks almost as large as saucers, and pinned each side the head with jeweled pins. The brows, in contrast, were so black and fine they might have been laid on in India ink with a bamboo brush. In her left nostril, fastened by a little hoop of gold, there was a square-cut topaz larger than an olive-pit, and its warm, translucent brown exactly matched the puzzled, frightened eyes that looked into mine. Great hoops of gold, so large their lower margins almost touched the creamy shoulders, were hung in her small, low-set ears; half a dozen bracelets of fine silver tinkled on each wrist; about each sharply-molded ankle was a pair of massive sand-cast silver bands.

The body matched the face in beauty, slim as a youth's, with slender hips and tapering legs, a flat stomach, but very full and high and pointed breasts.

I took a step back and turned sideways, appraising the profile reflected in the mirror. Oddly—perhaps naturally I could regard this body into which I had been forced objectively as if it were the body of another, and the more I looked at it the lovelier—and stranger—I appeared to be. Carefully and analytically I scrutinized the face. It

resembled me. In the eyes, the nose, the small, firm chin, there was a hint of similarity, but the very points of likeness made it more unlike me. It was as if I'd been transmuted from a base to a fine metal, idealized and etherealized. The woman in the mirror was not I—oh, no!—but if I'd had a lovely sister who bore a faint family semblance to her none-too-handsome brother this might have been she. Physically, I felt no difference, save that I seemed to move more easily and lightly. Neither was there any mental difference—then.

All at once I burst out raging. "Magic or no magic, they can't do this to me!" I yelled.

Yelled? No, screamed. The voice which said the words my mind formed was high and clear and bell-like. Even in my rage I realized it was musical.

But just then I was in no mood to test the implements with which my personality had been furnished. I was outraged, fairly wild with anger. It was as if I'd wakened from a night's debauch to find that my companions had made off with my clothes and left me in some remote place with a woman's dress on me. Just as I should have sought my masculine attire in such circumstances, so I was looking for my proper body now.

I RUSHED pell-mell at the doorway, tore the curtain from my path and pattered down the corridor, the little henna-painted feet on which I ran making angry, slapping impacts on the tiles. Presently I reached a door and seized its antique silver handle in both fists. But turn and twist it as I might, I could not make it spring the lock.

The noise I made aroused the porter, and he swung the panels back, stepping through the opening and looking at me questioningly. He was big

and very black and almost as naked as I was. His costume was composed of three articles: a turban, a breech-clout and a scimitar which had a blade as wide as a meat-cleaver.

"*Allah yeseemiq, ya Lella!*—God's blessing on thee, Lady!" he salaamed.

"Get out o' my way!" I returned. "D'ye think that you can get away with this——"

His amiable grin turned to a puzzled frown. From the rolls of fat that billowed down his stomach till they half obscured his girdle-top, as well as the high voice in which he spoke, I knew him for a *kapusi aghasi*, or eunuch harem-guard, and probably in all his years of service in the seraglio he had never before seen a *lella* who came pounding at the exit of the *haremlik* and motioned him to stand aside. "Make way!" I cried again, and tried to brush past him.

He turned his mountainously obese stomach broadside to me, barring the door effectually as if he'd backed a coal-truck into it.

I drew back my fist and let him have an uppercut, and for the first time realized the handicap of the body I was wearing. Something seemed wrong with my shoulder muscles, I couldn't draw my arm back properly, couldn't seem to aim the blow correctly; worse, I could put no force behind it. The little fist I swung struck harmlessly on his black chin, and a dreadful pain ran up my hand and wrist and arm where I bruised my knuckles on his jawbone.

I tried a second blow with even less success. Then he picked me up as if I were a half-grown child and bore me screaming down the corridor and back into the room I'd quit a moment earlier. There he dropped me on the rug and left me. It must have been ten minutes later that I realized I was crying like a

naughty child in a tantrum, beating both fists in a pillow, kicking till my toes were bruised against the floor, and literally streaming tears. When I looked at my reflection in the mirror I saw my eyes were red and swollen and my cheeks a mass of anger-blotches. I washed my face with water from the goldfish pool, dried it on the cover of my bed and sat down sullenly to wait developments.

I had not long to wait. The *tinkle-tonk* of anklets sounded in the hall and two young women, one part Arab, the other black as only full-blood Sudanese can be, came in and greeted me with a profound *temana*, touching the floor, the knees, the heart, the lips and forehead, as they entered. "The Salute, O daughter of the house of Yousouf!"

"Get out o' here! I'm no one's daughter, and you know it——" I began, but they paid no more attention than if I hadn't spoken. One of them slipped a pair of *takoums*—rockersoled wooden sandals — on my feet, while the other swathed me in a *peste-mal*, or silk-embroidered cotton bath-towel, till nothing but my head and feet were visible. When they'd wrapped me up till I was helpless as a mummy in its bindings they informed me that "if the honored lady is prepared, so is the bath," and ushered me down to the bathrooms.

There they took my hair down and arranged it in a coil on top of my head, binding it with a square of bright silk *à la babushka*. After that I sweltered in the hot room for an hour; then they laid me on a marble slab and sluiced me with great bucketfuls of water, first warm and soapy, finally clear and cold as ice. Then they kneaded me and rubbed me with sweet-smelling unguents, re-dyed my palms and soles and toes and fingers, gave fresh outline

to my brows with a cosmetic pencil, beaded my eyelashes and rubbed my lids with ground antimony—*kohl*, they call it.

I felt exhilarated, positively radiant, as I clop-clopped in my wooden sandals back along the stone-paved corridors, and was almost satisfied with life—temporarily, at any rate—when they led me to the dressing-room.

Whatever else he was, old Yousouf Pasha was not niggardly. The dressing-room was stocked until it would have put the wardrobe mistress of a Broadway show to shame. It was a big room, and the walls were lined with six-foot chests of carven cedar, all full of feminine apparel. There were baggy pantaloons with ruffled bottoms, tight little jackets stiff with embroidery, dresses without number, scarves, shawls and veils, and in smaller cabinets of sandalwood was jewelry enough to pay a prince's ransom, anklets and bracelets, bangles and brooches, bandeaux, earrings, toe-rings, nose-rings in variety enough to make a regiment of women sparkle like the jewelry window of a ten-cent store.

When we were laboring through prescribed psychology in school I'd read in one of Weininger's monographs that women regard clothes entirely differently from men, that they receive a sort of psycho-sexual stimulus when beholding lovely clothing, whether on themselves or others, and think of clothes as part of them, rather than things to be put on and stripped off, as men do. I remember thinking that the statement was a lot of scientific bosh, but on this first day of my womanhood I knew how right the *herr professor* was. I thrilled until I felt as if I blushed all over when the slave-girls took those piles of gorgeous dresses from their chests; when they put the dress I'm wearing on me

I felt myself go weak all over, and had to press my hands together to keep them from trembling.

The idea of a nose-ring—"as if I were a bull," I'd thought when I first saw it—seemed far more tolerable when they put this diamond in my nose, and as they slipped the bracelets, amulets and anklets on me till I couldn't move without a tinkle I felt delight increasing till it was almost ecstasy. I was ready, eager, to go back with them and see myself in the long mirror, and when I looked at the reflection which smiled back at me I discovered something more. The new body which encased my personality—or soul, or spirit, call it what you will—was still a thing to be objectively considered and admired, but no longer with complete detachment. It was not I, yet it was I. I knew it was myself—it hurt me when I stumbled up against a tabouret, I could feel the pangs of thirst and hunger in it—yet it was like another person, also. I loved it as I might have loved an exquisite young girl if I'd retained my own body, and—please try to understand—at the same time I loved to be loved by me. It was a pleasure to behold myself, to preen and pose and posture at the mirror, and the sensation when I ran my hands along my arms or body was something like that which a cat must have when it's stroked until it purrs.

The slave-girls seemed to understand this perfectly, and instead of laughing in derision they gave nods and smiles of approval when, unable to resist the impulse, I crossed the room and kissed my own reflection in the looking-glass.

I KNEW that Yousouf Pasha's house was orthodox, but I had not realized how it adhered to the old order. The periods of prayer were scrupulously ob-

served with the prescribed prostrations and ablutions; throughout the month of *Ramadan* we fasted rigorously from sunrise to sunset, not taking so much as a sip of water or whiff of smoke by way of relaxation, but at night we stuffed ourselves with food and sweetmeats, and slept as much as possible by day.

There was no nonsense about Yousouf Pasha. He was lord and master of the *selmalik* and *haremlik* and everything within their confines. When, in the evening of my first day as his daughter, I was sent for by him, I found I had to kneel and press my hands flat to the floor, then lay my brow between them while I intoned formally, "*Es-salaam, ya abu*—the Salute, O my father." Not until he had responded, "*Es-salaam, ya bent*—the Salute on thee, O daughter," might I rise, and then I had to stand with folded hands and eyes cast down demurely till he bade me sit upon a cushion at his feet.

I began to remonstrate with him, speaking as an equal to an equal, but before I'd said a dozen words he broke in with, "*Istaghfir Allah, ya bent*—ask God's pardon, daughter!" Then he explained my status to me and left nothing to imagination.

By my criminal carelessness I had robbed him of his one ewe lamb and the possibility of making good his promise to his life-long friend at a single stroke. But I had atoned by offering to take the daughter's place, and signed a statement that I did it willingly. In reliance on that statement he had trafficked with a pair of *slubbias* necromancers, desert gipsies, workers of unclean magic and followers of *Shaitan* the stoned and rejected. It had cost him much gold to secure their services, for the necromancy which enabled him to change a man into a woman or a

woman to a man was something which could be worked only once in a magician's lifetime, and was accordingly high-priced. Moreover, by dealing with these outcasts he had put his soul in jeopardy. However that might be, the work was done, I had become a woman—and one to make men's hearts a tessellated pavement for her feet, he admitted after a long, critical survey. I was to take his daughter's place and marry his old friend Foulik Bey who had, of course, never seen his bride-to-be. Meantime I must be schooled to play the part in which I had been cast; I must be letter-perfect by the marriage day, and letter-perfect I should be, if he had to kill me in the process of rehearsal. There was no better way for me to start my schooling than by assuming the rôle of a meek, submissive child, as Allah had intended womankind to be from the creation of the world.

My Arabic was limited to the *patois* of the bazar, and I had to learn the classic tongue which was the court language of the old Moslem aristocracy; so a teacher was engaged for me. He was a gentle, doddering old man, more than old enough to be my great-grandfather, but when I went to meet him I was draped from head to foot in a voluminous *faradje* with a Turkish *yashmak* covering covering my entire face. When the teacher left I was upbraided for immodesty. I had worn no gloves and he had seen my naked hands.

Embroidery was a required subject in the *Egyptienne's* curriculum, and I think I was more surprised than my instructresses when I found my fingers took to it naturally. It seemed to me that not the least uncanny part of the strange business was the aptitude of my new body for some things, its utter clumsiness in others. I'd always been a fair pianist, and I found that I had

lost none of my skill. Indeed, I played far better, for my woman's fingers were more flexible and agile, though the smallness of my hands proved something of a handicap, since I found it very difficult to reach an octave. I learned to play the one-stringed guitar easily, for I'd played both mandolin and banjo as a lad; but when I practised shadow boxing privately I found I'd lost all skill at it. My wrists turned in, I couldn't seem to shut my fists correctly, my punches had no semblance of precision.

The niceties of daintiness which women in the West have just begun to practise have been common in the East since before the Crusades. Twice each week I spent four hours in the hot room of the bath, and this was followed by a vigorous massage and "flower bath." The slaves took down my hair, filled it with rose petals and rubbed them vigorously into my scalp. Afterward they did the same to my entire body, so that in a little while the room was filled with rose-scent, and when I dropped off to sleep following the massage I dreamt of flowers. Once each three weeks I was shaved. A eunuch barber rubbed me with a scented soapy paste all over, then ran his razor lightly over me, and the body-hair came off like cold cream wiped away with tissue, leaving me as smooth as ivory from my neck to my feet.

ZUIHIJJAH, last month of the Moslem year, arrived, and with it came my wedding day. I spent the morning at the bath, being sweated, massaged, rubbed with flowers. After that I slept for several hours, and when I woke, the women came to dress me. My face was painted like a doll's, a penciled line joined my eyebrows above my nose; jewels were hung and draped

on me wherever there was room, around my head, on arms and wrists and ankles, in my ears and nose and on every finger. Even my toes, hidden in soft slippers of white kid with silver tassels, had rings thrust on them till they seemed like little curtain-rods. My robe was heavy satin, stiff with jeweled embroidery; the veil that covered it was held in place by a gold crown. Slave-women had to steady me as I walked through the corridors, for the weight of gown and jewelry was not much less than a hundred pounds. They sat me in a chair, the first I'd seen in Yousouf Pasha's house, and crowds of women guests filed by, murmuring charms against the evil eye and examining my costume critically. Etiquette required that I set my face in an unchanging smile and hold the grimace steadily. This was not hard to do, for my cheeks and lips and chin were so stiff with enamel that I felt as if I sat for a life-mask.

How long the ordeal lasted I don't know, but I was almost fainting from fatigue when the slaves came to conduct me to the bridal chamber. One grasped me by each arm, and supported by them I walked down the room. The women dropped back as I passed and reached out to touch my gown or veil for luck. "*Mâshallah*—Allah shield thee from the envious!" came the murmured benediction as I made my slow progress to the room before whose doors two eunuchs stood with drawn sabers. The veil was drawn across my face and pinned in place, and with a giggling push the slave-girls shoved me through the door.

Inside was an old gentleman, very straight, very slender, most aristocratic. He was buttoned tightly in a double-breasted frock coat which fairly blazed with decorations. Save for his

red *tarboosh* he might have been an artist's ideal of a Southern colonel, for he had the small white beard and sweeping white mustache inseparable from that stock character in pictures. As I came forward he bowed in European fashion, then took my hand and raised it to his lips. Next he put both hands up to my crown and raised it from my head, then drew the jeweled pins from my veil. I don't think I quite realized what had happened till that instant; then a flush so vivid that I felt it burn my cheeks swept through my face. This was Foulík Bey, my bridegroom, and by unveiling me he had accepted me as his. I was Ismet Foulík Hanum, wife of Foulík Bey—I who five months earlier had been Lynne Foster, Ph.D.

Through the windows of my carriage I could see the preparations for the bride's welcome as we drew up at the entranceway of Foulík Bey's palace. Two camels had been sacrificed, that I might walk across warm blood, and the poor beasts were still kicking feebly as I was taken from the carriage and led over the red stain that trickled from their severed throats. Slaves threw ears of wheat and gold coins in my path. An egg—symbol of fertility—was put beneath my foot to break as I stepped across the threshold of the *haremluk*. Ten *chamashirdji-kalfa*, or body slaves, greeted me with profound *temanas* as I came into the suite of rooms assigned to me. I had come "home."

LIFE in Foulík's harem was a counterpart of that I'd known in Yousouf's, except that it was stricter. I was a *hanum*, it was true, but I was fourth in rank, my husband's youngest wife, and subject to the wishes and commands of his first wife, or *hanum-ef-*

fendi, and the other two, as well. They took precedence when we went calling, muffled in our veils and mantles till we looked like meal-sacks. If one of them was present I must keep still till she spoke to me; if I were talking and an elder wife broke in, I had to pause respectfully till she had finished, and wait until she gave me leave before I spoke again.

My husband seemed quite fond of me, as he might have been fond of a dog or cat. Almost every night a slave came to conduct me to his private rooms, and on entering I had to throw myself face-downward on the floor and wait until he gave me leave to rise. Sometimes he talked to me, more often he amused himself by having me take down my hair so he could run his fingers through it. Occasionally I sang to him, and when I finished he rewarded me by holding out a lump of *halvah* or some candied rose or violet petals, which I nibbled from his hand. Once he forbore to bid me rise from my prostration on entering the room, and I knelt upon the threshold with my forehead to the floor for almost an hour. When finally he gave me leave to rise he told me he had kept me prostrate because he liked the way the lamplight shone upon my hair.

There was nothing like a book or magazine in the *haremlik*, and when I asked a eunuch to procure some for me he drew away as from contagion. That night I asked Foulík if I might have some French or English magazines, and he laughed as if I'd been unutterably funny. "*Ahee*, thou small piece of my heart, what wouldst thou do with such things?" he asked between chuckles. "Wouldst thou scan the pictures—Allah's curse upon their unbelieving makers!—like a woman of the *guelbi*? Couldst thou read them—thou, the

daughter of a pious Moslem? *Wah*, what are books to thee, my little tree of jewels? What does a parrot know of the Koran, or a monkey of the taste of ginger?"

Then I made an error. I began to tease, and he beat me—not angrily or in a rage, but very thoroughly, laying on the rattan with methodical exactitude which showed he was no novice at the work. Before Foulík had finished the chastisement I was groveling on the rug before him, trembling and sobbing. When he threw the cane away I kissed his hand.

ONE MORNING Foulík Bey did not rise when the muezzin's call of prayer came quavering from the minaret of the near-by Mosque of Spears. His companion of the night had been the chicken-brained *hanum-effendi* Fathouma, who had half completed her orisons before she realized her lord still lay upon the silk mattress. When she spoke to him he did not answer. He did not move when she touched him. Then her strident "*A-hee-e-e-e!*" went shrilling through the *haremlik* like a siren sounding warning of a fire.

Presently the *bash-kalfa*, or chief slave, came to conduct us to the master's private suite. The room was thronged with women, wailing, shrieking, tearing their garments. I made my way through them and knelt beside the bed. Foulík lay upon his back, not dead, but certainly not sleeping. His head rolled back where the supporting pillow had slipped, or been jerked from underneath it, and his little pointed beard was thrust up truculently. Early sunlight blended with the lamplight in the room, shining on his finely chiseled face as he lay there at the end of his long road, the peace and wisdom—and fatigue—of eighty years upon

him. I took one of his narrow high-veined hands in mine and raised it to my brow in proper Moslem fashion. It was flaccid as a newly-dead man's. Only his low, stertorous breathing and the feeble throbbing of his pulse told me that he was still alive. Paralysis had left him nothing but the minimum equipment of survival, and any moment that might cease to function.

I knew I had to think fast. Almost five years as an inmate of the *haremlik* had brought me to the verge of madness. It had been close confinement more rigorous than a prison's, cut off from any contact with the world I'd known, without a single book or newspaper to tell me what went on beyond the harem's boundaries, with no one to talk to but a lot of ignorant and vapid women and an old man who regarded me as Westerners might regard a pet animal. For a year or more I'd racked my brain for some scheme to escape; now Allah put my prison's key into my hands. The whole plan—perfect to the last small detail—came to me in a flash of inspiration, and I began to put it into execution instantly.

Unconsciously I had been weeping, for Foulík had been kind to me according to his lights, and I was genuinely sorry for him. But it was art and not grief that made me give a sudden scream so piercing that it drowned the other women's lamentations out. "*Allah hadiq, ya sidi, ya abu!*—God guide thy footsteps, my lord, my father!" I shrieked, and with the nails of my left hand I raked my face from hair to chin, screaming all the while.

Everybody in the overcrowded room looked at me with approval. By this demonstration of wifely devotion I had acquired merit, and their admiration increased steadily as I continued shrieking. Though I'd had it for five years,

I had not plumbed the possibilities of my girl's-body, and did not realize how delicate and finely balanced its nervous system was. The first few screams I gave were conscious efforts, but in less than five minutes I was in hysterics, and when the European-trained doctor came to minister to Foulík Bey he had another patient on his hands. But underneath it all my mind was working perfectly.

Like most of the big houses of the *ancien régime*, Foulík Bey maintained a staff of servants large enough for a hotel. Most of these were slaves; but some of them were hired, and among the latter were the more important eunuchs. One of these, a young man named Reshad, I had picked as my most likely helper. He was Armenian by birth and had been captured by a band of raiding Turks when just an infant. By them he had been fitted for his calling and inducted into it, but when Mustapha Kemal reformed the Turkish social order he found himself at liberty and without employment, and had come to Egypt where there was a market for his services. There was some doubt about his orthodox Mohammedanism, but none at all about his love of money.

All the clothes and jewelry I'd had at Yousouf Pasha's had come with me to Foulík's as part of my dowry. Actually and legally they were no more mine than the costumes furnished to a chorus girl are hers, but I felt I'd bought them fairly with the sacrifice of manhood. The *hanum-effendi* readily granted my petition to be allowed to go daily to the mosque to pray for our lord's recovery, and for several days I went there, working myself into hysterics and acquiring a great reputation for piety. Then I began to extend my excursions.

No *hanum* might go out alone. A

eunuch sat upon the box beside the coachman, a slave sat in the carriage with her, and the enveloping *faradje* and *charsaf* made her look as sexless as a sack of meal with a flower-pot on top of it. Thus enveloped I could have smuggled almost anything smaller than a Rolls-Royce out with me, and bit by bit I took my jewels from the treasure chests and handed them to Reshad as he helped me from the coach. After praying I was always in a state of near-collapse; so I had an excellent excuse to be driven through the streets for some time before returning to the *haremlik*. Reshad found it convenient to direct our route past the counting-house of Himor Kimirian, who in addition to being a fellow Armenian was one of Cairo's shrewdest bankers and jewel brokers.

When most of my jewels were disposed of we were ready for our break. A Jewish friend of Kimirian's leased a small shop and to this I was driven on my way back from the mosque. Of course, the slave accompanied me into the place, but she saw nothing amiss when a woman assistant handed coffee to us. I don't know what the stuff contained, but it must have been most potent, for the girl had hardly swallowed it when she fell over in a stupor.

The rest was almost shamelessly easy. I left the shop by the back door, met Reshad in the alley and got into another carriage. In a short time we were at Kimirian's, where I changed my clothes, and within an hour I was on my way to Alexandria with nearly a million francs to my account at the *Crédit Lyonnais*, and a most artistically forged British passport in my reticule.

I KNEW just how a prisoner reprieved from life incarceration feels when I stepped from the Marseilles-Paris train

de grande vitesse. I was a Comtesse de Monte Cristo, and the world was mine. I was young—at least it seemed the body they had given me was scarcely past its adolescence—beautiful and rich, and absolutely at a loose end. I reveled in my freedom, going on long shopping tours at Liberty's and the Galeries LaFayette, or the smaller, more exclusive shops, consulting skilled *coiffeurs and couturières*, riding, dining, going to the theater and the opera. I was catching up on all I'd missed of life during five years spent behind the harem's lattices, and loving every instant of it.

Then, gradually but surely, I became tired of myself. I still admired my woman's body and took pleasure in adorning it, but it and I—the real I—had not fused. When I was with men I felt like a man, and to come in contact with them roused purely masculine reactions. I could shake hands with them or touch them casually, but to be made love to by them outraged me as much as if I still wore a man's body. When I was with women I felt like a woman. There was pleasure but no thrill in kissing them or being kissed by them. Also, I soon discovered men were much the same in Europe as in Northern Africa, the principal distinction being that the Moslems were more frank about their attitude.

Finally I decided to come back to America. There would be a sort of bitter-sweet solace in visiting the scenes I knew so well and seeing all the friends I'd known, yet passing them unrecognized, like a ghost who haunts the scenes he'd known in life and watches his old friends while he remains invisible.

One of the first things that I did on my arrival was to visit the museum and make them a contribution. My gift,

plus my Egyptian "birth" and the knowledge of Egyptiana I displayed, won me the hearts of the directors, and I knew that in a little while I should be introduced to you.

You had been my closest boyhood friend and college chum; we'd shared almost every experience two men can share; twenty-five years' memories made a bond between us. Somehow, I felt when I met you I could make you understand I had been—still was—Lynne Foster. In you I'd find a man against whom I'd not have to be on guard. Perhaps, even, you'd go with me to Egypt and help me search out *slubbia* magicians whom we could bribe to change me back into a man.

I knew you'd be on hand when the New Wing was dedicated, and I timed my coming to meet you when you'd be almost ready to go home.

And then, my dear, we met.

It was *el ouad*—destiny. The moment that I raised my eyes to yours I knew. I was no longer a man imprisoned in a woman's body, but a woman, every inch—every cell and fiber—of me. When I put my hand in yours I felt a wild, tumultuous surf of longing breaking on my heart.

But between us hung a sword as merciless and potent as that the Angel held to bar Adam from Paradise. Something sharp, something cold and penetrating as a whetted, two-edged knife, was held between Ismet Foulík Hanum and Hugh Abernathy, and the barrier was the honed steel of my own remembering. For you were really you, while I had been—perhaps still was—Lynne Foster.

The realization of my love for you was like a rack on which my heart was torn to bleeding shreds as we rode home that night. I scarcely slept a

moment after we had said goodby, but through the torment which I suffered one thought ran like an anodyne: "He will come tomorrow; he has asked to see me!"

Somehow, it seemed you *must* see through me; that any minute you would penetrate my disguise and see Lynne Foster underneath the masquerade of woman's flesh. But you didn't. I could see you didn't. In me you saw no one but Ismet Foulík, and with my newborn woman's intuition I could tell you loved me. But I dared not let you tell me so. I wanted you to kiss me—and to kiss you—with a longing which was almost past endurance, but until you knew the truth about me I could not surrender to you. Then, last night, before I had a chance to stop you. . . .

Heart's darling, you have heard my story. If you still want me . . .

* * * * *

HE WAS down beside her on the hearth rug and his arms were warm about her as he kissed her hair, her brow, her eyes and lips, her throat, her heart, her little henna-painted hands and feet.

Presently: "You'll forget this terrible obsession, Ismet darling?" he whispered.

"Yes, beloved of my heart, if it will please you."

"You'll never think you are Lynne Foster?"

She lay back in his arms and looked at him, her eyes abrim with tears and worship.

"*Ya aini, ya amri*—oh, my life, my soul!" she answered in her high, clear voice. "Can't you understand? Ever since that night we met this spring Lynne Foster has been dead!"