

She was silent for a moment, then as if impelled by a sentiment stronger than her will, she approached him with flashing eyes and with outstretched hands.

"Did you really love her?" she asked bitterly.

"Yes," he replied, faintly, as if ashamed of the confession. "I know now that I loved her—but I love you also."

They stood motionless, their eyes fixed upon the body which lay between them. It was like a cold intervening wall, suddenly risen and separating them forever.

Actæon was shamed by the grief which his words caused her who had so loved him. Sonnica seemed stunned by his immense deception, and she gazed frigidly at the body of the slave with the eyes of an implacable Nemesis.

"Go, Actæon!" she said. "They are waiting for you in the Forum. The Elders are calling for you to serve as interpreter for the messenger from Hannibal."

The Athenian advanced a few steps, and then stopped, gently imploring mercy for the body.

"It will be deserted. Night is coming on, and—the hungry dogs—the soulless men who look for corpses——"

He chilled with horror to think that the beautiful body which had thrilled him with admiration might be devoured by the beasts.

Sonnica replied with a gesture. He might go. She would stay on guard, and, mastered by her chill hauteur, he turned and hastened toward the Forum.

As he reached the quadrangle it was growing dark. In the centre burned the great fire which was lighted every night to combat the mortal springtime chill.

The Elders brought their ivory chairs to the foot of