

the cry that came with it was surely one of gladness. My brain was still swimming, but the mist before my eyes was melting, so that I could see.

"It has been written!" cried Flamenka, exultingly. "The stars have delivered you into my hands—it is no longer my will, but theirs. I have mistaken—thank Heaven!—but not they! Vitéz Boldisár, murderer of Erdélyi, prepare to die, like him!"

I turned sick, as I saw him turn pale. "I see," he said at last. "This is not a case, then, of ransom?"

"Not all the treasure of the Empire," said she, "would outweigh my vow."

"This is horrible!" I could not help crying out. "Mári—Flamenka—whoever you are, woman, or witch, or fiend, you see what a mistake vengeance has already led you into: beware that this is not a worse one still! My life you had made yours, by having given it me back—in a way: but this man's is not yours. He was doing his duty when—will his death bring your husband to life? The stars, indeed! Are they slaves to our mad passions? Woman—I have been talking face to face with Death. But a moment ago I saw the colour of his mantle, and felt his breath upon me. I have been nearer to the stars than you, with all your magic, ever were. And, in their name, I command you, yes, command you, to let this man go."

Heaven knows what made me burst out in such a fashion as that, or whence came my words; or how long it was before she answered me. But it was a long time. It was so long as to almost make me hope that my will, after all, was stronger than hers.