

Empress Octavia

he is good-looking? So are other people, yet they must die too."

"Well then," replied the centurion, "I will take it upon myself." Turning to the kneeling figure, panting for breath, he said, —

"Jump into the water and try to reach the shore. Can you swim?"

"Yes," murmured the exhausted youth.

"Then go!" cried the soldier, spurning him with his foot.

"What do you say?" asked the bewildered artist.

"You are to try to escape," replied the centurion; then, turning to Marcus, he added laughing, —

"If he reaches the shore, he will escape us; if he does not, so much the better."

Metellus uttered a sigh of relief.

"Ye gods, I thank ye," he gasped, then swung himself over the edge of the boat into the water, which dashed upward around him, and, trembling, divided the cold waves, while the two men watched him. They gazed long at the white spot shimmering amid the black waters, — the white neck of a half mad man who was exerting all his strength to gain the shore.

"He will not reach it," said Marcus.