

"What is mine is always mine," he answered roughly. "Speak! What is it I have that you come for?"

The young man braced himself and put a hand upon his lips. "I come for your daughter, my Ry."

The old man suddenly regained his composure, and authority spoke in his bearing and his words. "What have you to do with my daughter?"

"She was married to me when I was seven years of age, as my Ry knows. I am the son of Lemuel Fawe—Jethro Fawe is my name. For three thousand pounds it was so arranged. On his death-bed three thousand pounds did my father give to you for this betrothal. I was but a child, yet I remembered, and my kinsmen remembered, for it is their honour also. I am the son of Lemuel Fawe, the husband of Fleda, daughter of Gabriel Druse, King and Duke and Earl of all the Romanys; and I come for my own."

Something very like a sigh of relief came from Gabriel Druse's lips, but the anger in his face did not pass, and a rigid pride made the distance between them endless. He looked like a patriarch giving judgment as he raised his hand and pointed with a menacing finger at Jethro Fawe, his Romany subject—and, according to the laws of the Romany tribes, his son-in-law. It did not matter that the girl—but three years of age when it happened—had no memory of the day when the chiefs and great people assembled outside the tent of Lemuel Fawe when he lay dying, and, by the simple act of stepping over a branch of hazel, the two children were married: if Romany law and custom were to abide, then the two now were man and wife. Did not Lemuel Fawe, the old-time rival of Gabriel Druse for the kinship of the Romanys, the claimant whose family had been rulers of the Romanys for generations before the Druses gained ascendancy—did not Fawe, dying, seek to secure for his son by marriage what he had failed to get for himself by other means?