

came him on that point, and the maid followed her mistress to her chamber.

An attendant was immediately sent to ascertain if she wanted anything. She called for a little cord, and that was all.

During the next forenoon the duke entered his niece's chamber. He found her alone. He had heard words in his thoughts when he entered; but one look at the pale face of the unfortunate maiden drove them all away, and he felt, when he took his seat, more of sorrow than of anger.

"Angela," he said, "I am sorry this thing has happened."

"So am I, my uncle," returned the girl in a strange tone.

"Then why did you do it?"

"I could not help it. The monks brought me."

"Ah, but I meant your going away as you did."

"Alas, my lord, I should not sorrow for that. Had I remained among the honest peasants of the mountains, or gained the deep walls of some cloister, I might have been happy."

"But you said nothing of this to me, it is the duke with some surprise."

"And suppose I had: would it have altered the case?"

"The duke did not reply."

"I had told you all I felt, all I suffered," continued Angela, "would it have made any difference in the result of your plans? Would you have released me from the fearful bonds, or have in any way lightened them?"

"I would have done it all in my power."

"Ah, but did it lay in your power?"

"No."

"And would the duke have done it?"

"No, no, I do not think he would."

"Then why should I have given my tale of woe to you? It would have been worse than useless, for it might have led you to keep a watch over my movements. No, my uncle, from the first moment when I learned that you had given your word for my marriage with de Villani, I resolved to escape if possible. I have made the trial, and I have failed. I know what my fate is to be now, for I know the hearts of the men that rule me."

The maiden's words were soothing, and Michael Fontani covered beneath her burning glance. The last sentence she uttered was spoken most bitterly, and he felt its application to his own heart.

"I am glad, at least, he at length said, 'that you realize the duty that devolves upon you.'"

"Duty," repeated Angela.

"Ay, duty. For surely it is a duty to obey those who have the right to govern."

"Hark ye, my lord, I would say nothing of duty in connection with the affairs of this world. You would know me, and gain nothing either. Tell me what the cardinal means to do."

"He means that you shall marry as he has planned. I saw him last night, and I have seen him again this morning. He will suffer no more."

"Suffer! What mean you?"

"That he will bring matters to a close at once. He is resolved now, and nothing can move him."

"You mean that he is angry now?"

"He was resolved before, and that was the reason I fled."

"Well, so be it, then," said the duke. "You know what his resolution is, and you know too, that I am as much bound as you are. The cardinal's edict may not be opposed."

"I am aware of that, my lord. I know full well the cardinal's power. Does he mean that I shall marry soon?"

"By the day after to-morrow."

Angela started, and her hands were clenched till the nails almost penetrated the flesh. But she said nothing, and she looked at the duke with a marble-like composure of countenance.

"Is that any set," she asked.

"Yes."

"Then I will be ready. I have counted upon the circumstance, and I know there is no escape for me. If I could flee from this place, I would do it. I would leave all my wealth behind me—all the friends, and all of worldly distinctions. But I know that it is now beyond hope. I feel, too, that there is no need of entreaty or persuasion—that tears would not move you—that my sorrow cannot lift the fate from me, and that hope is but a mere name, which has only its sound for me."

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that is enough," murmured Angela, and withdrew her hand from his grasp, and he moved back.

"Now what is your business?" asked he of the cardinal.

"You have prisoners here, whom I have a care for," returned the Franciscan.

"Ah."

"Yes. There is a man here called Hildebrand."

"Mayhap so."

"Have a care, good father," uttered the master, in a warning tone. "Remember that you do not have too much sympathy for that man."

"And why so?" calmly asked the friar.

"Why my son, with him, there is a danger."

"Ah, I shall not fear that," said Father Hugh, with a strange smile.

"You know not how some things can be done here; so I should advise you to be wary. If Hildebrand is here, he is safe; he is a prisoner, and he is a man."

"And you also have a younger man in your charge?" resumed the Franciscan, without seeming to notice the master's last remark. "I mean one who is called Francis de Mora."

"It can matter little to me who is here," was the reply.

"Ay, but it does matter, though."

"Ah, you are too free, now. Only a few days ago, when that tongue of yours was so busy, you were saying that I should tremble in my presence."

"Let us first to the business," said he, and then I have just come to tremble, and there is time for it. I may try it."

"But mark ye," continued the old man, speaking more quickly and vehemently, while he shook his finger most portentously, "there may be others who will tremble."

The master started at this; but he was a man used to strange scenes, and his mind was soon calm. For a moment the idea flashed upon him that his visitor might be insane, but the steady light of those great black eyes soon dispelled that thought.

"Now I know that de Mora is within these walls," continued the friar, "for I saw him led in."

"Well, and what of it?"

"I would see both him and Hildebrand."

"You ask a strange question, holy father."

"Ay, because this is a strange place, and there have been strange things here."

"Enough of that. I would see the men I have spoken of."

"Then, plainly, you are too late."

"Too late? How?" uttered the friar, starting to his feet.

"I hardly think they live now."

"By our holy church, signor master, I charge thee to speak more plainly. What do you mean?"

"Simply that both the prisoners have been consigned to the Tomb of Waters."

"Hark! shouted the old man, springing forward, and grasping the master by the arm. "I know the doom. When were the waters led in upon them?"

"An hour ago."

"An hour? Then they may be alive yet. Haste thee! Summon thy men! Off away! Fear open that dungeon! O, by the beard of God, if they be dead, there shall be trembling in Palermo