

the atmosphere, and put the blade between the first and second thought in the head of Rabesqurat, whereby the sense of the combat became immediately confused in her mind, and she used her powers as the fool does, equally against all, for the sake of mischief solely — no longer mistress of her own Illusions; and she began doubling and trebling Shibli Bagarag on the neck of monstrous birds, speeding in draggled flightiness from one point of the sky to another. Even in the terror of the combat, Shibli Bagarag was fain to burst into a fit of violent laughter at the sight of the Queen wagging her neck loosely, perking it like a mad raven; and he took heart, and swept the blade rapidly over Shagpat as she dandled him, leaving Shagpat but one hair remaining on him; yet was that the Identical; and it arose, and was a serpent in his head, and from its jaws issued a river of fiery serpents: these and a host of Afrites besieged Shibli Bagarag; and now, to defend himself, he unloosed the twin Genii, Karavejis and Veejravoosh, from the wrist of that hand which wielded the Sword of Aklis, and these alternately interwound before and about him, and were even as a glittering armour of emerald plates, warding from him the assaults of the host; and, lo! he flew, and the battle followed him over blazing cities and lands on fire with the slanting hail of sparkles.

By this time every soul in the City of Shagpat, kings and people, all save Abarak and Noorna bin Noorka, were overcome and prostrate with their faces to the ground; but Noorna watched the conflict eagerly, and saw the head of Shagpat sprouting incessant fresh crops of hair, despite the pertinacious shearing of her betrothed. Then she smote her hands, and cried, "Yea! though I lose my beauty and the love of my betrothed, I must join in this, or he'll be lost." So, saying to Abarak, "Watch over me," she went into the air, and, as she passed Rabesqurat, was multiplied into twenty damsels of loveliness. Then Abarak beheld a scorpion following the twenty in mid-air, and darting stings among them. Noorna tossed a ring, and it fell in a circle of flame round the scorpion. So, while the scorpion was shooting in squares to escape from the circle, the fire-beaked vulture flew to it, and fluttered a dense rain which swallowed the flame, and the scorpion and vulture assailed