

Empress Octavia

he felt calmer and more content. Charming, rapturous as his love might seem to a woman, on his part it was rather a sweet natural impulse to kiss. He easily succeeded in throwing off the fetters as soon as they chafed his flesh, and yet one could not be angry with him for this carelessness. Perhaps his affection for Stephanus had always been much more tender than his love.

"Oh, you must learn whether she still lives," a voice in his dream whispered, "and whether you can save her. Surely you can! What sweetness lies in the consciousness of being loved, even though the object of that love is far away, and can never become your own! Yet it would have been better, had you contented yourself with friendship, and never learned to know the glowing, life-consuming goddess. Oh, how sweet it is to rest in the arms of friendship; how treacherous, how mysterious is the power of love!"

So the dream swayed his thoughts; and suddenly it seemed as if the light of the lamp which stood before him grew dimmer and bluer, a mist rose from it, the air above the blue flame expanded and formed into a glittering frame, and in this frame — was it illusion or reality — he started up, sighing, and gazed