

The Mummer's Throne

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I would do it again to-morrow. The mistake was in coming here at all. I should have renounced my throne, and you and I together . . . But think! It is too late for us to try and escape. Even Florizel has abandoned me."

The queen shook her dainty head till the diadem trembled like liquid light.

"Never!" she cried. "Never! Some harm has happened to Florizel! He has been spirited away. We may never know the truth. What was that?"

A keen breath of air blew into the room, the tapestry on the walls trembled. The folds parted and a man stumbled and fell prostrate on the floor.

"For Heaven's sake lock the door," he whispered hoarsely. "I'm—I'm—"

He lay there in an utter state of prostration. His peasant's dress was torn and mudstained, the white features were smeared with blood. A cry broke from the king.

"Florizel!" he exclaimed. "My dear old friend, what is the matter? Where have you been?"

The prince opened his eyes and smiled faintly. After a little while he contrived to struggle to his feet. His breath was coming less painfully now.

"Give me some food," he said. "A few sandwiches and a glass of wine. I came here by way of the cliff. I managed by a miracle to scale the height."

The queen turned hastily to the door. Fritz detained her a moment.

"Can you manage it?" he asked. "Be very cautious. If you see Rutzstin—"

"Rutzstin is safe for the present," Florizel said. "I know exactly where he is to be found. So you got my message, Fritz."

"I got it, yes. It came from little Clarette. I was wondering how—"

"Yes, yes. We will come to all that presently. She is a dear little thing, and for courage she has few equals. Give me food first, for I have had nothing since daybreak. Schenteim's people fancy that I am lying dead in the mountains. It is no fault of theirs that I am not. . . . The danger is very close, Fritz."

"I know it," the king said moodily. "I have known it for a long time, but, like the fool that I am, I took no heed of it. And it's too late now."

"Not quite," Florizel smiled. "There is a chance of safety yet for all of us."

TO BE CONTINUED.

The Jewelled Cobra

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"I thought I'd like to tell you myself, Conway," he exclaimed. "Congratulations me, won't you? Miss Keele has just consented to be my wife."

"The dickens she has!" I could not help exclaiming under my breath.

"But how did you manage to have an interview with her?" I said aloud.

"You know, where there's a will there's a way," was his laughing response. "I wrote her a note, and she consented to see me in the ladies' saloon when the rest of the passengers were at dinner. The stewardess helped her to get into the saloon. Did you not notice my empty place this evening?"

"I can't say I did," I answered.

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