

The woman shuddered. "Nay, then, I am glad that we do not dwell there," she said quickly. "It is a wicked city and doubtless the vengeance of Jehovah will yet overtake it, even as Sodom perished at his word. But come, my lord, let us sup, for the hour grows late. I had the intent to have bidden our neighbor also, for to-night we shall taste the first of the white figs from the young tree by the fountain. They are fine, I can promise thee; I plucked them myself."

"Go thou and eat, little one; I shall fast to-night for the peace of the brethren," said Ananias, turning away his head.

"And what will it profit them, my lord, if thou dost fast? Wilt thou not eat of my figs even?" and the woman laid her hand persuasively on her husband's arm.

He looked down at her with a melancholy smile. "Dost thou love me, rose of Lebanon?"

"What shall I answer thee, my lord? I love thee even as the thirsty earth loveth the streams which flow down from the mountain; the desert laughs aloud because of the abundance of waters."

"'Tis well, life of mine. Go thou and rest in peace; but as for me, I must fast and pray this night, both for the brethren that be in peril, and also for our own souls that they faint not in the hour of trial."

The woman looked at him, her eyes misty with vague alarms. "Let me fast with thee, my lord. I also will pray."