

while all around reigned the stillness of death, save for the discordant cry of a solitary night bird far off in the forest. And as the dismal note came echoing through the night, a white and ghostly form glided from the deep darkness of the wood and advanced across the sparkling sands. For one brief instant the moonlight shone upon the upturned face of the night wanderer and revealed the pale yet serenely beautiful features of Mercade, the daughter of the king, and the fairest of the kingdom's many fair maidens. Without a pause, without the least hesitation, she advanced toward the massive pyramids, nor cast a single backward glance over the path she had just trod. Had she done so, her sharp eye would have seen another figure swiftly following in her footsteps. And it is well she did not see it, else it might have deterred her in her purpose. So onward she went, straight to the base of the great, grim Sphinx. There she paused a moment, and knelt as though in prayer. Then, from an inner fold of her flowing mantle, she drew a pure white, fluttering dove. She petted it a moment soothingly, and then held it out on her hand, her arm pointing directly at the cold, impassive face of the Sphinx.

Meanwhile the second figure had cautiously approached, and now stood behind her, motionless as sculptured marble, and as silent.

"The right for Kaloumis and the left for Meneptah," said Mercade, and dropped her extended arm.

The figure behind her started and clutched at its breast. Its eyes were fixed upon the slowly rising dove. Straight up went the bird till its shadow fell athwart the scornful face of the Sphinx. There it circled about for a moment as though undecided which way to go, its shadow now on one eye of that stone face, now on the other. Then, as though just suddenly conscious of its fateful mission, it darted far to the left and with a low coo disappeared in the darkness.

But ere the echo of its cry had died away the silent figure fell face downward on the sand. Startled by the sound, Mercade turned swiftly around, her hand gliding instinctively to her girdle, where she carried a small, jeweled dagger. But the next moment she had thrown herself beside the unknown and raised its face to the light.

"Kaloumis! Kaloumis!" she cried, with a voice full of deepest anguish.

At the sound of her voice he seemed to rally.