

CHAPTER XIX

THE library looked tranquil enough as I entered it, and the Sibyl- if Sibyl she were- was seated snugly enough in an easy-chair at the chimney-corner. She had on a red cloak and a black bonnet: or rather, a broad-brimmed gipsy hat, tied down with a striped handkerchief under her chin. An extinguished candle stood on the table; she was bending over the fire, and seemed reading in a little black book, like a prayer-book, by the light of the blaze: she muttered the words to herself, as most old women do, while she read; she did not desist immediately on my entrance: it appeared she wished to finish a paragraph. I stood on the rug and warmed my hands, which were rather cold with sitting at a distance from the drawing-room fire. I felt now as composed as ever I did in my life: there was nothing indeed in the gipsy's appearance to trouble one's calm. She shut her book and slowly looked up; her hat-brim partially shaded her face, yet I could see, as she raised it, that it was a strange one. It looked all brown and black: elf-locks bristled out from beneath a white band which passed under her chin, and came half over her cheeks, or rather jaws: her eye confronted me at once, with a bold and direct gaze.

'Well, and you want your fortune told?' she said, in a voice as decided as her glance, as harsh as her features.

'I don't care about it, mother; you may please yourself: but I ought to warn you, I have no faith.'

'It's like your impudence to say so: I expected it of you; I heard it in your step as you crossed the threshold.'

'Did you? You've a quick ear.'

'I have; and a quick eye and a quick brain.'

'You need them all in your trade.'

'I do; especially when I've customers like you to deal with. Why don't you tremble?'

'I'm not cold.'

'Why don't you turn pale?'

'I am not sick.'

'Why don't you consult my art?'

'I'm not silly.'

The old crone 'nichered' a laugh under her bonnet and bandage; she then drew out a short black pipe, and lighting it began to smoke. Having indulged a while in this sedative, she raised her bent body, took the pipe from her lips, and while gazing steadily at the fire, said very deliberately- 'You are cold; you are sick; and you are silly.'

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'Prove it,' I rejoined.

'I will, in few words. You are cold, because you are alone: no contact strikes the fire from you that is in you. You are sick; because the best of feelings, the highest and the sweetest given to man, keeps far away from you. You are silly, because, suffer as you may, you will not beckon it to approach, nor will you stir one step to meet it where it waits you.'

She again put her short black pipe to her lips, and renewed her smoking with vigour.

'You might say all that to almost any one who you knew lived as a solitary dependant in a great house.'

'I might say it to almost any one: but would it be true of almost any one?'

'In my circumstances.'

'Yes; just so, in your circumstances: but find me another precisely placed as you are.'

'It would be easy to find you thousands.'

'You could scarcely find me one. If you knew it, you are peculiarly situated: very near happiness; yes, within reach of it. The materials are all prepared; there only wants a movement to combine them. Chance laid them somewhat apart; let them be once approached and bliss results.'

'I don't understand enigmas. I never could guess a riddle in my life.'

'If you wish me to speak more plainly, show me your palm.'

'And I must cross it with silver, I suppose?'

'To be sure.'

I gave her a shilling: she put it into an old stocking-foot which she took out of her pocket, and having tied it round and returned it, she told me to hold out my hand. I did. She approached her face to the palm, and pored over it without touching it.

'It is too fine,' said she. 'I can make nothing of such a hand as that; almost without lines: besides, what is in a palm? Destiny is not written there.'

'I believe you,' said I.

'No,' she continued, 'it is in the face: on the forehead, about the eyes, in the eyes themselves, in the lines of the mouth. Kneel, and lift up your head.'

'Ah! now you are coming to reality,' I said, as I obeyed her. 'I shall begin to put some faith in you presently.'

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I knelt within half a yard of her. She stirred the fire, so that a ripple of light broke from the disturbed coal: the glare, however, as she sat, only threw her face into deeper shadow: mine, it illumined.

'I wonder with what feelings you came to me to-night,' she said, when she had examined me a while. 'I wonder what thoughts are busy in your heart during all the hours you sit in yonder room with the fine people flitting before you like shapes in a magic-lantern: just as little sympathetic communion passing between you and them as if they were really mere shadows of human forms, and not the actual substance.'

'I feel tired often, sleepy sometimes, but seldom sad.'

'Then you have some secret hope to buoy you up and please you with whispers of the future?'

'Not I. The utmost I hope is, to save money enough out of my earnings to set up a school some day in a little house rented by myself.'

'A mean nutriment for the spirit to exist on: and sitting in that window-seat (you see I know your habits)-'

'You have learned them from the servants.'

'Ah! you think yourself sharp. Well, perhaps I have: to speak truth, I have an acquaintance with one of them, Mrs. Poole-' I started to my feet when I heard the name.

'You have- have you?' thought I; 'there is diablerie in the business after all, then!'

'Don't be alarmed,' continued the strange being; 'she's a safe hand is Mrs. Poole: close and quiet; any one may repose confidence in her.'

But, as I was saying: sitting in that window-seat, do you think of nothing but your future school? Have you no present interest in any of the company who occupy the sofas and chairs before you? Is there not one face you study? one figure whose movements you follow with at least curiosity?'

'I like to observe all the faces and all the figures.'

'But do you never single one from the rest-or it may be, two?'

'I do frequently; when the gestures or looks of a pair seem telling a tale: it amuses me to watch them.'

'What tale do you like best to hear?'

'Oh, I have not much choice! They generally run on the same theme- courtship; and promise to end in the same catastrophe- marriage.'

'And do you like that monotonous theme?'

'Positively, I don't care about it: it is nothing to me.'

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'Nothing to you? When a lady, young and full of life and health, charming with beauty and endowed with the gifts of rank and fortune, sits and smiles in the eyes of a gentleman you-'

'I what?'

'You know- and perhaps think well of.'

'I don't know the gentlemen here. I have scarcely interchanged a syllable with one of them; and as to thinking well of them, I consider some respectable, and stately, and middle-aged, and others young, dashing, handsome, and lively: but certainly they are all at liberty to be the recipients of whose smiles they please, without my feeling disposed to consider the transaction of any moment to me.'

'You don't know the gentlemen here? You have not exchanged a syllable with one of them? Will you say that of the master of the house!'

'He is not at home.'

'A profound remark! A most ingenious quibble! He went to Millcote this morning, and will be back here to-night or to-morrow: does that circumstance exclude him from the list of your acquaintance- blot him, as it were, out of existence?'

'No; but I can scarcely see what Mr. Rochester has to do with the theme you had introduced.'

'I was talking of ladies smiling in the eyes of gentlemen; and of late so many smiles have been shed into Mr. Rochester's eyes that they overflow like two cups filled above the brim: have you never remarked that?'

'Mr. Rochester has a right to enjoy the society of his guests.'

'No question about his right: but have you never observed that, of all the tales told here about matrimony, Mr. Rochester has been favoured with the most lively and the most continuous?'

'The eagerness of a listener quickens the tongue of a narrator.'

I said this rather to myself than to the gipsy, whose strange talk, voice, manner, had by this time wrapped me in a kind of dream. One unexpected sentence came from her lips after another, till I got involved in a web of mystification; and wondered what unseen spirit had been sitting for weeks by my heart watching its workings and taking record of every pulse.

'Eagerness of a listener!' repeated she: 'yes; Mr. Rochester has sat by the hour, his ear inclined to the fascinating lips that took such delight in their task of communicating; and Mr. Rochester was so willing to receive and looked so grateful for the pastime given him; you have noticed this?'

'Grateful! I cannot remember detecting gratitude in his face.'

'Detecting! You have analysed, then. And what did you detect, if not gratitude?'

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I said nothing.

'You have seen love: have you not?- and, looking forward, you have seen him married, and beheld his bride happy?'

'Humph! Not exactly. Your witch's skill is rather at fault sometimes.'

'What the devil have you seen, then?'

'Never mind: I came here to inquire, not to confess. Is it known that Mr. Rochester is to be married?'

'Yes; and to the beautiful Miss Ingram.'

'Shortly?'

'Appearances would warrant that conclusion: and, no doubt (though, with an audacity that wants chastising out of you, you seem to question it), they will be a superlatively happy pair. He must love such a handsome, noble, witty, accomplished lady; and probably she loves him, or, if not his person, at least his purse. I know she considers the Rochester estate eligible to the last degree; though (God pardon me!) I told her something on that point about an hour ago which made her look wondrous grave: the corners of her mouth fell half an inch. I would advise her black-aviced suitor to look out: if another comes, with a longer or clearer rent-roll,- he's dished.'

'But, mother, I did not come to hear Mr. Rochester's fortune: I came to hear my own; and you have told me nothing of it.'

'Your fortune is yet doubtful: when I examined your face, one trait contradicted another. Chance has meted you a measure of happiness: that I know. I knew it before I came here this evening. She has laid it carefully on one side for you. I saw her do it. It depends on yourself to stretch out your hand, and take it up: but whether you will do so, is the problem I study. Kneel again on the rug.'

'Don't keep me long; the fire scorches me.'

I knelt. She did not stoop towards me, but only gazed, leaning back in her chair. She began muttering,-

'The flame flickers in the eye; the eye shines like dew; it looks soft and full of feeling; it smiles at my jargon; it is susceptible; impression follows impression through its clear sphere; where it ceases to smile, it is sad; an unconscious lassitude weighs on the lid: that signifies melancholy resulting from loneliness. It turns from me; it will not suffer further scrutiny; it seems to deny, by a mocking glance, the truth of the discoveries I have already made,- to disown the charge both of sensibility and chagrin: its pride and reserve only confirm me in my opinion. The eye is favourable.

'As to the mouth, it delights at times in laughter; it is disposed to impart all that the brain conceives; though I daresay it would be silent on much the heart experiences. Mobile and flexible, it was never intended to be compressed in the eternal silence of solitude; it is a mouth which should speak much and smile often, and have human affection for its interlocutor. That feature too is propitious.

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"I see no enemy to a fortunate issue but in the brow; and that brow professes to say,- "I can live alone, if self-respect and circumstances require me so to do. I need not sell my soul to buy bliss. I have an inward treasure born with me, which can keep me alive if all extraneous delights should be withheld, or offered only at a price I cannot afford to give." The forehead declares, "Reason sits firm and holds the reins, and she will not let the feelings burst away and hurry her to wild chasms. The passions may rage furiously, like true heathens, as they are; and the desires may imagine all sorts of vain things: but judgment shall still have the last word in every argument, and the casting vote in every decision. Strong wind, earthquake-shock, and fire may pass by: but I shall follow the guiding of that still small voice which interprets the dictates of conscience."

"Well said, forehead; your declaration shall be respected. I have formed my plans- right plans I deem them- and in them I have attended to the claims of conscience, the counsels of reason. I know how soon youth would fade and bloom perish, if, in the cup of bliss offered, but one dreg of shame, or one flavour of remorse were detected; and I do not want sacrifice, sorrow, dissolution- such is not my taste. I wish to foster, not to blight- to earn gratitude, not to wring tears of blood- no, nor of brine: my harvest must be in smiles, in endearments, in sweet- That will do. I think I rave in a kind of exquisite delirium. I should wish now to protract this moment ad infinitum; but I dare not. So far I have governed myself thoroughly. I have acted as I inwardly swore I would act; but further might try me beyond my strength. Rise, Miss Eyre: leave me;

"the play is played out."

Where was I? Did I wake or sleep? Had I been dreaming? Did I dream still? The old woman's voice had changed: her accent, her gesture, and all were familiar to me as my own face in a glass- as the speech of my own tongue. I got up, but did not go. I looked; I stirred the fire, and I looked again: but she drew her bonnet and her bandage closer about her face, and again beckoned me to depart. The flame illuminated her hand stretched out: roused now, and on the alert for discoveries, I at once noticed that hand. It was no more the withered limb of old than my own; it was a rounded supple member, with smooth fingers, symmetrically turned; a broad ring flashed on the little finger, and stooping forward, I looked at it, and saw a gem I had seen a hundred times before. Again I looked at the face; which was no longer turned from me- on the contrary, the bonnet was doffed, the bandage displaced, the head advanced.

"Well, Jane, do you know me?" asked the familiar voice.

"Only take off the red cloak, sir, and then-"

"But the string is in a knot- help me."

"Break it, sir."

"There, then- "Off, ye lendings!" And Mr. Rochester stepped out of his disguise.

"Now, sir, what a strange idea!"

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'But well carried out, eh? Don't you think so?'

'With the ladies you must have managed well.'

'But not with you?'

'You did not act the character of a gipsy with me.'

'What character did I act? My own?'

'No; some unaccountable one. In short, I believe you have been trying to draw me out- or in; you have been talking nonsense to make me talk nonsense. It is scarcely fair, sir.'

'Do you forgive me, Jane?'

'I cannot tell till I have thought it all over. If, on reflection, I find I have fallen into no great absurdity, I shall try to forgive you; but it was not right.'

'Oh, you have been very correct- very careful, very sensible.'

I reflected, and thought, on the whole, I had. It was a comfort; but, indeed, I had been on my guard almost from the beginning of the interview. Something of masquerade I suspected. I knew gipsies and fortune-tellers did not express themselves as this seeming old woman had expressed herself; besides I had noted her feigned voice, her anxiety to conceal her features. But my mind had been running on Grace Poole- that living enigma, that mystery of mysteries, as I considered her. I had never thought of Mr. Rochester.

'Well,' said he, 'what are you musing about? What does that grave smile signify?'

'Wonder and self-congratulation, sir. I have your permission to retire now, I suppose?'

'No; stay a moment; and tell me what the people in the drawing-room yonder are doing.'

'Discussing the gipsy, I daresay.'

'Sit down!- Let me hear what they said about me.'

'I had better not stay long, sir; it must be near eleven o'clock.'

Oh, are you aware, Mr. Rochester, that a stranger has arrived here since you left this morning?'

'A stranger!- no; who can it be? I expected no one; is he gone?'

'No; he said he had known you long, and that he could take the liberty of installing himself here till you returned.'

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'The devil he did! Did he give his name?'

'His name is Mason, sir; and he comes from the West Indies; from Spanish Town, in Jamaica, I think.'

Mr. Rochester was standing near me; he had taken my hand, as if to lead me to a chair. As I spoke he gave my wrist a convulsive grip; the smile on his lips froze: apparently a spasm caught his breath.

'Mason!- the West Indies!' he said, in the tone one might fancy a speaking automaton to enounce its single words; 'Mason!- the West Indies!' he reiterated; and he went over the syllables three times, growing, in the intervals of speaking, whiter than ashes: he hardly seemed to know what he was doing.

'Do you feel ill, sir?' I inquired.

'Jane, I've got a blow; I've got a blow, Jane!' He staggered.

'Oh, lean on me, sir.'

'Jane, you offered me your shoulder once before; let me have it now.'

'Yes, sir, yes; and my arm.'

He sat down, and made me sit beside him. Holding my hand in both his own, he chafed it; gazing on me, at the same time, with the most troubled and dreary look.

'My little friend!' said he, 'I wish I were in a quiet island with only you; and trouble, and danger, and hideous recollections removed from me.'

'Can I help you, sir?- I'd give my life to serve you.'

'Jane, if aid is wanted, I'll seek it at your hands; I promise you that.'

'Thank you, sir. Tell me what to do,- I'll try, at least, to do it.'

'Fetch me now, Jane, a glass of wine from the dining-room: they will be at supper there; and tell me if Mason is with them, and what he is doing.'

I went. I found all the party in the dining-room at supper, as Mr. Rochester had said; they were not seated at table,- the supper was arranged on the sideboard; each had taken what he chose, and they stood about here and there in groups, their plates and glasses in their hands. Every one seemed in high glee; laughter and conversation were general and animated. Mr. Mason stood near the fire, talking to Colonel and Mrs. Dent, and appeared as merry as any of them. I filled a wine-glass (I saw Miss Ingram watch me frowningly as I did so: she thought I was taking a liberty, I daresay), and I returned to the library.

Mr. Rochester's extreme pallor had disappeared, and he looked once more firm and stern. He took the glass from my hand.

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'Here is to your health, ministrant spirit!' he said. He swallowed the contents and returned it to me. 'What are they doing, Jane?'

'Laughing and talking, sir.'

'They don't look grave and mysterious, as if they had heard something strange?'

'Not at all: they are full of jests and gaiety.'

'And Mason?'

'He was laughing too.'

'If all these people came in a body and spat at me, what would you do, Jane?'

'Turn them out of the room, sir, if I could.'

He half smiled. 'But if I were to go to them, and they only looked at me coldly, and whispered sneeringly amongst each other, and then dropped off and left me one by one, what then? Would you go with them?'

'I rather think not, sir: I should have more pleasure in staying with you.'

'To comfort me?'

'Yes, sir, to comfort you, as well as I could.'

'And if they laid you under a ban for adhering to me?'

'I, probably, should know nothing about their ban; and if I did, I should care nothing about it.'

'Then, you could dare censure for my sake?'

'I could dare it for the sake of any friend who deserved my adherence; as you, I am sure, do.'

'Go back now into the room; step quietly up to Mason, and whisper in his ear that Mr. Rochester is come and wishes to see him: show him in here and then leave me.'

'Yes, sir.'

I did his behest. The company all stared at me as I passed straight among them. I sought Mr. Mason, delivered the message, and preceded him from the room: I ushered him into the library, and then I went upstairs.

At a late hour, after I had been in bed some time, I heard the visitors repair to their chambers: I distinguished Mr. Rochester's voice, and heard him say, 'This way, Mason; this is your room.'

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He spoke cheerfully: the gay tones set my heart at ease. I was soon asleep.

第十九章

我进门的时候，图书室显得很安静，那女巫——如果她确实是的话，舒适地坐在烟囱角落的安乐椅上。她身披红色斗篷，头戴一顶黑色女帽，或者不如说宽边吉卜赛帽，用一块条子手帕系到了下巴上。桌子上立着一根熄灭了的蜡烛。她俯身向着火炉，借着火光，似乎在读一本祈祷书般的黑色小书，一面读，一面象大多数老妇人那样，口中念念有词。我进门时她并没有立即放下书来，似乎想把一段读完。

我站在地毯上，暖了暖冰冷的手，因为在客厅时我坐得离火炉较远。这时我像往常那么平静，说实在吉卜赛人的外表没有什么会使我感到不安。她合上书，慢慢抬起头来，帽沿遮住了脸的一部份。但是她扬起头来时，我们能看清楚她的面容很古怪。乱发从绕过下巴的白色带子下钻了出来，漫过半个脸颊，或者不如说下颚。她的目光立即与我的相遇，大胆地直视着我。

“噢，你想要算命吗？”她说，那口气像她的目光那样坚定，像她的五官那样严厉。

“我并不在乎，大妈，随你便吧，不过我得提醒你，我并不相信。”

“说话这么无礼倒是你的脾性，我料定你会这样，你跨过门槛的时候，我从你的脚步声里就听出来了。”

“是吗？你的耳朵真尖。”

“不错，而且眼睛亮，脑子快。”

“干你这一行倒是都需要的。”

“我是需要的，尤其是对付像你这样的顾客的时候。你干嘛不发抖？”

“我并不冷。”

“你为什么脸不发白？”

“我没有病。”

“你为什么不来请教我的技艺？”

“我不傻。”

这老太婆在帽子和带子底下爆发出了一阵笑声。随后取出一个短短的烟筒，点上烟，开始抽了起来。她在这份镇静剂里沉迷了一会儿后，便直起了弯着的腰，从嘴里取下烟筒，一面呆呆地盯着炉火，一面不慌不忙地说：

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“你很冷；你有病；你很傻。”

“拿出证据来，”我回答，

“一定，三言两语就行。你很冷，因为你孤身一人，没有交往，激发不了内心的火花。你病了，因为给予男人的最好、最高尚、最甜蜜的感情，与你无缘。你很傻，因为尽管你很痛苦，你却既不会主动去召唤它靠近你，也不会跨出一步，上它等候你的地方去迎接它。”

她再次把那杆黑色的短烟筒放进嘴里，使劲吸了起来。

“凡是你所知道寄居在大房子里的孤独者，你几乎都可以说这样的话。”

“是几乎对谁都可以这么说，但几乎对谁都适用吗？”

“适合处于我这种情况的人。”

“是的，一点也不错，适合你的情况。不过你倒给我找个处境跟你一模一样的人看看。”

“我猜还得在上面放上银币吧？”

“当然。”

我给了她一个先令。她从口袋里掏出一只旧长袜，把钱币放进去，用袜子系好，放回原处。她让我伸出手去，我照办了。她把脸贴近我手掌，细细看了起来，但没有触碰它。

“太细嫩了，”她说。“这样的手我什么也看不出来，几乎没有皱纹。况且，手掌里会有什么呢？命运又不刻在那儿。”

“我相信你，”我说。

“不，”她继续说，“它刻在脸上，在额头，在眼睛周围，在眸子里面，在嘴巴的线条上。跪下来，抬起你的头来。”

“哦！你现在可回到现实中来了，”我一面按她的话做，一面说。“我马上开始有些相信你了。”

我跪在离她半码远的地方。她拨着炉火，在翻动过的煤块中，射出了一轮光圈。因为她坐着，那光焰只会使她的脸蒙上更深的阴影，而我的面容却被照亮了。

“我不知道你是带着什么样的心情上我这儿来的，”她仔细打量了我一会儿后说。“你在那边房间里，几小时几小时枯坐着，面对一群贵人，象幻灯中的影子那么晃动着，这时你心里会有什么想法呢，这些人与你没有什么情感的交流，好像不过是外表似人的影子，而不是实实在在的人。”

“我常觉得疲倦，有时很困，但很少悲伤。”

“那你有某种秘密的愿望支撑着你，预告着你的将来，使你感到高兴。”

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“我才不这样呢。我的最大愿望，是积攒下足够的钱，将来自己租一间小小的房子，办起学校来。”

“养料不足，精神无法依存，况且坐在窗台上（你明白了她知道我的习惯）——”

“你是从仆人那儿打听来的。”

“呵，你自以为灵敏。好吧——也许我是这样。跟你说实话，我同其中一位——普尔太太——相识。”

一听到这个名字，我立刻惊跳起来。

“你认识她——是吗？”我思忖道，“那么，这里头看来是有魔法了。”

“别惊慌，”这个怪人继续说，“普尔太太很可靠，嘴巴紧，话不多。谁都可以信赖。不过像我说的，坐在窗台上，你就光想将来办学校，别的什么也不想？那些坐在你面前沙发上和椅子上的人，眼下你对其中哪一位感兴趣吗？你一张面孔都没有仔细端详过吗？至少出于好奇，你连一个人的举动都没有去注意过？”

“我喜欢观察所有的面孔和所有的身影。”

“可是你没有撇开其余，光盯住一个人——或者，也许两个？”

“我经常这么做，那是在两个人的手势和神色似乎在叙述一个故事的时候，注视他们对我来说是一种乐趣。”

“你最喜欢听什么故事？”

“呵，我没有多大选择的余地：它们一般奏的都是同一主题——求婚，而且都预示着同一灾难性的结局——结婚。”

“你喜欢这单调的主题吗？”

“我一点也不在乎，这与我无关。”

“与你无关？有这样一位小姐，她既年轻活泼健康，又美丽动人，而且财富和地位与生俱来，坐在一位绅士的面前，笑容可掬，而你——”

“我怎么样？”

“你认识——而且也许还有好感。”

“我并不了解这儿的先生们。我几乎同谁都没有说过一句话。至于对他们有没有好感，我认为有几位高雅庄重，已到中年；其余几位年青、潇洒、漂亮、活跃。当然他们有充分自由，爱接受谁的笑就接受谁的笑，我不必把感情介入进去，考虑这件事对我是否至关重要。”

“你不了解这儿的先生们吗？你没有同谁说过一句话？你对屋里的主人也这么说吗？”

“他不在家。”

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“讲得多玄妙！多么高明的诡辩：今天早上他上米尔科特去了，要到夜里或者明天早上才回来，难道因为这临时的情况，你就把他排除在熟人之外——仿佛完全抹煞他的存在？”

“不，但我几乎不明白罗切斯特先生与你提出的主题有什么关系。”

“我刚才谈到女士们在先生们眼前笑容满面，最近那么多笑容注进了罗切斯特先生的眼里，他的双眼就像两只满得快要溢出来的杯子，你对此从来没有想法吗？”

“罗切斯特先生有权享受同宾客们交往的乐趣。”

“毫无问题他有这权利，可是你没有觉察到吗，这里所议论到的婚姻传闻中，罗切斯特先生有幸被人谈得最起劲，而且人们一直兴趣不减吗？”

“听的人越焦急，说的人越起劲。”我与其说是讲给吉卜赛人听，还不如说在自言自语。这时吉卜赛人奇怪的谈话、噪音和举动已使我进入了一种梦境，意外的话从她嘴里一句接一句吐出来，直至我陷进了一张神秘的网络，怀疑有什么看不见的精灵，几周来一直守在我心坎里，观察着心的运转，记录下了每次搏动。

“听的人越焦急？”她重复了一遍。“不错，此刻罗切斯特先生是坐在那儿，侧耳倾听着那迷人的嘴巴在兴高采烈地交谈。罗切斯特先生十分愿意接受，并且后来十分感激提供给他的消遣，你注意到这点了吗？”

“感激！我并不记得在他脸上觉察到过感激之情。”

“察觉！你还分析过呢。如果不是感激之情，那你察觉到了什么？”

我什么也没有说。

“你看到了爱，不是吗，而且往前一看，你看到他们结了婚，看到了他的新娘快乐吗？”

“哼！不完全如此。有时候你的巫技也会出差错。”

“那么你到底看到了什么？”

“你别管了，我是来询问，不是来表白的，不是谁都知道罗切斯特先生要结婚了吗？”

“是的，同漂亮的英格拉姆小姐。”

“马上？”

“种种迹象将证实这一结论（虽然你真该挨揍，竟敢大胆提出疑问），毫无疑问，他们会是无比快乐的一对。他一定会喜爱这样一位美丽、高贵、风趣、多才多艺的小姐，而很可能她也爱他，要不如果不是爱他本人，至少爱他的钱包。我知道她认为罗切斯特家的财产是十分合意的（上帝宽恕我），虽然一小时之前我在这事儿上给她透了点风，她听了便沉下了脸，嘴角挂下了半英寸。我会劝她的黑脸求婚者小心为是，要是又来个求婚的人，房租地租的收入更丰，——那他就完蛋——”

“可是，大妈，我不是来听你替罗切斯特先生算命的，我来听你算我的命，你却一点也没有谈过呢。”

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“你的命运还很难确定。我看了你的脸相，各个特征都相互矛盾。命运赐给了你一份幸福，这我知道，是我今晚来这里之前晓得的。她已经小心翼翼地替你把幸福放在一边，我看见她这么干的。现在就看你自己伸手去把它抢起来了，不过你是否愿意这么做，是我要琢磨的问题。 饕《热旱海 彼 乍 饭写剩 涯羌父 鲨种馐戡已 棕 袴暗募湍叮 成 准铀阑遥 负醪恢 雷约涸诟塙裁础?br>

“你不舒服，先生？”我问。

“简，我受了打击，——我受了打击，简！”他身子摇摇晃晃。

“呵！——靠在我身上，先生。”

“简，你的肩膀曾支撑过我，现在再支撑一回吧。”

“好的，先生，好的，还有我的胳膊。”

他坐了下来，让我坐在他旁边，用双手握住我的手，搓了起来，同时黯然神伤地凝视着我。

“我的小朋友，”他说，“我真希望呆在一个平静的小岛上，只有你我在一起，烦恼、危险、讨厌的往事都离我们远远的。”

“我能帮助你吗，先生？——我愿献出生命，为你效劳。”

“简，要是我需要援手，我会找你帮忙，我答应你。”

“谢谢你，先生。告诉我该干什么——至少我会尽力的。”

“简，替我从餐室里拿杯酒来，他们会都在那里吃晚饭，告诉我梅森是不是同他们在一起，他在干什么 赤缙幕独侄急话 幔 蚌味独值拇 鄯晒谖业某ジ赌茈κ保 苾刮一钹氯ア！ 钊反 策 档溃 碇俏茸 欢 耙甄稚 蝗们植姓跬眩 约捍 牖奈叩纳铃ā<で榛嵯蟠赖氏囊旖掏饶 茄 衽 库闾海 岬(5帝榭捐蚊斓幕孟毫 桥卸显透看握 粗腥猿钟芯韶Că 倭悬疾霍咧姓莆兆 派 镭 氏囊黄薄？穹纭 5.卣鸢退 炙淙欢蓟峤盗倪 医 幽且廊幌肝 5.纳 舻闹敢 蛭 撬 馐 土肆夹牡拿 睢！?br>

说得好，前额，你的宣言将得到尊重。我已经订好了计划——我认为是正确的计划——内中我照应到良心的要求，理智的忠告。我明白在端上来的幸福之杯中，只要发现一块耻辱的沉渣，一丝悔恨之情，青春就会很快逝去，花朵就会立即凋零。而我不要牺牲、悲伤和死亡——这些不合我的口味。我希望培植，不希望摧残——希望赢得感激，而不是拧出血泪来——不，不是泪水；我的收获必须是微笑、抚慰和甜蜜——这样才行。我想我是在美梦中呓语，我真想把眼前这一刻 *ad infinitum* 延长，但我不敢。到现在为止，我自我控制得很好，像心里暗暗发誓的那样行动，但是再演下去也许要经受一场非我力所能及的考验。起来，爱小姐，离开我吧，‘戏已经演完了’。”

我在哪儿呢？是醒着还是睡着了？我一直在做梦吗？此刻还在做？这老太婆已换了嗓门。她的口音、她的手势、她的一切，就象镜中我自己的面孔，也象我口中说的话，我都非常熟悉。我立起身来，但并没有走，我瞧了瞧，拨了拨火，再瞧了她一下，但是她把帽子和绷带拉得紧贴在脸上，而且再次摆手让我走。火焰照亮了她伸出的手。这时我已清醒，一心想发现什么，立即注意到了这只手。跟我的手一样，这不是只老年人干枯的手，它丰满柔软，手指光滑而匀称，一个粗大的戒指在小手指上闪闪发光。我弯腰凑过去细瞧

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了一下，看到了一块我以前见过上百次的宝石。我再次打量了那张脸，这回可没有避开我——相反，帽子脱了，绷带也扯了，脑袋伸向了我。

“嗨，简，你认识我吗？”那熟悉的口音问。

“你只要脱下红色的斗篷，先生，那就——”

“可是这绳子打了结——帮我一下。”

“扯断它，先生。”

“好吧，那么——”“脱下来，你们这些身外之物！”罗切斯特先生脱去了伪装。

“哦，先生，这是个多奇怪的主意！”

“不过干得很好，嗯？你不这样想吗？”

“对付女士们，你也许应付得很好。”

“但对你不行？”

“你并没对我扮演吉卜赛人的角色。”

“我演了什么角色啦？我自己吗？”

“不，某个无法理解的人物。总之，我相信你一直要把我的话套出来，——或者把我也扯进去。你一直在胡说八道为的是让我也这样，这很难说是公平的，先生。”

“你宽恕我吗，简？”

“我要仔细想想后才能回答。如果经过考虑我觉得自己并没有干出荒唐的事来，那我会努力宽恕你的，不过这样做不对。”

“呵，你刚才一直做得很对——非常谨慎，非常明智。”

我沉思了一下，大体认为自己是这样。那是一种愉快。不过说实在一与他见面我便已存戒心，怀疑是一种假面游戏，我知道吉卜赛人和算命的人的谈吐，不像那个假老太婆。此外，我还注意到了她的假嗓子，注意到了她要遮掩自己面容的焦急心情。可是我脑子里一直想着格雷斯·普尔——那个活着的谜，因此压根儿没有想到罗切斯特先生。

“好吧，”他说，“你呆呆地在想什么呀？那严肃的笑容是什么意思？”

“惊讶和庆幸，先生。我想，现在你可以允许我离开了吧？”

“不，再呆一会儿。告诉我那边会客室里的人在干什么？”

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“我想是在议论那个吉卜赛人。”

“坐下，坐下！——讲给我听听他们说些什么啦？”

“我还是不要久待好，先生。准已快十一点了。呵！你可知道，罗切斯特先生，你早晨走后，有位陌生人到了。”

“陌生人！——不，会是谁呢？我并没有盼谁来，他走了吗？”

“没有呢，他说他与你相识很久，可以冒昧地住下等到你回来。”

“见鬼！他可说了姓名？”

“他的名字叫梅森，先生，他是从西印度群岛来的，我想是牙买加的西班牙城。”

罗切斯特先生正站在我身旁。他拉住了我的手，仿佛要领我坐到一条椅子上。我一说出口，他便一阵痉挛，紧紧抓住我的手，嘴上的笑容冻结了，显然一阵抽搐使他透不过气来。

“梅森！——西印度群岛！”他说，那口气使人想起一架自动说话机，吐着单个词汇：“梅森！——西印度群岛！”他念念有词，把那几个字重复了三遍，说话的间隙，脸色白加死灰，几乎不知道自己在干什么。

“你不舒服，先生？”我问。

“简，我受了打击，——我受了打击，简！”他身子摇摇晃晃。

“呵！——靠在我身上，先生。”

“简，你的肩膀曾支撑过我，现在再支撑一回吧。”

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“简，替我从餐室里拿杯酒来，他们会都在那里吃晚饭，告诉我梅森是不是同他们在一起，他在干什么？”

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我去了。如罗切斯特先生所说，众人都在餐室用晚饭。他们没有围桌而坐，晚餐摆在餐具柜上，各人取了自己爱吃的东西，零零落落地成群站着，手里端着盘子和杯子。大家似乎都兴致勃勃，谈笑风生，气氛十分活跃。梅森先生站在火炉旁，同登特上校和登特太太在交谈，显得和其余的人一样愉快。我斟满酒（我看见英格拉姆小姐皱眉蹙额地看着我，我猜想她认为我太放肆了），回到了图书室。

罗切斯特先生极度苍白的脸已经恢复神色，再次显得镇定自若了。他从我手里接过酒杯。

“祝你健康，助人的精灵！”他说着，一口气喝下了酒，把杯子还给我。“他们在干什么呀，简？”

“谈天说笑，先生。”

“他们看上去不像是听到过什么奇闻那般显得严肃和神秘吗！”

“一点也没有——大家都开开心心，快快乐乐。”

“梅森呢？”

“也在一起说笑。”

“要是这些人抱成一团唾弃我，你会怎么办呢？”

“把他们赶出去，先生，要是我能够。”

他欲笑又止。“如果我上他们那儿去，他们只是冷冷地看着我，彼此还讥嘲地窃窃私语，随后便一个个离去，那怎么办呢？你会同他们一起走吗？”

“我想我不会走，先生。同你在一起我会更愉快。”

“为了安慰我？”

“是的，先生，尽我的力量安慰你。”

“要是他们禁止你跟着我呢？”

“很可能我对他们的禁令一无所知，就是知道我也根本不在乎。”

“那你为了我就不顾别人责难了？”

“任何一位朋友，如值得我相守，我会全然不顾责难。我深信你就是这样一位朋友。”

“回到客厅去吧，轻轻走到梅森身边，悄悄地告诉他罗切斯特先生已经到了，希望见他。把他领到这里来，随后你就走。”

“好的，先生。”

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我按他的吩咐办了。宾客们都瞪着眼睛看我从他们中间直穿而过。我找到了梅森先生，传递了信息，走在他前面离开了房间。领他进了图书室后，我便上楼去了。

深夜时分，我上床后过了好些时候，我听见客人们才各自回房，也听得出罗切斯特先生的嗓音，只听见他说：“这儿走，梅森，这是你的房间。”

他高兴地说着话，那欢快的调门儿使我放下心来，我很快就睡着了。