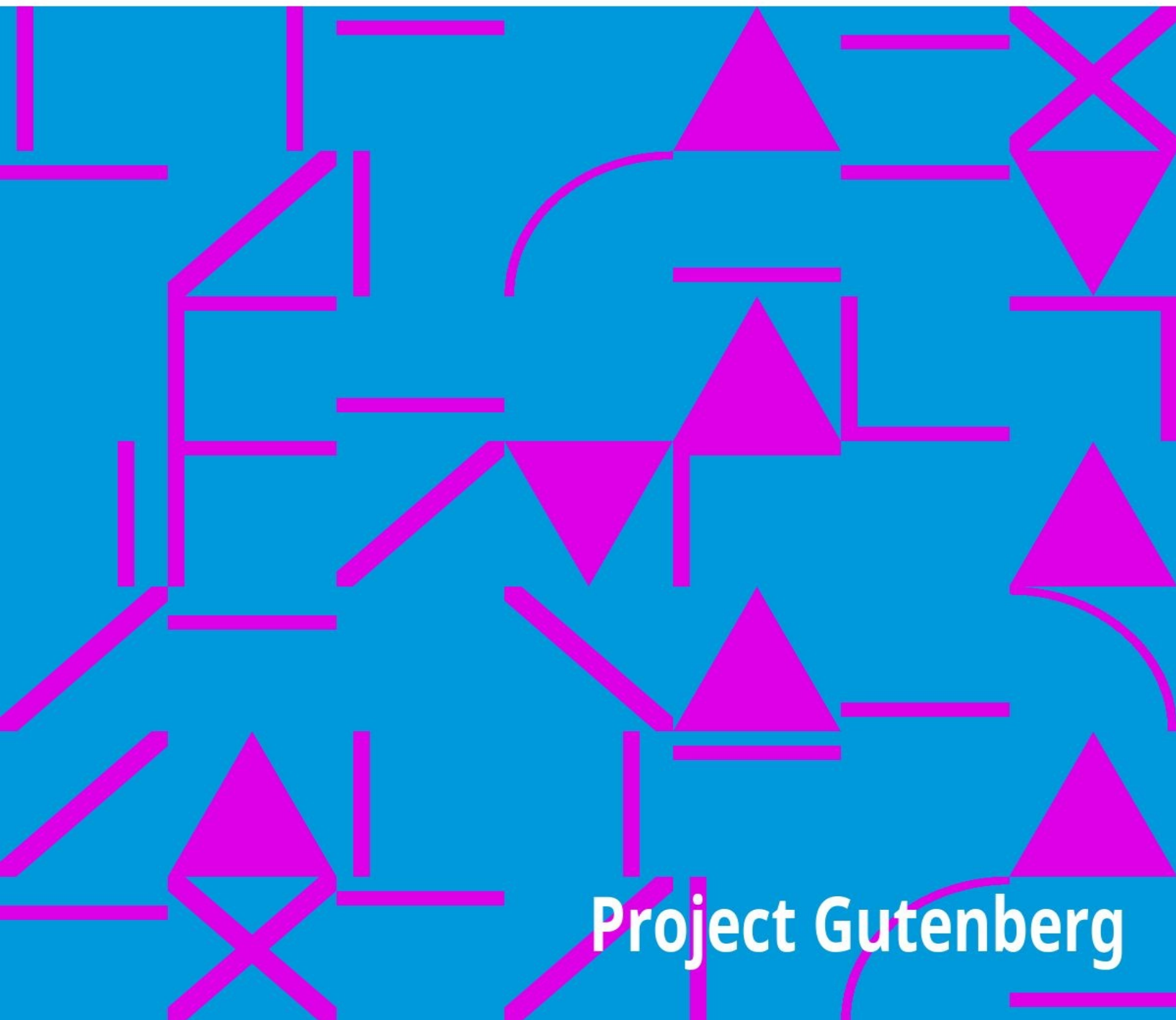


The adventures of Alphonso and Marina

An Interesting Spanish Tale

Florian



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The Project Gutenberg EBook of Alphonso and Marina
by Jean-Pierre Claris de Florian

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**THE ADVENTURES OF ALPHONSO
AND MARINA;**

AN INTERESTING SPANISH TALE.

Marina, at seventeen, was the most admired beauty in Granada. She was an orphan, and heiress to an immense fortune, under the guardianship of an old and avaricious uncle, whose name was Alonzo, and who passed his days in counting ducats, and his nights in silencing serenades, nocturnally addressed to Marina. His design was to marry her, for the sake of her great fortune, to his own son, Henriquez, who had studied ten years in the university of Salamanca, and was now able to explain Cornelius Nepos tolerably well.

Almost all the cavaliers of Granada were in love with Marina. As they could obtain a sight of her only at mass, the church she frequented was filled with great numbers of the handsomest and most accomplished youths of the country.

One of the most distinguished among these, was Don Alphonso, a captain of cavalry, about twenty, not very rich, but of a family of the first distinction. Handsome, polite, and witty, he attracted the eyes of all the ladies of Granada; though he himself paid attention to none but Marina, who, not insensible to his attachment, began, on her part, to take notice of her admirer.

Two months passed away without the lovers daring to speak; nevertheless, they silently said much. At the end of that time Don Alphonso found means to convey a letter to his mistress; which informed her of what she knew before. The reserved Marina had no sooner read this letter than she sent it back to Don Alphonso; but, as she possessed an excellent memory, she retained every word, and was able to return a very punctual answer, a week afterwards.

A correspondence was now settled between the two lovers; but Don Alphonso was desirous to be still more intimate. He had long solicited permission to converse with Marina through her lattices. Such is the custom in Spain, where the windows are of much more use during the night than in the day. They are the places of rendezvous. When the street is vacant and still, the lover wraps himself up in his cloak, and, taking his sword, invokes love and night to favour him, and proceeds to some low lattice, grated on the side next the street, and secured on the inside by shutters.

He waits not long before the window opens softly, and the charming maid appears. She asks, in a tremulous voice, if any one is there. Her lover,

transported at her condescension, endeavours to dispel her fears. They talk in a whisper, and repeat the same thing a hundred times. Day, at length, approaches, and they must separate.

Marina's lattice was on the ground floor, and opened into a narrow passage, where the houses were ill built, and only inhabited by the lower class of people. Don Alphonso's old nurse happened to occupy a tenement directly opposite the window of Marina. Don Alphonso, therefore repaired to his nurse. 'My good woman,' said he, 'I have been much to blame to suffer you to live so long in this miserable habitation; but I am now determined to make you amends, by giving you an apartment in my own house. Come, and reside in that, and leave me to dispose of this.'

The worthy woman could not refrain from tears, and, for a long time, refused; but, at last, overcome by his solicitations, she consented to the exchange, with every expression of gratitude to her benefactor.

Never did any monarch enter his palace with more satisfaction than Don Alphonso did the hovel of his nurse.

Early in the evening Marina appeared at her lattice. She promised to repair thither every other night, and she kept her word. These delightful interviews served only to fan the flame of love; and, very soon, the lovers nights were constantly passed in pleasing conversation, and their days in writing passionate epistles.

Just at this time, Henriquez, the intended husband of Marina, arrived from Salamanca; bringing with him a declaration of his passion in Latin, which had been written for him by the head of his college.

The lovers consulted each other on this event at the lattice; but, in the mean time, the old guardian had drawn up a contract of marriage, and a day was fixed on for the celebration of the nuptials of Marina and Henriquez.

In these circumstances, the only remedy was to fly into Portugal. This was determined; and it was also settled that the two lovers, on arriving at Lisbon, should first marry, and afterwards have recourse to the law, against the guardian.

Marina was to carry with her a box of jewels, which had been left her by her mother. These were very valuable, and sufficient to maintain the happy pair till the decision of their law-suit. To effect this escape, it was necessary to procure

the key of the lattice, and in this Marina succeeded.

It was resolved also, that the next night, at eleven, Don Alphonso, after having appointed horses to wait without the city, should come and fetch Marina; who should descend from the window, into the arms of her lover, and immediately set off for Portugal.

Don Alphonso spent the whole day in preparations for his departure. Marina, on her part, was equally busy, in getting ready the little box she was to take with her. She was very careful to secret in it a very fine emerald, which had been given her by her lover.

Marina and her box were ready by eight in the evening; and, before ten, Don Alphonso, who had already provided carriages on the road to Andalusia, arrived at the appointed spot: his heart beating with perturbation and hope.

As he approached the place, he heard persons calling for assistance, and perceived two men attacked by five armed assassins. The brave and humane Alphonso forgot his own affairs to defend the lives of the assaulted. He wounded two, and put the other three to flight.

What was his surprise, on more attentively viewing the persons he had delivered, to perceive they were no other than Henriquez, and Alonzo, the guardian of Marina. Some desperate young cavalier of the city, who was in love with Marina, knowing it was intended that Henriquez should espouse her, had hired bravoos, to assassinate them; and, had it not been for the valour of Don Alphonso, the young scholar and the old miser would have found it no easy matter to escape.

Alphonso did his utmost to avoid their grateful acknowledgments, but Henriquez, who piqued himself on having learned politeness at Salamanca, swore he should not leave them that night. Alphonso, in despair, had already heard the clock strike eleven. Alas! he knew not the misfortune that had happened.

One of the bravoos, whom he had put to flight, had passed muffled up in his cloak, near the lattice of Marina. The night was extremely dark, and the unfortunate beauty, having opened the window, imagined him to be Don Alphonso, and presented him the box with joyful impatience: 'Take our diamonds,' said she, 'while I descend.'

At the word diamonds, the bravo suddenly stopped, took the box, without speaking a word, and, while Marina was getting out of the window, fled with the utmost precipitation.

Imagine the surprise of Marina, when she found herself alone in the street, and saw nothing of him whom she had taken for Don Alphonso. She thought, at first, he had left her, to avoid raising suspicion or alarm. She, therefore, hastily walked to a little distance, looked round on every side, and called in a low voice. But no Alphonso could she see; no lover could she hear.

She was now seized with the most alarming apprehensions. She knew not whether it were most advisable to return home, or endeavour to find the horses and attendants of Don Alphonso, that were waiting without the city. She continued to walk forwards, in the utmost uncertainty and distress, till she had lost herself in the streets; while her fears were augmented by the darkness and silence of the night.

At length she met a person, whom she asked if she were far from the gate of the city. The stranger conducted her thither; but she found nobody waiting as she expected.

She dared not yet accuse her lover of deceiving her: still she hoped he was at no great distance. She proceeded, therefore, along the road, fearful of every bush, and calling Don Alphonso at every step; but the farther she walked the more she was bewildered; for she had come out of the city on the side opposite to the Portugal road.

In the mean time Don Alphonso found himself unable to get away from the grateful Henriquez and his father. They would not suffer him to leave them for a moment, but obliged him to enter the house with them; to which Alphonso, fearful of betraying his intent, and frustrating his dearest hopes; and imagining too that Marina might be soon acquainted with the reason of his delay, most reluctantly consented.

Alonzo hastens to the chamber of his ward, to inform her of the danger he had escaped. He calls, but receives no answer; he enters her apartment, and finds the lattice open; his cries collect the servants, and the alarm is immediately given, that Marina is missing.

Alphonso, in despair, immediately offered to go in quest of her. Henriquez, thanking him for the concern he expressed, declared his resolution to accompany

him. Alphonso suggested, that the probability of finding her would be greater, if they took different roads. Accordingly, he hastened to rejoin his domestics: and not doubting but Marina had taken the road to Portugal, put his horses at full speed. But their swiftness only removed him farther from the object of his love; while Henriquez galloped towards the Alpuxarian mountains, the way which Marina had actually taken.

In the mean time, Marina continued to wander, disconsolate, along the road that led to the Alpuxares. Presently she heard the clattering noise of approaching horses; and at first, imagined it might be her beloved Alphonso: but, afterward, fearful of discovery, or apprehensive of robbers, she concealed herself, trembling, behind some bushes.

Here she presently saw Henriquez pass by, followed by a number of servants. Shuddering at the danger of being again in the power of Alonzo, if she continued in the high road, she turned aside, and took refuge in a thick wood.

The Alpuxares are a chain of mountains, which extend from Granada to the Mediterranean. They are inhabited only by a few peasants. To these, fear and terror conducted the unfortunate maid. A dry and stony soil, with a few oak trees, thinly scattered: some torrents and echoing cataracts, and a number of wild goats, leaping from precipice to precipice; are the only objects which present themselves at day-break to the eyes of Marina. Exhausted, at length, by fatigue and vexation, she sat down in the cavity of a rock, through the clefts of which a limpid water gently oozed.

The silence of this grotto, the wildness of the landscape around, the hoarse and distant murmur of several cascades, and the noise of the water near her, falling drop by drop into the bason it had hollowed beneath, all conspired to excite in Marina the most melancholy sensations. Now she thought herself cruelly abandoned by her lover; and now she persuaded herself that some mistake had happened: 'It certainly could not be Alphonso,' said she, 'to whom I gave my diamonds. I must have been mistaken. No doubt he is now far hence, seeking me with anxiety and distraction; while I, as far distant from him, am perishing here.'

While thus mournfully ruminating, Marina, on a sudden, heard the sound of a rustic flute. Attentively listening, she soon heard an harmonious voice, deploring, in plaintive strains, the infidelity of his mistress, and the miseries of disappointed love.

'And who can be more sensible of this than myself?' said Marina, leaving the

grotto, in search of this unfortunate lover.

She found a young goatherd, sitting at the foot of a willow, his eyes bedewed with tears, and intent on the water as it issued from its rocky source. In his hand he held a flageolet, and by his side lay a staff and a little parcel.

'Shepherd,' said Marina, 'you are no doubt forsaken by your Mistress: have pity on one abandoned, like yourself, and conduct me to some habitation, where I may procure sustenance, at least, though not repose!'

'Alas! Madam,' answered the goatherd, 'I wish it were in my power to conduct you to the village of Gadara, behind these rocks: but you will not ask me to return thither, when you are informed that my mistress is this day to be married to my rival. I am going to leave these mountains, never to behold them more; and I carry nothing with me but my flute, a change of dress, which I have in this parcel, and the memory of the happiness which I have lost.'

This short account suggested a new project to Marina.

'My friend,' said she to the goatherd 'you have no money, which you will certainly want, when you have left this country. I have a few ducats, which I will divide with you, if you let me have the dress in your parcel.'

The goatherd accepted the offer. Marina gave him a dozen ducats, and, having learned the road to Gadara, took her leave of the despairing lover, and returned into the grotto to put on her disguise.

She came out habited in a vest of chamois skin, with a shepherd's wallet hanging by her side, and, on her head, a hat ornamented with ribbands. In this attire she appeared yet more beautiful than when adorned with brocades and jewels. She took the road to the village, and, stopping in the market-place, enquired of the peasants, if they knew of any farmer who wanted a servant.

The inhabitants surround her, and survey the stranger with admiration. The girls express their surprise at the beauty of her flowing ringlets. Her elegant form, her graceful manner, the brilliancy of her eyes, even though dejected, their superior intelligence and mild benignity, astonish and delight all beholders. No one could conceive from whence came this beautiful youth. One imagines him a person of high distinction in disguise; another, a prince in love with some shepherdess; while the schoolmaster, who was at the same time the poet of the village, declared it must be Apollo, sent down, a second time, to keep sheep among

mortals!

Marina, who assumed the name of Marcello, was not long in want of a master. She was hired by an aged alcaid, or judge of the village, esteemed one of the worthiest men in the whole province.

This honest countryman soon contracted the warmest friendship for Marina. He scarcely suffered her to tend his flock for a month before he gave her an employment within his house, in which the pretended Marcello behaved with so much propriety and fidelity, that he was equally beloved by his master, and the servants.

Before he had lived here six months, the alcaid, who was more than eighty, left the management of all his affairs to Marcello: he even asked his opinion in all the causes that came before him, and never had any alcaid decided with so much justice as he, from the time he permitted himself to be guided by the advice of Marcello, who was proposed as an example to all the village: his affability, his pleasing manner, and his good sense, gained every heart. 'See the excellent Marcello,' cried the mothers to their sons, 'he is perpetually employed in rendering his old master's age happy, and never neglects his duty, to run after the shepherdesses!'

Two years passed away in this manner. Marina, whose thoughts were continually employed on her lover, had sent a shepherd, in whom she could confide, to Granada, to procure information concerning Don Alphonso, Alonzo, and Henriquez. The shepherd brought word back, that Alonzo was dead, Henriquez married; and that Alphonso had not been seen or heard of for two years.

Marina now lost all hope of again beholding her lover, and, happy in being able to pass her days in that village, in the bosom of peace and friendship, had resolved to bid an eternal adieu to love, when the old alcaid, her master, fell dangerously ill. Marcello attended his last moments with all the affection of a son, and the good old man behaved to him like a grateful father: he died and left all he possessed to the faithful Marcello. But his will was far from being a consolation to his heir.

The whole village lamented the alcaid, and, after his funeral rites were celebrated, the inhabitants assembled to choose a successor. In Spain certain villages have the right of nominating their own alcaid, whose office it is to decide their differences, and take cognizance of greater crimes by arresting and examining the offenders, and delivering them over to the superior judges, who

generally confirm the sentence of those rustic magistrates; for good laws are always perfectly consonant to simple reason.

The assembled villagers unanimously agreed, that no one could be so proper to succeed the late alcaid as the youth whom he seemed to have designed for his successor. The old men, therefore, followed by their sons, came with the usual ceremonies to offer Marina the wand, the ensign of the office. Marina accepted, and sensibly touched by such a proof of esteem and affection from these good people, resolved to consecrate to their happiness a life which she had formerly intended to dedicate to love.

While the new alcaid is engaged with the duties of her office, let us return to the unfortunate Don Alphonso, whom we left galloping towards Portugal, and continually removing farther from the beloved object of his pursuit.

Don Alphonso arrived at Lisbon, without obtaining any intelligence of Marina, and immediately returned, by the same road, to search every place he had before in vain examined; again he returned to Lisbon, but without success.

After six months ineffectual enquiry, being convinced that Marina had never returned to Granada, he imagined she might perhaps be at Seville, where, he knew, she had relations. He immediately hastened to Seville, and there found that Marina's relations had just embarked for Mexico.

Don Alphonso no longer doubted that his mistress was gone with them, and directly went on board the last ship which remained to sail. He arrived at Mexico, where he found the relations, but alas! no Marina: they had heard nothing of her: he, therefore, returned to Spain. And now the ship is attacked by a violent storm, and cast away on the coast of Granada; he, and a few of the passengers, save themselves by swimming; they land, and make their way to the mountains, to procure assistance, and, by accident or love, are conducted to Gadara.

Don Alphonso and his unfortunate companions, took refuge in the first inn, congratulating each other on the danger they had escaped. While they were discoursing on their adventures, one of the passengers began to quarrel with a soldier, concerning a box, which the passenger asserted belonged to him.

Don Alphonso desirous to put an end to the contention, obliged the passenger to declare what it contained, opening it, at the same time, to discover whether he spoke truth.

How great was his surprise to find in it the jewels of Marina, and, among them the very emerald he had given her. For a moment he stood motionless, examining attentively the casket, and fixing his eyes, sparkling with rage, on the claimant, 'how came you by these jewels?' said he, with a terrible voice.

'What does it signify,' replied the passenger, haughtily, 'how I came by them? It is sufficient that they are mine.'

He then endeavoured to snatch the casket from Don Alphonso; but the latter, pushing him back, instantly drew his sword, and exclaiming, 'Wretch, confess your crime, or you die this moment,' attacked him with great fury: his antagonist defended himself desperately, but presently received a mortal wound, and fell.

Don Alphonso was immediately surrounded by the people of the house. They take him to prison, and the master of the inn sends his wife to fetch the clergyman of the parish, that he may administer spiritual comfort to the dying man, while he runs himself, to the alcaid to carry the casket, and inform him of the whole adventure.

How great was the surprise, the joy, and the anxiety of Marina on perceiving her diamonds, and hearing the behaviour of the noble stranger!

She immediately hastened to the inn: the minister was already there; and the dying man, induced by his exhortations, declared, in presence of the alcaid, that, two years before, as he was one night passing through a street in Granada, a lady had given him that box, through a lattice, desiring him to hold it till she came down, but that he immediately made off with the jewels; for which theft he asked pardon of God, and of the unknown lady he had injured. He immediately expired, and Marina hastened to the prison.

Imagine the palpitations of her heart: she could no longer doubt but she should again see Don Alphonso, but she was apprehensive of being known by him: she therefore pulled her hat over her eyes, wrapped herself up in her cloak, and, preceded by her clerk and the gaoler, entered the dungeon.

No sooner had she come to the bottom of the stairs than she perceived Don Alphonso. Her joy almost deprived her of speech; she leaned against the wall, her head sunk on her shoulder, and the tears bedewed her cheeks. She wiped them away, stopped a moment to take breath, and, endeavouring to speak with firmness, approached the prisoner.

'Stranger,' said she, disguising her voice, 'you have killed your companion. What could induce you to commit such a horrid crime?'

'Alcaid,' answered Don Alphonso, 'I have committed no crime; it was an act of justice; but I am desirous to die. Death alone can end the miseries, of which the wretch I have sacrificed was the first cause. Condemn me. I wish not to make a defence. Deliver me from a life which is hateful to me, since I have lost what alone could render it delightful; since I can no longer hope ever to find'——

He was scarce able to conclude, and his voice faintly expressed the name of Marina.

Marina trembled on hearing him pronounce her name. She could scarcely conceal her transports, but was ready to throw herself into the arms of her lover. The presence, however, of so many witnesses restrained her. She, therefore, turned away her eyes, and faintly requested to be left alone with the prisoner. She was obeyed.

Giving a free course to her tears she advanced towards Don Alphonso, and offering him her hand, said to him, in a most affectionate tone, 'Do you then still love her who lives for you alone?'

At these words, at this voice, Alphonso lifts his head, unable to believe his eyes. 'Oh Heavens! Is it—is it my Marina! Or is it some angelic being assuming her form? Yes, it is my Marina herself, I can no longer doubt it,' cried he, clamping her in his arms, and bathing her with his tears. 'It is my love, my life, and all my woes are ended.'

'No,' said Marina, as soon as she could recover speech, 'you are guilty of bloodshed, and I cannot free you from your fetters; but I will repair to-morrow to the superior judge, will inform him of the secret of my birth, relate to him our misfortunes, and, if he refuses me your liberty, will return and end my days with you in this prison.'

Marcello immediately gave orders for the removal of Alphonso from the dungeon into a less hideous place of security. He took care that he should want for nothing, and returned home to prepare for his journey, the next day, when a most alarming event prevented his departure, and hastened the delivery of Don Alphonso.

Some Algerine galleys, which had for several days pursued the ship on board

which Don Alphonso was, had arrived on the coast, some time after the shipwreck; and willing to repay themselves for the trouble they had taken, had determined to land, during the night. Two renegadoes, who knew the country, undertook to conduct the barbarians to the village of Gadara, and fulfilled their promise but too well.

About one in the morning, when labour enjoys repose, and villainy wakes to remorse, the dreadful cry *to arms! to arms!* was heard.

The Corsairs had landed, and were burning and slaughtering all before them. The darkness of the night, the groans of the dying, and the shrieks of the inhabitants, filled every heart with consternation. The trembling wives caught their husbands in their arms; and the old men sought succour from their sons. In a moment the village was in flames, the light of which discovered the gory scymitars and white turbans of the Moors.

Those barbarians, the flambeau in one hand, and the hatchet in the other, were breaking and burning the doors of the houses; making their way through the smoaking ruins, to seek for victims or for plunder, and returning covered with blood, and loaded with booty.

Here they rush into the chamber, to which two lovers, the bride and bridegroom of the day, had been conducted by their mother. Each on their knees, side by side, was pouring forth thanks to heaven, for having crowned their faithful wishes. An unfeeling wretch, remorseless, seizes the terrified bride; loads her unhappy lover, whom in cruelty he spares, with chains; and snatches before his face, in spite of his distraction, his tears, prayers, and exclamations, that prize which was due to him alone.

There they take the sleeping infant from its cradle. The mother, frantic, defends it, singly, against an host. Nothing can repel, nothing can terrify her. Death she braves and provokes. For her child she supplicates, threatens, and combats; while the tender infant, already seized by these tigers, starts, wakes, stares, with the wild agony of terror, on the grim visage of its murderer, and sinks into convulsive horror and sleep, from which it wakes no more.

Nothing is held sacred by these monsters. They force their way into the temples of the Most High, break the shrines, strip off the gold, and trample the holy relics under foot. Alas! of what avail to the priests is their sacred character? to the aged their grey hairs? to youth its graces, or to infancy its innocence? Slavery, fire, devastation, and death are every where, and compassion is fled.

On the first alarm the Alcaid made all haste to the prison to inform Don Alphonso of the danger. The brave Alphonso demanded a sword for himself and a buckler for the Alcaid. He takes Marina by the hand, and making his way to the market-place, thus accosts the fugitives: 'My friends, are ye Spaniards, and do ye abandon your wives and children to the fury of the infidels?'

He stops, he rallies them, inspires them with his own valor, and, more than human, (for he is a lover, and a hero) rushes, sabre in hand, on a party of the Moors, whom he instantly disperses. The inhabitants recover their recollection and their courage; enraged, behold their slaughtered friends; and hasten in crowds to join their leader.

Alphonso, without quitting Marina, and ever solicitous to expose his life in her defence, attacks the barbarians at the head of his brave Spaniards, and dealing destruction to all who make resistance, drives the fugitives before him, retakes the plunder and the prisoners, and only quits the pursuit of the enemy to return and extinguish the flames.

The day began to break, when a body of troops, who had received information of the descent of the infidels, arrived from a neighbouring town. The governor had put himself at their head and found Don Alphonso surrounded by women, children, and old men; who, weeping, kissed his hands, with unfeigned gratitude, for having preserved their husbands, their fathers, or their sons.

The governor, informed of the exploits of Don Alphonso, loaded him with praises and caresses; but Marina, requesting to be heard, declared to the governor in presence of the whole village, her sex; giving, at the same time, a relation of her adventures, the death of the bravo by Don Alphonso, and the circumstances which rendered him excusable.

All the inhabitants, greatly affected with her story, fell at the feet of the governor, intreating pardon for the man to whom they were indebted for their preservation. Their request was granted, and the happy Alphonso, thus restored to his dear Marina, embraced the governor, and blessed the good inhabitants. One of the old men then advanced: 'Brave stranger,' said he, 'you are our deliverer, but you take from us our Alcaid; this loss perhaps outweighs your benefit. Double our blessings; instead of depriving us of our greatest, remain in this village; condescend to become our Alcaid, our master, our friend. Honour us so far, as to permit nothing to abate our love for you. In a great city, the cowardly and the wicked, who maintain the same rank with yourself, will think themselves your

equals; while, here, every virtuous inhabitant will look on you as his father; next to the Deity himself, you will receive, from us, the highest honour; and, while life remains, on the anniversary of this day, the fathers of our families will present their children before you, saying, 'behold the man who preserved the lives of your mothers.'

Alphonso was enchanted while he listened to the old man. 'Yes,' cried he, 'my children, yes, my brethren, I will remain here. My life shall be devoted to Marina and to you. But my wife has considerable possessions in Granada. Our excellent governor will add his interest to ours that we may recover them, and they shall be employed to rebuild the houses which the Infidels have burnt. On this condition alone, will I accept the office of Alcald; and though I should expend in your service, both my riches and my life, I should still be your debtor; for it is you who have restored to me my Marina!'

Imagine the transports of the villagers while Alphonso spoke. The governor was a person of power, and undertook to arrange every thing to his wish; and, two days afterwards, the marriage was celebrated between Marina and her lover.

Notwithstanding their late misfortunes, nothing could exceed the joy of the inhabitants. The two lovers long lived in unexampled felicity; and made the whole district as virtuous and happy as themselves.

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by Jean-Pierre Claris de Florian

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