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PRINCE LUCIFER

By ETTA W. PIERCE.

CHAPTER V.

The Island Lady.

Months and years glided on. Philip Hawkstone's murder faded gradually from the minds of men. His widow remained on the island, and governed the people like a queen. The islanders began to distrust her, and to dislike her; they ended by giving her unqualified love and respect. Did sorrow, sickness or poverty enter their homes, the island lady, as she was called, was swift to follow after, with a heart full of sympathy, and a hand freighted with relief. She ruled them with kindness and gentleness. Patiently, persistently, she won her way into their confidence and esteem. Harris, the overseer, who had, at the time of Philip Hawkstone's death, regarded the fair Creole with open suspicion, soon became her firm friend, her faithful, zealous adherent. She superintended all the work done on the island; built houses, introduced new inventions, and cultivated the acquaintance of every man, woman and child among her tenants; but she saw no strangers, received no visitors, and rarely crossed to the mainland. A pale, impressive lady, always gentle, but never joyous, dressed invariably in black, and with streaks of premature gray in her hair—a lady whose manner compelled deference and attention, and who moved among her dependents with the grace of a born sovereign; yet all the while Jetta Hawkstone carried in her heart a silent sorrow, like the fox which gnawed the vitals of the Spartan lad in olden story.

"She has made a conquest of every soul on the island," Harris was wont to sigh; "she is rich and powerful and—the most unhappy creature in the world!" To that wild, strong-fisted gypsy, Peg Patton, Philip Hawkstone's widow was particularly kind. The girl lived with a blind grandmother in a tumble-down old house at the head of a lonely street, wooded inlet. Immediately after the tragedy Mrs. Hawkstone sent workmen to repair the house, and it soon became known that she had taken the inmates under her own care, and was supporting them in every comfort. The girl Peg came often to the island, and held long interviews with the island lady to which no third party was ever admitted. The islanders discovered that Mrs. Hawkstone went sometimes unattended to the lonely inlet house, and they saw that all animosity was over between the gypsy and the fair woman. Indeed, it was one person above all others who, from first to last, had Jetta Hawkstone, had now come to regard her with devoted affection, that person was Peg Patton.

To little Basil, the heir of the island, Jetta Hawkstone was mother, father, comrade, and teacher, all in one. Heart and soul, this woman, young and beautiful, devoted herself to the boy, and in return Basil adored his fair stepmother. A dashing, brilliant, and successful young Greek, hot-hearted, high-tempered, but with mighty ideas of his own importance, and so haughty withal that he was early called "Prince Lucifer" by his envious cousin Vincent, who represented a younger branch of the family.

"My darling," said Jetta Hawkstone to her son, "you are the owner of this island, you are rich, you bear an old and honorable name, you hold great possibilities for good or evil in your hands; learn to control yourself, and then you can be trusted to rule others. You were born a gentleman; act like one everywhere, and under all circumstances."

The best tutors that money could procure came to the island to teach the lad, for she would not be parted from him. She became the guardian of his education as well as of his worldly little person. The boy never spoke of his father, and seemed not to remember him.

"Time went on. The day of tutors passed, Basil Hawkstone entered college. The young island sovereign went out from his small domain to conquer new worlds.

"Trust me, mamma," he said, "I will win all the honors I can, for your sake."

And he kept his word. He was the most brilliant scholar of his class, and during his college course was the same dominating, all-conquering "Prince Lucifer" that he had been on the island. He graduated in a blaze of glory, and a few weeks later sailed for Europe, to see the world and enjoy life for a season, after the fashion of his kind.

In the drawing-room at Tempest Hall mother and son parted. Jetta Hawkstone had aged greatly of late. Her abundant hair was now as white as snow.

of Jetta. Harris, give me your arm—I am growing old."

"Old, madam!" said Harris, "and you still on the right side of forty? No, no, that can't be. You are tired with your journey—that's all."

"So you've come to live on the island!" said Vincent Hawkstone. "You are southern, like my aunt, I suppose?"

She had a neck as white as ivory, and down her shapely back streamed two massive braids of black hair with curling auburn tips. She turned that same neck in a stately way, and answered: "I hope you do not belong here!"

"Only by sufferance! I am a poor relative merely—a hanker-on of the family. You will find Prince Lucifer more agreeable—everybody adores him and snubs me. You seem to be a high and mighty miss. I wonder what my aunt means to do with you? Whatever she possessed her to bring a girl to the island, it's no place for girls. We've had every other horror here in the last twenty years, but no girls. Why, you'll be like something out of a menagerie."

She gave him a withering look. "You are the most impertinent person that I ever saw," she said, and then walked on in contemptuous silence.

When they reached the porch Mrs. Hawkstone turned and called the girl, softly, tenderly.

"Welcome to your new home, Jetta! I want you to be very happy here, dear child—happier than I have ever been. Welcome, Gabriel's daughter!"

She turned to the young stranger across the threshold with her own hand, then she turned to say something to Harris, and fell to the floor in a dead faint. They carried her into the drawing-room. She revived shortly, and looked around for Jetta.



SENATOR PHILANDER C. KNOX.

answered, hoarsely. "Ask anything but this, mother—anything but this!"

"My heart is set upon your marriage with Jetta. There is a weight on my conscience—I must provide for the child's future. If you love me, Basil, promise that you will marry Gabriel's daughter."

"Mother, I cannot!" he groaned, with averted face.

"Because I am already married!"

"There was a moment of dead silence in the Cedar Chamber. Only the salt tide kept up its monotonous beat on the beach below the seawall."

"You are keeping something from me, Basil!" she cried. "But wait! I have a right to know the truth. Do you not see that I must make haste?—I have so little time. In the last few months—yes, even since I knew that I was stricken with a mortal disease—I have thought only of you, planned only for you. In the corner yonder stands a cabinet. He looked and nodded. 'It holds my private papers. Here is the key,' forcing the same into his hand. 'The topmost document is for you to read as soon as I die—let no eye but your own see it—it was written for you only, and from now you will learn something of what I have suffered since I came to this island.'

The light began to die in the chamber; it seemed as though the voice of the island lady faded with it.

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