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Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Kipling Doyle Willis
Baum Henry Nietzsche Hall
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Turgenev Balzac Willis
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman Twain
Darwin Zola Lawrence Plato
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**The Battle of the Strong –
Volume 3 A Romance of Two
Kingdoms**

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CHAPTER XVI

The night and morning after Guida's marriage came and went. The day drew on to the hour fixed for the going of the *Narcissus*. Guida had worked all forenoon with a feverish unrest, not trusting herself, though the temptation was sore, to go where she might see Philip's vessel lying in the tide-way. She had resolved that only at the moment fixed for sailing would she go to the shore; yet from her kitchen door she could see a wide acreage of blue water and a perfect sky; and out there was Noirmont Point, round which her husband's ship would go, and be lost to her vision thereafter.

The day wore on. She got her grandfather's dinner, saw him bestowed in the great arm-chair for his afternoon sleep, and, when her household work was done, settled herself at the spinning wheel.

The old man loved to have her spin and sing as he drowsed. To-day his eyes had followed her everywhere. He could not have told why it was, but somehow all at once he seemed to deeply realise her—her beauty, the joy of this innocent living intelligence moving through his home. She had always been necessary to him, but he had taken her presence as a matter of course. She had always been to him the most wonderful child ever given to comfort an old man's life, but now as he abstractedly took a pinch of snuff from the silver box and then forgot to put it to his nose, he seemed suddenly to get that clearness of sight, that perspective, from which he could see her as she really was. He took another pinch of snuff, and again forgot to put it to his nose, but brushed imaginary dust from his coat, as was his wont, and whispered to himself:

"Why now, why now, I had not thought she was so much a woman. Flowers of the sea, but what eyes, what carriage, and what an air! I had not thought—h'm—blind old bat that I am—I had not thought she was grown such a lady. It was only yesterday, surely but yesterday, since I rocked her to sleep. Francois de Mauprat"—he shook his head at himself—"you are growing old. Let me see—why, yes, she was born the day I sold the blue enamelled timepiece to his Highness the Duc de Mauban. The Duc was but putting the watch to his ear when a message comes to say the child there is born.

'Good,' says the Duc de Mauban, when he hears, 'give me the honour, de Mauprat,' says he, 'for the sake of old days in France, to offer a name to the brave innocent—for the sake of old associations,' says de Mauban. 'You knew my wife, de Mauprat,' says he; 'you knew the Duchesse Guida-Guidabaldine. She's been gone these ten years, alas! You were with me when we were married, de Mauprat,' says the Duc; 'I should care to return the compliment if you will allow me to offer a name, eh?' 'Duc,' said I, 'there is no honour I more desire for my grandchild.' 'Then let the name of Guidabaldine be somewhere among others she will carry, and—and I'll not forget her, de Mauprat, I'll not forget her.'... Eh, eh, I wonder—I wonder if he has forgotten the little Guidabaldine there? He sent her a golden cup for the christening, but I wonder—I wonder—if he has forgotten her since? So quick of tongue, so bright of eye, so light of foot, so sweet a face—if one could but be always young! When her grandmother, my wife, my Julie, when she was young—ah, she was fair, fairer than Guida, but not so tall—not quite so tall. Ah! . . . "

He was slipping away into sleep when he realised that Guida was singing

"Spin, spin, belle Mergaton!
The moon wheels full, and the tide flows high,
And your wedding-gown you must put it on
Ere the night hath no moon in the sky—
Gigoton Mergaton, spin!"

"I had never thought she was so much a woman," he said drowsily;
"I—
I wonder why—I never noticed it."

He roused himself again, brushed imaginary snuff from his coat, keeping time with his foot to the wheel as it went round. "I—I suppose she will wed soon. . . . I had forgotten. But she must marry well, she must marry well—she is the godchild of the Duc de Mauban. How the wheel goes round! I used to hear—her mother—sing that song, 'Gigoton, Mergaton spin-spin-spin.'" He was asleep.

Guida put by the wheel, and left the house. Passing through the Rue des Sablons, she came to the shore. It was high tide. This was the time that Philip's ship was to go. She had dressed herself with as much care as to what might please his eye as though she were going to meet him in person. Not without reason, for, though she could not see him from the land, she knew he could see her plainly through his telescope, if he chose.

She reached the shore. The time had come for him to go, but there was his ship at anchor in the tide-way still. Perhaps the Narcissus was not going; perhaps, after all, Philip was to remain! She laughed with pleasure at the thought of that. Her eyes wandered lovingly over the ship which was her husband's home upon the sea. Just such another vessel Philip would command. At a word from him those guns, like long, black, threatening arms thrust out, would strike for England with thunder and fire.

A bugle call came across the still water, clear, vibrant, and compelling. It represented power. Power—that was what Philip, with his ship, would stand for in the name of England. Danger—oh yes, there would be danger, but Heaven would be good to her; Philip should go safe through storm and war, and some day great honours would be done him. He should be an admiral, and more perhaps; he had said so. He was going to do it as much for her as for himself, and when he had done it, to be proud of it more for her than for himself; he had said so: she believed in him utterly. Since that day upon the Erehos it had never occurred to her not to believe him. Where she gave her faith she gave it wholly; where she withdrew it—

The bugle call sounded again. Perhaps that was the signal to set sail. No, a boat was putting out from the Narcissus. It was coming landward. As she watched its approach she heard a chorus of boisterous voices behind her. She turned and saw nearing the shore from the Rue d'Egypte a half-dozen sailors, singing cheerily:

"Get you on, get you on, get you on,
Get you on to your fo'c'stle'ome;
Leave your lassies, leave your beer,
For the bugle what you 'ear
Pipes you on to your fo'c'stle 'ome—

'Ome—'ome—'ome,
Pipes you on to your fo'c'stle 'ome."

Guida drew near.

"The Narcissus is not leaving to-day?" she asked of the foremost sailor.

The man touched his cap. "Not to-day, lady."

"When does she leave?"

"Well, that's more nor I can say, lady, but the cap'n of the main-top, yander, 'e knows."

She approached the captain of the main-top. "When does the Narcissus leave?" she asked.

He looked her up and down, at first glance with something like boldness, but instantly he touched his hat.

"To-morrow, mistress—she leaves at 'igh tide tomorrow."

With an eye for a fee or a bribe, he drew a little away from the others, and said to her in a low tone: "Is there anything what I could do for you, mistress? P'r'aps you wanted some word carried aboard, lady?"

She hesitated an instant, then said: "No-no, thank you."

He still waited, however, rubbing his hand on his hip with mock bashfulness. There was an instant's pause, then she divined his meaning.

She took from her pocket a shilling. She had never given away so much money in her life before, but she seemed to feel instinctively that now she must give freely—now that she was the wife of an officer of the navy. Strange how these sailors to-day seemed so different to her from ever before—she felt as if they all belonged to her. She offered the shilling to the captain of the main-top. His eyes gloated, but he said with an affected surprise:

"No, I couldn't think of it, yer leddyship."

"Ah, but you will take it!" she said. "I—I have a r-relative"—she hesitated at the word—"in the navy."

"Ave you now, yer leddyship?" he said. "Well, then, I'm proud to 'ave the shilling to drink 'is 'ealth, yer leddyship."

He touched his hat, and was about to turn away. "Stay a little," she said with bashful boldness. The joy of giving was rapidly growing to a vice. "Here's something for them," she added, nodding towards his fellows, and a second shilling came from her pocket. "Just as you say, yer leddyship," he said with owlsh gravity; "but for my part I think they've 'ad enough. I don't 'old with temptin' the weak passions of man."

A moment afterwards the sailors were in the boat, rowing towards the Narcissus. Their song came back across the water:

" . . . O you A.B. sailor-man,
Wet your whistle while you can,
For the piping of the bugle calls you 'ome!
'Ome—'ome—'ome,
Calls you on to your fo'c'stle 'ome!"

The evening came down, and Guida sat in the kitchen doorway looking out over the sea, and wondering why Philip had sent her no message. Of course he would not come himself, he must not: he had promised her. But how much she would have liked to see him for just one minute, to feel his arms about her, to hear him say good-bye once more. Yet she loved him the better for not coming.

By and by she became very restless. She would have been almost happier if he had gone that day: he was within call of her, still they were not to see each other.

She walked up and down the garden, Biribi the dog by her side. Sitting down on the bench beneath the appletree, she recalled every word that Philip had said to her two days before. Every tone of his voice, every look he had given her, she went over in her thoughts. There is no reporting in the world so exact, so perfect, as that in a woman's mind, of the words, looks, and acts of her lover in the first days of mutual confession and understanding.

It can come but once, this dream, fantasy, illusion—call it what you will: it belongs to the birth hour of a new and powerful feeling; it is the first sunrise of the heart. What comes after may be the calmer joy of a more truthful, a less ideal emotion, but the transitory glory of the love and passion of youth shoots higher than all other glories into the sky of time. The splendour of youth is its madness, and the splendour of that madness is its unconquerable belief. And great is the strength of it, because violence alone can destroy it. It does not yield to time nor to decay, to the long wash of experience that wears away the stone, nor to disintegration. It is always broken into pieces at a blow. In the morning all is well, and ere the evening come the radiant temple is in ruins.

At night when Guida went to bed she could not sleep at first. Then came a drowsing, a floating between waking and sleeping, in which a hundred swift images of her short past flashed through her mind:

A butterfly darting in the white haze of a dusty road, and the cap of the careless lad that struck it down.... Berry-picking along the hedges beyond the quarries of Mont Mado, and washing her hands in the strange green pools at the bottom of the quarries. . . . Stooping to a stream and saying of it to a lad: "Ro, won't it never come back?" . . . From the front doorway watching a poor criminal shrink beneath the lash with which he was being flogged from the Vier Marchi to the Vier Prison. . . Seeing a procession of bride and bridegroom with young men and women gay in ribbons and pretty cottons, calling from house to house to receive the good wishes of their friends, and drinking cinnamon wine and mulled cider—the frolic, the gaiety of it all. Now, in a room full of people, she was standing on a *veille* flourished with posies of broom and wildflowers, and Philip was there beside her, and he was holding her hand, and they were waiting and waiting for some one who never came. Nobody took any notice of her and Philip, she thought; they stood there waiting and waiting—why, there was M. Savary dit Detricand in the doorway, waving a handkerchief at her, and saying: "I've found it—I've found it!"—and she awoke with a start.

Her heart was beating hard, and for a moment she was dazed; but presently she went to sleep again, and dreamed once more.

This time she was on a great warship, in a storm which was driving towards a rocky shore. The sea was washing over the deck. She recognised the shore: it was the cliff at Plemont in the north of Jersey, and behind the ship lay the awful Paternosters. They were drifting, drifting on the wall of rock. High above on the land there was a solitary stone hut. The ship came nearer and nearer. The storm increased in strength. In the midst of the violence she looked up and saw a man standing in the doorway of the hut. He turned his face towards her: it was Ranulph Delagarde, and he had a rope in his hand. He saw her and called to her, making ready to throw the rope, but suddenly some one drew her back. She cried aloud, and then all grew black. . . .

And then, again, she knew she was in a small, dark cabin of the ship. She could hear the storm breaking over the deck. Now the ship struck. She could feel her grinding upon the rocks. She seemed to be sinking, sinking—There was a knocking, knocking at the door of the cabin, and a voice calling to her—how far away it seemed! . . . Was she dying, was she drowning? The words of a nursery rhyme rang in her ears distinctly, keeping time to the knocking. She wondered who should be singing a nursery rhyme on a sinking ship:

"La main morte,
La main morte,
Tapp' a la porte,
Tapp' a la porte."

She shuddered. Why should the dead hand tap at her door? Yet there it was tapping louder, louder. . . . She struggled, she tried to cry out, then suddenly she grew quiet, and the tapping got fainter and fainter—her eyes opened: she was awake.

For an instant she did not know where she was. Was it a dream still?

For there was a tapping, tapping at her door—no, it was at the window.

A shiver ran through her from head to foot. Her heart almost stopped beating. Some one was calling to her.

"Guida! Guida!"

It was Philip's voice. Her cheek had been cold the moment before; now she felt the blood tingling in her face. She slid to the floor, threw a shawl round her, and went to the casement.

The tapping began again. For a moment she could not open the window. She was trembling from head to foot. Philip's voice reassured her a little.

"Guida, Guida, open the window a moment."

She hesitated. She could not—no—she could not do it. He tapped still louder.

"Guida, don't you hear me?" he asked.

She undid the catch, but she had hardly the courage even yet. He heard her now, and pressed the window a little. Then she opened it slowly, and her white face showed.

"O Philip," she said breathlessly, "why have you frightened me so?"

He caught her hand in his own. "Come out into the garden, sweetheart," he said, and he kissed the hand. "Put on a dress and your slippers and come," he urged again.

"Philip," she said, "O Philip, I cannot! It is too late. It is midnight. Do not ask me. Why, why did you come?"

"Because I wanted to speak with you for one minute. I have only a little while. Please come outside and say good-bye to me again. We are sailing to-morrow—there's no doubt about it this time."

"O Philip," she answered, her voice quivering, "how can I? Say good-bye to me here, now."

"No, no, Guida, you must come. I can't kiss you good-bye where you are."

"Must I come to you?" she said helplessly. "Well, then, Philip," she added, "go to the bench by the apple-tree, and I shall be there in a moment."

"Beloved!" he exclaimed ardently. She shut the window slowly.

For a moment he looked about him; then went lightly through the garden, and sat down on the bench under the apple-tree, near to the summer-house. At last he heard her footstep. He rose quickly to meet her, and as she came timidly to him, clasped her in his arms.

"Philip," she said, "this isn't right. You ought not to have come; you have broken your promise."

"Are you not glad to see me?"

"Oh, you know, you know that I'm glad to see you, but you shouldn't have come—hark! what's that?" They both held their breath, for there was a sound outside the garden wall. Clac-clac! clac-clac!—a strange, uncanny footstep. It seemed to be hurrying away—clac-clac! clac-clac!

"Ah, I know," whispered Guida: "it is Dormy Jamais. How foolish of me to be afraid!"

"Of course, of course," said Philip—"Dormy Jamais, the man who never sleeps."

"Philip—if he saw us!"

"Foolish child, the garden wall is too high for that. Besides—"

"Yes, Philip?"

"Besides, you are my wife, Guida!"

"No, no, Philip, no; not really so until all the world is told."

"My beloved Guida, what difference can that make?" She sighed and shook her head. "To me, Philip, it is only that which makes it right—that the whole world knows. Philip, I am so afraid of—of secrecy, and cheating."

"Nonsense-nonsense!" he answered. "Poor little wood-bird, you're frightened at nothing at all. Come and sit by me." He drew her close to him.

Her trembling presently grew less. Hundreds of glow-worms were shimmering in the hedge. The grass-hoppers were whirring in the mielles beyond; a flutter of wings went by overhead. The leaves were rustling gently; a fresh wind was coming up from the sea up on the soft, fragrant dusk.

They talked a little while in whispers, her hands in his, his voice soothing her, his low, hurried words giving her no time to think. But presently she shivered again, though her heart was throbbing hotly.

"Come into the summer-house, Guida; you are cold, you are shivering." He rose, with his arm round her waist, raising her gently at the same time.

"Oh no, Philip dear," she said, "I'm not really cold—I don't know what it is—"

"But indeed you are cold," he answered. "There's a stiff south-easter rising, and your hands are like ice. Come into the arbour for a minute. It's warm there, and then—then we'll say good-bye, sweet-heart."

His arm round her, he drew her with him to the summer-house, talking to her tenderly all the time. There was reassurance, comfort, loving care in his very tones.

How brightly the stars shone, how clearly the music of the stream came over the hedge! With what lazy restfulness the distant All's well floated across the muelles from a ship at anchor in the tide-way, how like a slumber-song the wash of the sea rolled drowsily along the wind! How gracious the smell of the earth, drinking up the dew of the affluent air, which the sun, on the morrow, should turn into life-blood for the grass and trees and flowers!

CHAPTER XVII

Philip was gone. Before breakfast was set upon the table, Guida saw the Narcissus sail round Noirmont Point and disappear.

Her face had taken on a new expression since yesterday. An old touch of dreaminess, of vague anticipation was gone—that look which belongs to youth, which feels the confident charm of the unknown future. Life was revealed; but, together with joy, wonder and pain informed the revelation.

A marvel was upon her. Her life was linked to another's, she was a wife. She was no longer sole captain of herself. Philip would signal, and she must come until either he or she should die. He had taken her hand, and she must never let it go; the breath of his being must henceforth give her new and healthy life, or inbreed a fever which should corrode the heart and burn away the spirit. Young though she was, she realised it— but without defining it. The new-found knowledge was diffused in her character, expressed in her face.

Seldom had a day of Guida's life been so busy. It seemed to her that people came and went far more than usual. She talked, she laughed a little, she answered back the pleasantries of the seafaring folk who passed her doorway or her garden. She was attentive to her grandfather; exact with her household duties. But all the time she was thinking— thinking—thinking. Now and again she smiled, but at times too tears sprang to her eyes, to be quickly dried. More than once she drew in her breath with a quick, sibilant sound, as though some thought wounded her; and she flushed suddenly, then turned pale, then came to her natural colour again.

Among those who chanced to visit the cottage was Maitresse Aimable. She came to ask Guida to go with her and Jean to the island of Sark, twelve miles away, where Guida had never been. They

would only be gone one night, and, as Maitresse Aimable said, the Sieur de Mauprat could very well make shift for once.

The invitation came to Guida like water to thirsty ground. She longed to get away from the town, to be where she could breathe; for all this day the earth seemed too small for breath: she gasped for the sea, to be alone there. To sail with Jean Touzel was practically to be alone, for Maitresse Aimable never talked; and Jean knew Guida's ways, knew when she wished to be quiet. In Jersey phrase, he saw beyond his spectacles— great brass-rimmed things, giving a droll, childlike kind of wisdom to his red rotund face.

Having issued her invitation, Maitresse Aimable smiled placidly and seemed about to leave, when, all at once, without any warning, she lowered herself like a vast crate upon the veille, and sat there looking at Guida.

At first the grave inquiry of her look startled Guida. She was beginning to know that sensitive fear assailing those tortured by a secret. How she loathed this secrecy! How guilty she now felt, where, indeed, no guilt was! She longed to call aloud her name, her new name, from the housetops.

The voice of Maitresse Aimable roused her. Her ponderous visitor had made a discovery which had yet been made by no other human being. Her own absurd romance, her ancient illusion, had taught her to know when love lay behind another woman's face. And after her fashion, Maitresse Aimable loved Jean Touzel as it is given to few to love.

"I was sixteen when I fell in love; you're seventeen—you," she said. "Ah bah, so it goes!"

Guida's face crimsoned. What—how much did Maitresse Aimable know? By what necromancy had this fat, silent fisher-wife learned the secret which was the heart of her life, the soul of her being—which was Philip? She was frightened, but danger made her cautious.

"Can you guess who it is?" she asked, without replying directly to the oblique charge.

"It is not Maitre Ranulph," answered her friendly inquisitor; "it is not that M'sieu' Detricand, the vaurien." Guida flushed with annoyance. "It is not that farmer Blampied, with fifty vergees, all potatoes; it is not M'sieu' Janvrin, that bat'd'lagoule of an ecrivain. Ah bah, so it goes!"

"Who is it, then?" persisted Guida. "Eh ben, that is the thing!"

"How can you tell that one is in love, Maitresse Aimable?" persisted Guida.

The other smiled with a torturing placidity, then opened her mouth; but nothing came of it. She watched Guida moving about the kitchen abstractedly. Her eye wandered to the raclyi, with its fitches of bacon, to the dreschiaux and the sanded floor, to the great Elizabethan oak chair, and at last back to Guida, as though through her the lost voice might be charmed up again.

The eyes of the two met now, fairly, firmly; and Guida was conscious of a look in the other's face which she had never seen before. Had then a new sight been given to herself? She saw and understood the look in Maitresse Aimable's face, and instantly knew it to be the same that was in her own.

With a sudden impulse she dropped the bashin she was polishing, and, going over quickly, she silently laid her cheek against her old friend's. She could feel the huge breast heave, she felt the vast face turn hot, she was conscious of a voice struggling back to life, and she heard it say at last:

"Gatd'en'ale, rosemary tea cures a cough, but nothing cures the love—ah bah, so it goes!"

"Do you love Jean?" whispered Guida, not showing her face, but longing to hear the experience of another who suffered that joy called love.

Maitresse Aimable's face grew hotter; she did not speak, but patted Guida's back with her heavy hand and nodded complacently.

"Have you always loved him?" asked Guida again, with an eager inquisition, akin to that of a wayside sinner turned chapel-going

saint, hungry to hear what chanced to others when treading the primrose path.

Maitresse Aimable again nodded, and her arm drew closer about Guida.

There was a slight pause, then came an unsophisticated question:

"Has Jean always loved you?"

A short silence, and then the voice said with the deliberate prudence of an unwilling witness:

"It is not the man who wears the wedding-ring." Then, as if she had been disloyal in even suggesting that Jean might hold her lightly, she added, almost eagerly—an enthusiasm tempered by the pathos of a half-truth:

"But my Jean always sleeps at home."

This larger excursion into speech gave her courage, and she said more; and even as Guida listened hungrily—so soon had come upon her the apprehensions and wavering moods of loving woman!—she was wondering to hear this creature, considered so dull by all, speak as though out of a watchful and capable mind. What further Maitresse Aimable said was proof that if she knew little and spake little, she knew that little well; and if she had gathered meagrely from life, she had at least winnowed out some small handfuls of grain from the straw and chaff. At last her sagacity impelled her to say:

"If a man's eyes won't see, elder-water can't make him; if he will—ah bah, glad and good!" Both arms went round Guida, and hugged her awkwardly.

Her voice came up but once more that morning. As she left Guida in the doorway, she said with a last effort:

"I will have one bead to pray for you, trejous." She showed her rosary, and, Huguenot though she was, Guida touched the bead reverently. "And if there is war, I will have two beads, trejous. A bi'tot—good-bye!"

Guida stood watching her from the doorway, and the last words of the fisher-wife kept repeating themselves through her brain: "And if there is war, I will have two beads, trejous."

So, Maitresse Aimable knew she loved Philip! How strange it was that one should read so truly without words spoken, or through seeing acts which reveal. She herself seemed to read Maitresse Aimable all at once—read her by virtue, and in the light, of true love, the primitive and consuming feeling in the breast of each for a man. Were not words necessary for speech after all? But here she stopped short suddenly; for if love might find and read love, why was it she needed speech of Philip? Why was it her spirit kept beating up against the hedge beyond which his inner self was, and, unable to see that beyond, needed reassurance by words, by promises and protestations?

All at once she was angry with herself for thinking thus concerning Philip. Of course Philip loved her deeply. Had she not seen the light of true love in his eyes, and felt the arms of love about her? Suddenly she shuddered and grew bitter, and a strange rebellion broke loose in her. Why had Philip failed to keep his promise not to see her again after the marriage, till he should return from Portsmouth? It was selfish, painfully, terribly selfish of him. Why, even though she had been foolish in her request—why had he not done as she wished? Was that love—was it love to break the first promise he had ever made to his wife?

Yet she excused him to herself. Men were different from women, and men did not understand what troubled a woman's heart and spirit; they were not shaken by the same gusts of emotion; they—they were not so fine; they did not think so deeply on what a woman, when she loves, thinks always, and acts upon according to her thought. If Philip were only here to resolve these fears, these perplexities, to quiet the storm in her! And yet, could he—could he? For now she felt that this storm was rooting up something very deep and radical in her. It frightened her, but for the moment she fought it passionately.

She went into her garden; and here among her animals and her flowers it seemed easier to be gay of heart; and she laughed a little,

and was most tender and pretty with her grandfather when he came home from spending the afternoon with the Chevalier.

In this manner the first day of her marriage passed—in happy reminiscence and in vague foreboding; in affection yet in reproach as the secret wife; and still as the loving, distracted girl, frightened at her own bitterness, but knowing it to be justified.

The late evening was spent in gaiety with her grandfather and the Chevalier; but at night when she went to bed she could not sleep. She tossed from side to side; a hundred thoughts came and went. She grew feverish, her breath choked her, and she got up and opened the window. It was clear, bright moonlight, and from where she was she could see the muelles and the ocean and the star-sown sky above and beyond. There she sat and thought and thought till morning.