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## Corianton, Chapter IV

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**Abstract:** A fictional portrayal of events in the life of Corianton, one of the sons of Alma the Younger. Corianton walks with the woman, who introduces herself as Joan of Siron, and claims she is kin to Seantum, the Zoramite with whom he is lodging. She flatters him and appeals to his vanity. He joins her in a party at the house of Seantum, dancing with her and partaking of wine. She departs after midnight, wherein he feels guilt at his indiscretion and how the other missionaries would react to it, but he continues among the other revellers until he passes out.

danger. My watch was taken out. Guide book, maps, and charts they overhauled with native curiosity. One slipped the bridle off my horse. My coat and vest were in their clutches and when I felt my suspenders slide from my shoulders my mind was prepared for the worst; but some of them began to quarrel over the money which they had discovered. The one who had been the first to seize me, and with the look of a demon, through some hasty promptings returned me all they had taken except the money. This enraged another whose glaring eyes pierced the twilight in satanic rage and he aimed his long steel pointed spear at me. The one who had so lately befriended me seized it with his hand and a struggle between them ensued. Dropping to the ground on the opposite side of my horse I hastened along beyond the struggling robbers when a caravan came up. Confusion arose and the Bedouins rode on.

My companion and I began to survey our situation. I supplied what I could of my friend's lost apparel, and now that a nearly nude Arab came up to where we were halted with the caravan, we found that both the party of the caravan and unfortunate Arab had suffered a similar loss just a short time before. They all expostulated and recited in angry tones their grievances; but I confess I was never happier in my life. The unfortunate man we met proposed to follow them to their camp and enter complaint to the Sheik, who would, he assured us, refund him all and punish severely the daring robbers of that night's exploits. He generously asked

us to go with him. My companion with the glow of enthusiasm turned to me and exclaimed, "What do you say?" "*Not much,*" was my idiomatic response. "I don't care to make the Sheik's acquaintance. He may be a good man, but we haven't time to call on him now," and we hastened in the opposite direction till we reached Ashdod.

It was now daylight and the road frequented by travelers offered greater security; but the night had been one of terror to more than ourselves, and where we met the Bedouins was frequently asked. On my arrival at Jaffa the American consul kindly offered to render me every possible assistance and lodge complaints with the government. But one can never reach a Turkish official without Baksheesh, a money lubricator of Turkish officialism; besides I intended to leave the realms of the Sultan next day and satisfied myself that the experience must compensate the loss. The consul was unrelenting in his denunciations of the dusky robbers. However, I was not so ruthlessly disposed. Men sometimes get robbed in America, I incidentally rejoined; besides if the vicious were as unrestrained in Broadway as they are in all parts of Palestine worse stories could be told of America than of the dusky desert nomads. I was so frequently exposed to their mercies and met cordiality and courtesy that I was disposed to regard the unfortunate encounter an exception. The Bedouin possesses a revengeful character, but the instances of his fidelity, devotion, and friendship are themes of recent as well as early romance. *Jos. M. Tanner.*

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## CORIANTON.

### CHAPTER IV.

WAS the woman who accosted Corianton at the gate of his lodging, young, handsome? He could not tell; the twilight had deepened too much into the shadow of night, to permit him to see clearly; but there was a fascination in the full, sweet tone of her voice, and he

was thrilled by the touch of her soft hand, as she laid it gently on his arm, as if to detain him while asking the questions with which the last chapter closed.

"You are going into Seantum's?"

"Yes, that is where I lodge."

"I will go with you."

He hesitated, and was not a little astonished at her perfect self-possession, which, to his thinking, bordered on boldness. It must be remembered that among the Nephites, one of the chief characteristics of their women, so far as one is able to judge from their records, was modesty—an excellent thing in woman, when not feigned or prudish. The freedom, therefore, with which this woman had accosted him, a perfect stranger, and now proposed to go with him, uninvited, to the place where he lodged, was a boldness to which Corianton was unaccustomed. She observed that he hesitated, and broke out into a light, silvery laugh.

"Ah, I forgot," she said, in an apologizing tone, yet with a touch of defiance in it, "thou art one of the prophets, perhaps a solemn one, and unacquainted with our people, and my manners are too bold; but Seantum, with whom you lodge, is a near kinsman—my father's brother; now, will you throw open the gate, and allow me to go in with you?" He complied with her request mechanically, and in silence, for he knew not what to say. As they approached the house he again felt that soft hand laid gently on his arm, and the same sweet voice said, almost pleadingly: "Let us not go into the house yet, the evening is beautiful; see, the moon is just peeping over the tree tops, and floods the earth with her soft light—let us walk in the garden." She had retained her hold upon his arm, and obeying her will rather than his own, he turned down a path leading away from the house.

The house of Seantum was situated at the southern outskirts of the city, in the midst of a spacious and splendid garden. There were extensive lawns, studded with tropical trees, several species of palm and plantain; the cocoa trees standing in groups, their great tufts of gigantic leaves rustling in the moonlight at a height of sixty and seventy feet; banana and papaw trees growing side by side in rows along the walks, and back of them in irregular order stood pomegranates, while here and there were clumps of lindens, inter-

spersed with sumach and cashew, and a great variety of evergreen shrubbery. Here side by side, and in fine contrast, were the rhododendron, with their rose-colored flowers, and the coffee shrub with its cluster of delicate white blossoms. Other flowers and flowering trees existed in great profusion—the fragrant eglantine, the elegant, airy though thorny acacia, and now and then an aloe plant, and, ah, rare sight! several of them were in full bloom; these, with splendid magnolias, mingled their odors, and burdened the air with ambrosial fragrance, which, with the chirrup and hum of insect life, the gentle whispering wind, stealing softly through shrubbery and tree, and all kissed to beauty by the glorious moonlight, made up a night such as lovers love, and love's young dream expands.

\* \* \* "In such a night  
Troilus, methinks, mounted on Trojan walls  
And sighed his soul towards the Grecian tents  
Where Cressia lay that night."

"In such a night  
Did Thesbe fearfully o'ertrip the dew,  
And saw the lion's shadow ere himself,  
And ran dismayed away."

"In such a night  
Stood Dido with a willow in his hand  
Upon the wild sea banks and waft his love  
To come again to Carthage."

"In such a night  
Media gather'd the enchanted herbs  
That did renew old æson."

And, finally, on such a night did Corianton walk in the garden of Seantum, with this woman, so strangely met.

"You are not at all curious," she said. "You have not yet asked my name, nor why I am here, nor what it is I want with you—you have not spoken half a dozen words since we met—you smile, do you mean by that I have not given you a chance to say more?"

"Such were my thoughts, lady, but I would know your name, and am most curious to know what you would with me."

By this they had reached a lakelet at the lower end of the garden, from whose moist beach grew several gigantic mango

and sycamore trees. They had passed in the shadow of one of those whose inclining trunk extended far out over the water-lily-bedecked lake; half seating herself on the inclined tree, she raised her hand to clutch a grape vine that drooped from a branch above, and as she did so the ample folds of her sleeve slipped back and left uncovered a beautiful white arm. And now Corianton noticed for the first time that the form was supple and finely proportioned. Her head, too, had been covered with a kind of mantilla which had also partly shrouded her face; this fell back now revealing a face of uncommon loveliness, and a profusion of brown hair.

"You must know then, sir prophet," she said with a light air, "that I am *Joan*, from Siron; my father is a Nephite by birth, but when young met with my mother, taken captive during a war with your people. He fell in love with the captive, married her and she finally induced him to go with her to her people. They settled in Siron where they lived happily until my mother died—my father still lives, and has never been entirely rid of the traditions of the Nephites, and hearing that a party of Nephite prophets were preaching in Antionum, it was his wish that I should come to our kinsman Seantum's, find you and ask that you would also preach in Siron."

"But why did you come to me? I do not lead our party, I am youngest in it."

"Ah, sir prophet, you are more famous than you know. It was Corianton that we first heard of in Siron; it is he whose eloquence most baffles the Zoramites, and threatens the disruption of their Church—believe me sir, I was charged to bid *you* come by my father."

Oh, flattery! what man is proof against thy sweet, seducing charms? and how those charms are heightened, when flattery falls from beauty's lips! The vanity of Corianton was well pleased with the words of the woman; pride swelled his bosom, and he felt exalted above his brethren.

"For two days I have sought you" (Corianton had been absent two days from his lodgings), "now I have found

you and delivered my message, will you go to Siron?"

"I cannot say, lady, I must first confer with my brethren, and if by them it is thought best, I—"

"What! are you not free to come and go where and when you will, are you in bondage?"

"No lady, not in bondage, yet it is mete I counsel with my associates, and if—"

"And if they give you leave, why then you'll go—ah me, that is such liberty as a maiden has under her father's control. I've often wished myself a man, I might have a more extended liberty, but if men cannot act independent of control, it pleases one that I am a woman. I fear, sir prophet, that I shall never be a convert to your faith."

"Then I would esteem my success in Siron of little value though I gained the whole people, if I failed to number one so fair among those who followed me."

"Come sir, let us now go in; you begin to find your tongue, and even a prophet I see can flatter."

So saying she drew her mantle over head, and they walked in silence towards the house. Corianton as he walked away did not observe shadowy forms glide from under adjacent trees, hold a brief consultation and depart from the spot which he himself had just quitted.

As they approached the house, lively strains of music floated out upon the evening air, and lights gleamed from all the windows; now sounds of revelry could be heard—the merry laugh, and flying feet. In the hall they were met by Seantum. "Returned home at last Corianton, eh?" he said with blustering familiarity, "what, and with Joan too!"

"Yes, kinsman; I found our prophet as he was entering the grounds, and have detained him long enough to deliver my message."

"Quite right, too, quite right; if you have anything to do, do it, and do it at once. But come, sir, some young folks have gathered here, to make merry the night, recreation will do you good, sir; youth was made for enjoyment, sir, and

youth cheats itself if it make not good use of the time."

"Oh, kinsman, you forget," said Joan; "this man, though he hath not a dry hand, a moist eye, a wrinkled brow, a gray beard, a stooped back, a cracked voice, a shrunken leg—and though he hath no staff, yet is he a holy man, and will account the youthful revels you recommend, as sinful. Alas," said she, with charming mock solemnity, "alas, that youth should so soon wed itself to the vocation of the aged! Besides, I warrant me, he will tell thee he must first counsel with his fellow-prophets, before he can stir, in what you would have him enjoy. So pray forbear, tempt not the holy prophet;" and with this tantalizing witchery she left him.

Seantum laughed heartily at the evident discomfiture of Corianton. "By my life, sir, she hath hit you as hard with her sarcasm of your solemnities, as your ridicule hits the weakness of our Zoramite faith; but come, sir, come, you must rally, you must let her see that you have spirit—which I know you have—go in, sir," lowering his voice, "it shall not harm your reputation; go in, you shall find beauty, gaiety, pleasure and secrecy beneath my roof—go in, sir; youth was made for pleasure!"

His pride, wounded by the light sarcasm of Joan, and, influenced, it must also be confessed, by the cajolery of Seantum, Corianton permitted himself to be led down the hall into a spacious saloon, brilliantly lighted by cressets, and at one end of which, on a platform, was arranged a banqueting table, laden profusely with all the delicacies of the tropics—a rich variety of meats, fruits and wines, of which all were free to partake at pleasure. The ceiling and walls of the saloon were frescoed with voluptuous figures or grim monsters, half animal, half human—with here and there indications that some knowledge of the old mythologies was still retained; the windows were draped with curtains of rich stuffs, variously colored; their ample folds gently stirred by the soft breeze which stole into the room, filling it with the rich perfumes of the garden. The

floor was variegated Mosaic work, smooth as polished ivory, covered at the sides and ends by soft carpeting.

As Corianton and Seantum entered the saloon a pretty dark-eyed girl was executing a sort of fandango to the evident delight of a number of persons sitting or lounging promiscuously about the room. At the conclusion of the dance the girl was greeted warmly with a round of applause. Then there was quiet, broken occasionally by only light ripples of laughter, the hum of confused conversation, or occasional commands to the slaves to serve fruits or wines. There were whispered nothings, tender caresses, and loose jests. Groups of women of all shades of beauty were reclining on divans or cushions, half concealed by the rich foliage of gigantic house plants in great vases; and sometimes in recesses nearly shut out from the main body of the saloon by closely drawn curtains.

The entrance of Seantum and Corianton had attracted no attention; but as that tall, graceful Nephite passed the various groups, the girls broke out in exclamations of admiration—"how handsome!" "how young!" "what fine eyes!—and what a form!" "who is it?" "a stranger—a Nephite." All this agitated Corianton, and rendered him uneasy. Arriving at the head of the saloon, he was introduced to a group of young men about his own age.

"This is my Nephite prophet of whom you have heard me speak," said Seantum, "receive him as my honored guest and friend." At this Corianton was warmly saluted, and called upon to pledge the acquaintance in wine. There was no retreating now, nor could there be any refusal.

"Though our new friend is a Nephite," said Seantum, after the pledge of friendship had been drunk, "and reared under traditions which we have forsaken, religious differences, arising solely from training in childhood, should make no difference in social life," "No, no," broke in several voices. "Let us bury thoughts of all such differences in another bowl of wine," said a youth of Laman-

ish appearance, and already under the influence of the beverage he now called for. At that moment in the lower part of the saloon some one was greeted by hearty applause; looking in that direction Joan was seen advancing clad in loose, fleecy garments; she held in her hand a long strip of crimson gauze, and as she reached the middle of the saloon she shook out its folds and began a dance of exquisite grace. What mischief hath not been worked by the witching grace exhibited by beautiful woman in the dance! The elegance and harmony of motion, the poetry of movement, gives a lustre to beauty and influences the senses through the imagination. 'Twas the dancing of the fair daughter of Jared which drove Akish of old to pledge himself to murder King Omer among the Jaredites; and Herod promised with an oath anything, to the half of his kingdom, to the daughter of Herodias for dancing before him, and when she demanded John the Baptist's head—even that was not denied.

Never had Corianton seen such a combination of motion and beauty as that now before him. The slight willowy form of Joan swaying with easy grace, the poise of the head, the movement of the arms, all in perfect harmony with the rest of her actions. Frequently the company applauded her, but now evidently the dance is drawing to a close, concluding with rapid whirling round the entire saloon; as she passed near Corianton she suddenly threw her gauze scarf over his head, as a challenge for him to join her in the *finale*; and he, forgetful of all but her loveliness and bewitching grace, caught her hand, holding the tips of her fingers, and accom-

panied her in that whirling circuit. He had evidently acquitted himself well, for he shared in the applause which greeted her, and the compliments that followed. "Ah my friend, I scarcely thought a prophet could do so well," she whispered, in her taunting manner, but seeing that he turned pale at her remark, and that a pained expression also passed over his firm feature she quickly added "you did well, I am proud of you, and you must be my companion for the evening," and her hand once more stole within his arm.

The revels were continued through the night, wine flowed as freely as water, and long before the gray dawn began to break in the east many had sunk down in a helpless, drunken sleep. Corianton also was intoxicated but not so much with wine as with the beauty and *chic* of Joan. When she left him, as she did soon after midnight, he began to realize the situation into which his half thoughtless indiscretion had plunged him, and he knew not how he would well answer his brethren for his conduct. Though he had drunk but little wine, not being accustomed to it, his brain was on fire, and a mad spirit of wrecklessness seized him. Passing a groupe of young fellows in an advanced stage of intoxication in one of the recesses of the saloon, he was hailed by them, and congratulated upon his conquest of the fairest lady in all their land. He joined them in their praises of her beauty and in their revel. What he did, what was done he knew not, his brain was confused—he had an indistinct recollection of boisterous, frenzied jollity, then high words, a quarrel, but not the reason of it, and then all was darkness, oblivion.

[To be continued.]

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## LEAVES FROM A NOTE BOOK.

### AT THE HOME OF "RAMONA."

OUR stay at the Camulos Ranch, or the home of "Ramona," as it will henceforward be more generally called, was a pleasant one. The old home and its surroundings give a perfect conception

of an old time Mexican, Spanish homestead such as was once common throughout this part of the country, but which are now fast disappearing from the land. It is situated in the Santa Clara Valley, which opens out on to the Pacific Ocean,