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Corianton, Chapter V

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Abstract: A fictional portrayal of events in the life of Corianton, one of the sons of Alma the Younger. The next morning, Corianton encounters his brother Shiblon, who exhorts him to flee and tells him that he was reported in the company of the harlot Isabel the night before. Corianton protests his innocence, and does not believe his brother, who is shortly thereafter arrested by Seantum for slandering his family. Seeing his father and Ammon pursued by a mob and mocked for his own actions, Corianton is ashamed and confronts Joan, now revealed as the harlot Isabel. She convinces him to come with her to the land of Siron. In the aftermath of his departure, the mission to the Zoramites departs the city, soon to be followed by the believers among the Zoramites, who are cast out by their brethren. In the land of Siron, Isabel reveals her true colors to Corianton and orders him beaten and taken in bonds to the land of Jershon. There, he is stoned by the refugees of Antionum, until rescued by his brother Shiblon. As he recovers, he is taught the great fundamental truths of the gospel by his father Alma the Younger, and is finally humbled.

CORANTON.

CHAPTER V.

AS THE grey lights of morning struggled through the heavy curtained windows of the saloon, Corianton awoke. For some time he lay half bewildered, unable to call to mind what had happened, or where he was, conscious only of the heavy, dull pain in his head. At last, however, the revels of the past night were conjured up by his recollection; but awakening consciousness brought with it a sickening sense of shame. He was lying on a cushioned divan in one of the many recesses opening into the saloon, and near him in a heavy stupor, on the floor, was a young Lamanite. He arose and staggered from the recess to seek the open air. In the saloon the lights in the cressets were burning low, but giving out sufficient of their pale, yellow light to reveal the general disorder that prevailed. Fruits, drinking bowls, withered flowers and ottomans lay scattered about promiscuously. The banquet table itself with its burden of fruits and wines and silver furniture, had been overturned, doubtless in the melee which followed the quarrel, of which Corianton had but an indistinct recollection. Near the door leading into the hall were two slaves sleeping in each other's arms—worn out by the services of the past night.

Corianton wended his way through all this debris and at last reached the garden; but neither the cool morning air, the song of birds nor the perfume of flowers brought relief to his aching heart or troubled mind.

He followed the same path down which Joan had led him the night before to the margin of the lake, and stood under the same trees where her loveliness first attracted his attention. Again he saw her half reclining against the tree, once more heard her sweet voice deriding his faith and mocking at the bondage it brought with it—"What, are you not free? Are you in bondage?" she had said, and the humiliation he had experienced by the taunting question still hurt his pride. He sought a bower near at hand,

and stretching himself upon a seat beneath it, was soon lost in a fitful slumber.

He was suddenly awakened by some one in a subdued but hurried tone calling his name. Shaking off his sleep at last, he was surprised and not a little troubled at seeing his brother Shiblón standing over him.

"Wake, brother, wake and come, leave this horrid place!" The speaker was pale and evidently much excited. "Come brother, in the name of God shake off this slumber, and come with me before it is too late!"

"Why Shiblón, what's amiss?"

"Alas, I fear thou art amiss; and your bad deeds are like to bring trouble to us all. Your association with harlots in this place is the talk of the whole city, and everywhere we are threatened by violence—we can no longer preach to the people since they judge us all by your conduct, and condemn us all as hypocrites and bid us be gone. The other brethren started to leave the city, but I came in search of you; now brother come, in God's name come! Come, let us leave together; by a penitent life you may yet cancel this great sin—you are young—not yet hardened in vice; I pray you, come!"

Corianton stood before his brother perplexed; to him his speech was incoherent—wild. "Shiblón," said he, "I have not associated with harlots, and though the revels of last night were indiscreet, I am free from such sin as you impute to me."

"God grant that you are, and far be it from me to believe that you add the sin of falsehood to a grosser sin; but brother, the house of Seantum where you have lodged, is the worst den of infamy in all Antionum, and only last night you were seen in loving converse on the shores of this very lake with the harlot Isabel."

"Isabel!" echoed Corianton, "I know and have seen no such woman. I walked through the ground here last evening with Joan, niece of Seantum, and though of sprightly disposition yet modest, and I believe as virtuous as she is fair."

"Oh, Corianton, in this you are cozened.

That woman is not Joan, nor is she Seantum's niece; but a wicked harlot from Siron whose body to the chief men of this city has been as common as their wills have desired it; you have fallen in the traps laid by the Zoramites to destroy the mission in this city. Seantum is one of the leaders of the Zoramites, he it was who sent for this cunning harlot to work your ruin and in that hoped for the destruction of our mission; and he has succeeded, alas! too well. They have deceived you; and as the devil appears as an angel of light, so this woman assumes a virtue that she possesses not, and by that seeming grace wins you to your destruction. But break this chain and let us flee." Before Corianton could reply there was heard a hurrying of feet and they were surrounded by a body of men.

"Take that man" said Seantum, pointing to Shiblón, "and bind him." The young man saw at a glance that neither flight nor resistance would avail anything, and he submitted without an effort at either. "Corianton," said Seantum, "I overheard the ungracious words of your brother against my house and my kinswoman, and I insist upon a vindication of both before the magistrates of this city, hence I have taken him, but I mean him no further mischief; and does not justice to my great reputation and to my household dictate the taking of this course?"

"Though the sentence fall upon my brother, I say your case is just; let him answer it before your judges, and let his resistance teach him discretion."

"Corianton," said Shiblón, "I complain not at my captivity, incurred by an anxiety for your good, nor shall I shrink before the judges however unjust or merciless they may be. But take my advice, if you are still free from the sin that reputation sticks on you, lose no time in leaving this man's accursed house; trust not his friendship, for it is poison; believe not in the pretensions of the harlot Isabel, Joan she is not, she is one whose feet go down to death, whose steps take hold on hell!"

"Away with him, and stop his slander-

ous mouth!" cried Corianton, white with rage. One of those who held him, struck Shiblón a brutal blow in the face. "Noble Seantum," continued Corianton, "see that yourself and your fair niece be cleared of those slanders, and tell her that there is one Nephite at least who can rise above the prejudices of a narrow faith and not impute lewdness to mirthfulness, nor wantonness to innocent gaiety."

"Be assured, sir," replied the one addressed, "I shall not fail to report you truly to the fair Joan; and you shall not suffer in her estimation by reason of your brother's foul slander."

"Brother, you are now blinded by your infatuation and anger," said Shiblón, whose spirit neither blows nor prospective harsher treatment could daunt, "but the time will come, when the scales will fall, and you will see the black wickedness of those who have entrapped your unwary feet; farewell, and whatever fate overtakes me, remember I suffer it out of love for you." He was then dragged away in the direction of the house, followed by Seantum.

Left alone to battle with the contending emotions that struggled in his breast, and his anger, which broke out so suddenly at what he believed to be a repeated slander on the fame of the woman who had first awakened the emotion of love in him, having subsided, he began to be plagued with rising apprehensions. What if Shiblón were right? What if he had been duped by the crafty Zoramites? and many things that passed under his observation in the banqueting saloon the night before gave support to his increasing fears. "Yet I'll not believe it, until proven true, then if she be indeed a harlot, and hath betrayed me into this compromising position, may God pity her, for she hath need of pity!" With these words he left the garden and started in the direction of the market place in the city.

He observed as he walked along many people looked curiously at him, and turned to follow him with their gaze. As he turned into one of the principal streets he heard a tumult, and saw an

excited crowd of people rapidly gathering about two men who were evidently making efforts to extricate themselves from the throng. They were coming in his direction, and stepping aside into a narrow alleyway, he thought to let the throng pass without being observed. As the crowd drew near, to his astonishment, he saw the two men were his father and Ammon. The mob at their heels, however, was evidently, as yet, good natured, and were merely mocking them. Some who occasionally ran in front of them would shout at the spectators gathered at the sides of the streets—"Behold the Nephite prophet, who comes to teach us holiness while his son makes merry the night with harlots!"

"Teach your own son virtue before you leave your cities to convert the Zoramites," cried another.

"The son's no worse than the father I'll warrant," shouted a third. "Nor so bad either," broke in several. "Say old greybeard," said a voice from the crowd, "which of you holy men is contracted to Isabel to-night," and the insinuation was followed by shouts of laughter. So they passed on, yelling, cursing, mocking, deriding, pushing; the spirit of violence constantly increasing. The two prophets answered nothing, but bore all meekly; the only sign of emotion being the tears that silently flowed down the furrowed cheeks of Alma at the taunts thrown at him respecting his son; indeed he seemed weighed down with grief, and would have been trampled under foot but for the support of his strong companion, who bore him up, and kept back those who would, had they dared, have used violence towards them.

The crowd passed and their shouts rose faintly above the busy hum of life in the city, and then at last died away altogether.

Corianton had remained in the alleyway from which he had seen and heard what is described above; there he stood trembling from head to foot in an agony of shame and terror. At last he walked away, and rather from instinct than design he retraced his footsteps in the direction of Seantum's. As he walked

along he increased his speed; passion rocked his frame, and a deep design for revenge filled his heart. He passed down the path with rapid strides and entered the hall. Here he met a maid who had attended to Joan—Isabel, and in whose company he had left her the night before. "Where is your mistress, maid," he demanded, in no gentle tone. "She is yet in her room, sir prophet," said the maid, trembling with fear.

"And where is that room?"

"The first door to the left opens to a passage leading to it; shall I say to my mistress you would see her?"

"No," he replied in tones husky with anger, "I will see her unannounced. Small need to stand on ceremony with such as she." And with a few rapid strides he reached the door indicated, and entered the passage leading to the splendid rooms set apart for the use of Isabel.

He threw aside the heavy curtain stretched across the passage and stood in the presence of the woman bent on his destruction. She was seated on a low ottoman with a silver mirror in her hand and a slave was just putting the finishing touches to her toilet. She hastily arose as Corianton entered, and intense anger flashed in her dark eyes.

"Methinks this entrance is somewhat rude, bold Nephite. At least I should have thought a prophet would have had respect for a maiden's privacy."

"Aye, no doubt he would. All men would respect a maiden's privacy; the most licentious wretch would tremble did he invade its hallowed precinct. But who respects the privacy of a commoner? Who pauses on the threshold of a strumpet?"

"Commoner? Strumpet?" echoed Isabel, choking with rage, "what mean you?"

"Mean? mean?" he cried, "I mean that the mask behind which you would hide as Joan is snatched away. I mean that you are a base harlot; that that fair face is besmirked with loathsome filth, that the sweet tones of your voice, the arch smile, that angel form, are but the blandishments of hell to decoy men on

to ruin. I mean that you with your paramours conspired to work my ruin; and I, fool-like, must walk in midday light into your traps." He had approached her at this climax of his passion and seized her by the throat! With a shriek she sank upon her knees before him in terror. Finding her helpless in his grasp, he recovered his self-control sufficiently to loose his hold.

"No, no, I will not kill you—I meant not to harm you—pardon me. O, my God! why, oh why, is this woman so foul and yet so fair that heated rage is cooled, madness subdued to gentleness, and man's purposed revenge weeps itself to softness in womanly tears?" Covering his face with his hands he sank into a settee overpowered by the emotions which shook his frame.

By this time Isabel had moved from the terror into which Corianton's sudden rage had thrown her; and deeply read in man's moods and passions, she saw what an influence she held over the one now before her, stealing softly to his side, and placing her hand on his shoulder she said gently: "Corianton, have you done well in thus proceeding? What have I done to merit such harsh treatment—how deserved it?"

"What have you done?" he cried—"you came to me with a lie on your lips, deceit in your heart, and under the guise of innocence, purity and goodness sought to encompass my ruin—well madame, your plans have carried—I am undone—ruined! I can never return to my people, to them I am infamous—an outcast!" and again his form was convulsed in an agony of grief.

"But may there not be some extenuating circumstances to free me from the harsh judgment you passed upon me? Trained from my childhood to hate your people, and taught that all means were proper that would lead to your destruction, the helpless instrument of unscrupulous men bent on defeating their mission to the Zoramites—is it any wonder that I undertook the part assigned me in the scheme? But, Corianton," and she sank on her knees at his feet, "the moment I saw you—so

noble in bearing—so young—my heart relented; I shrank from the performance of the wicked plot—but what was I to do? Had I told you the truth—that I was Isabel—the infamy of that name would have steeled your heart against me—you would have driven me from you as an unclean thing; and your presence—the nobility which looked from your eyes, inspired me with love such as I have never known before—I experienced longing for something better than I had known—a desire for purity, goodness, virtue, that I might be worthy of you; and even wicked and unclean as I am, hope whispered high promises to my woman's heart—'love will forgive and forget the past, it lives only in the present and for the future,' it said; but alas! it was a vain hope—I awake and find it dust! oh, why is there so much difference between man and woman! No matter what the past of a man may have been, he hath but to repent and all is forgotten. But when a woman falls, 'tis never more to rise or be forgiven."

These indirect appeals to him touched the gentler nature of Corianton, and bending over her as he took her hand he said: "Nay, do not weep; if I have fallen I alone am to blame, I should have had better discretion. I am no coward to lay the blame upon another. I alone am to blame and I will alone bear the burden of heaven's displeasure."

"Corianton," cried Isabel as a sudden idea seized her, "if you are an out-cast, come to me, go with me to Siron; we are both young, we may live for each other, and life may yield us much of happiness—I will be true to you, work for you, nay, my proud spirit is conquered by my love, I will even be your slave; let us unite our shattered fortunes; all may yet be well."

Oh youth, how elastic is thy texture! Oppressed with the heaviest grief, bowed down to the dust by ruin, thy buoyancy will up-raise the soul—hope dwells perennially in thy breast! The proposition of Isabel revived the sinking spirits of Corianton, and under the influence of

her hopeful words his life yet seemed to promise something worth living for.

"If you have become an outcast from your people," she said, "and that through me, I will become an outcast from those who knew me here, I will forsake my friends for you; and then, hand in hand, we will seek our new and better fortune. But men are changeful in their love, and when time or care steals beauty from our cheeks your eyes will wander—swear to be true to me, Corianton." And her arms stole gently about his neck and she looked pleadingly into his eyes. All his love for this woman now seemed to go out to her, and warmly returning her tender embrace he said: "Do not fear the vanishing of my love, Isabel, for I do love thee with my whole heart, better than my country, my people or my God—the last I am entranced from, and henceforth thou shalt be my idol," and he lovingly kissed her lips.

That night they left for Siron, and reached their destination.

The following day when it became known that Corianton had gone to Siron with Isabel, the excitement in Antionum greatly increased. Shiblön the day before had been released from his bondage and was stoned by the people in the streets, led on by some of the servants of Seantum. He escaped them, however, and joined his father and brethren, and told them of the blind infatuation of Corianton.

It was decided that it would be useless to attempt to preach longer to the people of Antionum, and that evening they departed for the land of Jershön, their spirits bowed down with grief at the hardness of the hearts of the Zoramites; but sorrowing most of all for the wickedness of Corianton and the disgrace he had brought upon the work.

Zoram and his associates, chief among whom was Seantum, were not satisfied with the departure of the Nephite prophets; but formed the resolution of driving from their midst those who had believed in their words. Hence they sent among the people secretly to find out those who believed in the word

which Alma and his companions had taught; and learned the sentiments of those who disbelieved their teachings. The reports justified them in believing they could drive the former out of their land. The effort was successful; and the outcasts fled to Jershön where the people of Ammon received them with gladness, and provided for their immediate wants.

The home of Isabel, in Siron, was nearly as magnificent as that of Seantum in Antionum. All that wealth could do to satisfy the caprice and extravagant tastes of woman had evidently been lavished upon Isabel by her lovers. For two days after the arrival from Antionum she had been all that could be desired by Corianton—loving, gentle, and at times sprightly. But the morning of the third day when he suggested leaving her establishment, whose luxury constantly reminded him of her former life and shame, she manifested some petulance, and replied—

"You knew who and what I was before you came here, I take it unkindly that you upbraid me for the past." The fact was that during the night Zoram had arrived from Antionum and was filled with jealous rage. He feared the young and handsome Nephite had won the fancy of his mistress, and demanded that he should be gotten rid of.

About midday Corianton entered the apartments of Isabel and urged again that she would consent to leave Siron and go to a land not known and there begin their new life.

"There is the door," she said coolly, "if you like not to stay, you may go."

"Nay, Isabel, but you promised that you would forsake all this for me!"

"And are you so simple as to believe a woman's words? I was blinded by my infatuation and half repentance, but the dream is past, I am myself again, and see we are not suited to each other; you had better return to your people, sir prophet, fall down at their feet, and seek their forgiveness."

He stood amazed—twice deceived and by this woman—twice damned in shame for a thing scarce worth his pity!

"And is this the return for my great love for you?" he asked in husky tones.

"That for your love," and she threw a goblet of wine in his face, "I despise both you and your love." Several of the servants and Zoram entering the apartment at that moment, she threw herself into the arms of the latter, saying as she kissed him, "this is my love—my prince—my king of men. Now go!" she cried, pointing to the door.

"Not I," he replied, "I will not budge until I have laid him dead at my feet who set on foot the plan that brought my shame," and he sprang at Zoram with the fury of an enraged tiger. Before he could reach him, however, he was overpowered by the servants and bound securely. Zoram had drawn his dagger, and would have killed the Nephite but Isabel clung to him.

"No, no, you shall not slay him, he is my prey, and 'tis for me to say what shall be his fate. Nephite," she said, "our friend Korihor went into your chief city where, through sorcery, he was smitten dumb and fled from your land. He returned to us half crazed, and miserably perished. That, your people said, was a judgment of God, a manifestation of his power. Now live, return to your people to be the scorn and shame of the times, and let them know that your fall is a manifestation of Isabel's power; let it be Corianton for Korihor—Isabel against God."

"See that a number of servants go with him as guards and take him to the borders of the land Jershon," said Zoram. "Come, move slaves, away with him, and be not over-tender of him in your journey!" Two men were soon mounted, and Corianton, his hands bound behind him, was compelled to run between them, each of his guards holding him by a strap fastened about his body; all that day and night, and part of the next day they continued their journey, with occasional rests for themselves and their horses. Reaching the borders of the land of Jershon before noon of the second day, they cruelly beat their prisoner and left him, directing their course for Siron.

Left more dead than alive by his hard journey and merciless beating, Corianton lay in a stupor for some time. Regaining consciousness he wandered, he knew not whither, but at last came to one of the chief towns of the people of Ammon, where a large number of the outcast Zoramites had been given a resting place. In passing through the streets he was recognized by some of them, and the news of his return soon spread throughout the city.

The people came running together to see him. Some looked on him with pity, others looked upon him as the author of all their distress and began clamoring for vengeance. The latter class was by far the more numerous, and the excitement was growing uncontrollable. "Stone him, stone him!" was the cry. Corianton passed, threw back his tattered robe, and addressing the crowd said—"Yes, people, I am the cause of much of the affliction that has befallen you—let my life pay the penalty of my follies—I refuse not to die—to die would be relief." Those who heard these words, and saw the majesty of the speaker, fallen though he was, were awed into silence, but those on the outskirts of the ever-increasing crowd still clamored for his life, and even began to cast stones at him. These volleys soon caused those near him to draw back, and he stood alone. Shrouding his face in his mantle he sank to the ground prepared to meet the worst.

At that moment a clear, strong voice rose above the tumult of the mob: "In the name of God, hold! Stay your hands, men! Let him be cursed that casts another stone!" And Shiblón, all breathless, pushed his way through that angry crowd to where his brother lay, half stunned and bleeding. He threw aside the mantle and bent over the poor bruised form. "Alas! my brother, cast down and well nigh destroyed!" and the tears flowed down his cheeks and dropped upon the half unconscious face of Corianton. Then the murmurs of the crowd, awed but for the moment by his appearance, rose into cries for vengeance. Quickly rising to his feet, Shiblón waved

his hand for silence and then addressed them: "You people from Antionum, listen to me. My father and the sons of Mosiah, together with this my brother and myself, came into your midst to teach you the truth. Out of love for you my father, though bowed with age and unremitting toil in the behalf of others, left the pleasures and comforts of his home, risked his life, and endured the scoffs of the proud Zoramites, that you might live, and live in the truth, and be free; and for this you reward him by slaying his dearest son, who fell by the practice of a cunning harlot. I grant you the sin was great; such as he are great even in their sins; and they are likewise great in their sufferings.

"If his crime was worthy of death, had he not already suffered more than death? The burden of his great sin he must carry through life—and could his worst enemy be gratified by casting one more stone at this poor, bleeding body, or pleased by adding one more pang to his tortured mind? Oh, men! has pity, mercy, gratitude left your breasts; and does your mad frenzy make you brutish beasts? My brother's sin is more against himself and God than you, and it is for you to leave him to the justice and mercy of his God who hath said, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay.'"

The crowd slunk away, except those who remained to assist Shiblón in re-

moving his brother to the home of Ammon who lived in the city. Here his wounds were dressed; and he was attended upon by Shiblón with all the devotion of a loving brother.

His father forgave him and took no small pains in teaching him, instilling into his soul faith in the great fundamental truths of the Gospel. And Corianton's proud, haughty spirit now humbled to the dust, listened with prayerful attention to the instruction of his father, and found the faith of the Gospel the stay and hope of his soul, and no longer questioned, but lovingly trusted in the justice and mercy of God. May it not be that even his great sin was necessary to humble his pride, and prepare him to receive and sense the gospel, that by and through it he might be prepared to receive the highest degree of glory to which his nature could attain, and which he never could have obtained with his pride unhumbled?

"I give unto men weakness," saith the Lord, "that they may be humble; and his grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before Him."

THE END.

Do not get so angry that you cannot pray: do not get so angry that you cannot feed an enemy—even your worst enemy, if an opportunity should present itself.—*President Brigham Young.*

LIFE AND CHARACTER OF BRIGHAM YOUNG.*

WE keep fresh in the heart sacred memories of the great dead by holding these annual conferences of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Associations, on the anniversary of the birth of one of the greatest reformers of any age; and it is eminently proper and befitting that we should prayerfully and gratefully celebrate, in this manner, his natal day. And while willing to attempt the part given me, I sensibly realize that

the committee on programme have assigned me a subject—The Life and Character of Brigham Young—which I have contemplated with no degree of confidence, feeling, as I did, utterly incompetent to do his great merit even partial justice.

By patient toil and persistent effort, the amateur might succeed with tongue or pen, in delineating some of the beauties of blade, leaf and flower. In like manner the unskilled hand may depict form and color of shrub or tree, imitate graceful curvatures of majestic

* Lecture by Apostle Moses Thatcher, at Y. M. M. I. A. Conference, June 1, 1889.