



# *The Corsair*

*after Lord Byron*

by Christian Lanciai (2009)

*the characters:*

Medora  
Conrad  
Juan  
Gonzalves  
other pirates  
Said Pasha  
his captain  
other Turks  
concubines in his harem  
Gulnare  
Gulnare's maids  
Medora's maid

The action is by the Aegean Sea in the 1820s.

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## *The Corsair*

Act I scene 1. In a villa on a Greek island.

*Medora* Let me cool your tongue with our finest wine from the warmest home parts of my mother country. Let me cover you with my hair and comfort you with my love, until you descend into the loveliest dreams as a solace for your melancholy and gloominess. What is depressing you, my love? You have everything – friends, love, freedom, beauty, everything in abundance, and still you sullenly keep wary watch under wrinkled eyebrows, as if you were the most miserably allotted being in the world.

*Conrad* You are right, Medora. My wealth has frightened me, and my fortune has become too monotonous to do no more than bore me. I need new challenges and temptations, that puts everything to the test and forces me to sharpen me up enough to perform the impossible – only then I feel quite alive and could be somewhat happy. Here in the doldrums of sloth I am only persecuted by the painful memories I tried to escape from all my life.

*Medora* Those are the invisible wounds which are my life's ambition to cure and at least allay for you, my beloved hero, victor and king of all hostile seas, since you alone dared to challenge and never was defeated by the enemy fleet.

*Conrad* Don't boast of me, Medora. I am just a lawless pirate and nothing else, who devoted my life to help the Greeks to cast off the yoke of their oppressors, these brutal Turks, who had no business in Europe but should have stayed in the wildest Asia. *(rises)* But look! A ship is entering the harbour! A small ship, but one of ours. It must be carrying some news.

*Medora* You long self-destructively to get out to war, which one day will destroy you, and you know it, and still you prefer the company of death, blood, battle and slaughter to mine.

*Conrad* I want to be useful, Medora, and not just lie entangled in your arms. It is amusing sometimes, we need each other, there was never a man who did not need a woman, but man also needs his manliness and to give vent for it. Your force needs responsibility and action, and the liberation of the Greeks from the Turks has been a screaming necessity for three or four hundred years!

*Medora* But you are an Englishman.

*Conrad* Don't remind me of it. Look, there is Juan. Welcome, Juan, my best friend! What's new? Did the schooner bring any news?

*Juan* Indeed, Conrad, some private mail for you, that seemed very urgent, according to the crew.

*Conrad* Many letters?

*Juan* No, just one. *(delivers it)*

*Conrad* And then the more important. *(opens it and is consumed by its contents)*

*Medora* Who is it from?

*Juan* No one knows, but probably from some spy ashore.

*Medora* New mortally dangerous and impossible missions?

*Juan* It usually is, that only he can manage.

*Medora* Your front is folded up in deep furrows, my love, and your melancholy seems heavier than ever, as if you had new worries that multiply the old ones thousandfold.

*Conrad* I will handle this alone, Juan., I only need a ship with a full crew of my bravest men.

*Juan* What will be the destination?

*Conrad* Instructions will follow. Planning comes first. Nothing must go wrong. The small fregate is enough. Make the manning moderate, only the best may follow, since it will be a risky mission.

*Juan* We like that.

*Medora* But I don't.

*Conrad* Mind the preparations, Juan. I have to bandage my mistress' soul already bleeding to death.

*Medora* Each time you go out I get the feeling it will be your last mission.

*Conrad* Of course there must be a last time once, but we live for that it won't be the next one.

*Juan* The men are already enthusiastic and full of expectations, Conrad. I go.  
(leaves)

*Conrad* It's about Turks and their violations, Medora, with all the inhumanity and brutality which their brainwash religion compel them to. Here is just another example of how it has gone all too far, and I have to get out to try to give the transgressors a knockdown blow. Only I can do it.

*Medora* And your men follow you blindly and obey the least hint of yours although they very well know that it could be a suicide mission.

*Conrad* We live not to make it so. They are worse who deliberately devote themselves to suicide missions in order to destroy others together with themselves.

*Medora* How big are their chances of success? How many could survive?

*Conrad* At least fifty percent, probably more, perhaps all.

*Medora* That means you have at least fifty percent chances of failure, perhaps more, so perhaps you all may perish.

*Conrad* Medora, we have no choice. The Turks know our hiding place and could send a fleet here at any time to destroy our base. Then we will all be lost anyway. Better then to hit first, hit hard and deep, and we might succeed. Right now we have a golden opportunity. The Turks don't expect us, and we can go straight in and hit the core of the problem.

*Medora* There is something else that drags you away from me, like some temptation.

*Conrad* Medora, we have to consider the rest of humanity. We can't just think of ourselves. Love is an egoistic sickly monster if it doesn't comprise and consider all humanity. The Greeks need me and my contribution. I have no choice.

*Medora* I only tell you this, my love, that if bad news reaches me from your raid, if it failed or you have been taken prisoners to make your execution unavoidable, I will not hesitate to take my life. I will in that case follow you in death.

*Conrad* That is wrong. I never asked you for that and never will. No one has the right to ask that of anyone.

*Medora* Don't worry, I will do it myself.

*Conrad* The more I shall live for your not willing to do it, and live for giving you reason to live until I come back, to live for our victory.

*Medora* That's what I mean. You have to prevail. You have no choice. Or else I will die.

*Conrad* Then we are agreed. We have something to live for and something to be victorious for, and our moral and motivation couldn't be better. Therefore we must succeed.

*Medora* But what is really your enterprise and target?

*Conrad* Our worst enemy, our mortal enemy and greatest threat, the unreachable Said.

*Medora* So he is now unreachable?

*Conrad* I know now how we will reach him and strike him at the heart of his headquarters. He is there now, and we have received the key.

*Medora* Nothing can hold you back then and me least of all. When will you depart?

*Conrad* We sail before dawn. Everything must be made ready tonight. We haven't got a day to lose.

*Medora* Will you have any spare moment at all before you go?

*Conrad* A night without you would be unthinkable in the present situation.

*Medora* I thought so. When will you come?

*Conrad* As soon as I can.

*Medora* I will receive you with grapes and the sweetest fruits and the softest white wines of Greece.

*Conrad* And coffee.

*Medora* As you wish.

*Conrad* You own me tonight, my love, and that moment shall be an eternity for both of us.

*Medora* You are welcome.

*Conrad* Thank you. (*kisses her and leaves*)

*Medora (alone)* He will not come. He is too eager. He will go away with them as soon as his men are ready. They will not let him go. They only live for their adventure. But I live only for him. My God, what if he doesn't come back! But he must come back. As he said himself, he has no choice. He must save Greece, and he must love me.

Scene 2.

*Juan* Captain, your ship is ready.

*Conrad* Is everyone already prepared?

*Juan* Right now everything is to our advantage, the wind, the weather, if we start now we could reach our destination before next dawn, have time to prepare an ambush and strike when the night is ripe.

*Conrad* The good pasha Said will then have a hell of a party. We must not miss this opportunity to afterwards take him and his men by surprise when they are fully intoxicated by everything they have drunk and smoked. This is our only chance. We must take it, for it will never come again.

*Juan* Then it is fitting enough that we are all eager and ready.

*Conrad* All the gods of Greece favour us against the imperial tyranny of the half moon with violation and blasphemous abuse of one and only god's name for an excuse.

*Juan* The Greek gods are all nature. The islamic god is just the oppression and slavery of dictatorship. We must start at once.

*Conrad* If you say so. Where is Gonzalves?

*Gonzalves* Here. There is not one among your most faithful and trusted friends who is not ready to wage their lives for you in this adventure, although they aren't much aware of it.

*Juan* Have you bid Medora farewell?

*Conrad* Alas, she is expecting me tonight.

*Juan* We can't take that into consideration. You know what the weather is like – it could any time change to its contrary, you can never trust it, it always takes you by surprise, is always only deceptively stable and has to be taken advantage of immediately when the right wind is blowing or not at all.

*Conrad* I know. I must leave her be.

*Gonzalves* Survive and come back with an explanation.

*Conrad* Like so many times before. My friends, this is something we just have to carry through now with glory and honour, for we will never again have the chance to catch Said Pasha completely unawares.

*Juan* As you say. We are ready.

*Conrad* Good. Then we sail off, quietly, stealthily, gently on a secret mission that cannot risk any lady's detection but is safest conducted in blindness.

*Gonzalves* Yes.

*Juan* Discreetly in the dark we can but succeed.

*Conrad* Let us sail away silently and not make any sound. Medora must not notice that I one more time have been snatched away from her by my fate on an unknown mission of destiny, until we are out of sight from all of the overwhelming tears of the female weakness of tenderness, which the entire ocean only consists of and already has more than enough of.

*(They break it up.)*

Act II scene 1. Pasha Said's palace.

*Wild partying, smoking and drinking in a sumptuous hall with dancers, oriental music and everything in an overwhelming colourfulness dominated by red.*

*Said* What news, captain? Have you heard anything about the cursed pirate's nest?

*captain* We have located it and can now at last prepare a surprise attack and destruction of the entire colony of pirates.

*Said* That sounds good. As long as captain Conrad lives, I will never be able to rest. He must be annihilated once and for all.

*captain* And now Allah at last has given us the opportunity and hour to do it. All we need is to prepare and await your orders.

*Said* Not tonight at least, for tonight I will party, for I have at last secured the most precious pearl of the Orient, the legendary Gulnare, the inmost pearl of the pomegranate of the world! Where is she?

*captain* She avoids you, most gracious pasha.

*Said* Not for long! She is mine! She will never again get out of my harem! Bring her here at once! She must keep me company! (*captain leaves.*)

Gulnare, I live only for you, queen of slaves, the loveliest jewel the world has known, and why do you avoid me? What do you hold against me? What's wrong with you? None of my ladies ever turn me down, but you constantly abscond and thereby provide me with my life's most irresistible challenge! Well, there she is! Keep me company, my love! Have a drink with me!

*Gulnare (has been brought to his side, where he is lying by the banqueting table, wallowing)*  
Thank you, I have had quite enough, and so has my lord.

*Said* So you still recognize me as your lord.

*Gulnare* I haven't said that, but in my country we call every cavalier my lord out of courtesy.

*Said* Why won't you have me?

*Gulnare* I want no man. You are no exception.

*Said* You have to make me one. You are my life's highest ambition. How I have desired to make you my conquest! When finally I managed to buy you for a record fortune I considered myself at last having made my fortune. My life was worthless although I had everything, only because I missed you. But you will certainly learn to cooperate with time.

*Gulnare* I have managed to survive only by cooperating with everyone in my way, but cooperation is friendship, while you desire something else.

*Said* Allah knows that I desire you.

*Gulnare* No one can have me against my will.

*Said* Then I shall make you want me.

*Gulnare* How?

*Said* By treating you better than anyone else. You shall be my supreme queen. All my harem dames will be subject to you. Only your law will count at my court. I will spoil you until you have forgotten everything you were before and all your previous life.

*Gulnare* That you can't demand. My memory is my identity and soul, which you will never reach.

*Said* Anything is possible with force.

*Gulnare* Not with women.

*Said* I wish you no harm. All I wish is to love you.

*Gulnare* If love is to work, both have to love each other. One-sided love is no love. I can never love you, least of all if you threaten to use force. Then it will only result in hatred and failure. But I will be the friend of all and also yours.

*Said* So far so well, but I wish for something better.

*captain (returns)* Highest pasha, a dervish is here with information about the harbour.

*Said* One of our spies?

*captain* A spy he is indeed, who seems to know a lot.

*Said* How interesting. Let him appear at once. This could favour our plans. (*Captain leaves.*) I have got some business to discuss. We will carry on later.

*Gulnare* As you wish, my lord. (*departs humbly but gladly*)

*captain* The dervish, my lord.

(*This one enters and throws himself humbly on the floor in courtesy to the pasha.*)

*Said* Who are you, slave? You appear to have a story to tell.

*dervish* I was a slave but only to the Christians, from whom I managed to escape.

*Said* From what Christians? Do you come from the islands?

*dervish* I was captured from one of your trading vessels which was taken by the seahawk of Chios, captain Conrad and his fearsome pirates.

*Said (to the captain)* That's the very bandits we wish to get at. What luck! – Go on, my friend! Then you should know all about their camp! Do they have any defence to speak of? Could we take them by surprise? How many ships and how many men are with that damned buccaneer Conrad?

*dervish* They have established a camp where Chios is at its most inaccessible, since you need good seamanship to pass in and out between the treacherous shallows and the incalculable currents, if you don't know exactly how they work and know how to fit in to their rhythms and constant changes. You can't get in there if you don't have a local expert for a pilot.

*Said* Such a resort would fit such a sly and clever buccaneer perfectly for operating his raids. Could you then possibly serve us as a pilot?

*dervish* I know the waters and the shallows and am familiar with the currents.

*Said* Then you are a godsend to us as just the man we need. – He is worn and torn after his ordeals of escape. Give him all that he can take of what our festive banquet may offer of fruits, meat, and delicacies, wine and coffee.

*dervish* Thank you, but I am used to fasting during my constant strains.

*Said* As you wish, my friend. You don't have to. But drink then at least. Have a drink. You have lived among the Christians and know how they drink, you must have learned something of their bad habits, haven't you?

*dervish* My pledge to my sect forbids me any drink.

*Said* Not even coffee?

*dervish* Coffee is all right, but just one cup, since I have a sensitive stomach.

*Said* You seem to be all sensitivity. What did the Christians really do to you? Weren't you ravished again and again both by their bandits and sluts? What more keeps the Christians busy than sex, violence and orgies?

*dervish* Alas, these pirates were hardly Christians, rather downright free-thinkers and freebooters who live according to reckless licence. They hardly followed any laws at all.

*Said* That's what I mean. Such lawless savages can't have any limits. That's why I am curious about what vices they really practice.

*dervish* Then I will have to disappoint you, my lord, for their vices were hardly different from yours. ,Yes, in one way they were different. They had no harems.

*Said* No harems at all? But they must have many mistresses? I have heard from a reliable source that all western women are wanton sluts, and that's what they all look like.

*dervish* The appearance is deceptive. Most Greeks and westerners stick faithfully to only one woman all their life.

*Said* Also that demon buccaneer Conrad?

*dervish* Even he. It is difficult to find exceptions.

*Said* Your report fills me with wonder. For us it is almost compulsory to have as many wives as possible, and that is at least a Turkish custom. The Prophet had no objection. On the contrary. He had four wives himself, which he therefore prescribed as a minimum. But your report still gives me pleasure. By you I have obtained a key to the corsairs' nest, and you seem to be knowledgeable and reliable enough to assist us as a pilot. I think we will send a fleet there already tomorrow, so that we will have an immediate end to that source of pestilence. Your enlightenment is most welcome.

*(A sudden explosion and blinding flashes of lights outside towards the harbour.)*

What is this?

*dervish* Only the signal to tell us that your fleet just exploded, Said Pasha. The Christians have made a breakthrough and taken your harbour.

*Said (terrorstruck)* Who are you?

*dervish* Guess three times. *(suddenly applies a shrill horn and blows three times. The pirates immediately rush in from all directions with war cries, armed and all too ready with guns. The "dervish" casts off his disguise and reveals himself as - Conrad.)*

*Said (terrorstruck)* The pirate chief himself!

*Conrad (pulls his sword)* Correct!

*Said (pulls his sword)* What insolence!

*(Great turbulence when the feast is transformed into a bloody battle with wild screams and gunsmoke. The pirates seem to immediately get the advantage.)*



*Said* Go back! Take cover! Lock up the harem! (*runs off*)

*Conrad (cries)* Don't let them lock the harem! (*runs after him*)

(*The fighting goes on. Said appears above the scene.*)

*Said (bellows)* You incompetent eunuchs! They are just a handful, not more than a crew! They have no chance against us! Drive them back!

(*Suddenly massive Turkish enforcements turn up, and the pirates are gradually being forced to retire.*)

*Gonzalves* Turn back! Here we will all be butchered! Where is the captain?

*Juan* He vanished into the harem.

*Gonzalves* Back to the ship! We will have to liberate him later!

(*The pirates fight their way out.*)

*Turkish captain* Victory! Victory!

*one Turk* But their attack has cost us much blood. It's mostly only ourselves who lie massacred.

*captain* Where is the Pasha?

*Said (shows up)* We did that well! We have their commanding chief in a trap! How many casualties and wounded?

*captain* Several dozens.

*Said* And how many pirates did you manage to kill?

(*The Turks look awkwardly at each other.*)

*captain* Not one.

*Said* You gelded eunuchs and castrated swine! You shouldn't have let a single one get away! – But we still have the best one. He shall pay for this! – Get rid of all this mess, at once! This was a worthy place for decent feasts and houris until the Christians came and disrupted the party! (*The Turks start cleaning up.*)

*Said (to himself)* He shall pay for this!

## Scene 2. In the harem.

*Plenty of dames with Gulnare in the lead.*

*Enter Conrad suddenly on the run, closes the door behind.*

*Conrad (when all the ladies are horrified)* Evidently I have come to the right place.

*Gulnare (shocked at first, then collects herself)* Don't be appalled, sisters. This man has come to save us. (*approaches him with determination*) Welcome, stranger. You are just in time.

*Conrad* It was vital to anticipate the worst.

*Gulnare* It pleases me that my messenger came through alive.

*Conrad* It was by a hair's breadth.

*Gulnare* It always is.

*Conrad* At least I found the way.

*Gulnare* I am sorry you ran into problems. You will not come out of here alive.

*Conrad* My men have been beaten back, but they all came out alive. That's more important.

*Gulnare* Said will flay you alive.

*Conrad* Let him amuse himself.

*Gulnare* It is my fault.

*Conrad* No, Gulnare, it is your credit. My men will still be able to liberate you all, at least those of you who want to be liberated. We have a plan that should succeed, but we had counted on better inside help.

*Gulnare* Most of us are enslaved Greeks of the orthodox faith, or at least they were. Most of them would gladly murder Said in his bed, if they didn't have Christian scruples. They would also immediately have been punished with death if they tried, until you turned up. You have lighted hope in their hearts. I foisted out my letter in a last desperate effort to do something about it. We still have not failed.

*Conrad* No.

*Said (behind the scene, calling)* You did that well! We have their leader in a trap!

*Gulnare* He is coming. Whatever you do, don't let him understand that we have known each other before.

*Conrad* Gulnare, your word is my law.

*(Said breaks in with four desperately armed Turks.)*

*Said* Ha! Did you come here just to have a taste of my harem? Help yourself! They are all yours – for looking. You will have the most studied agonizing slow death anyone ever had, and you will be able to watch and long in vain for all these lovely ladies as long as you still can use your eyes and as long as your body will be able to suffer. You and your gangsters have killed thirty of my men! That will cost you thirty deaths, since you are the only one we got hold of! What about that, you corny suicide? Was it worth sacrificing your life only to find the ultimate and longest extended pain of death?

*Conrad* Kill me slowly if you want, but as long as I am not quite dead you will have to suffer that I live.

*Said* What a fool you are! What motivated you? Was it just my harem and the erotic adventure? It doesn't matter. You are done for and can't be more done in. Take him to the cell! He will languish in the darkest greatest solitude to begin with in total isolation from all company and light, until we drag him out when madness has got the better of him. Then we will recall him to reality and enjoy his infinitely prolonged and painful death.

*Conrad* My body will be easy to break down, but you will never quench my spirit.

*Said* Away with him!

*(The four shackle Conrad who is pinioned and brought out.)*

*(to Gulnare)* What did he really do in here?

*Gulnare* Just paying a visit.

*Said* Did you know who he was?

*Gulnare* Not at once, but it showed later.

*Said* Did he know any of my ladies?

*Gulnare* Absolutely not. They can all confirm that.

*Said*           What the devil then was his business in my harem?  
*Gulnare*       We shall never know that if you kill him.  
*Said*           Do you ask me to spare his life, after having killed all those men of mine?  
*Gulnare*       That would be naïve.  
*Said*           Of course. I will take care of you after his execution. You have no choice. You have got to be mine.  
*Gulnare*       Why not already tonight?  
*Said (surprised)* Do you mean it?  
*Gulnare*       If I anyway don't have any choice there is hardly any point in postponing the deal.  
*Said*           You constantly surprise me, my Gulnare, my finest treasure and most golden beauty. Your golden locks possessed me from the beginning.  
*Gulnare*       Perhaps it's time at last for me to react.  
*Said*           So it is indeed! (*leaves elated with eager expectations.*)  
*Gulnare (when he is sure to be gone and the door is safely shut)* My sisters, our liberation has just begun. It looks bad now, but don't let appearances deceive you. Conrad is still alive, and as long as he lives there is hope.  
*One concubine* Have you known him before?  
*Gulnare*       My sister, what on earth could make you think such a thing?

Act III scene 1. Chios.

*Medora*       Is that really his ship coming back?  
*maid*           Yes, but it is roughly handled. They have just landed, and there seems to be many casualties.  
*Medora*       And what about himself?  
*maid*           They all seem gravely depressed like helping each other ashore with their souls weary with fatigue.  
*Medora*       Alas, then the worst has happened!  
*maid*           As long as there is life there is hope.  
*Medora*       Your platitudes have never been worse displaced than now.  
*Maid*           I think captain Juan is coming.  
*Medora*       He at least is a responsible man. (*enter Juan serious but open*) Let me hear the worst, captain Juan.  
*Juan*           Our raid seemed to be successful, everything worked out according to plan, but in the middle of the fighting Conrad vanished into the castle in pursuit of the escaping Pasha, and we could not save him when we then were driven back by an overwhelming might. We could save all except him back to the ship.  
*Medora*       And did that satisfy you?  
*Juan*           Of course not. We tried another attack, but all we succeeded with was to set most of the Pasha's ships on fire with parts of his castle. But Conrad did not

appear again, and we couldn't save him. We have learned from a reliable source that he is kept prisoner in an isolation cell in the tower awaiting certain execution. The Pasha only has to bury many of his dead comrades first.

*Medora* How many did you lose?

*Juan* Five, but many besides were wounded. We fought as hard as we could and sacrificed everything except our lives, but five of us sacrificed even that.

*Medora* Did you bring them back?

*Juan* Four of them. One was burned in the flames, but he was already dead.

*Medora* And the Pasha?

*Juan* He has at least forty corpses to try to collect and identify, which won't be easy.

*Medora* So Conrad's life cost him forty lives.

*Juan* You could see it like that.

*Medora* Then he will hardly let Conrad out alive.

*Juan* It looks bad.

*Medora* Is there no hope?

*Juan* We will send a third clandestine expedition there to reconnoitre and see if anything can be done and above all to find out what has happened.

*Medora* Until then I can live but no longer.

*Juan* As long as we don't know that he is dead there must be hope, madam.

*Medora* Yes, there must be, but it looks hopeless.

*Juan* Rather, but not completely.

*Medora* Not yet. Thank you, Juan. Take well care of the wounded, and let me know if I can do something.

*Juan* Thanks, madam. (*leaves*)

*Medora* Thus am I left hovering between heaven and earth in total incertitude with all the odds pointing at a certain death for my beloved. What an unspeakable torture! Surely they will torture him, the inhuman bully Said with forty dead to avenge, as slowly as possible, while I can do nothing but suffer with him! Of all possible unfortunate outcomes this was the most unfortunate – incertitude about his unavoidable insufferably slow and painful death! Break, o my heart, in the same moment when he is forced to give up!

*Maid* May the gods help him.

*Medora* Yes, they are probably the only ones who could help him, but did they ever help anyone before?

## Scene 2. Said's splendid bedchamber

*Said* So she will come to me at last, the indispensable super bride, the incomparable party titbit, the hottest desirable virgin of all! What a night this will be! I will never achieve a greater triumph! It will be the highlight of my life, and then nothing shall ever be impossible for me! I will cleansweep the entire Aegean Sea

from vexing pirates, I will cleanse all Greeks from all Greece, and they will bitterly forget that they ever even dreamed of any liberation, for I have their Englishman at my mercy! And his slow protracted death will be so bitterly painful that it will never be forgotten in the history books as the cruellest execution of all time! Let any Greek then dare to rise against any Turk again!

*(enter Gulnare with maids.)*

*maid 1* We ask your leave to bring her highness to your bed, great pasha.

*Said* You are welcome. You are most sincerely welcome, especially you, my beloved, the best bride, as my for so long most longed for beatifying intercourse!

*Gulnare* You may leave, my maids. – We are not there yet, Said. First we must have a talk.

*Said* What about?

*Gulnare* The prisoner in the tower.

*Said* He is dead.

*Gulnare* Not yet.

*Said* He is doomed. Not even you can save his life.

*Gulnare* Consider then, my dear Said Pasha. What can you gain by his death? Nothing. The Greeks will only grow more obstinate than ever in their rebellion, and you will make Great Britain itself the sultan's enemy. Will the sultan thank you for that?

*Said* Great Britain is already implacable as an enemy of the sultanate thanks to this inveterate Englishman, who alone managed to build up a sea power to back up the Greeks in their meaningless rebellion. But we will be avenged! He cost me forty of my closest comrades, half my fleet and half my palace and a lot more! I will massacre the entire population of Chios as a retribution for his raid!

*Gulnare* You will gain nothing by it. You will only have more enemies and perhaps make all Europe your enemy. Consider the position this buccaneer managed to reach, who has managed to turn all England against Turkey to help the Greeks in their hopeless struggle. Consider what ransom you could obtain for him. You could ask for any amount, and it would compensate all your losses more than well.

*Said* Never while I live! I hold his life in my hand, and I will keep it! I will never let it go! And what is your interest in his case? You are his only defendant. Why?

*Gulnare* I am just trying to compensate your blind lack of sense with some real political sense.

*Said* It does not work. His death sentence is settled. I can't go back on my word. He has to die in the name of Allah, for thus it is written. A pagan must not kill forty of my men unpunished.

*Gulnare* He didn't do it. It was his men.

*Said* But they got out alive! They got away with it! Then no one can demand that he also should get away!

*Gulnare* Think of the ransom possibilities. You could almost be as rich and influential as the sultan.

*Said* You just keep nagging. Come here and love me instead and forget that English uncastrated dog. He is worthless. I can't sell him for money for his worthlessness.

*Gulnare* He is not worthless in England and in the eyes of Europe.

*Said* But he is in mine and in the eyes of all Islam, for he has murdered Muslims!

*Gulnare* As if Muslims never murdered Christians.

*Said* Are you now also defending the Christian heathens? As an unbeliever you are worthless! Only those who submit to Allah have any value in the eyes of Allah.

*Gulnare (sighs)* You are as hopelessly intransigent as a Greek.

*Said* I am a true and faithful Muslim!

*Gulnare (aside)* And therefore so stupid. – Well, I have promised you a night of love, and you shall have it.

*Said* At last you are getting to the point!

*Gulnare* Love me, so that I may love you in return.

*Said* Argh! This is the moment I have been waiting for!

*Gulnare* Enter me, so that I may enter you.

*Said* We shall remain within each other for ever. You shall be my only real wife. You shall be the highest mistress of all Greece. I will do everything for you and give you everything. I will...

*(While he has worked himself up she has unnoticed produced a small switchblade, which she now with all her might thrusts into his throat straight in the carotid.)*

*Said (bellows)* Aaaaarrghhh! *(spurts blood and collapses over her. Disgusted she heaves him over down to the floor.)*

*Gulnare* What tastelessness! You do indeed transcend all others in total lack of style! You didn't even understand that I actually tried to save your life, did you? One single sensible word from you would have saved both yours and Conrad's. Now it is too late. *(rises from the bed all bloody.)* I will have to wash before I proceed, but now at least the worst is over. *(goes towards the bathroom)*

### Scene 3. Conrad's cell.

*Conrad* Am I alive or dead? That is my chief uncertainty. My execution is decided but not implemented. I have learned that I will die in the most inhuman possible manner but learn no details, while time just passes on and gets slower by every second. Pasha Said promised me that the darkness, stench and loneliness would drive me mad, but the less space and circumstance I get to live, the better gets my perspective of life, the clearer my thoughts and security, the more I love and life most of all, and the poorer seems to me Said and everything he represents, yes, all the power in the world is reduced to nothing by the obvious sovereignty of the individual in his loneliness, which nothing and not even death can break. I am free,

Said, in all my imprisoned fug, while you are hopelessly chained in the suicidal corruption of the blind alley of your power. And I will never be more free than when you at last start murdering me, and while you are at it I will never cease mocking you with such scorn, that it will keep pursuing you to your death until you yourself lie there in the ruins of the one-sided nothingness of your ridiculously ambitious vanity. – But I see some light approaching my prison door, it is not some ordinary prison guard but a delicate and cautious female being, bringing eternally new rays of hope.

*(through the aperture of the door)* – Gulnare, is that you?

*Gulnare (now dressed in white, locks up the door from outside)* It is done.

*Conrad* What is done?

*Gulnare* Said's death sentence is carried out but only on himself.

*Conrad* What have you done?

*Gulnare* Murdered him.

*Conrad* You are lost! You have sacrificed yourself!

*Gulnare* No, I have made it better. I have stowed away Said's body. He is gone for a journey. His authority was so tremendous, that no one will ask any questions. I have his seal ring. I can open all doors with it, and no one has any right to question it. Everybody knows that I was his first concubine.

*Conrad* Gulnare! You risked everything!

*Gulnare* No, I did not risk anything. I am not alone. All my sisters in the harem are with me. They don't know yet what I have done, but they can suspect it, and no one there was locked up as a sex slave of their free will, since most of us were Christians. God is dead. The Greek gods live with all nature, for we were also helped from the outside. Your friends have returned, and they are now waiting to take us all on board.

*Conrad (impressed)* I couldn't have done it better myself. How many are we?

*Gulnare* About fifty.

*Conrad* And there is room on the ship?

*Gulnare* We'll have to borrow an extra ship from Said. He won't object.

*Conrad* You stun me with wonder.

*Gulnare* Don't think but act. Time is only on our side as long as we act fast with determination. We have to get down to the ship at once.

*Conrad* You lead the way. I follow.

*Gulnare* I know all the shortcuts and underground gangways of the castle. We will soon be outside. Come! *(She takes him by the hand and drags him along out. They vanish.)*

Act IV scene 1. On board.

Conrad and Gulnare resting on deck in each other's arms.

*Gulnare* Can you forgive me. Conrad?

*Conrad* Forgive you for what?

*Gulnare* I am a murderess, and I actually don't know myself why I did it. Perhaps it was just for egoistic reasons, to liberate myself and my sisters.

*Conrad* No one else could have done it. If he had lived we would all be dead.

*Gulnare* Especially you. I tried to plead for the sense of allowing you to live. You would have got him a considerable ransom. But he was blinded by feeling violated by your trespassing into his harem. He saw nothing but the sacrosanctity of his own sexual territory, where only he himself had any right of violation. You came too close on him.

*Conrad* Poor man. I never could understand the muslim harem system. It must be extremely impractical and costly.

*Gulnare* It is just all vanity.

*Conrad* I am also a murderer. I have killed many in my piracies.

*Gulnare* But that is your profession. You are a soldier of the sea. For a woman it is never natural to kill.

*Conrad* I don't think you had any choice.

*Gulnare* He gave me no choice.

*Conrad* In my vanity I first thought you had carried through your splendid mission for my sake.

*Gulnare* That motive would have been enough, since you have another.

*Conrad* You know it.

*Gulnare* As you see. Who is she?

*Conrad* Your contrary in everything, as weak and vulnerable as you are bold and experienced, as soft and warm as you can be ruthlessly cold-blooded, as delicate as you are hardy.

*Gulnare* Does she know about me?

*Conrad* No.

*Gulnare* What will she say when you bring me home with you?

*Conrad* We shall see. I am used to improvising.

*Gulnare* I neither wish to bereave her of you nor you of her.

*Conrad* Tell her that,.

*Gulnare* She must learn our history.

*Conrad* Is it necessary?

*Gulnare* I think so. How long have you known her?

*Conrad* A few years..

*Gulnare* No longer?

*Conrad* She really knows nothing about me.

*Gulnare* That was the case in most of your affairs. They never learned anything.

*Conrad* It was best that way.



*Gulnare* It is your choice, Conrad. Both she and I only have to accept it.  
*Conrad* I must take both of you into consideration.  
*Gulnare* I am sure you will.  
*Conrad* Gulnare, we have time for love here on board before we reach port.  
*Gulnare* Can I take it? And then face her? It could be another Said situation.  
*Conrad* You could be very good friends, like sisters.  
*Gulnare* Has she loved you, like I have?  
*Conrad* At least as much.  
*Gulnare* Then we had better never meet.  
*Conrad* Why?  
*Gulnare* We would both consider each other as having raped your soul.  
*Conrad* And haven't you?  
*Gulnare* Yes.  
*Conrad* So you are colleagues.  
*Gulnare* Conrad, we both want you for ourselves. Make your choice now, or I will never come ashore.  
*Conrad* An impossible choice.  
*Gulnare* Then I remain on board. As soon as you have stepped ashore I will sail on.  
*Conrad* Can you be that rude?  
*Gulnare* On the contrary. I leave her in peace from me and you in peace with her.  
*Conrad* Total self-sacrifice, in other words.  
*Gulnare* You have to choose, Conrad. No woman can accept a harem condition. I will wait on board until you give me a signal that either everything is well ashore or that you come with me.  
*Conrad* Where?  
*Gulnare* That's for you to decide.  
*Conrad* You give me a chance, and I take it.  
*Gulnare* Then we are agreed.  
*Conrad* Then perhaps we have only one chance to make love before we depart.  
*Gulnare* I waited for this moment for eight years. Only my longing kept me alive through all my humiliations.  
*Conrad* Then I am yours for tonight.  
*Gulnare* Let us at least go down below deck.  
*(They go down below deck.)*

Scen 2. Ashore.

*Juan* It isn't true!  
*Gonzalves* Unfortunately it is all too true.  
*Juan* No cause? No reason?  
*Gonzalves* No one can understand anything.

Juan But we have prevailed!

Gonzalves Yes, but no one here knew about it.

Conrad (*enters*) What is the matter? What has happened?

Juan You don't want to know this, Conrad.

Conrad What is it I don't want to know?

Juan The truth, when it strikes at heart.

Conrad Is it something about Medora? I notice the villa is quiet and dark.

Gonzalves She is dead, Conrad.

Conrad (*can't take it*) Dead? But why?

Gonzalves You are not alone. No one can understand it.

Conrad She threatened with suicide, but only if I did not return.

Juan It wasn't suicide. Her heart just seems to have failed by the all too pressing nervous strains of incertitude.

Conrad I must speak to her maid.

Juan She is here. Her body is here also.

Conrad Where?

Juan (*shows*) In there.

Conrad (*moves immediately to a closed room, which opens, a completely void and white room, where Medora is lying on a lit de parade on her back with clasped hands and flowers adorning her body also in her hands. Her maid is kneeling beside her.*)

Let me drown you in flowers, my love, when kisses no longer are able to pay my tribute. Alas, this was the most infamous undeserved fate that could have befallen us! No wonder then, that you were so desperately exaggeratedly concerned about my mission! It was not my death that threatened but only your own, which no one could foresee. So young, so beautiful, so captivating as never before even in death, since I feel your spirit alive and desperately trying to convey your excuse for what no one can be held accountable, since no one could imagine this could happen! Still I am to blame for everything, who alone by my absence and departure became the cause of your death. Alas, this is way too bitter for us all! (*falls down on his knees by her, sobbing in her bosom.*)

Maid It was not your fault, captain Conrad.

Conrad Yes, they will reiterate that forever, and still it was only my fault.

Juan Captain, what will you do?

Conrad What do you suggest?

Juan We still have much to do. The struggle for freedom for Greece has only started.

Conrad Yes, I know, but I am now out of all wars and adventures. It has cost me a love that was too valuable to be risked, and it was one loss too many. I have failed too many women, this one deserved to be let down least of all, and now there remains only one heart left for me, which I don't wish to ever let down. She is the one who is waiting on my ship. I am sorry, my friends, but I will sail away with her and vanish.

Gonzalves This comes as something of a surprise.

*Conrad (rising)* I have no choice. The only thing that matters in life, and the only true duty you have as a human being, is to love, and I really must not fail her now, when I have been so betrayed by my own destiny. You will have to war without me. This might actually have been the victory that could decide the war for you.

*Juan (to Gonzalves)* We have no right to hold him back against his will.

*Gonzalves (takes Conrad's hand)* Thanks for everything, captain, and we shall never forget you.

*Conrad* Thank *you* for good fights and a wonderful companionship.

*Juan* May we know your destination?

*Conrad* No, Juan, you may not. Just let me disappear. Remember me like I was to you in battle at my best, and let me then just live on piously in your memories as one lost beyond the rainbow of love's rosy glimmer of romance, for only there I desire to stay on in eternity. I had better break up at once, for Gulnare is expecting me. Farewell. Live well and long, and pray excuse me. (*leaves*).

*Gonzalves* What do you think? Will he be back?

*Juan* No, Gonzalves, he will never be back, but nevertheless he will remain with us forever.

*Gonzalves* Is that supposed to be some comfort?

*Juan* No, my dear friend, just a statement of naked facts, another being that the struggle always will keep us moving on.

*(They go out together. Only the maid remains, as whiteclad with her hair let out as the blonde body, mourning at her side.)*

*The End,*

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*(Dharamsala 26.10.2009,  
translated in March 2022)*