

"THE QUEEN OF CARMINIA"

A DRAMA
IN FOUR ACTS



By
Agnes Jane Stibbs

BELIZE, B. H.
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The Queen of Carminia.

Cast of Characters.

ILLA—Queen of Carminia.

ELAM—A Christian Priest of Carminia.

SIDONIA—A Chaldean, High Priestess in the Temple of Duara.

CHEDOR—A Heathen Priest.

CHARICLES—Prince of Parthia.

TESMAR—Brother to the Prince.

LANDO—A Parthian.

ATTENDANT—To Queen Illa.
Nobles, etc., etc.

Costumes.

ILLA—FIRST DRESS—Loose white dress lightly girdled around the waist.
Wreath of Roses.

SECOND DRESS—Rich dress and crown; dress made somewhat
in Greek style.

ELAM—Plain large loose black robe simply girdled around the waist.

SIDONIA—Rich purple dress and loose robe with trimmings of gold
fringe and golden arabesque figures. Long wide sleeves lined with
crimson. Long crimson scarf to wind around the waist. Hair in
long braids just behind the ears, short curls across the forehead
with pendant ornaments in the centre and over the temples. Net-
work of Jewels over the head falling between the braids. Crimson
sandals.

CHEDOR—Purple robe trimmed with gold.

CHARICLES—Rich claret coloured loose coat coming just above the
knee, richly trimmed with gold. Jewelled belt. Long Scarf of
silk, centre of it fastened at the waist under the right arm, and
crossing the breast held on the left shoulder by a rich clasp.
Jewelled Coronet. Tights. Sandals.

TESMAR—Same as Charicles, but of a lighter color and trimmings of
silver. Fillett for head.

LANDO—Same as Charicles but plainer.

NOBLES, etc.—In same fashion of dress as Charicles, with slight
alterations.



THE QUEEN OF CARMINIA.

ACT FIRST.

SCENE FIRST—Court of the Temple of Duara.

Charicles discovered leaning on Tesmar's arm.

Charicles—I pray thee chide me, no longer, my brother, I will try to dispel this unwonted feeling of despondency, but well thou knowest I am not used to have my arms set at naught. I expected no hard won victory, but an easy one, and behold I have won none at all! Wonder struggles with disappointment in my heart.

Tesmar—Nay Charicles, thou canst not say thou hast won naught; for even though Carminia hath not fallen into our hands yet have we taken many prisoners and much spoil.

Charicles—True, and the city will doubtless yet accept such terms of peace as I may offer.

Tesmar—Touching the matter of the surrender of Carminia I am not so confident as thou dost seem to be. The country is large, the city well defended, and these prisoners have fallen into our hands, rather by chance than as the reward of valor. I speak not to discourage thee, for well thou knowest Charicles, that my all, nay my very life is in thy hands. What can I do for thee?

Charicles—I thank thee Tesmar and right well I know thy love is true! I know the difficulties attending the taking of Carminia, I know as well as thou dost that there is not a Carminian but would gladly offer his life at the word of their brave Queen Illa. Yet 'tis not these difficulties that I dread. Come, (draws Tesmar near him.) I will tell thee my secret thought. Didst thou not observe the glittering symbol raised high above the palace walls? I am told they worship a strange God, and methinks that symbol is a charm, granted by him, to render their city impregnable. What sayst thou?

Tesmar—I did observe it brother, and the same symbol was also borne beside the royal banner. I'll not deny that I also have thought as thou dost, yet we will not be

disheartened, but implore our Gods, and raising the image of the serpent of Duara upon our banners, follow thee to conquest!

Charicles—Nay my brother, for my very soul would sicken in the moment of Victory; I like not to witness scenes of pain and death, dost thou not recall the maiden who on her knees prayed for the life of the aged man, who seemed but to think of her? My heart trembled at the sight Tesmar!

Tesmar—Thy heart is not wont to tremble Charicles, yet I do not wonder that it softened then. I do well remember her. Lando told me, in the moment when he seized her, that she should be offered in sacrifice to our God, the great Duara! Lando himself hath strictly cared for her, crowning her each day with fresh flowers, and giving for her use the daintiest meats and richest perfumes, thus preparing her for the sacrifice.

Charicles—(Starting.) Is she indeed to be sacrificed? Ah! I feared so! Yet why do I speak thus, Duara can but be pleased with her, and I owe him a rich offering for his protecting care over me. When will the sacrifice be made?

Tesmar—Lando hath had her in charge some twenty days, but if I mistake not, our High Priestess doth reserve the rich morsel for some great occasion.

Charicles—I pray thee tell me Tesmar, is there not a prophecy that saith great good shall be brought to Parthia during the reign of Charicles by a captive maiden? And, if it so readeth, may not this be the one? (speaks eagerly.)

Tesmar—Dismiss the thought my brother, thou hast surely forgotten our highly favored priestess, Sidonia, who in her infancy was brought a captive from Chaldea. Seest thou not in her the captive maiden?

Charicles—(Sighing,) aye, true, I had hoped—but come, Tesmar, let us seek the temple, this weariness of heart grows upon me. I pray thee make known to Sidonia the sadness that oppresses me, and tell her that I would seek counsel of the Gods.

Tesmar—With all my heart my prince, and if the Gods counsel thee to seek new conquests, thou shalt find me ever by thy side.
(*Exit both.*)

SCENE SECOND — Interior of Temple.

Image of the God, at his feet a tripod containing fire.
In front of that a low broad altar.

Chedor standing near the altar.

Carmi in chains standing near Lando.

Enter Charicles attended by Tesmar.

Chedor—We are summoned here, oh! Prince, by the voice of our High Priestess to offer sacrifice to our God. I pray thee cast aside that look of gloom, for see she comes, the favorite of the Gods—the mighty Sidonia!

(All bow low as Sidonia enters with the sacrificial knife, approaches the altar.)

Sidonia—Mighty God! thy priestess bows before thee! (kneels as do the others.) Great Duara the sacrifice to-day is rich and rare. These, thy servants implore thy favor! (rises) Bring hither the sacrifice!

Chedor brings Carmi forward, casts her backward upon the altar, and retires.

Sidonia—For thee, oh Prince, this sacrifice is made. Thou bearest a gloomy brow because, for the first time thy arms have been defeated, the throbbing heart of this captive shall tell us why! and as it slowly consumes in presence of our God, thou mayest contemplate new conquests, for Duara will smile upon thy arms!

(As she is about to strike the knife into Carmi's heart Lando throws himself at the feet of Charicles. All start to their feet.)

Lando—Mercy, oh! Prince. Mercy for the innocent victim! there is but one God and that one is not Duara! Fear *his* anger, oh Prince, nor hope to win his smiles should the pure blood of yonder captive maiden stain this unholy altar! Why should she die? Because she is a captive, and a Christian? Then the award of death be also mine, for here, before ye all, I do affirm that I too am a Christian!

(Lando rises and stands with bowed head a little on one side, near Charicles.)

Chedor—Listen to his blasphemy! Here, at the very foot of the altar, he dare confess his crime! Let them both perish!

Charicles—Silence!

Chedor—I dare not be silent! The just anger of our God must be appeased, this insult washed away with blood! Duara demands the sacrifice of this christian maiden!

Seest thou not how she hath already by her sorceries caused the noble Lando to insult his God? Behold the treasure which spite of chains and terror she still clasps closely to her breast! Demand that she show it to thee, it is the charm of the God her people worship! Behold she seeks to usurp the office of our mighty priestess, Sidonia, the favorite of the Gods!

Sidonia—Defend me not, oh Chedor, my power is all sufficient for myself. I do but wait to hear the issue of this argument. 'Tis passing strange, and anger is displaced by wonder. Speak Charicles, what sayest thou?

Charicles—Release the maiden, I would speak with her. (They place her before him). Speak maiden, what dost thou keep concealed in thy bosom? Why hast thou caused Lando to blaspheme his God?

Carmi—Prince, I am a christian! The God whom I adore is our one Lord and Saviour, and happily he is no longer a strange God to the noble Lando. This charm, (putting her hand in her bosom) as thou dost call it, is but the symbol of my faith (holds up cross) an image of the cross where on my God, inspired by more than human love, gave up his life to save mankind!

Charicles—Thine is a strange faith maiden, that calls for the death *of a God!* How can this be?

Carmi—I pray thee Prince question my aged companion, the good priest Elam, he will make clear to thee all that is now so mysterious, and I call the saints to witness that a great joy floods my heart as I listen to thy question, for by questioning thou shalt learn truth, and soon know there is no power in such Gods as thou here dost worship!

Sidonia—Now by the Gods the maiden speaketh boldly! 'Tis well; her heart will but more readily resolve our doubts and be more worthy of our God.

Chedor—Beware of the Christian; oh Prince, she would lure thee to thy destruction; question her not, tempt not the wrath of Duara!

Charicles—Enough! I forbid the sacrifice.

(Sidonia starts violently.)

Chedor—Prince!

Charicles—Peace, Chedor; I will in private question this young maiden. There is something suits well my heart in the idea of a God who sacrificed himself to save mankind! I would know more of this God, (to Carmi.) Thou art free. Release her Lando. (It is done.) Thou shalt teach me concerning thy faith, and then will I send thee back to Carminia.

Carmi—Prince! I will pray my God to be merciful unto thee, even as thou hast shown merey unto me.

Charicles—Lando, thou wilt take this maiden once more into thy careful keeping, and let her aged friend bear her company. Lady, from this moment thou art free, but I pray thee tarry yet a few days in Parthia that I may ask thee questions which fill my mind in regard to the God whose attribute is love.

Carmi—My Prince, again I thank thee, but more than all for this opportunity thou hast granted me of making known to thee my God. I will gladly stay, until such time as thou art willing to let me go.

Charicles—'Tis well. Thou shalt have safe escort as I have promised, even my brother Tesmar. (Turning to Chedor.) Chedor, canst thou not satisfy our God with some other kind of sacrifice?

Chedor—Duara will accept no sacrifice but that of a living heart.

Sidonia—Duara asks no mean sacrifice, oh Prince, nor shall the sacrificial knife of Sidonia be stained with aught but human blood! Still some few faithful hearts bow before me, (Tesmar approaches and kneels), and mighty being thou shalt be avenged! (throws incense on the fire and casts herself at the foot of the altar.) Gods! help thy priestess! She will not see thee insulted nor thine altar robbed of its offering. Inspire me oh Duara!

(A long pause, during which a large serpent crawls upon the altar.

All start back amazed.)

Chedor—Lady! behold Duara hath heard thee! *The Deadly Serpent of Duara* whose very *breath* is death, hath answered thy call! For the first time in a hundred years hath the serpent appeared to a priestess!

Listen to its whisperings, mighty Sidonia, so shalt thou be wise.

(A pause during which the serpent crawls nearer to Sidonia.
She appears to listen and then starts up.)

Sidonia—Behold through the golden mist that surrounds me I see the form of Charicles, Prince of Parthia, and at his feet the noble Lando! Above his head, sparkling with transcendent glory, lo! *a kingly crown* and above that a strange symbol like to that clasped in the hand of the captive! Ah! the crown is placed upon the brow of Charicles by a virgin's hand, but dark clouds swiftly encircle the royal feet and destruction rises in his path! Behold a maiden must die ere Charicles can wear the crown, but the maiden's death secures it! Over the dead bodies of the maiden and her lover Charicles mounts an Emperor's throne!

(Stands as if inspired.)

Chedor—(Seizing the captive.) The Gods have spoken! Let the maiden's death secure the crown.

(Sidonia lifts her knife, Charicles darts between them.)

Charicles—Nay Sidonia, thou shalt not strike the maiden save through my heart!

Sidonia—For the first time since I entered the temple has my will been disputed, nay, more, *defeated*. Ah! (starts violently.) What was the prophecy uttered by the dying priestess the night I was placed in the temple? Speak Chedor, I would hear it again.

Chedor—Lady! thou knowest that inspired by the Gods she prophesied that the Chaldean captive should be the most favored priestess that ever served Duara! She promised thee a power not to be disputed by Gods themselves; she declared thy will should be law in the land; and it hath been so!

Sidonia—My will! aye, What said she more concerning my will? (Chedor hesitates.) Speak when I command!

Chedor—She said that if thrice thy will was defeated thou shouldst no longer be a mighty priestess, but the slave of a strange God!

(Chedor falls upon his knees.)

Sidonia—A slave? Sidonia, *a slave?* No! not even to a God! Coward! Thou art now frightened because for *once* I have been disobeyed. Take courage Chedor, I will make the Gods themselves liars but my will shall still be law. Their own companions shall bow before me, and hearken to my command! speaks to serpent.) Thou dread companion of Duara, listen to my voice, and know thy ruler. Return at once whither, thou didst come, and there await my call.

(The serpent crawls back.)

Who dare contend with Sidonia now?

(All fall upon their knees except Lando, who supports Carmi.)

DISPOSITION OF CHARACTERS.

... Altar ...

SIDONIA.

CHEDOR.

LANDO.

CARMI.

TESMAR.

CHARICLES.

Curtain on First Act.

ACT SECOND.

SCENE FIRST—Doors of the temple. Enter Sidonia, walks moodily across, as she turns to go back enter Chedor behind her.

Chedor—Fair lady and mighty priestess, pardon this seeming intrusion upon thy solitude, but to thy humble servant thy countenance seemeth clouded, and thy heart ill at ease. Can Chedor serve thee?

Sidonia—Faithful heart thou shalt have thy reward. Aye, thou canst serve me. I would see Charicles, and see him alone, go, bid him at once to my presence.

Chedor—Thou shalt see him, but I cannot say the hour. He but now prepares an escort to bear the christian maiden to her home. He also sends his brother Tesmar as ambassador to Queen Illa.

Sidonia—For what purpose?

Chedor—Lady, he hath had no thought but of Carminia for many days. Thou knowest he hath spent hours, and days, in company with the Carminian captive, and now he seeks a peace where he could force a conquest. Should Carminia become his, he will exchange his princely coronet for a kingly crown.

Sidonia—(Speaking to herself.) The manner of Charicles doth seem soft and tender, can it be that he still loves Sidonia?

Chedor—Charicles loves—but not Sidonia!

Sidonia—(Fiercely) Slave! How darest thou read my thoughts? Thou dost trifle with thy miserable life! Yet speak—whom does he love, if not Sidonia?

Chedor—Carmi, the christian maiden whom he released not many days since. Hast thou not seen it?

Sidonia—Silence! Nor dare to question me. Go, bid Charicles come hither, tell him that *I command* his presence.

Chedor—Lady—Should I—

Sidonia—Thou darest to pause when I command? (Chedor bows low and exits.) 'Tis well, he hath obeyed me.

(Enter Charicles.)

Charicles—Fair lady, Chedor bid me to thy presence, somewhat rudely it is true, yet still I came. (bows before her.)

Sidonia—Thou art ever welcome, Charicles, most welcome to Sidonia. I have much to say to thee.

Charicles—I pray thee say it hastily Sidonia, matters of high import call me away.

Sidonia—Thou dost unwillingly spare a moment to poor Sidonia?

Charicles—(Surprized) Poor. Thou the favorite of the Gods poor. Nay, Sidonia, thy wand is far more powerful than my sceptre.

Sidonia—True, and yet thou dost unwillingly grant me one poor minute, (going from him.) Ah, Charicles, thou dost not care for me.

Charicles—(Follows and takes her hand.) I do, I do indeed, so far as an humble Prince dare love a mighty priestess. Thou art consecrated to the Gods and I have not dared—

Sidonia—(Turning suddenly.) Dare! What may a lover not dare? I may be a mighty priestess, Charicles, yet I love with a woman's heart. Once, Charicles, when I was but an humble captive from a strange land, thou wert not indifferent to me, but now—Ah, thou hast answered me, thou lovest me not.

Charicles—Sidonia, thou dost grieve and alarm me! Thou hast served me often (with much feeling) and my deepest gratitude is thine, nay more, my fondest friendship I gladly dedicate to thee, but my warmest love—True Sidonia, once before thou wert placed in the temple, I loved thee, but when thou wert consecrated to the Gods, I crushed the feeling in my heart, and do regret if all unknowingly I have kept thy love, I would not have thee suffer one moment's pain.

(Charicles speaks with much feeling showing deep pity and sorrow, holding her hands clasped on his bosom.)

Sidonia—Friendship! Gratitude! Oh! Gods, he would not see me suffer one moment's pain, yet wrings my heart with keener anguish than if 'twere pierced by sacrificial knife; Love thee! Ah Charicles thou knowest not how I do love thee. Thou art the only one upon whom I have

ever looked with favor. When my eyes rest upon a tall and stately tree I think but of thy manly form, do graceful flowers woo my glance—they mind me of thy gentle kindness! The sparkling stars of heaven serve but to recall thy dear eyes, where so oft I 've seen a glance of love! Do storms arise?—still, still—I think of thee. My every thought is thine—my every heart beat syllables thy name! Tell me Charicles, hast thou ever known such love?

Charicles—'Tis even thus my brother Tesmar loves thee Sidonia!

Sidonia—Why dost thou speak to me of Tesmar? Hast *thou* ever so loved?

Charicles—Nay Sidonia, my heart is given half to ambition, Honor! Glory!

Sidonia—Ha! says't thou so? then indeed thy heart shall *all* be mine, for I can make thee *richer! grander! greater!* than thy wildest ambition ever bid thee hope to be! In a moment, at my word, the treasures of the earth or sea, are thine! Behold!!

(Move her hands with a weird movement; scene opens disclosing most brilliant scenery, treasures, etc. Suspended in air a glittering Crown. Red light on, or brilliant white.)

(Charicles starts in amaze.)

Seest thou that glittering crown? It rested on the brows of thy ancestors when Parthia was a mighty kingdom! For twice two hundred years it hath been lost, behold! the Gods have revealed it to me, with all the secret power it bestows upon its possessor! *It shall be thine Charicles!* By *my* power Parthia shall be made great among the nations, and Kings shall serve at thy footstool! *Hath not the Gods said?*

Charicles—The crown of my ancestors! The crown of my ancestors! For this have I hoped, dreamed, fought, and now do my ambitious wishes reach toward their fulfilment! (Paces the stage in great excitement.) The crown of Parthia! Aye it shall be mine; Carminia shall be but a province, Aria shall be my footstool. Nay, Media and Babylon shall acknowledge my power. My beloved country shall once more be great in the annals of nations, and Charicles shall be its King! (Stops abruptly before Sidonia.) Thou canst do all this Sidonia?

(He opens his arms she rushes into them.)

Sidonia—Aye, *and more!* All, all, shall be thine! Wealth! Power! Glory! Love! My power shall be *thy* slave! Ah! what height canst thou *not* reach, with my true heart for thy stepping-stone to greatness!

Charicles—(Pressing her to his bosom) I will not trample on thy loving heart, not even to raise myself to Heaven!

Sidonia—I know thou wilt not, and so I'll be content; for if thou lovest me not so warmly now—in time, when I have proven my devotion, I will win thy love! (embraces him.)

Charicles—(Starting back and speaking aside.) Love! ah! I have plighted that to Carmi the captive! (aloud.) I barter then, my heart for a crown? (pause.) Sidonia I cannot do it! Beautiful! Loving; Glorious as thou art, my heart refuses thee its allegiance! I cannot give thee my love!

Sidonia—Oh think what thou dost forfeit Charicles! Wealth such as no mortal ever yet possessed. Power-co-equal with the Gods! Love—a love Charicles that Gods themselves might think a crown of glory to win! See! I who never bowed to mortal before, humbly cast myself into the dust at thy feet. Thy very slave!

(Voice from above, apparently not heard by them, speaks.)

Voice—Alas! She owns herself a slave and knows it not!

(Charicles bends over Sidonia almost embracing her, turns away, then eagerly starts toward her again, at last turning aside throws up his hands and speaks in the most excited manner.)

Charicles—God of the Christians help me to resist this Almighty temptation! (Pause)
(turning to Sidonia) Lady, the God whom my heart seeketh would not smile upon the kingdom won by the sorceries. Thou shouldst not kneel to me Sidonia!

(Attempts to raise her, she resists.)

Sidonia—Wouldst thou close the gate of that Heaven thou hopest to win upon *me* Charicles? A mighty conflict tears my heart! The powers of good and evil wrestle for possession of Sidonia! Oh! Charicles, loose not my last hold on that Heaven thou seekest, but save me by the power of thy love!

Charicles—Sidonia, thou dost distract my heart with grief! I cannot! I cannot! Thou dost force me to tell thee I love another, my heart doth hold another image.—

Sidonia—(Suddenly interrupting, and springing to her feet.)
 Name her not! Gods that my knife had pierced her bosom
 as she lay upon the altar! Charicles! every glance of
 thine eyes is dearer to me than the light of day, yet ere
 I'd have them look lovingly upon another I'd gladly see
 them closed forever! For one caress of *love* from thy
 lips I'd barter every hope of Heaven but rather than they
 should press another's cheek, with joy I'd see them cold
 and still in death! Thou has scorned my love, and now
 shalt thou know what 'tis to feel a woman's hate! *I have*
warned thee! I can love, aye and *I can hate also;*
 and know ye not that she who warmest loves can most
 devoutly hate! Go! Go on thy way, proud heartless
 Prince, pursued by the hatred of a woman scorned, and
 the vengeance of a Priestess of the Gods!

(Charicles falls on his knees.)

(Blue or green light.)

Curtain on Second Act.

ACT THIRD.

SCENE FIRST—Throne room in the Palace of Queen Illa
 of Carminia. Ella seated on the throne.

Elam the priest standing near her. Lords around.

(Enter an Attendant.)

Attendant—My gracious Queen, art thou now ready to
 receive the noble gentleman who formed thy escort?

Illa—Quite ready. Admit them to our presence.

(Attendant bows low goes out and returns ushering in Tesmar
 and Lando. They kneel at the foot of the throne.
 Sidonia disguised peeps in.)

Illa—Most noble Tesmar, I greet thee! Good Lando welcome!

(They start up in surprize.)

Lando—'Tis Carmi the Captive!

Illa—Thou speakest truly Lando, and to thee Queen Illa
 owes her life, for when the humble captive lay bound upon
 the altar 'twas thy voice, raised in entreaty, caused Charic-
 cles to forbid the sacrifice. For this I shall ever hold thee
 in grateful remembrance!

Lando—Great Queen, I knew not that Carmi the Captive and Queen Illa were one. I pray thee (kneels) forgive my presumptuous words of love to Carmi.

Illa—I have nothing to forgive good Lando, thy words were ever gentle and such as any maiden Queen or Captive might listen to. I thank Heaven who threw me into thy hands, and so made me the instrument of its good-will to Parthia. Noble Tesmar, I know the message thou bearest to the Queen of Carminia, yet I pray thee utter the words of thy brother, Prince Charicles.

Tesmar—(Kneeling) My Royal Lady, I scarce know in what terms to word my brother's demand, for right well do I know that he would never wrest a crown from the brow of Carmi. Indeed I may not deny that he hath confided to me his heartfelt desire to place upon her brow the crown of Parthia. Yet if thou wilt have his words, (rises) here before these nobles, I do demand in the name of Charicles, Prince of Parthia, the peaceful surrender of the kingdom and crown of Carminia.

Illa—Thou hast spoken well Tesmar! I pray thee bear to thy noble brother words of courteous greeting. Tell him that Illa hath heard that he is a Christian, and she so looks to the welfare of her people that, putting aside all maiden diffidence, she offers him her hand and crown. (To the priest) Father! have I spoken well?

Elam—My child, God himself hath put the words into thy mouth. For this sacrifice which thou hast made of thy heart and crown, for the good of thy people, thou wilt surely win a rich reward in heaven!

Illa—Nay father; thou dost grant me more than I merit. I *might* have been willing to make the sacrifice, but in this case the heart of Illa goes with her hand. While she instructed Charicles in the truths of Christianity he taught her to love, and the noble Prince did not hesitate to plight his faith to the humble captive. I would hear what he doth say to the offer of Queen Illa's hand, I doubt not he will refuse it. I beg thee Tesmar tell Prince Charicles that Illa doth eagerly await his reply, but prays that whether it be yea or nay that he say it to her with his own lips, that they may treat further concerning the crown of Carminia.

Tesmar—(Bowling low) I will deliver thy words most noble lady, and I do thank the Gods for the turn this affair hath taken.

Illa—The Gods? Thou art not a Christian Tesmar?

Tesmar—Nay madam, I still worship Duara, the God of Sidonia!

Illa—(Aside) 'Tis *Sidonia* he worships not her God. (Comes down speaking aloud) And now Tesmar, farewell, keep for me the secret of Carmi.

(He takes her hand kneels and kisses it.)

Scene closes.

SCENE SECOND—A wood path.

(Enter Sidonia meeting Chedor.)

Chedor—Lady, thou hast not been in the Temple for many days. Has thou in solitude sought new favors from the Gods?

Sidonia—No! I have been to Carminia.

Chedor—To Carminia!

Sidonia—Aye! To Carminia. Disguised I followed Tesmar, and when the Captive left him I followed *her*. She entered the Palace doors. Soon came Tesmar with his train, and then what thinkest thou I saw?

Chedor—Lady I dare not say!

Sidonia—Then I'll tell thee! I saw *Carmi the captive* seated upon the throne of Carminia! To *her* was the demand of Charicles made! There will be no more question concerning the surrender of the crown, for 'tis Illa that Charicles loves, and she hath charged Tesmar to make an offer of her hand to his brother! Duara hath been false to me! Why did he not warn me of the danger in my path? Oh! my heart burns for vengeance on him in his high state!

Chedor—(In horror) Lady defy not the Gods lest they crush thee in their anger!

Sidonia—Defy the Gods! I defy any power that comes between my desires and the fulfilment of them! I love him no longer, but Gods! so bitter shall be my vengeance, the Gods of destruction shall envy me!

Chedor—Devote thyself to Duara lady, seek aid and comfort there from him.

Sidonia—Nay! I'll devote myself to Vengeance. Go! bid Tesmar seek me, he expects the summons and will come at once.

Exit Chedor.

My plan is inspired by the Gods, for 'tis they have given me this weird power! But if I should fail? Nay, I will *not* fail! Tesmar is too completely the slave of my will. But 'tis not in these dreary woods that I would meet him. I must have every aid my power can give.

(Waves her wand. Scene opens disclosing a magnificent apartment, furnished in oriental style.)

~~16~~ (Fine opportunity for a transformation scene.)

Now then Sidonia, prove thy right to the title of Enchantress, or relinquish it forever! (goes up.) He tarries! (looks off.) What meaneth he? (Walks about, pauses often then sits in an attitude of deep dejection.) He will come, for he is true and faithful, if I could have loved him—But no 'tis Charicles I love! (pause) Ah Charicles, couldst thou but have loved me, then indeed this guilty heart all purified by holy love might yet have hoped for heaven, but there is no hope and I am lost! lost! (looks at her hand.) What's that? A tear? Away thou pearly drops that prove me but a woman still, and Vengeance do thou fill this heart, where love once sat enthroned!

(Enter Tesmar.)

Ah! Tesmar.

Tesmar—(Casting himself at her feet.) Sidonia!

Sidonia—(Softly.) I have waited for thee my Tesmar, the time seemed long!

Tesmar—Believe me I came upon the wings of Love! So long have I worshipped thee Sidonia, and met not in thine eyes an answering gleam of love that now thou hast given me a ray of hope, my soul is dazzled with the light!

Sidonia—Thou art a true lover Tesmar, I knew of thy love long ere thou didst tell it.

Tesmar—(Rising and gently placing his arm around her.)
I wonder even now how I ever dared approach the proud and mighty priestess with words of love, but I fancied I saw a look that was not all indifference in thine eyes and the mighty love in my heart would not be silenced. Oh! say once more Sidonia, that thou dost love me, for oh! 'tis *thee* I worship not thy God! (Embraces her lovingly.)

Sidonia—Dost thou love me so much?

Tesmar—Do I? (ardently) Would that I could so prove it; that thou wouldst never care to ask again!

Sidonia—Tell me, art thou also a Christian, Tesmar, like Charicles?

Tesmar—I? I desert the God whose priestess is Sidonia?
No! (with a gesture of scorn) I am not a christian!

Sidonia—Tesmar, thou *canst* prove thy love if thou wilt. Duara demands a sacrifice, and he hath declared it shall be offered by thee! Aye! not only doth Duara ask sacrifice but Sidonia demands revenge!

Tesmar—(Eagerly) Who hath injured thee dear love, give me his name, by Duara I will slay him!

Sidonia—He will seek me here, and thou shalt strike him to the heart!

Tesmar—Nay, that were to prove myself a coward Sidonia and unworthy of thy love.

(Without speaking Sidonia puts her arm around his neck and looks fixedly into his eyes. Tesmar sighs heavily and passes his hand over his eyes. A red or white light on.)

Sidonia—He hath wronged and insulted me, scorned and defied me! Shall I be unavenged?

Tesmar—(Dreamily.) Let us fly to some lovely lonely spot and lose ourselves in the sweets of love!

Sidonia—I will have vengeance!

Tesmar—Let us speak of love!

Sidonia—Of death rather!

Tesmar—(Rousing) And why of death dearest?

Sidonia—(Passionately) Avenge my wrongs!

Tesmar—Speak! I will do thy will!

Sidonia—He must die by thy hand.

Tesmar—Aye! ere to-morrow's sun hath risen he shall fall in fair fight!

Sidonia—He must die to-night, and as I have said! Then to-morrow Tesmar—

(Throws herself upon his bosom.)

Tesmar—(Clasping her in his arms and speaking eagerly) To-morrow thou wilt be my own! Is it not so?

Sidonia—It is so! Come to me with thy hand still red with his blood, and I will place my own within it!

Tesmar—(Speaking in a dreamy constrained tone, evidently under the influence of her will.) Alas! my soul recoils from the deed! Already I feel within my heart the moving of a mighty anguish—and yet—and yet—(pause, Sidonia regards him steadily.) Ah!—h—am I dreaming, or hast thou really asked me to do a deed I shudder even to name?

Sidonia—I will that thou shalt do it!

(Clasps him in her arms then waves her hand before his face.)

Tesmar—(With closed eyes and in a soft monotonous tone.) I can but obey thy will.

Sidonia—Aye, I knew that I should conquer! (leads him behind pillar and give him a dagger) Stand here and when I say, *I will have vengeance, strike!* And strike sure!

(Moves away from him.)

Tesmar—I can but obey thy will.

Sidonia—Aye! thou canst but obey my will! If Sidonia could feel aught of human pity 'twould be for thee Tesmar, but thou must be sacrificed to my vengeance for death will be doubly bitter to Charicles if it come from his loving brother's hand! Duara thou hast aided me, forever am I thy willing servant! By all the Gods a noble sacrifice shall be laid upon thy shrine! Thy altars shall be washed with human blood! And the incense of a burning heart ascend to thee! Aye, should all else fail, I'll offer up Sidonia's own! Duara hath indeed been kind, behold, 'tis Charicles!

(Enters Charicles.)

Charicles—Fair lady, I have come to bid thee farewell. To-morrow I set out for Carminia. My embassy hath returned and Queen Illa requests that I treat with her in person, concerning the surrender of Carminia.

Sidonia—But she hath made thee an offer of her hand Charicles; hast thou refused it?

Charicles—Truly I have, for my faith is plighted to an humble maiden!

Sidonia—And this maiden Charicles, where is she?

Charicles—Alas! I know not, Tesmar, by her own request, left her at the gates of Carminia, and I fear that evil hath befallen her for she promised me I should hear from her by Tesmar, and no word hath reached me.

Sidonia—She is false to thee Charicles; and thou didst reject my true heart for her fleeting love! Ah! listen to me once more Charicles—

Charicles—Enough—

Sidonia—Yet listen—!thou knowest not the height of power to which my love can lift thee, the depth of misery to which my hate can sink thee!

Charicles—Sidonia, if thy entreaties move me not thy threats cannot avail! Enough—I must leave thee—farewell!

Sidonia—Thou must leave me? Go then! but yet—
I will have vengeance!

(Tesmar springs from his hiding place, his dagger uplifted.
Looks wildly at Charicles, then throws himself at Sidonia's feet.
Charicles recoils in horror.)

Tesmar—(Gaspingly) Mercy Sidonia! It is—my—brother!

Sidonia—(Bending over him) Tesmar! Our bridal!

Tesmar—(Wildly) Oh! I must do her will! (starts up.)

Charicles—Tesmar, my brother, what is this?

Tesmar—Oh! I know not! I am urged onward, to eternal destruction! Save me my brother save me!

Sidonia—Thou shalt do it!

(Flashes of blue and red light.)

Tesmar—(Falling on his knees) Mercy! Mercy!

Charicles—(Standing between Tesmar and Sidonia) Demon that thou art! hast thou vowed destruction to us both?

Tesmar—(Clinging convulsively to Charicles) Save me—
Save me!

Charicles—(Lifting and shaking him) Rouse thyself, my brother! Hast thou yielded thyself, soul and body to the enchantments of this demon priestess?

Tesmar—I am going mad!

(Falls senseless into the arms of Charicles, who sinks to one knee supporting Tesmar. A voice from above speaks.)

Voice—Defeated—The *second* time! Oh! Sidonia—
Beware!

Sidonia—Charicles! Thou hast conquered! but the future is still before me! Thou shalt yet feel my hatred! Gods! to have my power defied! my love rejected! and I *Sidonia* live to say it! (falls on her knees.) Duara! thy priestess hath been faithful to thee, Oh! desert her not! My soul is on fire! grant me but vengeance on this man so do I swear to thee the blood that rages now so hotly through my heart!

Curtain on Third Act.

ACT FOURTH.

SCENE FIRST—Throne room in the Palace of Queen Illa.

Illia seated on Throne, Lords and Ladies in waiting.

Elam the Christian Priest standing near.

(Enter Attendant.)

Attendant—(Bowling low) My Queen, the noble Charicles, Prince of Parthia craves leave to present himself before you.

Illia—Admit him at once.

(Exit Attendant. Re-enters ushering in Charicles, Lando and Tesmar. Tesmar is pale and sorrowful.)

Charicles—(Kneeling) I have hastened madame, to return in person, my thanks for your kindness. I pray thee pardon my seeming discourtesy and ingratitude, I am not ungrateful, but before thou didst honor me by the offer of thy hand my heart was given to another.

Illa—I pray thee rise my Prince—

Charicles—(Starting up) By Heaven it is my Carmi! My Carmi upon the throne of Carminia! Tesmar thou knewest of this!

(Tesmar bows. Charicles goes up one step of the Throne, Illa comes down one. They embrace and Charicles hands her to seat kneeling beside her chair.)

Illa—Yes Charicles, 'twas the Queen of Carminia captive in thy hands owes the boon of life to thee! And now Charicles for the answer to thy demand I do regret (smiling) that the crown of Carminia hath caused my brow to lose its fairness in thine eyes, and that thou dost reject my hand.

Charicles—(Kissing her hands) Dearest love I do beseech thee—

Illa—Nay hear me—since thy faith is plighted to an humble maiden, and thou wilt not break it—I pray thee receive the Crown of Carminia, and so thou mayest keep thy faith with the portionless maiden.

(Takes Crown and places it on the head of Charicles.)

Tesmar—(In awed surprize) Truly the wisdom of the Serpent of Duara is great! Behold Charicles is crowned by a maiden's hand!

Charicles—But I pray thee observe Tesmar that Lando is not at my feet, neither is the Crown secured to me by a virgin's death.

Illa—Noble Tesmar thou art soon to be my brother. Wilt thou grant me one desire of my heart?

Tesmar—(Kneels) Gladly my Queen.

Illa—(Drawing cross from her bosom) I pray thee wear this in thy bosom, and grant my aged friend the privilege of explaining to thee the Christian faith.

Tesmar—(Taking the cross) My beloved Queen and sister, for so I hold thee in my heart from this moment, I will listen to thy friend, nay more I will listen right willingly, and seek to know thy God.

Illa—Heaven hath been too kind to us! Charicles, thou shalt rejoice with me!

Charicles—I do dear Illa, for well I know his listening will end in believing. And now my Queen, I pray thee say to our good father, that to-morrow he may unite us.

Illa—I am thy subject Charicles, and it shall be according to thy will.

(Elam raises his hand in an attitude of Benediction.)

Scene closes.

SCENE SECOND—Exterior of Palace.

(Enter Sidonia meeting Chedor who bears two caskets.)

Chedor—(Bowing low) My Mistress I have obeyed thy behest. Here are the caskets.

Sidonia—My faithful follower, may the Gods reward thee! (touching one of the caskets) This one Chedor?

Chedor—Contains the crown.

Sidonia—(Opening casket looking in) Thou hast eased the spring Chedor?

Chedor—Aye my lady; the crown has but to be gently placed upon the brow when the poisoned blade will spring from its concealment.

Sidonia—Tis well! Truly did I tell Charicles there was a secret power conferred by this crown upon its possessor! methinks the ancient Kings of Parthia had bold hearts to bear this crown upon their heads!

Chedor—Thou dost forget my lady, the spring was held by a tiny golden band, so held it was safe—but *now*—

Sidonia—Enough! This shall be my nuptial gift to the fair Illa, Queen of Carminia, Will the poison bring death quickly Chedor?

Chedor—Lady! Did the Gods send a lightning flash from heaven it could not kill more quickly! But place it with *sure hand, for with one blow its venom will be sped!*

Sidonia—Again 'tis well! For this crown (taking it out) Hath Charicles dreamed, hoped, fought, and now indeed do his ambitious wishes reach toward their fulfilment!

The ancient crown of Parthia! Aye! it shall be his, with my own hand will I place it upon the brow of his fair bride! (replaces it.)

Chedor—Pardon, my more than Queen, but if the crown is for Illa, for whom then is this other casket? Methought thou didst intend *this* for her, that the deadly poison floating on her breath, might carry death in her loving kiss!

Sidonia—No Chedor! Charicles shall live to mourn his love, they shall not both die! This casket (touching it) is for me Chedor, for Sidonia!

(Chedor starts back and withdraws it from her hand.)

What meanest thou? Come near (Chedor approaches reluctantly) Think'st thou Charicles will not seek to punish me when he beholds his love lying dead at his feet? Think'st thou that *I* will submit? No! I place myself beyond his power, and even in death will I still have revenge, for the poison that floats upon my breath will slay those who dare approach me! For this reason Chedor, have I chosen this mode of death (opens casket and takes serpent out) The deadly serpent of Duara!

Chedor—(Drawing back in terror and falling on his knees) Oh! lady, my mistress I implore thee! See the serpent himself doth fear to touch thee, another had been bitten on the instant! Sidonia! my adored mistress—

Sidonia—Silence—The serpent *shall* do my will—there—sink thy poisonous fangs into my bosom—

Chedor—(Catching her dress) Sidonia, mighty being--!

Sidonia—Too late Chedor! He hath bitten me already! Thou art harmless now, but all thy venom rages in my heart! Gods Chedor, but now a feeling of pity moved my heart but the serpent's bite hath vanquished it! Come Chedor let us enter the palace.

(Exit Sidonia bearing the serpent, followed by Chedor with the caskets.)

SCENE THIRD—Throne room of Illa. Charicles and Illa seated. Tesmar looking very sad. Lando near the foot of the throne. Nobles around.

Charicles—Lando! (Lando approaches) Thou hast proven thyself true and brave beyond compare. My beloved Queen owes her life to thee, and I my crown unstained by blood. Our two kingdoms shall henceforth be one, and while we hold our royal court in Parthia we do name thee Vice-roy of Carminia. Accept this golden key, emblematical of thy office.

Lando—(Kneeling and taking key) My royal master, my life hath ever been at thy service, it is so still.

(Rises and returns to place.)

Charicles—Tesmar my brother, thou hast so persistently refused all honors from my hand that I know not what to say to thee. Thy sad face is the one bitter drop in my cup of joy. What can I do for thee?

Tesmar—Nothing my brother. The world hath no charms for Tesmar. With thy permission I propose to place myself under the teaching of father Elam, hoping that some day in the future I may be found worthy to assist him in spreading the good tidings in my dear land of Parthia.

Charicles—(With much emotion) My dear brother thou hast chosen well. I will give thee then a service that may perhaps please thee. Thine be the task to destroy the banners whereon is broidered the image of the serpent of Duara, to throw down his altars and purify the Temple, wherein henceforth the praises of the true God shall be heard instead of the groans of innocent victims.

Tesmar—My king, if thou dost command, I, as thy subject, should obey, but I pray thee remember I am but a young Christian and—and—no! I will not in presence of Sidonia, cast down the God she worships! I pray thee bestow the service upon another.

Illa—(To Charicles) Thou art most thoughtless my Charicles. (To Tesmar) Dear brother believe me Sidonia shall have the highest position our royal household affords, and every tenderness shall be shown her. Do not believe that Charicles would press upon thee so ungenerous a service.

(Enter Attendant.)

Attendant—(Bowing low before the throne) My king a lady waits without craving permission to present herself before the King and Queen.

Charicles—A lady sayest thou?

Attendant—Aye a lady. Young, fair, of majestic bearing, and beautiful to behold. She desires to offer a gift with her best wishes.

Charicles—(Aside) It is Sidonia! (Aloud) Admit the lady to our presence.

(Attendant goes out, returns ushering in Sidonia and Chedor who carries the crown. Sidonia kneels.)

Sidonia—My gracious sovereign, accept the humble duty of thy servant, and permit her to offer for thy acceptance the gift whereof we spoke anon. It is offered freely, most noble Charicles, and without hope of reward, save what I may find in the feelings of my own heart. If in times past the servant hath offended thee, I pray thee grant thy gracious pardon.

Charicles—(Descending taking her hand and speaking in the most gracious manner) Rise fair lady, if in any matter thy warm temper hath caused thee to offend, thou art freely forgiven. We will accept thy gift with pleasure Illa! this lady was a Chaldean captive who was brought up in my father's palace, thou dost doubtless recognize her as the high priestess in the temple of Duara. Thine be the task, with gentle words of love, to tell her of thy God and win her heart to Him.

Illa—(Coming down and taking Sidonia's hand) Beauteous lady, thy lovely form can but enshrine a noble soul! Thou canst not be called blind for thou hast never yet been led into light. Oh! how gladly will I teach thee the truths of my religion! Already thou hast won my heart.

Sidonia—'Tis so I would have it sweet lady. Thou art happy in thy love Illa?

Illa—Oh! so happy, so joyously happy! Of all earth ills I can think of *but one* that were indeed an ill—that we be parted! Were he to die—I would go mad or die with him! Were *I* to die! oh heaven forgive me I should repine even in Paradise without him!

(Illa turns to Charicles, he takes her hand and appears to be speaking to her while Sidonia turns to Chedor.)

Sidonia—(Aside) Chedor the punishment were greater should *he* die first! Gods! as the lioness ravens for its prey, so do I thirst for her blood! (aloud) Fair Queen I have brought thee a gift which can but prove the drop will fill to overflowing thy cup of joy. I did intend to place my gift upon thine own fair brow, but so great I find thy love for Charicles I feel assured that I will more nearly touch thy heart by proffering it to him. (Takes the crown from Chedor) It is the acient crown of Parthia, the gift most ardently desired by Charicles.

Illa—How can I thank thee! (kisses her hand.)

Sidonia—(Aside) She toys with the deadly asp and knows it not! (aloud) Charicles, thy ambitious wishes have reached their fulfillment! Wilt thou allow me to place this crown of thy ancestors upon thy royal head?

(Charicles kneels before her as she is about to place the Crown on his head. Lando strikes her hand up speaking as he does so.)

Lando—Nay! I fear evil from her hand!

(The crown falls on the bosom of Chedor who falls as if struck by lightning. Charicles clasps Illa in his arms in great excitement. A moments pause the voice above speaks.)

Voice—Thrice defeated! The end draweth nigh!

Charicles—Gods! Lando thou hast saved her life again! Behold her servant upon whom the crown hath fallen lies dead at her feet! The secret power of the crown is *death*. Seize that woman, she is a wicked sorceress and shall die the death!

(They rush upon her, she draws a dagger, but they disarm her.)

Sidonia—(Scornfully) Oh! brave men! Oh! mighty King! Cowards! Cowards all! Ah! why hast thou done this? The lights are gone! The floor slips from beneath my feet!
(Sinks heavily upon their arms.)

Lando—My Prince she hath fainted.

Charicles—Rest her on yonder seat. To-morrow we will appoint her mode of death, the day after she shall die!

(They seat her.)

Illa—Nay Charicles 'tis not thus hastily that a Christian Should act, I pray thee have mercy, spare this unhappy woman, nor condemn her soul and body to death.

Lando—(Picking up the crown) Lo! the poisoned blade still remains in the bosom of Chedor, the crown hath lost its venom!

Illa—Wilt thou not spare her Charicles? 'Tis the first request thy wife makes of thee!

(The attendants move away and Sidonia springs from her seat.)

Sidonia—I am not conquered yet! Spare thy pleadings fair Queen, Sidonia fears not death! (They approach her) Stand back! A deadly poison rages in my veins and the smallest scratch from my hand is deadly as a viper's bite! Charicles! the curses of a soul forever doomed to punishment shall resound in the ears of thy God to all eternity, and perchance may drag thee down to perdition also! Gods the fires already rage in my bosom! Duara! I vowed to thee a noble sacrifice, accept Sidonia's heart!

(Falls on her knees.)

Tesmar—(Rushing forward) Sidonia! Rouse thyself! If thou hast taken poison I am skilled in them all, and yet can save thee!

Sidonia—(Holding him away from her) Nay Tesmar, I am no longer a mighty Priestess, my God hath deserted me, or he hath no power! Were I to live 'twould be but as a slave, hated! scorned! despised!

Tesmar—Not so Sidonia! I know thy every crime, and love thee still! I will save thee and—(attempts to put his arms around her.)

(Sidonia pushes him away and starts up.)

Sidonia—Approach me not! The poison of the serpent of Duara (all starts back in horror) already curdles my hearts blood, and my every whispered word is death!

(Totters back.)

Tesmar—(Again rushing forward and clasping her in his arms) Sidonia! the death that divides others shall unite us! (She leans heavily upon him, he gradually sinks to one knee supporting her on his bosom) Oh! my only love, if indeed thou canst find in thy breaking heart one thought of tender compassion for the unhappy Tesmar, I pray thee let thy dying eyes rest lovingly upon my face, put thy dear arms about me, and in thy last kiss bestow the death I covet from thy lips!

Sidonia—Ah! Tesmar the only pity I have ever known hath been for thee! I know thou dost dread life without me more than death with me—and so—Ah! even my kindness is cruel—and so—(lifts herself on his bosom and kisses him.)

(Tesmar embraces her rapturously.)

Tesmar—Mine! mine at last! and forever!

Sidonia—(Struggling for breath) Nay, Tesmar, the heaven—where thou wilt live again is forever—closed to me!

Tesmar—Ah! think not so! I believe in the God of the Christians and if indeed I am admitted to his presence, will weary him with prayers for thee and at last—after thy just punishment thou wilt be forgiven!

Illa—(Weeping) Sidonia, canst thou yet hear me? I too will join my prayers with his, and God who is the source of Love and Mercy will not be obdurate when man doth so freely forgive, Charicles—

Charicles—Aye Illa, I do freely forgive, and to the end of life morning and evening will I pray for Sidonia!

Tesmar—Hearest thou Sidonia? Thou wilt yet be mine in Heaven!

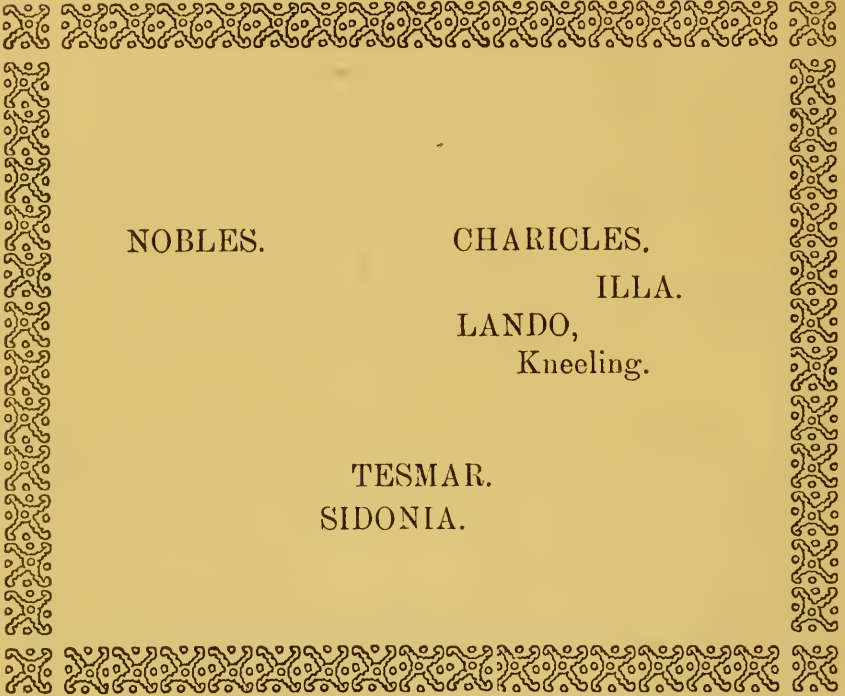
Sidonia—(Slowly lifting and kissing him again.) Tesmar—my last thought is of thee—(pause—she moves convulsively.) I believe thy God is good—he will hear thee—we will—meet again—Tesmar—Charicles—pardon—

(Lando kneels presents the crown to Charicles. Illa takes it and places it on the brow of Charicles. Tesmar takes cross from his bosom places it in the stiffening hand of Sidonia. She grasps it convulsively, presses it to her lips and dies.)

Voice—Behold the fulfillment of the prophecy.

Curtain.

DISPOSITION OF CHARACTERS.



NOBLES.

CHARICLES.

ILLA.

LANDO,
Kneeling.

TESMAR.

SIDONIA.

The End.

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