



Thelma
MARIE CORELLI

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THELMA

BY

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*Simplified and brought within the vocabulary of
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*Sir Philip Errington watched the splendid sight through
his field-glasses*

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PART ONE

THE LAND OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN

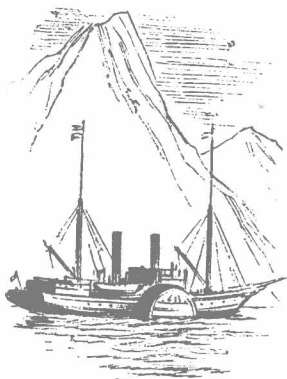
One

STRANGE ADVENTURE

~~There~~
A. It was midnight—but it was not dark and there were no stars. The sun shone brightly in the sky, and the hills of Altenfjord were full of golden light. There was complete silence: no wind, no cry of the sea-birds. The colours of sea and sky were wonderful.

A young Englishman, Sir Philip Errington, lay alone on the shore watching this splendid sight.

"Glorious!" he said to himself as he looked at his watch and saw that it was exactly twelve o'clock. "Glorious! I have the best view. My friends in the *yacht* will see nothing as good as this."



Yacht

As he spoke he raised his *field-glasses* and looked towards the island of Seiland opposite. There was no sign of his yacht. He could see only the clouds and rocks and water, their colours growing more beautiful every moment.

Suddenly the silence was broken by the sound of a voice that sang, clearly and sweetly, an old Norwegian song.

"A woman's voice," thought Sir Philip, "but where is the woman?"

Puzzled, he looked to the right and the left and then out to the *fjord*, but he could see no one. Then, as he waited, the singing stopped and he heard the sound of a boat on the shore. Then he turned and saw a rocky cave and a boat being pushed out into the water. He stepped towards the entrance of the cave and suddenly found himself face to face with a young woman: she stood in her boat and looked at him in silent surprise.

She was about nineteen, tall, with dark blue eyes and a fair skin: her hair was the colour of midnight sunshine—the sunlight seen at midnight in those Northern lands. To Sir Philip she seemed the most beautiful creature that he had ever seen. He was so surprised at meeting her at such a time and in such a place that for a moment he could not speak.

Then, pointing to the boat, he said, "May I help you?"

She was silent.

"Perhaps she doesn't understand English," he thought. "I must talk by signs."

So he made signs to show how he could help to push the boat, and the girl laughed.

"That was very well done!" she said in English. "You see, I know your language. It was rude of me not to have answered at once. Yes, you can help me if you will. The boat is caught in the rock. If we both push we can move it."

So together they pushed and the boat was soon in the water.

The girl thanked him, jumped in and was about to row away.

"Stop a minute!" said Sir Philip. "Will you not tell me your name?"

The girl looked angry.

"Sir, I do not know you. Girls in Norway do not give their names to strangers. We shall not meet again. Goodbye."

B. Without another word or look she rowed quickly away over the water. Sir Philip followed her with his eyes and then with his field-glasses until she was out of sight.

"What a wonderful girl!" he thought. "I wonder who she is. Perhaps Valdemar, our guide on the yacht, may know her. I must ask him."

Then suddenly he thought of the rocky cave where she had come from, and he decided to visit it.

Inside the cave it was dark and cold, and the floor was thick with stones. He lit a match and saw an old oil lamp on a shelf of rock. He lit this, and he saw steps leading down to a closed door. He went down, holding the lamp.

The door was of hard wood, so hard as to be almost like iron, and black with age. A word was cut in the middle of the door:

THELMA

“Ah!” cried Sir Philip. “I know what that is! Thelma! That is the girl’s name, of course. This is some secret place of hers. I wonder if the door will open.”

He pushed hard. Slowly, inch by inch, the huge door opened into what seemed nothing but darkness. He held up the light and looked in: then he exclaimed as a sudden wind from the sea blew the lamp out. In darkness he felt for his match-box. He lit the lamp again and saw that he was in a large room. The walls of rock were entirely covered with beautiful shells, set in strange shapes and shining in the lamp-light like jewels.

He walked through this room into another one, lit by a small red light. He saw now that he was in the presence not of life but of death: there was a stone *coffin* on the floor. There were fresh flowers on it. Some letters were cut in the stone and Sir Philip read for the second time that strange name

THELMA

“So it belongs to someone dead,” he said sadly to himself. “It is not the name of that lovely living woman who met me in the light of the midnight sun. But why has she come here? And the lamp and the flowers—why are they here?”



*A dwarf came running up to him, shouting angrily
in Norwegian*

C. Suddenly an angry cry broke the silence. A light appeared on the steps and a strange creature like a dwarf came running up to him, shouting angrily in Norwegian. He was a little man not quite four feet high, with long hair and wild eyes.

"I'm very sorry," said Sir Philip, thinking that this must be the owner of the cave. "I came here by accident. I am going away this minute."

"Going away!" shouted the dwarf, this time in English. "Never, never! You have stolen something! You are a thief. You have come to kill me! The dead have called you here. See how the blood drops from the poor heart of Sigurd! Poor Sigurd! Poor Sigurd!"

His voice sank to a whisper. Sir Philip saw that the dwarf was mad.

"You are wrong," he said in a gentle voice. "I would not steal anything from you, nor have I come to kill you. I am on holiday in this country. Is this your home?"

"My home!" cried the dwarf. "My home is everywhere. My soul lives between the sun and the sea; my heart is with Thelma."

Thelma! Here perhaps was the answer to the mystery.

"Who is Thelma?" asked Sir Philip.

The dwarf gave an angry laugh. "Do you think that I will tell you? Do you think that I will open the door of my treasure to you? And what do you want with Thelma? She is dead. Go away! Away, I tell you! I shall die when Thelma tells me to die, but not till then."

And he rushed away, crying and shouting. . . . Silence returned to the cave.

Sir Philip left, feeling as if he were in some mad dream. He carefully put the oil lamp back on its shelf of rock at the entrance.

He went out into the glorious sunshine. The birds were singing, and his yacht had returned to the fjord.

just 4th July

TWO

SIR PHILIP'S PLAN

A. Back on the yacht, Sir Philip told his adventure to his friend George Lorimer.

"I don't believe you!" said Lorimer. "You've been drinking!"

"What a story!" said his French friend Duprèz, who had come with them on this holiday.

So Sir Philip took them to see their guide, Valdemar. Valdemar knew this part of Norway very well.

"I say, Valdemar," said Sir Philip, "are there any pretty girls living near here?"

"I do not know much about women," answered Valdemar slowly. "I think that there are plenty of girls in Bosekop."

"But pretty ones?" said Philip.

"None that I know of," said Valdemar.

"And are there any beautiful sea-caves which we could visit here?" said Lorimer.

"Nothing very beautiful on this side of the fjord," said Valdemar.

"Now you see!" said Lorimer, turning to Sir Philip. "You've been dreaming!"

Sir Philip laughed, but he tried again.

"Can you tell me," he said to Valdemar, speaking in a slow and clear voice, "whether there is any place, person or thing here called *Thelma*?"

At once a look of surprise and fear came into Valdemar's eyes.

"Thelma!" he said in a low voice. "Is it possible that you have seen her?"

"Ah! So you know her!" cried Sir Philip with delight. "Who is she? What is she? If Thelma lives here, there must be at least one pretty girl."

Valdemar looked serious and troubled.

"I did not think of her," he said. "It is not for me to speak of the daughter of Olaf Gldmar. Pardon me, sir, but how did you meet her?"

"By accident," said Sir Philip. "Tell me, is she an important person here?"

"Oh no!" said Valdemar. "She is not what you would call important. Her father is a farmer. They have a good house and plenty of land and he pays his men well, but he and his daughter never visit the town. Nobody sees them. They live apart and have nothing to do with their neighbours."

"And where do they live?" asked Lorimer, becoming interested.

Valdemar pointed towards the west.

"You see that great rock and that high green hill, thick with trees, behind it? Olaf's house is at the side

of it. But I am sure, gentlemen, if you go there you will not get a pleasant welcome. They do not like visitors."

"Is that so?" said Lorimer. "Then we shan't trouble them. Thank you for telling us."

"The daughter is as fair as the sun and the sea," said Valdemar, "but her father is not like the rest of us. He is proud, and men are afraid of him. Do you wish to sail today, gentlemen?"

"No, Valdemar," said Sir Philip, "not until to-morrow, if the weather keeps fair."

"Very good, sir," said Valdemar and turned away.

"You didn't ask him about the coffin and the dwarf," said Lorimer.

"No, I did not, because I believe that he knows nothing of either. Now I must see that girl again. She may explain the mystery of the cave."

"Well, what are you going to do?"

"Nothing at present. We'll go fishing with the others. But tonight, as you know, we are going to visit the minister of the English church here in Bosekop. You and I will leave him talking to Duprèz for a few minutes while we row over and look for the farmer's house."

"All right, said Lorimer, laughing, "but something tells me that you will have to kill the old farmer before you will be allowed to make love to his daughter."

"Don't be silly," said Sir Philip. "Besides, it isn't love: it's only curiosity—nothing else."

B. Charles Dyceworthy, minister of the English

church, sat in the small dining-room of the minister's house at Bosekop. He was a large, fat man with a shining face, little brown eyes and a small mouth. He had come from England to spend the winter in Norway and to do the duties of the Norwegian minister who was ill.

Mr. Dyceworthy was comfortable and very happy at Bosekop. There were two things which he loved above all—good food and the sound of his own voice.

“Ulrika!” he called to his servant, a tall woman with a wooden expression on her face. “My visitors from the yacht will be coming soon.”

Ulrika, without answering, laid the table. Just as she was about to leave the room, Mr. Dyceworthy called her again.

“Ulrika!”

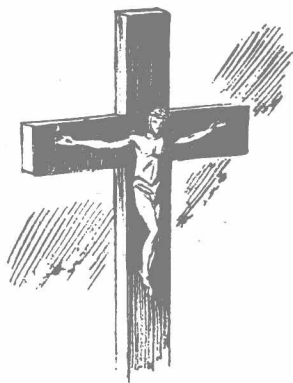
“Sir?”

“Did you ever see a thing like this before?”

He held up a small *crucifix*. On it were the words “*Passio Christi conforta me.*”¹ Thelma.”

The woman looked at him in terror.

“It belongs to *her*!” she cried, and her face grew very white. “The *witch*!”² It belongs to the witch! Burn it, sir, and her power will leave her!”



Crucifix [*krʉ:si fil<S*] 十字架

[*wit*] 女巫

¹ May the death of Jesus Christ bring me comfort.

² A woman who practises magic.