

CHAPTER III

THE DAUGHTER OF THE MOON

For the fourth time since we were cast away on this island the huge full moon shone in a sky of wondrous blue. Kari and I watched it rise between the two snow-clad peaks far away that he had called a gateway to his land, which was so near to us and yet it would seem more distant than Heaven itself. Heaven we might hope to reach upon the wings of spirit when we died, but to that country how could we come?

We watched that great moon climb higher and higher up a ladder of little bar-like clouds, till wearying we let our eyes fall upon the glittering pathway which its light made upon the bosom of the placid sea. Suddenly Kari stared and stared.

"What is it?" I asked idly.

"I thought I saw something yonder far away where Quilla's footsteps make the waters bright," he said, speaking in his own language in which now we often talked together.

"Quilla's?" I exclaimed. "Oh! I forgot: that is the lady moon's name in your tongue, is it not? Well, come, Quilla, and I will wed and worship you, as 'tis said the ancients did, and never turn to look upon another, be she woman, or goddess, or both. Only come and take me from this

accursed isle and in payment I'll die for you, if need be, when first I've taught you how to love as star or woman never loved before."

"Hush!" said Kari in a grave voice, when he had listened to this mad stuff that burst through my lips from the spring of a mind distraught by misery and despair.

"Why should I hush?" I asked. "Is it not pleasant to think of the moon wearing a lovely woman's shape and descending to give a lonely mortal love and comfort?"

"Because, Master, to me and my people the moon is a goddess who hears prayer and answers it. Suppose, then, that she heard you and answered you and came to you and claimed your love, what then?"

"Why, then, friend Kari," I raved on, "then I should welcome her, for love goes a begging, ready as ripe fruit to be plucked by the first hand if it be fair enough, ready to melt beneath the first lips if they be warm enough. 'Tis said that it is the man who loves and the woman who accepts the love. But that is not true. It is the man, Kari, who waits to be loved and pays back just as much as is given to him, and no more, like an honest merchant; for if he does otherwise, then he suffers for it, as I have learned. Therefore, come, Quilla, and love as a Celestial can and I swear that step by step I'll keep pace with you in flesh and spirit through Heaven, or through Hell, since love I must have, or death."

"I pray you, talk not so," said Kari again, in a frightened voice,
"since those words of yours come from the heart and will be heard. The
goddess is a woman, too, and what woman will turn from such a bait?"

"Let her take it, then. Why not?"

"Because, O friend, because Quilla is wed to Yuti; the Moon is the
Sun's wife, and if the Sun grows jealous what will happen to the man who
has robbed the greatest of the world's gods?"

"I do not know and I do not care. If Quilla would but come and love me,
I'd take my chance of Yuti whom as a Christian I defy."

Kari shuddered at this blasphemy, then having once more scanned that
silver pathway on the waters, but without avail for the great fish
or drifting tree or whatever he had seen, was gone, prayed after his
fashion at night, to Pachacamac, Spirit of the Universe, or to the Sun
his servant, god of the world, I know not which, and rolling himself in
his rug of skins, crept into our little hut to sleep.

But as yet I did not sleep, for though Kari hated both, this talk of
love and women had stirred my blood and made me wakeful. So I took a
rough comb that I had fashioned from the shell of a turtle, and dragged
it through my long fair beard, which, growing fast, now hung down far
upon my breast, and through the curling hair that lay upon my shoulders,

for I had become as other wild men are, and sang to myself there by the little fire which we kept burning day and night and tried to think of happy things that never should I know again.

At length the fit passed and I grew weary and laid myself down by the fire, for the night being so fine and warm I would not go into the hut, and there sleep found me.

I dreamed in my sleep. I dreamed that a very beautiful woman who wore upon her naked breast the emblem of the moon fashioned in crystal, stood over me, looking down upon me with large dark eyes. And as she looked she sighed. Thrice she sighed, each time more deeply than the last. Then she knelt down by me--or so it seemed in my dream, and laid a tress of her long dark hair against my yellow locks, as though she would match them together. She did more, indeed--in my dream--for lifting that tress of fragrant hair, she let it fall like thistledown across my face and mouth, and then kissed the hair, for I felt her breath reach me through its strands.

The dream ended thus, though I wished very much that it would go on, and I felt as though it had gone away as such visions do. Awhile later, as I suppose, I awoke quite suddenly, and opened my eyes. There, near to me, glittering in the full light of the brilliant moon, stood the woman of my dream, only now her naked breast was covered with a splendid cloak brodered with silver, and on her dark locks was a feathered headdress in front of which rose the crescent of the moon, likewise fashioned in

silver. Also in her hand she held a little silver spear.

I stared at her, for move I could not. Then remembering my crazy talk with Kari, uttered one word, only one. It was--Quilla.

She bowed her head and answered in a voice soft as the murmur of the wind through rushes, speaking in the rich language called Quichua that Kari had taught me. In this tongue, as I have told, we talked together for practice during our journeys and on the island. So that now I knew it well.

"So indeed am I named after my mother, the 'Moon,'" she said. "But how did you know it, O Wanderer, whose skin is white as the foam of the sea and whose hair is yellow as the fine gold in the temples?"

"I think you must have told me when you knelt over me just now," I said.

I saw the red blood run to her brow, but she only shook her head, and answered:

"Nay, my mother, the Moon, must have told you; or perchance you learned it in the spirit. At least, Quilla am I named and you called me aright."

Now I stood up and stared at her, overcome by the strangeness of the business, and she stared at me. A marvellously beautiful woman she was in her dazzling robe and headdress, and lighter coloured than any native

I had seen, almost white, indeed, in the moonlight save for the copper tinge that marked her race; tall, too, yet not over-tall; slim and straight as an arrow, but high-breasted and round-limbed, and with a wild grace in her movements like to that of a hawk upon the wing. Also to my fancy in her face there was something more than common youthful beauty, something spiritual, such as great artists show upon the carven countenances of saints.

Indeed she might well have been one whose human blood was mixed with some other alien strain--as she had called herself, a daughter of the Moon.

A question rose to my lips and burst from them; it was:

"Tell me, O Quilla, are you wife or maid?"

"Maid am I," she answered, "yet one who is promised as a wife," and she sighed, then went on quickly as though this matter were something of which she did not wish to talk, "And tell me, O Wanderer, are you god or man?"

Now I grew cunning and answered,

"I am a Son of the Sea as you are a Daughter of the Moon."

She turned her head and glanced at the radiance which lay upon the face

of the deep, then said as though to herself:

"The moon shines upon the sea and the sea mirrors back the moon, yet they are far apart and never may draw near."

"Not so, O Quilla. Out of the sea does the moon rise and, her course run, into the sea's white arms she sinks to sleep at last."

Again the red blood ran to her brow and her great eyes fell, those eyes of which never before had I seen the like.

"It seems that they speak our tongue in the sea, and prettily," she murmured, adding, "But is it not from and into Heaven that the Moon rises and departs?"

At that moment to my grief our talk came to an end, for out of the hut crept Kari. He rose to his feet and stood there as ever calm and dignified, looking first at Quilla and then at me.

"What did I tell you, Master?" he said in English. "Did I not say that prayers such as yours are answered? Lo! here is that Child of the Moon for whom you sought, clothed in beauty and bringing her gifts of love and woe."

"Yes," I exclaimed, "and I am glad that she is here. For the rest, were she but mine, I think I should not grudge her price whate'er it be."

Quilla looked at Kari frowning over the spear that when he appeared she had lifted, as though to defend herself, which in my case she had not thought needful.

"So the sea breeds men of my own race also," she said, addressing him.

"Tell me, O Stranger, how did you and yonder white god come to this isle?"

"Riding on the ocean billows, riding for thousands of leagues," he answered. "And you, O Lady, how did you come to this isle?"

"Riding on the moonbeams," she replied, smiling, "I, the daughter of the Moon, who am named Moon and wear her symbol on my brow."

"Did I not tell you so?" exclaimed Kari to me with a gloomy air.

Then Quilla went on:

"Strangers, I was out fishing with two of my maidens and we had drifted far from land. As the sun sank I caught sight of the smoke of your fire, and having been told that this isle was desert, my heart drew me to discover who had lit it. So, though my maidens were afraid, hither I sailed and paddled, and the rest you know. Hearken! I will declare myself. I am the only child of Huaracha, King of the People of the Chancas, born of his wife, a princess of the Inca blood who now has been

gathered to her Father, the Sun. I am here on a visit to my mother's kinsman, Quismancu, the Chief of the Yuncas of the Coastlands, to whom my father, the King, has sent an embassy on matters of which I know nothing. Behind yonder rock is my balsa and with it are the two maidens. Say, is it your wish to bide here upon this isle, or to return into the sea, or to accompany me back to the town of Quismancu? If so, we must sail ere the weather breaks, lest we should be drowned."

"Certainly it is my wish to accompany you, Lady, though a god of the sea cannot be drowned," I said quickly before Kari could speak. Indeed, he did not speak at all, he only shrugged his shoulders and sighed, like one who accepts some evil gift from Fate because he must.

"So be it!" exclaimed Quilla. "Now I go to make ready the balsa and to warn the maidens lest they be frightened. When you are prepared you will find us yonder behind the rock."

Then she bowed in a stately fashion and departed, walking with the proud, light step of a deer.

From our little hut I took out my armour and with Kari's help, put it on, because he declared that thus it would be more easily carried, though I think he had other reasons in his mind.

"Yes," I answered, "unless the balsa oversets, when I shall find mail hard to swim in."

"The balsa will not overset, sailing beneath the moon with that Moon-lady for a pilot," he replied heavily. "Had the sun been up, it might have been different. Moreover, the path into a net is always wide and easy."

"What net?" I asked.

"One that is woven of women's hair, I think. Already, if I mistake not, such a net has been about your throat, Master, and next time it will stay there. Hearken now to me. The gods thrust us into high matters. The Yuncas of whose chief this lady is a guest are a great people whom my people have conquered in war, but who wait the opportunity to rebel, if they have not already done so. The Chancas, of whose king she is the daughter, are a still greater people who for years have threatened war upon my people."

"Well, what of it, Kari? With such questions this lady will have nothing to do."

"I think she has much to do with them. I think that she knows more than she seems to know, and that she is an envoy from the Chancas to the Yuncas. To whom is she affianced, I wonder? Some Great One, doubtless. Well, we shall learn in time; and meanwhile, I pray you, Master, remember that she says she is affianced, and that in this land men are very jealous even of a white god who rises from the sea."

"Of course I shall remember," I answered sharply. "Have I not had enough of women who are affianced?"

"By your prayer of the moon this night, which the moon answered so well and quickly, one might think not. Also this daughter of hers is fair, and perchance when she gave her hand she kept her heart. Listen again, Master. Of me and of whom I am, say nothing, save that you found me on this island where I dwelt a hermit when you rose from the sea. As for my name, why, it is Zapana. Remember that if you breathe my rank and history, however much sweet lips may try to cozen them out of you, you bring me to my death, who now do not wish to die, having a vengeance to accomplish and a throne to win. Therefore treat me as a dog, as one of no account, and be silent even in your sleep."

"I will remember, Kari."

"That is not enough--swear it."

"Good. I swear it--by the moon."

"Nay, not by the moon, for the moon is woman and changes. Swear it by this," and from beneath his skin robe he drew out the golden image of Pachacamac. "Swear it by the Spirit of the Universe, of whom Sun and Moon and Stars are but servants, the Spirit whom all men worship in this shape or in that."

So to please him I laid my hand upon the golden symbol and swore. Then, very hurriedly, we made up a tale of how, clad in my armour, I had risen from the sea and found him on the island, and how knowing me for a white god who once in ages past had visited that land and who, as prophecy foretold, should return to it in days to come, he had worshipped me and become my slave.

This done we went down to the rock, Kari walking after me and bearing all our small possessions and with them Deleroy's sword. Passing round the rock we saw the balsa drawn up to the sand, and by it the lady Quilla, who now had put off her fine robes and again was attired as a fishing-girl as I had seen her in my dream, and with her two tall girls in the same scanty garments. When these saw me in the glittering armour, which in our long idle hours we had polished till it shone like silver, with the shield upon my arm and the casque upon my head and the great sword girded about my middle and the black bow in my hand, they screamed with fear and fell upon their faces, while even Quilla started back and glanced towards the boat.

"Fear not," I said. "The gods are kind to those who do them service, though to those who would harm them they are terrible."

Kari also went to them and whispered in their ears what tale I know not. In the end they rose trembling, and having motioned to me to be seated

in it, with the help of Kari pushed the balsa, which I noted with joy was large and well made, down into the sea. Then one by one they climbed in, Quilla taking the steering-oar, while Kari and the two maidens hoisted the little sail and paddled till we were clear of the island, where the gentle wind caught the balsa. Then they shipped the paddles, and although full laden, we sailed quietly towards the mainland.

Now I was at the bow of the balsa and Quilla was at its stern, and between us were the others, so that during all that long night's journey I had no speech with her and must content myself with gazing over my shoulder at her beauty as best I could, which was not well, because of Kari, who ever seemed to come between my eyes and hers.

Thus the long hours went by till at length when we were near the land the moon sank, and we sailed on through the twilight. Then came the dawn, and there in front of us we saw the lovely strand green with palms within a ring of snow-clad mountains, two of them the great peaks that we had seen from our isle.

On the shore was a city of white, flat-roofed houses, and rising above it, perchance the half of a mile from the sea, a hill four or five hundred feet in height and terraced. On the top of the hill stood a mighty building, painted red, that from the look of it I took to be one of the churches of these people, in the centre of which gleamed great doors that, as I found afterwards, were covered with plates of gold.

"Behold the temple of Pachacamac, Master," whispered Kari, bowing his head and kissing the air in token of reverence.

By this time watchmen, who had been set there to search the sea or the boat of Quilla, had noted our approach. They shouted and pointed to me who sat in the prow clad in my armour upon which the sun glittered, then began to run to and fro as though in fear or excitement, so that ere we reached the shore a great crowd had gathered. Meanwhile, Quilla had put on her silver-broidered mantle and her head-dress of feathers, crowned with the crescent of the moon. As we touched the beach she came forward, and for the first time during that night spoke to me saying:

"Remain here in the balsa, Lord, while I talk with these people, and when I summon you be pleased to come. Fear not--none will harm you."

Then she sprang from the prow of the balsa to the shore, followed by her two maidens, who dragged it further up the beach, and went forward to talk with certain white-robed men in the crowd. For a long while she talked, turning now and again to point at me. At length these men, accompanied by a number of others, ran forward. At first I thought they meant mischief and grasped my sword-hilt, then, remembering what Quilla had said, remained seated and silent.

Indeed, there was no cause for fear, for when the white-robed chiefs or priests and their following were close to me, suddenly they prostrated themselves and beat their heads upon the sand, from which I learned that

they, too, believed me to be a god. Thereon I bowed to them and, drawing my sword--at the sight of which I saw them stare and shiver, for to these people steel was unknown--held it straight up in front of me in my right hand, the shield with the cognizance of the three arrows being on my left arm.

Now all the men rose, and some of them of the humbler sort, creeping to the balsa, suddenly seized it and lifted it on to their shoulders, which, being but a light thing of reeds and blown-out skins, they could do easily enough. Then, preceded by the chiefs, they advanced up the beach into the town, I still remaining seated in the boat with Kari crouching behind me. So strange was the business that almost I laughed aloud, wondering what those grave merchants of the Cheap whom I had known in London would think if they could see me thus.

"Kari," I said, without turning my head, "what are they going to do with us? Set us in yonder temple to be worshipped with nothing to eat?"

"I think not, Master," answered Kari, "since there the lady Quilla could not come to speak with you if she would. I think that they will take you to the house of the king of this country where, I understand, she is dwelling."

This, indeed, proved to be the case, for we were borne solemnly up the main street of the town, that now was packed with thousands of people, some of whom threw flowers before the feet of the bearers, bowing and

staring till I thought that their eyes would fall out, to a large, flat-roofed house set in a walled courtyard. Passing through the gates the bearers placed the balsa on the ground and fell back. Then from out of the door of the house appeared Quilla, accompanied by a tall, stately looking man who wore a fine robe, and a woman of middle age also gorgeously apparelled.

"O Lord," said Quilla, bowing, "behold my kinsman the Caraca" (which is the name for a lesser sort of king) "of the Yuncas, named Quismancu, and his wife, Mira."

"Hail, Lord Risen from the Sea!" cried Quismancu. "Hail, White God clothed in silver! Hail, Hurachi!"

Why he called me "Hurachi" at the time I could not guess, but afterwards I learned that it was because of the arrows painted on my shield, hurachi being their name for arrows. At any rate, thenceforth by this name of Hurachi I was known throughout the land, though when addressed for the most part I was called "Lord-from-the-Sea" or "God-of-the-Sea."

Then Quilla and the lady Mira came forward and, placing their hands beneath my elbows, assisted me to climb out of that balsa, which I think was the strangest way that ever a shipwrecked wanderer came to land.

They led me into a large room with a flat roof that was being hastily

prepared for me by the hanging of beautiful broideries on the walls, and sat me on a carven stool, where presently Quilla and other ladies brought me food and a kind of intoxicating drink which they called chicha, that after so many months of water drinking I found cheering and pleasant to the taste. This food, I noted, was served to me on platters of gold and silver, and the cups also were of gold strangely fashioned, by which I knew that I had come to a very rich land. Afterwards I learned, however, that in it there was no money, all the gold and silver that it produced being used for ornament or to decorate the temples and the palaces of the Incas, as they called their kings, and other great lords.