

Synopsis

Characters

Conrad, *the Corsair*

Birbanto, *Conrad's lieutenant*

Lankodem, *master of the Grand Bazaar and later head (agha) of Seyd's harem*

Seyd, *pasha*

Medora and Gulnare, *two noble girls*

Zulmea, *daughter of a rich merchant*

Lankodem's maidservant

Medora and Gulnare's friends

The corsairs and their women

Lankodem's men

Act I

Prologue on the shore.

At the end of a successful raiding voyage, Conrad, accompanied by his second-in-command Birbanto and his pirates, returns to land. Lankodem, the bazaar owner, is also scouting the shore with his henchmen, on the lookout for new female slaves. He knows that imprudent young women from the neighbouring enemy village come to walk here. Indeed, scarcely have the men settled down on the lookout when the unsuspecting women appear, led by the noblewomen Medora and Gulnare. They are quickly surrounded and overpowered by the men. As a connoisseur in these matters, Lankodem chooses Medora and Gulnare and does not concern himself with the other women. The two beauties are taken off to the bazaar, closely guarded.

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The bazaar.

People are going about their business between the colourful stalls when Lankodem and his two captives arrive. Lankodem is impressed by the extraordinary beauty of Gulnare and gives her into the care of his female servant, who is to prepare her for presentation. Medora is sent off to join the other slaves. Then there are new arrivals at the market: Conrad, Birbanto and the pirates. Zulmea, the daughter of a rich merchant, immediately starts making eyes at Birbanto. Lankodem calls to Conrad and proposes that he have a look at his slave girls. Conrad evidently does not find them very interesting, and so Lankodem has Medora brought in. It is love at first sight on both sides! Lankodem sees that he has found

an interested customer. He has the beautiful young woman led off and tells Conrad that he can have Medora – but for a price. Conrad is willing to pay any price and wants to conclude the transaction immediately, but at that moment Seyd Pasha enters. This causes Lankodem to stop and reflect, for Seyd Pasha could be a better buyer. He hands Medora over to his female servant. Lankodem welcomes Seyd Pasha with a great show of respect and – since he knows his weaknesses – shows him his female slaves. As Seyd Pasha does not show much enthusiasm, Lankodem has Gulnare brought in, and Seyd Pasha immediately succumbs to her charms. Unable to resist such temptation, he is persuaded and buys her. Seyd Pasha is ready to depart, but Lankodem persuades him to grant him a few moments more: Medora, adorned to show off her beauty to the utmost, is brought in. She is forced to dance before Seyd Pasha, but displays all her charms for Conrad, paying no heed to the Pasha, who hastens to make Lankodem an offer. While the two men start haggling, Conrad tells Medora he loves her. But she is extremely anxious about the transaction of which she is the subject. Conrad assures her that she will leave this place with him and with no one else. But before Conrad has time to take action, the deal is concluded and Seyd Pasha departs with his two new slave girls – Gulnare and Medora. Conrad, who is hell-bent on winning the lady of his heart for himself, orders his men to wait in readiness. He sets off on the search for Medora. The pirates, who have total confidence in the capability of their leader, start a boisterous dance, but this is soon interrupted by the return

of Conrad, who has found Medora. A shot rings out – this is Conrad's signal to depart. Birbanto sees to it that the pirates capture Lankodem and the slaves. Zulmea comes too, and they all make their escape.

Act II

The pirates' stronghold.

The pirates' stronghold is filled with all the riches that the pirates have collected in the course of their raids. Their women are awaiting the return of their consorts. Conrad and Medora arrive. The women welcome them warmly and ask what has happened to their men. Conrad assures them that they are already on their way. Medora and Conrad have their first few minutes alone. Medora asks Conrad for a few moments by herself. Shortly afterwards the others return. The slaves and Lankodem are excluded while the men and women celebrate seeing each other again. They are soon joined by Medora and Conrad. Conrad presents his new love to them all, and Medora, who wants to make good use of this favourable moment, asks him to release all the slaves. Conrad orders Birbanto to grant her wish. Birbanto protests – why should they give up the slaves? But Medora's wishes win the day. Conrad yields to her and orders the immediate release of the slaves. Birbanto is furious, but obeys. However, he swears to get his revenge. Lankodem, who has witnessed the scene, approaches Birbanto and offers to help him. Birbanto listens to the merchant and releases him from his bonds. Lankodem gives him a strong sleeping potion concealed in a rose, which will put anyone who smells the flower into a deep sleep. Birbanto finds a perfect and

devoted ally in Zulmea. He therefore asks her to bring the flower to Medora, who will surely give it to her lover. As soon as Conrad and Medora return, they give free rein to their feelings for one another, until Zulmea appears with the poisoned flower. In an ecstasy of love and as a symbol of their first meeting, Medora does indeed give the rose to her beloved. Conrad, moved by her gesture, breathes deeply of the flower's scent and immediately begins to stumble about and then lapses into a deep sleep. Medora is deeply shocked and tries to minister to him, while Birbanto and the masked pirates storm in. Feeling herself threatened, Medora grasps a dagger and wounds one of them, who turns out to be Birbanto. This unforeseen incident confuses the pirates, and in particular Birbanto, who panics: Conrad is beginning to wake up! Since there is no time to be lost, Birbanto urges Lankedem to flee as quickly as possible and to bring Medora with him. When Conrad wakes, he is disturbed to find that Medora has disappeared. Birbanto, concealing his wound, pretends to know nothing. Conrad is sceptical, but all the pirates feign ignorance. Conrad is confused, but having no other choice he gives the order to depart: Medora must be found! Once again he imposes his will on the pirates as their undisputed leader.

Act III

The palace of Seyd Pasha.

The setting is all luxury and voluptuousness. The women of the harem and Gulnare, who has become the Pasha's favourite, cluster around him. Gulnare seems very satisfied with her new position and the extravagant gifts that are placed at

her feet. Lankedem, who is in debt to the Pasha, brings in Medora. At first anxious, Medora calms down when she sees Gulnare, who takes her into her rooms. To reward Lankedem for his loyalty, Seyd Pasha calls upon the odalisques to cheer him, and the merchant disappears with them. The Pasha gives himself up to daydreaming: his spirit wanders through the "jardin animé" where Medora and Gulnare appear before him. The pirates arrive at the palace, seeking an opportunity to gain entry. Conrad orders them to cover their faces so that they look like pilgrims. At this moment, Lankedem crosses their path and asks them what their intentions are. The strangers declare that they want to ask the Pasha to grant them hospitality. Lankedem knows how generous the Pasha is and offers to put in a good word for them. Inside the palace, the female slaves who have remained with Seyd Pasha are laughing to see that he has fallen asleep again. Their mockery rouses the somnolent Pasha. Lankedem enters and asks the Pasha to accord the pilgrims hospitality. The Pasha grants his wish and has them led in. The group is joined by Medora and Gulnare, who are astonished to see the strangers. Conrad unobtrusively makes his true identity known to Medora, who is happy but somewhat mistrustful and distracts all the others. Conrad decides to delay no longer, but to act immediately. He reveals himself and commands his men to do likewise. They overpower Lankedem and Seyd Pasha. Medora's mistrustful gaze falls on the one buccaneer who remains concealed. She approaches him and takes off his disguise. It is indeed Birbanto. Medora reveals to Conrad the true nature of

this traitor. As proof, she shows him the wound she inflicted on Birbanto. Conrad now has no further doubts, particularly when Birbanto draws his weapon as soon as Conrad approaches him. In the ensuing fight, Conrad inflicts a fatal wound on Birbanto. All are shocked by this unexpected death. However, they must escape quickly before the Pasha's troops arrive. Gulnare refuses Medora's invitation to come with her: she prefers to remain with Seyd Pasha.

— *Epilogue*

While Medora recovers from all the excitement in Conrad's arms, the pirates hoist the sails. All go aboard. Back on the high seas, a storm erupts and the ship sinks. While the waters become calm again, the moon rises in the sky. In the moonlight we see Medora and Conrad, who have managed to reach land. They thank heaven for their rescue and swear their eternal love to each other.