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*GOTHIC BOURNES*

**THE STRANGER  
A NORMAN TALE**

**By  
Matthew Gregory Lewis**

**(1799)**

TRANSCRIPTION BY

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TALES  
OF  
TERROR AND WONDER

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'The Stranger, a Norman Tale'

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## THE STRANGER A NORMAN TALE

[14] Stupida, e fissa nell'incerta sabbia,  
Coi capelli disciolto,<sup>1</sup> e rabuffati,  
Con le man giunte, e con immote labbia,  
I languidi occhi al ciel tenea levati,  
Come accusando il gran Motor, che l'abbia  
Tutti inclinati nel suo damno i fati;  
Immota e come attonita ste alquanto,  
Poi sciolse al duol la lingua e gli occhi al pianto. – TASSO.<sup>2</sup>

“What notes faintly borne in the whispering gale,  
On Midnight's black pinion sad echoing sail?  
For whom tolls the deep-sounding bell?  
Why move the slow monks through the cloisters' thick gloom?  
Whose corse<sup>3</sup> do they bear to the deep-vaulted tomb?  
For whose soul do the requiems swell?

“And why do the nuns the sweet violets strew,  
More wet with their tears than the night's chilling dew?  
Why join they the funeral train?” –  
“Oh, list!<sup>4</sup> and I'll tell you a story of woe,  
Which will urge the big drop of compassion to flow,  
And bind you in Sympathy's chain.

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<sup>1</sup> This should be «disciolti», the masculine plural of the adjective «disciolto»

<sup>2</sup> Though this fragment is attributed to Torquato Tasso, it actually belongs to Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, (VIII-39) published for the first time in 1516.

*'She [stood], stupid and fixed in the unstable sand / with her hair loose and ruffled/ her hands [were] joined and her lips [were] still/she looked up at the sky with languid eyes / as if [she were] blaming the great Engine [probably God] which had / set against her all the fates / she stayed still and was bewildered/ then she vented her pain through her tongue and her crying through her eyes (she screamed and cried)'. Translated by Ilaria Luciola, MA Student at Universidad Autónoma de Madrid*

<sup>3</sup> «Corse» is the archaic version of the word «corpse» (<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/corse>)

<sup>4</sup> «List» is the imperative of the verb «to listen». *Encyclopedià Metropolitana*, (<https://books.google.es/books?id=IDtOAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA181&lpg=PA181&dq=%22oh+list%22+exclamation&source=bl&ots=z4y1Y2KCi&sig=ACfU3U3bG65TAov-HG76YCFbootFmj0kA&hl=it&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwidgcqDltLsAhWBilwKHVO4BAQQ6AEwEHOECAoQAQ#v=onepage&q=%22oh%20list%22%20exclamation&f=false>, pag. 181)

“Where yon<sup>5</sup> moon-silvered battlements frown o’er the glade,  
Near which the dark pines throw their wide-spreading shade,  
And sigh in the murmuring wind,  
[15] Fair Adela dwelt; – for her mind’s matchless grace,  
And the beauty that dawned in her heavenly face,  
In anguish young Theodore pined:

“He pined, but the maiden regarded his sighs,  
Responsive affection illumined her eyes,  
Nor to conquer the passion she strove;  
But a parent’s harsh mandate compelled them to part,  
Dissevered the link which united each heart,  
And blighted the flow’ret<sup>6</sup> of love.

“St. Aubin, the sire<sup>7</sup> of the love-stricken maid,  
Forbad her to wed, she with anguish obeyed,  
And poured out in silence her woe:  
Still revenge rankled<sup>8</sup> deep in her stern father’s breast,  
By the Virgin he vowed that he’d never know rest  
Till he’d laid the cursed Theodore low!

“But the youth from St. Aubin’s malignity fled,  
Through a deep tangled forest’s wild mazes he sped,  
While his soul bitter agony felt,  
From a convent, hard by, tolled the evening bell,  
When he gained, all exhausted, a moss-covered cell,  
Where whilom<sup>9</sup> an Anchorite dwelt!

“With his chaplet, and beads, in a hermit’s array,<sup>10</sup>  
Here shut from the world, to keen sorrow a prey,  
His journey the wanderer closed!  
Well known to the traveller was Theodore’s gate,  
When the loud-roaring tempest refused to abate,  
Here the way-weary pilgrim reposed!

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<sup>5</sup> Old word for «that» or «those» (<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/yon>).

<sup>6</sup> The word is contracted to make sure, for metrical reasons, that it is read as if it had two syllables instead of three.

<sup>7</sup> «Father or forefather» (archaic) (<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/sire?s=t>).

<sup>8</sup> «Continue to be painful; fester» (archaic) (<https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/rankle>).

<sup>9</sup> «Formerly» (archaic) (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/whilom>).

<sup>10</sup> In the original text here, instead of the inverted commas, there a blotch. Since all stanzas start with inverted commas, I thought it would be consistent to use the inverted commas here as well.

[16]“One night it was stormy, the blast howled amain,<sup>11</sup>  
Through the thick bowering leaves dripped the pattering rain,  
And increased the swoln<sup>12</sup> rivulet’s tide;  
When, half lost in the wind that hoarse-muttering roared,  
A voice in sad accents for shelter implored,  
Nor was the petition denied.

“Enwrapt<sup>13</sup> in a cloak a lone stranger appeared,  
All silvered by time was his long flowing beard,  
In silence he entered the cell;  
How officiously Theodore trimmed up the fire,  
He wrung the wet drops from his rain-drenched attire,  
And strove his deep gloom to dispel.

“But the hermit in vain his scant viands<sup>14</sup> displayed,  
The looks of the stranger his bosom dismayed,  
For his features in sadness were dressed;  
His mind was entranced in reflection profound,  
His eyes were in sullenness fixed on the ground,  
And his soul’s inward workings confessed.

“‘Ah, alas!’ cried the hermit, ‘my means can afford,  
No high-mantling wine to enliven the board,  
In my fare simple plainness you find.’”  
“‘Here, drink!’ quoth<sup>15</sup> the stranger, ‘this flagon behold!  
’Twill expel from your bosom the night’s piercing cold  
And your sorrow-thralled spirits unbind!’

“But Theodore scarce had with gratitude quaffed,<sup>16</sup>  
From the stranger’s full flasket, the soul-cheering draught,  
[17]When arose, grimly smiling, the guest;  
All changed were his features, and altered his mien,  
In his bright sparkling eyes exultation was seen,  
Then thus he the hermit addressed:

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<sup>11</sup> «With full force» (archaic) (<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/amain?s=t>)

<sup>12</sup> «Swollen» here is contracted to make sure that the metre is maintained.

<sup>13</sup> Archaic spelling for «enwrapped» (<https://www.yourdictionary.com/enwrapt>).

<sup>14</sup> Archaic term for «items of food» (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/it/dizionario/inglese/viands>).

<sup>15</sup> «Said» (archaic) (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/quoth>).

<sup>16</sup> «Quaff»: to drink an alcoholic drink in a short time (archaic)  
(<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/quaff>).

“Dost thou know me, vile caitiff?<sup>17</sup> or hath this disguise  
So enveloped my form as to baffle your eyes?

The injured St. Aubin behold!  
Of a sure subtle poison the life-chilling force  
Now lurks in thy veins; ere<sup>18</sup> the dawn thy wan corpse  
Death’s cold icy grasp shall enfold!

“Full gorged with revenge, now I sated depart,  
Yet know that the fair, who enslaved thy proud heart,  
In yon abbey’s drear solitude pines.  
On the bier when to-morrow<sup>19</sup> you breathless are laid,  
Forgetting her love and her lover, the maid  
Her hand to La Mauron resigns!’

“Revengefully scowling, he rushed from the cell;  
With what pangs did the bosom of Theodore swell  
When St. Aubin’s last words met his ear.  
With composure the horrors of death could he view,  
But his rival exulting! his mistress untrue!  
In his breast roused the storm of despair!

“But now he remembered the hour it was near,  
When at Heaven’s tribunal his soul must appear,  
Yet no terror the hermit betrayed.  
In his features the calm of devotion he wore,  
Low he bent to the cross, and his beads counted o’er,  
To the Virgin while fervent he prayed.

[18]“Soon his countenance altered, his looks they were wild,  
For sudden a voice his attention beguiled,  
To him were its accents addressed;  
But what words can his soul’s thrilling ecstasy tell,  
When a maiden so lovely rushed into his cell,  
And Adela sank on his breast!

“Oh, my love!’ she exclaimed, ‘from yon convent I’ve fled,  
Or a parent had forced me thy rival to wed,

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<sup>17</sup> Cowardly person (archaic) (<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/caitiff>).

<sup>18</sup> Before (in time) (literary or archaic) (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ere>).

<sup>19</sup> Archaic spelling of «tomorrow» (<https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/to-morrow>).

But I vowed for my true love to die;  
Oh, haste thee, my Theodore, haste thee away!  
My escape will be known at the dawning of day,  
'Tis Adela begs thee to fly!'

"She spoke: but his features distraction expressed,  
While her hand in his own he in agony pressed,  
And drew with quick heavings his breath.  
With his mist-clouded eyes still her form did he view,  
While his tremulous lips faintly quivered 'adieu,'  
Then closed were for ever in death!

"But, O God! what a pang rent poor Adela's heart!  
All frantic she cried, 'No, we never will part,'  
While, her eyeballs insanity fired,  
'I remember my vow! –yes! for thee will I die!'  
She sank on his corse with a soul-parting sigh,  
And, fast locked in his arms, she expired!

"Where the faint gleam of torches yon cloister illumes,  
A reverend priest the fond lovers entombs,  
While he prays that their sins be forgiven;  
[19]But so pure were their lives, and their virtues so bright,  
Already their spirits have winged their glad flight,  
And are blessed with their Maker in heaven!

"Full oft will the grey-bearded fathers relate,  
To the way-weary pilgrim, poor Theodore's fate,  
When at eve tolls the slow passing bell!  
At the soul-chilling sound sad remembrance shall rise,  
And the pitying nuns wipe the tear from their eyes,  
As of Adela's sorrows they tell!"

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