

### *Lost Pages from The Black Diamonds*

*[This passage goes at the end of Chapter XVII (page 126). The manuscript consists of two 8- by 12.5-inch leaves closely written in pencil on both sides. The sheets are numbered on one side only, 167 and 169.]*

“That is no mean comfort,” said Mustapha. “The profit last year was only 11,000 pieces of gold, but trade was bad, the weather bad, and I had only eight ships. It was 9,000 pieces of gold the year before that, and I had only seven ships. The coming year I intend to buy five more ships and then I will have, at least, if trade is good, and the weather good, 30,000 pieces of gold. If things go on like this from year to year I will soon be one of the richest merchants in Bagdad.”

“You are a fortunate man, Mustapha.”

“Perhaps you think so, but at the present time I shall bother myself little about fortunes. My mind is too full of plans for revenge to have much time to give to thoughts of gain.”

“Well, I am not as rich as you, Mustapha, but my trade increases more and more every year, though I have only four ships. I possess 20,000 pieces of gold at the present date and I hope to have 5,000 more next year. Besides my ships and stores, I am the master of a tailoring establishment, that is, a number of tailors working for me, and in my pay, and from that I make 500 pieces of gold a year. I supply them with the cloth, they make the clothes and sell them, I receive the profit, and pay them out of it.”

“Well, you are quite prosperous. I can remember a time when my father was no richer than you. But trade gets better every year and the merchants of Bagdad get richer year by year. The whole country is more prosperous too, and I intend to start a caravan or two, to trade with the Arabians and Persians. Heretofore I have done all my trading with the distant lands of China and other countries in that part of the world, but next year I shall follow the example of most of the merchants of this great city and trade more at home. The risk is not so great, and neither is the time and expense, and I have heard that the profit is just as good as that earned by trading by the sea. I shall also trade with Arabia and Persia by ship which is much quicker than caravan-trading, and I would advise you to do the same. You will make nearly as much out of it as I.”

“I have long intended to do it, Mustapha, but I could not quite make up my mind to such a course. I shall do so next year, though, and as soon as I can spare the money. I owe several debts and they will not leave me more than half my fortune when I have squared them. The rest of the money will be for provisioning my ships and paying the officers and sailors, and when I am all thru, I fear I shall have only a few thousand.”

“Why don’t you borrow? I will lend you ten thousand just for friendship’s sake and give you ten years to pay it back in, with no interest.”

“What a friend you are, Mustapha. It is just what I shall do if you will lend me the money. When can you do so?”

“Any time you want it. To-morrow afternoon will be a good time. I shall be at my home then. Can you be there at two o’clock?”

“Certainly, I shall be there right on the minute.”

“Then it is agreed. Hand me parchment and ink and I will give you a written agreement.”

The parchment and other necessary things were brought, and Mustapha seated himself and wrote the following:

“I, Mustapha Dagh, do hereby lend to my friend, Balbec Khan, the sum of 10,000 pieces of gold. This amount is to be paid back within ten years, and there is to be no interest upon the same.

“Signed,  
“Mustapha Dagh”

Then Balbec wrote below in his own handwriting:

“I, Balbec Khan, do hereby agree to Mustapha Dagh’s agreement above. I promise to pay back the ten thousand pieces of gold within the agreed the ten years.

“Signed,  
“Balbec Khan.”

“Put this away and see that nothing happens to it,” said Mustapha when the document was finished. “When you have paid back the money you will write below what is already written: ‘I, Balbec Khan have paid back the ten-thousand pieces of gold lent to me by Mustapha Dagh, within the given time.’ Then you can destroy the record if you wish.”

“Well, it is time to go to bed,” said Balbec. He then deposited the document in a safe place and led his guest to the room where he was to sleep for the night.

It was long after midnight when Mustapha fell asleep and he did not awaken till seven of the following morning. He arose and dressed and went downstairs to the dining-room where he found Balbec awaiting him before sitting down to breakfast. Balbec was a bachelor and led a somewhat lonely life, eating breakfast alone, except when he had company or some of his friends stopped in.

“Well, you are not an early riser,” said Balbec, impatiently. “I always make a point of rising at six, no matter what time I go to bed the night before.”

“I always sleep till I awake,” was Mustapha’s quiet answer. “I do not see how you can awake at six in the morning if you go to bed at 2 o’clock of the previous night, unless you have somebody to wake you up.”

“That explains it, my dear Mustapha. It is nothing but habit that make me awake at six.”

“I have never formed such a habit, so you see I awake at the time I have had enough sleep. I let nature take care of my sleeping and waking, not my habits.”

“Of course, everybody doesn’t have the same methods. It would be madness to expect such a state of affairs. Every door has two sides, as anyone knows, and a square box has four. If one has two sides, and the other four sides they can’t turn it around without making the door as thick as it is wide, and taking the box to pieces and making a door out of it. You can’t wash off a leopard’s spots, no matter what you use, nor can you make silk out of wool or cotton.”

“Quite an admirable argument, my dear Balbec. You have defeated yourself by your own reasoning. Some swords have two edges, you know, and each edge is equally sharp.”

“Come now, no more of this fine talk. Our breakfast is growing cold.”

With that they seated themselves at the table and ate a hearty breakfast. When the meal was finished, Balbec said, “I have the disguise ready for you and if you will come with me you may put it on now and see if the fit is good.”

He led the way to another room where a wig, false whiskers, and a suit of clothes resembling those worn by the middle class of Arabians lay on a chair. The wig was coal-black in color, and the hair was long and rough. So were the whiskers. The clothing consisted of a white turban, a long Arabian cloak, sandals, and the other articles of desert clothing.

When Mustapha had dressed himself in these articles, wearing his real clothes beneath, except his shoes, as he had to put on the sandals in their place, and his red turban, which he exchanged for the white one, Balbec told him that he would have to paint his face a darker hue. This was done with a kind of pigment, and the same was applied to his hands and feet.

Balbec then gave him a long staff like those carried by the Arabians and an Arabian sword which was little different from the Turkish scimitar.

“Now you are all right,” said Balbec, surveying Mustapha’s make-up with the eye of an artist. “I give myself credit for what I have done. The rest you’ll have to manage for yourself. I shall not try to give you any more advice. You yourself know just how to act in what you are to do today.”

“Yes, you have done well, and I shall not forget it. Send a messenger to my home to tell them that I have returned. Do not forget that you must be there this afternoon. Good-bye.”

“Good-bye, and good luck go with you, Mustapha,” said Balbec, as Mustapha walked out of the room and into the street. The merchant stood in his doorway watching his young friend, till he was out of sight, and then turned and went in, closing the door behind him.