

## RAJMOHAN'S WIFE

### Chapters 17-19:

- Chapter 17: The chapter opens with Mathur in Tara's apartment. Tara, like the caring wife she is, asks him about his anxiety. Mathur, though clearly disturbed, does not divulge any details to Tara, but leaves abruptly on hearing the hoot of the screech-owl. Tara rushes to the terrace to find out Mathur's whereabouts. She finds him going out into the jungles through the back door of the house. Much later Mathur returns but enters the house through the go-down mahal- the tenantless wing of the house.
- Chapter 18: The chapter opens with the description of a cellar/dungeon where a prisoner is held captive. It is disclosed that Madhav has been held prisoner in this dungeon by Mathur. Madhav is in an angry mood and when Bhiku and the dacoit chief arrive he shows no sign of fear or anxiety. While the dacoits start bantering with Madhav, he comes to the point directly solicits information on the identity of his captors. While they are having this conversation, a low moaning sound is heard. Those present are unable to locate the source of the noise. After they resume their talk, the sound is heard more loudly and it seems to be coming from somewhere above them. The dacoit chief goes out of the dungeon and conducts a thorough check of the veranda where the room is located. The adjoining rooms are also empty, as also the terrace above it. The turn of events disconcerts the robbers and they speed up the negotiations with the captive. The sardar begins to dictate a note to Madhav which would be delivered to his amla and he would surrender the will to the robbers and they would release Madhav. However, the plan cannot be fulfilled because the sound is heard again and this time accompanied with the clattering of iron chains and a terrifying shriek. The robbers flee the dungeon too scared to linger there. They are terrified further, when they encounter a female while escaping the godown mahal. Madhav recovers his wits and runs out of the dungeon to find that the woman standing at the end of the verandah is Tara. Before he can question her the shriek is heard again.
- Chapter 19- This chapter brings the suspense of the earlier chapters to an eventful climax. The chapter first establishes the friendly relation between

Tara and Madhav, untainted by Mathur's machinations or avarice. Madhav conveys to her the circumstances of his being taken captive. Tara tells him how her worries and curiosity led her to explore this part of the house with a spare set of keys. Tara is disturbed to learn about Madhav's abduction by Mathur, but she insists that Mathur was in a disturbed mood from two days before. Again the shriek is heard and Madhav frantically sets about searching for the source of the sound. They unlock a door in the dungeon which leads to the adjoining room. And on entering it, a staircase is revealed which in turn leads to a tiny room which is so cleverly constructed that no one can see it from the outside and its height is camouflaged within the outer rooms ceiling. On unlocking this room, they find a huge mahogany bed where they find Matangini held captive to the bed with iron chains. This chapter and the earlier ones have a distinct Gothic flavor.

Shymasree Basu