

WEST WITH THE NIGHT

Beryl Markham

When the girl came as she always did and kneaded the new dead hairs from his bright coat with supple fingers and ran the soft body-brush over him, he turned his head and watched her, accepting the soothing stroke of her hand, but he knew that the old anger was in him again. It had welled up in his heart until now it burst and made him whirl round and catch her slender back with his teeth, biting until the brush dropped from her hand, flinging her bodily against the far wall of the box. She lay there huddled in the trampled bedding for a long time, and he stood over her, trembling, not touching her with any of his feet. He would not touch her. He would have killed any living creature that touched her then, but he did not know why this was so.

After a while the girl moved and then crawled out of the box and he pawed through the bedding to the earthen floor, tossing his head up and down, letting the anger run out of him.

But the girl was there again, in the stable, the next day. She cleaned it as she had cleaned it each other day and her touch on his body was the same, except there was a firmness in it, and Camciscan knew, without knowing, that his strength, his anger, and his loneliness at last were challenged ...

