

Maria Amabile

# A Turkish princess in Italy



 *Abroventura*

*Maria Amabile*

*A Turkish  
Princess  
in Italy*

novel



*the European self publishing*

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# Chapter 1

“The building looks like a comfortable residence, my Almighty.”

“Yes, its neat simplicity made it interesting,” the princess Amira said with a bright smile.

“And look at the surrounding grounds! Come to this side; this room is wonderful. It opens upon a small wood,” said the maid, excited and restless. “My Almighty, look down there is a gentle slope that falls towards the sea,” she said admiring the view.

“The tall trees give the spot a melancholy look and a pleasant shade. The room will be mine. Maid, tell the servants to bring my books, drawings, and musical instruments,” Amira ordered, noticing that the windows were particularly pleasant. They descended to the floor and opened upon the lawn that surrounded the house.

“You know, Agropoli is a lovely town. I like it. I’ve only been here for five days, but I feel like I’ve lived here for ever.” The princess Amira walked up and down the terrace like a colourful butterfly. “Let’s walk as far as the sea. It is a wonder in the evening.”

“You, my Almighty, look like your mother. You have the same elegant body, the same delicacy of features and dark green eyes full of tender sweetness,” the maid said, looking at her with a warm expression on her face. She wanted her mistress to be happy; she

had taken care of her since she was born. Her father, the great Benavert, had entrusted her with that duty.

“My mother? That’s the best compliment you could give to me! She was a lovely person. She had a captivating grace about her. She was the greatest woman... princess living with Benavert.”

As Amira went back to the great hall she momentarily felt melancholy memories of her distant country. She missed it so much, but she liked her new house too, in the middle of the glowing beauty of the landscape. This called for self-control, not for tears. The princess Amira dried her tears and prepared to meet with calmness the trial of living in that home where there wasn’t a parent to welcome her. Even Giafar, her preceptor, wasn’t in Agropoli. He had remained in Turkey. Her father hadn’t ordered him to accompany her and she missed him.

“Yes,” said she, “let me not forget what my father has taught me. How often my father has pointed out the necessity of resisting even virtuous sorrow; how often my father and I have admired together the greatness of a mind that can, at once, suffer and reason!”

If he was to pay a visit to her chambers, he would be pleased to see that she remembered and attempted to practise the precepts he had given her.

She went out and took a turn on the path which allowed a closer view of the castle. The chimneys tipped with light, rose from behind tall oaks, whose foliage partly concealed the lower part of the building. The princess sighed heavily. “This is my favourite hour,” she said gazing upon the long evening shadows that stretched over the landscape. “What lovely scene!”

She walked slowly, till her ears caught the gay melody of a

dance. She had so often heard it before, when she walked in that place. She raised her eyes, looking for the exact place where the melody came from, but there was nobody.

A dog came running and barking before her and as a girl appeared it barked louder.

“Sorry lady, Mia signora,” said the girl as the dog continued barked and ran round her and, then flew toward the castle. “The dog has lost his owner. It belonged to the Princess.” She made the sign of the cross.

“The princess?”

“Yes, the prettiest and the kindest one. Princess Testene.”

“Oh my lady,” said a bodyguard, interrupting them, “I’ve been seeking you up and down this half hour and was afraid some accident had befallen you. How can you like to wander about in this night air! It’s dangerous. Do come into the house.”

“Please, ask for that princess. I want to know more about her.”



## Chapter 2

Amira walked silently into the long corridor and the maid led her across the hall into the dinner room, where they had laid the cloth, with one solitary knife and fork, for supper.

“Where’s the great Benavert, my father?”

“They say he’s meeting to discuss some serious problems and he’ll take too much time.”

“I’m returning to my chambers.”

“No, my lady, supper is ready.”

“I don’t want it,” replied the princess. “I will go to my room and try to sleep. Tomorrow I shall be better.”

“That is poor doings!” said the maid. “Dear lady, do take some food! The cook has dressed a pheasant, and a fine one he has cooked for you.”

“Did he?” said the princess Amira in a tender voice, while she felt her poor heart warmed for a moment by a ray of sympathy. At last, her spirits were entirely overcome and she retired to her room.

The sun was shining when the princess opened her eyes. She

struggled to focus in the light which came through the curtains and sank back into sleep.

Once more she awoke, this time with a smile on her lips and a laugh stopped somewhere in her throat. She lay still for a while, looking at the ceiling and allowed herself to remain that way to stay her memory with her father and let it linger in her mind.

She turned on her side and watched the curtain flutter as the cool air blew in through the window for a while, then she got up. A trunk had been carried in. Five dresses were inside, each one chosen by her father for her to wear, each one rich and beautiful and bought from the trade posts of the Mediterranean. She chose the dark blue silk robe which showed the tops of her breasts and her neck; her hair was under a dark blue head-dress, embroidered with holly leaves in green and red threads. And she hurried to the emir's quarters by herself . She was learning fast.

“If you listen and watch, you learn,” she repeated herself. She had known that the sea called the Mediterranean was very blue and had no tides and that the countries to the east of it were hot, with palaces built of pink and white stone and circular roofs.

When she arrived at the king's room there was a group of Agropolesi whose leader was a dark old man. Whenever the

emir spoke to him it was with an angry sneer. The dark man sometimes pretended not to hear him and sometimes answered briefly. The princess Amira couldn't hear what was being said but just now she heard the dark man reply, “Testene? You can't have a girl like her.” She had already heard that name and everyone behind him crossed and greeted as the princess appeared in the doorway opposite them.

The emir had turned at the sound of that greeting and, now she saw that the dark man smiled. It was a happy and easy smile, and it reminded her of when she had met the dog and girl walking around the castle.

“Come here” the emir said. He waved to her and turned back to his officers. “Keep your eyes on him.”

As the dark man walked up to him, the princess entered the room.

“Women are not allowed.” Shouted the first officer.

“Who is the emir?” the princess asked.

Later the emir was holding her hand as they climbed the stairs. At last the princess could be alone with her father. Love had won.

“The guards have told me that you go around regardless of any danger,” the emir said, puzzled and angry because she was a rebel.

“The land where we live attracts me, my highest Father. It’s safe, quiet and beautiful too.”

“You must obey my orders. Here we’re strangers,” he said with a harsh tone, then he became softer and added, laughing, “But, I know you’re young and enchanted by fairy stories.”

A guard came and the emir stood up, ready to follow him. “Ah, my lady daughter!” said he. “Don’t stop to esteem me, so you don’t stop to love me.”

“Most true, Father!” replied the princess Amira, trying to command her trembling voice.

The princess Amira remained in her chamber the following morning, without receiving any notice from the king, or seeing anyone except her maid and the armed men, who sometimes passed on the terrace below. She had tasted no food since the dinner of the preceding day and an extreme faintness made her feel the necessity of going out of her room to obtain refreshment.

It was near noon before she left her apartment and went first to the south gallery. She walked fast because she was scared of the dark in the long corridors. She passed without meeting a single person or hearing a sound except, now and then, the echo of a distant footstep.

It was unnecessary to call her maid, whose lamentations were still audible in her ears upon her approach to the gallery.

As she drew near the great hall, the sounds she heard and the people she met in the passages alarmed her, even if they were peaceable and did not interrupt her, though they looked earnestly at her as she passed, and sometimes spoke. On crossing the hall toward the cedar room, where the emir usually sat, she saw on the pavement fragments of swords. Some of them had garments stained with blood and she almost expected to have seen among them a dead body, but from such a spectacle she was spared. As she approached the room, the sound of a familiar voice made her pause and falter from her purpose. She looked up through the long arcades of the hall in search of a servant, but no one appeared and the urgency of going back to her chambers made her linger near the door. The voices inside were not quarrelling, and she distinguished the dark man's voice who spoke about the princess Testene and the king.

But as she turned from the door, it was suddenly opened by

the emir himself. The princess trembled and was confused, while he almost started with surprise. She forgot all she would have said, and neither enquired for the dark man, but stood silent and embarrassed.

After closing the door he sternly questioned her. “What have you overheard?”

‘That’s an accusation. I’ve not come with an intention to listen to your conversation . . . just because I’m hungry . . .’ she explained herself.

“Hungry?” He looked at her only with a malignant smile, which instantaneously confirmed her worst fear for the Italian man and, at that moment, she had no courage to ask for his mercy.

“If you call for your maid surely she’ll get you lunch. I have no time to answer idle questions,” he said, and as he was about to go inside the room again, a trumpet sounded, and in the next moment, she heard the heavy gates of the portal open and then the clattering of horses’ hoofs in the court with the confusion of many voices.

“Go to your apartment,” the emir ordered her as he went to meet a party of horsemen.

She turned her eyes where the noise came and saw through the door the same horsemen she had seen leave a few days before. But she didn’t stop to question the reason before she hurried to her quarters.



## Chapter 3

The following morning the princess Amira got up very early and went out for a walk. The magnificence of the porticos excited her admiration. She was curious to survey their structure.

Within the shade of one, a person with his arms folded and his eyes directed towards the ground was pacing the pavement behind the pillars. Then he turned suddenly, as if startled by the sound of steps, glided to a door and disappeared.

The princess Amira noticed him because there was something extraordinary in the figure. He was tall, thin, bending forward from the shoulders; he had a yellow complexion, harsh features and had an eye with an expression of uncommon ferocity.

The princess Amira was so distracted by that sinister man that she didn't realize that someone followed her. A man wrapped in a black cloak followed her steps, determined to obtain, if possible, a view of the young girl's face. She walked quickly, looking neither to the right or left, and as she turned into a narrow road he nearly lost her, but quickening his pace and observing a cautious distance, he overtook her as she entered the harbour.

In descending the last steps of the Terrazzo, the foot of the woman slipped and while he hurried to assist her, the breeze from the water caught her veil and wafted it partially aside. He saw a countenance more touchingly beautiful than he had dared to

image. Her features expressed the tranquillity of an elegant mind; her dark green eyes sparkled with intelligence. She was worried about her foot and did not immediately observe the admiration she had inspired, but the moment her eyes met those of the man, she became conscious of their effect and she hastily drew her veil.

The young woman was not badly hurt by her fall, but as she walked with some difficulty, the man insisted that she should accept his assistance. She refused, but he insisted so repeatedly and respectfully that at last, she accepted it and they walked together.

On the way he attempted to converse with her, but her replies were short. They arrived at the end of the road and she stopped near a house. The house was small, not very big but had an air of comfort and taste. It stood on a hill surrounded by a garden and vineyards and, though the little portico and colonnade in front were of common marble, the style of architecture was elegant. It was not very far from a palace guarded by sentries. As they found shelter from the sun the cooling breezes rose from the bay below.

The man stopped at the little gate leading into the garden, where the young woman thanked him many times for his care, but did not invite him to enter. He, trembling with anxiety, remained for a moment gazing upon her, unable to take leave. At the end he tore himself away, the beauty of her appearance haunting his imagination, and the touching accents of her voice still vibrating on his heart. He lingered in the woods hour after hour and walked through the trees, recalling the enchantment of her smile and the sweetness of her accent.

In the evening he returned to his father's palace, the Duke Filomarino dei Gigli. He had adopted the young man after his daughter's death, the princess Testene. It was the first time in a

long time that he felt happy, dwelling with delightful hope on the remembrance of the thanks he had received from that mysterious woman. He attended his father on his evening ride on the Corso, where in every gay carriage that passed, he hoped to see the object of his constant thought, but she did not appear. His father, the Duke, observed his anxiety and unusual silence and questioned him. He wanted an explanation of the change in his manner. But the young man's replies only excited a stronger curiosity and he thought that he might need to find more artful means. Noiro was the only son of the Duke Filomarino dei Gigli, a nobleman of one of the most ancient families of Agropoli, with an uncommon share of influence at Court and a man higher in power than in rank. His pride of birth was equal to other privileges. His pride was at once his vice and his virtue, his safeguard and his weakness.

Noiro owed everything to him. He didn't descend from an ancient family like that of his father. He was a fisherman once and at that time he was of violent passion, haughty, but not deceitful and untiring in pursuit of vengeance. He loved his natural father; he had inherited much of his character.

However, he was also noble and generous like his adoptive father, and of fiery passions, without any vindictive thirst of revenge.

When he arrived back at the castle it was very late.

The castle of Duke Filomarino dei Gigli stood on the pleasant coast of Agropoli. It had been built in the year 1484. From its windows one could see the sea and the landscape stretching along it, with luxuriant woods, vines and plantations of olives. To the

south the view was bounded by the mountains, whose summits were veiled in clouds, especially in winter time. The precipices along them were full of the soft green of the pastures and woods, where flocks, herds and simple cottages were to be seen. To the north and to the east the plains were lost in the mists of distance. On the west, it was bounded by the waters of the majestic sea.

Duke Filomarino dei Gigli had a beautiful daughter, named Testene. He liked to wander along the coast with his daughter and listen to the music that floated upon the waves of the sea. He was a descendant from the older branch of an illustrious family and it was decreed that his patrimonial wealth should be made greater either by a splendid alliance with his daughter's marriage or by success in the intrigues of public affairs. But the duke had too nice sense of honour to fulfil the former hope and too small a portion of ambition to sacrifice what he called happiness to the attainment of wealth. After the death of his wife, he had busied himself with parental duties and the treasures of knowledge and illuminations of genius.

The castle had a library enriched by a collection of the best books in ancient and modern languages. The duke cultivated his daughter's understanding with the most scrupulous care. He gave her a general view of the sciences and an exact acquaintance with every part of elegant literature. He taught her Latin and English, so that she might understand the sublimity of their best poets. In person, Testene resembled her mother. She had the same elegant body, the same face with delicate features and the same dark blue eyes, full of tender sweetness. She was lovely; the varied expressions of her countenance as a conversation awakened the emotions of her mind, threw a captivating grace around her. She had discovered in her early years an uncommon delicacy of

mind, warm affections and ready benevolence. All the Agropolesi loved her sweetness and goodness, and all the noble of the district courted her for her beauty.

Her favourite walk was to a little fishing-house, belonging to a handsome young man called Noiro. He was about twenty, an uncommonly handsome person with manly and expressive features, but whose countenance exhibited, on the whole, more of the haughtiness of command and the quickness of discernment, than of any other character. She frequently went there, and sometimes Noiro played music and awakened every fairy echo with the tender accents of his oboe as Testene's voice drew sweetness from the waves over which they trembled.

Noiro occasionally amused himself with botanizing as they strolled on. He pointed out to her the objects that particularly charmed him. Other times she recited beautiful passages from Latin and Italian poets he had heard her admire. In the pauses of conversation, when he thought himself not observed, he frequently fixed his eyes pensively on her countenance, which expressed with so much animation the taste and energy of her mind. When he spoke again there was a peculiar tenderness in the tone of his voice that defeated any attempt to conceal his sentiments. Step by step these silent pauses became more frequent, even if Testene betrayed an anxiety to interrupt them. She, who had been reserved, would now talk again and again, of the woods, the valleys and the mountains, to avoid the danger of sympathy and silence.

Noiro had fallen in love with Testene and loved her in silence. But he had been fortunate because his love was reciprocated. It had been enough for him to see Testene while she was going to church, accompanied by her handmaids, to fall in love with her. It