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PART FOUR

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## A DAUGHTER OF



## By STEPHEN McKENNA

8 sole executor to Marshall Gaunt, I was un- neglected wardrobe and packed the clothes in an aesthetic judgment, I felt that Marshall had expectedly summoned to England in midsaying he had died from brouchial pneumonia. His fame as a portrait painter was not so firmly established that the public took any interest in his health, and I had received no warning of his illness from the English papers which came irregularly, five, six, or seven days after publication, to Campitello: moreover, as he only wrote letters when business urged him, I had been compelled for a twelvementh to content myself with his general advice: "As long as you don't hear from me you may assume that I'm alive; the solicitors will let you know soon enough when I'm dead."

Even if, for once, he had not spoken ironically I felt confident that the announcement would not have to be made for another 20 years. Gaunt was a man of my own age-a few months, more or less, but certainly not a day older than 45; and, though I thought and more than once in the last year had told him that he was beginning to eat too little and drink too much, his resilient constitution and his wiry frame, which had come unscathed through the war, were more than a match for the excesses to which he subjected them; and, though I may have thought, too, that he shut himself up unduly in his studio, working and smoking with equal fury, I was not justified in criticizing his habit of life unless I could suggest a practical alternative.

Six months before I had at least saved him from the cutting of his throat and had persuaded him that he was an artist with a future; if he chose to work himself to death his suicide was at least delayed and might yet be averted by the deliberate march of time and the stealing, slow steps of forgetfulness.

The solicitors, in a consolatory postscript, suggested that I should not have to endure many days of the English winter, as the estate was small and the will simple and precise: to his sister, Mrs. Mountjoy, Marshall was bequeathing his exiguous savings, the lease of his Maida Vale house, and an almost worthless accumulation of tattered books and ramshackle furniture; as I had almost convinced him that he was a genius not yet come into his own and that we must nurse his reputation, the pictures unfinished or unsold were confided to me with instructions to hold or sell, according to the state of the market; and, though he did not cite me by name, I could think of no rival claimant under the clause which empowered the executor, in his discretion, to give tokens of remembrance to any friends who cared to ask for them.

I reflected, as I settled into the train at Florence, that if the whole of my duties were likely to be this discreet balancing of claims between Mrs. Mountjoy and her dead brother's friends I might well have continued to sun myself in the villa at Campitello. In his most normal period, which I should call the years from the Slade school to the outbreak of war, Marshall Gaunt had lacked friends because, with his ironical detachment, he did not need friends and even frightened them away; if the propinquities of a mess and of joint service urged him into ephemeral intimacies, he made no attempt to preserve them when the war was over and he could escape to Maida Vale or to Campitello; women, he gravely assured me, he would gladly have admitted to his life had he had leisure for

The funeral took place on the day after my arrival, but the coffin was already sealed and I could take no farewell of the white-cheeked face with the deepset, smoldering eyes which used to turn in certain lights and moods from brown to golden red, flashing with disconcerting mischief under their Mephistophelian brows. Mrs. Mountjoy told me that he had allowed his beard, which he had shaved on joining the army, to grow again and that this, with the prominent, narrow cheek bones, restored to his face that unbalanced length without breadth which made all my amateur sketches of him seem out of drawing. She added that he had grown old and careworn in the year before his death, with threads of silver in the thick, black hair on his temples and new wrinkles, no longer the puckerings of a quick smile, round his eyes. He was restless in manner, she said, and unconcentrated in expression; I would not have been surprised she had substituted "wandering" and

"The truth is, Mr. Bandon," she concluded, "he never got over the war. To a man of his temperament, sensitive and emotional, it must have been a greater strain than to anyone else. I'm sure you know what I mean. . . . . And it's not as though he was a boy: Marshall was almost 40 when he joined the army, and at that

age there's not the same recuperative power." As I had come to bury Marshall, not to praise him and still less to argue about him, I saw no purpose in reminding Mrs. Mountjoy that he had declared his age as 31 for the purpose of obtaining a commission and that he had applied for a commission because this temperament of his forbade him ever to hesitate on the outskirts of an adventure. Maybe his older sister had seen so much of him in the last weeks that the latest impression obliterated all that he had left in earlier years, maybe she was an unthinking woman incapable of giving a period its date showed himself emotional and sensitive it was in the 12 months between his demobilization and his death; if the quality was there before it was so uncompromisingly repressed that it played its part only by night attacks and secret

raids from his unconscious mind, "Did death come very suddenly?" I asked, as we returned from the cemetery.

"He was taken ill on Juesday and died on Friday," Mrs. Mountjoy told me.

"It was peaceful, I hope?" 'Very, I'm thankful to say. I don't think he

even knew he was dying; it was all so unexpected that he didn't have time to resist." Again I saw no purpose in asking myself or her whether, granted the time and the warn-

ing, he would have shown any wish to resist. "Was he unconscious?" I inquired.

"Not until the very end." "And I suppose, if he didn't know he was dying, he couldn't have left any message or in-

"No. I asked him if he didn't like you to be sent for, but he didn't want anyone." As she, who had attended the deathbed, did not hint that even in the last moments of delirium he had let fall any phrases that invited

an explanation, I did not choose to put the idea said as we entered the house. "He sent me a copy when it was drawn; it only remains for us to see if there are any codicils or later instruc-

tions." "I don't think so," said Mrs. Mountjoy. For at least seven years I had not stirred the ubiquitous dust of the studio; and in a friendship of four times that duration I had been admitted only to the dining room, to a "study"

and-once, at a season of sickness-to Marshall's own, old, shabby bedroom. His sister led me round quickly and without visible emotion, though in her very speed I seemed to detect a woman's distaste for the squalid setting of an unfastidious bachelor, a

these threadbare intimacies. In the matter-of-fact disposal of Marshall Gaunt's useless effects I copied her own impatience and detachment; hurriedly we set aside the books that were to be forwarded to her own house in Surrey, unsentimentally we sorted the / vas and looking from the one to the other with

shapeless bundles for his old school's mission winter by a telegram from his solicitors in Rotherhithe. I, too, was anxious enough to g he had died from brouchial pneumonia. escape from the gray lifelessness and the chill

mists of Maida Vale in winter. "He wanted you to choose something for' yourself," said Mrs. Mountjey, pausing, flushed over the last unfinished parcel of books. "It's in the will. And even if it weren't . .

"I hoped that perhaps there might be some sketch," I said. "Anything he has left in the

What I was seeking had so far eluded me, even in the sanctity of Marshall's bedroom; perhaps it was destroyed, perhaps left behind unfinished in some unexplored corner of my own villa. I believed, nevertheless, that the faculty of self-torture which came to life when Marshall revealed himself as "sensitive" and "emotional" would have preserved, for future mortification, the iron spike which he had bound

moulding of her flesh and in the coloring of her hair and eyes, poor Bianca was innocent of all beauty; a great artist, seeing her curiosity and gratification in staring at her own portrait, seeing, too, the tenacity with which she gripped the chocolate box, and guessing, no doubt, the acquisitiveness with which she had seized it, might have painted he symbolically as a wolf in the early stages of domestication by food; for general fitness of conduct. That he had but Marshall Gaunt would have been the first to any designs on Bianca was improbable; that he admit that he was not a great symbolic artist. "Hullo! I say, you've missed the time of

"This picture. . . . Don't try to think of polite things to say about it, because I know as well as you do that it's bad. But I've had great fun

painted an indifferent picture of a girl who was his narrow, white face lighting to a smile as he unprepossessing by almost every artistic stand- painted in "A Daughter of Pan," That was our first meeting, my own first In the framework of her bones, in the warning; and, looking back on it all, I do not think that, if I had my time over again, I should of 20 I might have counseled him not to lay up blooded man of more than 40, with a certain sense of responsibility and even stronger instinct

the intermittent presence of her scowling sweetyour life!" he cried as he caught sight of me. heart and through the medium of an interpreter was inconceivable. By day, so far as I could gather, he subordinated all personal interest to the exigencies of the sitting; and it was only with this young lady. It's all right; she doesn't in the evening, when I joined them in their crust and glass of wine, that they dropped

would try to carry out any designs on her in



I was fortunate in reaching the divan in time to grip and drag back the brown, powerful little hand that was grasping a long knife and had already pricked Gaunt's chest. Then I tried to make her drop it without cutting my fingers off.

I was careful not to show that it wakened any interest in me; cautiously and reverently I perambulated the studio, half choosing and wholly rejecting, twice paying little Bianca the insufficient tribute of a transitory cold glance, before I felt dispassionate enough to ask whether I might carry away, as a memento of my friend and of his art, the wistful, suflen portrait of this little Murillo face with the prominent cheek bones and drooping mouth, the rather broad nose and staring eyes.

"I don't think I know that," said Mrs. Mountjoy, delicately wrapping her hand in a and place; if at any time Marshall Gaunt duster before venturing to draw the grimy canvas into a better light. "I suppose that's one of the studies he did when he stayed with you last

year. "For a wonder, he doesn't seem to have dated it," I said; and this lapse from candor was the last sacrifice of truth to friendship that I was compelled to make. "If you don't want

"You're most welcome to it." said Mrs. Mountjoy, stepping past me to lift the picture down from the ledge on which it was standing. As she drew it away from the wall there was a metallic clatter, followed by the sound of something round and light rolling over bare boards. Before I could see what had fallen, she had stooped and picked up a long, slender knife set in a rough wooden handle. "What a dangerous

thing to leave about!" she exclaimed. This time I had no opportunity of walking indifferently round the studio to impress her with my lack of interest, but in calling the knife

dangerous she had given me my cue. 'He must have brought that back, too," I "It's an ddinary gardening knife; you see them by the thousands in Italy. I believe they're used, among other things, for pruning the vines. . . . If you're afraid that some one will cut his fingers with it. . . ."

Of utility the knife showed little promise; "The will, I gather, is with the solicitors," I of beauty or worth none at all. Before I left the house that afternoon it had been given to me; and when I returned to Italy a week later, it accompanied me-with a stout cork over its dagger point and a wad of felt round its murderous blade-in the trunk that already contained the mediocre portrait behind which it had so apppropriately sheltered itself for the best part of a year.

Though Marshall Gaunt was my guest during the whole time that he was painting Bianca, I never saw him at work on this portrait. One morning, I remember, he told me in high jubilation that he had discovered an incomparable model; but an important collection was being dispersed in Florence, and, when I returneddistaste mitigated perhaps by wonder that he making a wholly undesigned entry-it was in had remained a bachelor and by resentment time to see him painting his signature with free

born of loyalty, that I should be the witness of and grandiose sweeps of the brush. Bianca-I never heard her other name-had crept down from the dais to inspect and criticize, and was standing at his elbow, munching, with a box of chocolates pressed jealously to her waist. In the studio, face to face with the can-

understand English. First of all luring her meager little person, in her efforts to learn Enghere from a mother who entertained the un- lish, and-most of all-in her trick of followworthiest suspicions of my moral character; ing him with devoted eyes as he moved about then persuading her that I didn't in the least want a study of the nude. Her mind is that of a maiden aunt. . . . Then the daily duel with Antonio: I don't know if that's his name, but' he's the young man who comes here every evening to fetch her away and, incidentally, to murder me if he thinks I've been poaching on

"I couldn't very well explain to either of them that it's the child's ugliness that attracts me. The moment I saw her. . . . Half starved and cunning, ignorant and credulous-with an astounding shrewdness, a sublime common sense running through it all-avaricious, but so honest that you could leave her alone and famished, she wouldn't go off with a penny-piece. Virtu-. When I tilted her chin in posing her, she slapped my face for me; and yet I've never seen more animal greed and passion on a human face. Fascinating! . . . I must be getting very old or decadent or something when I find ugliness so attractive, but I confess that her variety of it bowls me over. I'm going to paint her again. And again and again until I get that transcendent beauty of ugliness. . . . Now I suppose she wants some food. You might suggest it to her; I'm getting rather tired of dumb

As I had myself caten no food for 10 hours I welcomed the excuse for at least a glass of wine and crust of bread. Gaunt also had fasted since early morning, and the three of us sat down on the divan to refresh ourselves until Bianca's cavalier came to fetch her away. Supported by an interpreter, Gaunt projected a series of seemingly disconnected inquiries about her life and upbringing, to which the girl replied with a brevity conditioned half by reserve and

half by inability to grasp his abstract questions. I cannot pretend that the conversation amused me, as the only interest lay in Gaunt's intellectual infatuation for the girl or for the mental image of her which he had created, and this I considered certainly foolish and perhaps undesirable. That it even held seeds of danger became apparent when Bianca, relieved of shyness and suspicion by the presence of a third party, began to respond gently to the warming flattery of Gaunt's whimsical attention. I noticed that the sullen eyes from time to time raised themselves for a fleeting glance at him; stray, attractive words of English were repeated under her breath with a caressing wonder; and, when her sweetheart knocked defiantly at the studio door, we had charmed one husky laugh from her and more than one smile.

"Tell her I want her to come again tomorrow" said Caunt as we surrendered Bianca to an aggressive youth whose naturally unamiable face had been twisted into a permanent scowl by a shrapnel wound that had displaced the muscles of one cheek. "And mind you here." he added when we were alone. "I want to find out more about her; she interests me."

the studio, Bianca began timidly to return his love; and the best excuse that I can make for my own blindness is that the idea of love between two such people was so fantastic that I refused to contemplate it.

I might be refusing to this day if I had not had the proof forced upon my notice. The first picture had been followed by a second, the secand by a third-that indifferent, unfinished portrait which I had carried back to Campitello from the studio in Maida Vale. One afternoon, as it neared completion, I observed a change in Marshall Gaunt's demeanor; a new elation was making him restless, and the restlessness reacted on Bianca until she, a patient sitter made perfect by her loving desire to please him, moved and fidgeted about beyond the limit of the most

Indulgent artist's teleration. In my room next to the studio I heard him first ask and then tell her to sit still; her murmured reply was peevish in tone, and when next Gaunt spoke there was an unpleasing snap in his voice. As Bianca's English was on the primitive level of Gaunt's Italian, I felt they were getting at cross purposes and was about to volunteer my services as peacemaker or at least as interpreter when the fast crumbling endurance of the artist was blown away by an explosion of irrational and disproportionate anger.

"Damnation!" I heard. "For the love of God, sit still, can't you?" Whatever the words conveyed, there was no mistaking the tone, and caught a pathetic whimper of surprise and fear. It was followed by a quick softening of Gaunt's voice. "Here, it's all right! Don't cry, Bianca. I didn't mean it. It's absolutely all right! I'm not angry with you, but I expect

we're both a bit tired. Let's have a breather." When I came into the studio he was standing on the dais with one arm round the girl's heaving shoulders, patting her head with his other hand, drying her eyes, and, at the end, kissing her cheeks and then her lips. At the scrape of my boots on the tiled floor she shook him off and turned away until she felt composed enough to face us, while I took Gaunt's arm and made him help me lay out the simple ingredients of our evening meal. It was my turn now to become conscious of atmospheric disturbance, and I cannot define the sensation any better than by saying that I seemed to have interrupted a private emotional scene which the actors independently decided to suspend as long as I was present. From a distance I should have judged that it was a scene of anger or, less gloriously, of petulance, but, at close quarters, I appeared to have interrupted a love passage, and for the first time I felt that they had reached an understanding from which I was

Bianca, I felt very sure as I looked at her passionate eyes and hungry mouth, wanted to be kissed no less than Marshall Gaunt wanted to kiss her; it was unsatisfied longing more than fatigue or artistic impatience that made them so

into Gaunt's restless eyes; and the fact that I had interrupted their scene filled me with misgivings for its end. Gaunt, at a little over 40, and Bianca at, I suppose, 17, had this in common, that sex had played little part in their conact differently. Had Gaunt been a dissolute boy scious life. Gaunt, I believe, had experienced a romance in boyhood and had lived faithful to trouble for himself or others; but insofar as its memory for 20 years; Bianca, I dare swear, I knew him, he was a detached and rather cold- had never before been kissed. If they had been overwrought all day, that broken moment of embrace had maddened them.

Until I could see some hope of avoiding disaster it was impossible to banish the misgivings. Even if Gaunt recovered his senses in time to pack up for England before any more harm was done he still could not undo the harm of having unsettled the foundations of this little savage's mind; it was likely enough that he had given her a distaste for the simpler appeal of her scowling sweetheart; it was even possible that, by lighting a fire in her and not feeding it, he would compel the flames to lick their way, in tentative exploration, until they found something else to consume.

If, on the other hand, Gaunt allowed himself to be swept away, blind and mad, realizing his madness and rushing on indifferent to it, there would be bodily disaster and sordid tragedy for Bianca's portion, spiritual disaster and remorse for his own; that he could protect himself from the vengeance of the girl's family by carrying her to distant security, I was ready to assume, though any general survey of his risks could not overlook the hundredth chance that he might be followed across Europe and left with a knife between his ribs.

If ever it were worth a man's while to break head or heart against such obstacles, it was not worth while with poor little Bianca as sole prize. As I grew to know her better I did realize that beauty of ugliness which had first excited Gaunt's artistic interest; I am prepared to go further and to say that I discovered in it a sinister attraction.

In the portrait-and it is the sole merit of that unsatisfactory work-Gaunt contrived to bring out what I thought then and believe more strongly now to have been the essence of Bianca; the pure animal in the guise of woman which led him to christen her a daughter of Pan. Religion and some rudimentary education affected, indeed, to bind her at least with ropes of sand; but I always felt that these conventions, in which at heart she did not believe, obscured the essential Blanca as her conventional clothes blurred the outline of her animal body. When first I saw her, voraciously gobbling chocolates and suspiciously clutching the box. I likened her to a wolf in the early stages of domestication by food; but, as I observed her day after day for a month, she seemed, in every movement that revealed her nature, to shed domestication, like a half-tamed dog that from afar hears the forgotten, ancestral pack in cry until in the tense, thunderous atmosphere of the day and moment when Marshall Gaunt's lips met hers, she stood forth bare and unincumbered by the animal spirit.

It was only by a flash of lightning, as it were, that I saw her. By the time that I had set the table with a fiask of wine and glasses she had reverted to the guarded friendliness which she reserved for these repasts at the end of the day's work, and it was in Gaunt that the change of manner lingered. Excited and boisterous from the beginning, with glittering eyes and a flush on his long, white face, he seemed to be atoning for his moment of harshness by extravagant affection. When he was not filling Bianca's glass or pressing her favorite sweetmeats upon her he was patting her cheek, stroking her hand, or playing with her hair. Both were drinking more wine than usual, drinking it, too, without

I had stood up to fetch another flask, and, while my back was turned and my head half inside the cupboard I heard a scuffle. had been sitting with his arm round Bianca's shoulders; when I came back he had drawn her on to his knees. In a moment he was bending to kiss her again, and I was fortunate in reaching the divan in time to grasp the brown, powerful little hand that was grasping a long knife and had already pricked Gaunt's chest till his shirt showed a widening circle of blood.

I remember wondering before all else, to the exclusion of all else, where she had concealed so ungainly a weapon and how she could move so supplely with 10 inches of steel and four inches of wooden haft disposed among her clothing. Then I tried to make her drop it without cutting my fingers off; and, when it had clattered to the floor and I had my foot on it, I could attend to Gaunt, who was looking from the stain of blood to his would-be murderess with such amazement as would have moved me to laughter at a moment less grave.

"The little devil! . . . You see that, Bandon? . . . She actually tried to stab me!" The prick of the knife had sobered him and destroyed all desire to continue his caresses.

'What's she jabbering about?" "She says her body is sacred," I translated. At a secure distance Gaunt dabbed at his chest with a reddening handkerchief and kept

his eyes averted from me. "Well, I know that," he muttered. "I wasn't going to harm her. . . . She didn't mind the

time before when I kissed her. . . . You saw."
"Perhaps she didn't realize what was happening-then or now. You may be thankful it's no worse." Brightly, through all the confusion of shocked excitement, I seemed to see an unexpected escape for Gaunt from this entanglement. "You'd better pay what you owe her

and get rid of her. And I'll put the fear of God into her so that she doesn't go about telling Antonio and the rest that you insulted her." I was just turning to impress Blanca with the enormity of trying to stab overdemonstrative Englishmen when I was astonished to see her crumple up and fall to her knees, burying her face in her hands and then stretching them

in entreaty to Gaunt.

She says she's mad. She's asking you to kill her now," I interpreted. He stared at her and then broke into

"What a bloodthirsty little ruffian it is," he commented. "Look here, explain to her that my intentions are strictly honorable and say that, if she feels I took any liberties with her. I apologize from the bottom of my heart. I don't want to kill her, and she mustn't try to kill me. By the same token, I think we'll put

this little toy out of harm's way." Drawing the knife from under my foot, he drove the point of it into the woodwork of the wall a yard above Bianca's reach. The girl looked from the quivering haft to the stain on Gaunt's shirt, then drew herself upright and blunged into his arms as though to staunch the bleeding with the touch of her bosom.

As Gaunt's arm slipped, readily protecting, round her waist, I touched his shoulder.

"You're playing with fire, both of you," I warned him, but he only laughed and held the pliant, swaying body tighter as he bent to kiss the upturned lips. "Well, even if you pay no attention to me, remember that there are other people to consider," I added, as a familiar knock fell upon the studio door.

The sound caused Gaunt at least to master his new intoxication; but Bianca, none too gently disengaged from his arms, looked at him with repreach and perplexity, as though he had repulsed her. When the door opened and she saw the author of the interruption, she strode with swinging hips and shoulders across the echoing floor and screamed defiance into the scowling face of Antonio, who at once replied

Then he went back to his easel, and I saw querulous and brought that golden red light with mingled invective; threats and entreaties, Above their tumult it was difficult for us to make our voices heard.

TEN CENTS

"What are they shouting about?" demanded

"She's explaining that she's tired of him and hates him and always has hated him and always will." I answered; "and he's threatening to murder you and her if you lay a finger on her. He's also reminding her of the vows they've exchanged and of his undying love for her. The rest can only be described as vulgar abuse on

"Well, I think he's loosed off quite enough," said Gaunt with decision, as he marched to the door and joined eagerly and unintelligibly in the altercation.

For five minutes three angry voices held forth in two languages to the limit of lung capacity and with a rich accompaniment of pantomime. At the end, Gaunt turned on his heel and led Bianca back into the studio; the rejected lover vowed vengeance in an operatic speech, but at length, when he could find no one to answer him or even to listen, was compelled to go away.

"And it's time for you to be going, too," I told Bianca.

Whatever life she and Gaunt chose to make for themselves, I was determined that they should not embark upon it until he at least had thought over it for 12 hours in cold blood.

"My knife," she murmured, without looking "What's she talking about?" asked Gaunt. "She wants her knife," I translated. "She

says the other man will kill her at sight." "O, will he?" drawled Gaunt. "Then I think I'll see her safe home." After one glance at the knife, he decided to leave it where it was. Here, my child, I'm not going to rob you, but I think that's rather an unsafe thing to carry about; you'd better have something that shuts up even if it's not so useful as a weapon of de-

fense. Explain to her, Bandon, that I want to effect an exchange." My services as interpreter were hardly needed when once Gaunt had exhibited to her delighted eyes a knife with two blades and a corkscrew, a spike, and saw, a file and the long steel hook traditionally designed for removing stones from a horse's hoof. She was turning it over with eager fingers and inspecting the inset silver name plate as they left the studio; I saw Bianca look up with a smile of rapture; and her ugliness was burnt away by the radiance of her eyes, revealing a new beauty underneath. Nevertheless, though I too realized this new beauty in her, it was a sinister beauty; and I was oppressed with what I must call panic fear because

I was afraid without a reason. When Gaunt returned an hour later, I could see that he would have preferred to be left in peace; but I felt that, for all the disorder of his wound and his excited emotions, I must force him to look ahead before he committed himself irrevocably.

"We'd better be quite frank about this," I suggested. "I see how things stand at present. What are you going to do next?"

"That's just what I can't tell you just yet," he answered; then, with an attempted bolt, "She's made a deuce of a hole in my chest. I went into a chemist's for some antiseptic-'

"Don't run away from my question, Marshall," I interrupted. "Are you going to carry

"I really don't know what I'm going to do," he answered evasively. "That's the worst' "", your unpractical artist."

"Then let's think here and now-the two of us. Are you going to carry her off, make her your mistress, get rid of her when you're tired of her, send her back spoiled and unfitted for any kind of life that she's used to-with perhaps a child in the bargain?"

"Strange as it may seem, I am not," said Gaunt with an effort to shelter himself behind his usual irony. "I'm given to understand that it's a most praiseworthy and delightful thing to do, but I've no experience, my technique would break down. Besides-what was her phrase? 'My body is sacred'? She wouldn't let me carry her off, even if I wanted to; and, as it happens,

I don't want to." "Then you mustn't see her again." I told him. "And, as you will see her if you stay here, you must clear out. You realize that?"

The irony in Gaunt's smile and tone were evidence to me that he was affecting to jest for fear of bursting his frail bands of self-control. "Strange as it may seem, I don't," he an-

"Then, once again, what are you going to

"You've surely not exhausted all the possible solutions? What would you say if I suggested marrying Bianca?"

"I shouldn't readily think you capable of being such a fool. You're middle aged, and she's a child; you're an angular, moody bachelor, and she's a young savage; you've been brought up in a certain way, and she's a peasant. Good God, you'd have to hire me as interpreter before you proposed to her!"

"I don't think that'll be necessary. After all, we're naturally intelligent, though our education has been neglected; she can learn English, and I can learn Italian. I know half a dozen words already. I've proposed already. That celebrated but unreadable romance I Promessi Sposi. . . . Mark you, I won't swear that she quite understood what I was driving at, but I hammered away; and she's coming tomorrow to give me her answer.'

While he was in this mood I knew it would be fruitless to argue with him. "Let's talk it over in the morning." I said,

"when you're cool. And now come out for a walk." "I'll come for a walk with pleasure, but I

don't know what there is to talk over. I shall be grateful, all the same, if you can spare time to be present. . · Our interview next day was the strangest that I have ever attended, the strangest that

any man, surely, could be required to attend. My duty was to convey to one helpless creature an offer of marriage from another creature so helpless that he said to me, in trembling apprehension: "You're going to play the game, aren't you?

Swear you won't try to set her against me!" I employed the shortest, simplest formula that I could devise; and Bianca, hanging her head, answered:

"I understood. He told me yesterday." "Well, he wants to know what you say to

Her answer reminded me of a phrase that Gaunt had once used in praise of her "sublime common sense."

"It's impossible, absurd." I sometimes wonder whether, to the hour of his death, Marshall Gaunt believed that I was keeping my word and arguing, not in his interests. Heaven knows, but loyally and honorably on his behalf, in the terms of my brief, Bianca talked for 10 minutes, I should say, letting trickle the short phrases and broken sentences of one who had never been trained to think comprehensively or to express herself coherently. A dozen times, from a dozen different starting places, she came back to her uncompromising statement that it was impossible, absurd for a man to marry such a girl as she was: they would be miserable, they had nothing to common but their love; luxury of dress and living had no power to tempt her into forgetting this inseparable bar; the urgency of Gaunt,

vehement in unintelligible English and passion-(Turn to Page Eight, Column Three.)