

CHAPTER XI

Who rears the bloody hand?—SAYERS

Emily remained in her chamber, on the following morning, without receiving any notice from Montoni, or seeing a human being, except the armed men, who sometimes passed on the terrace below. Having tasted no food since the dinner of the preceding day, extreme faintness made her feel the necessity of quitting the asylum of her apartment to obtain refreshment, and she was also very anxious to procure liberty for Annette. Willing, however, to defer venturing forth, as long as possible, and considering, whether she should apply to Montoni, or to the compassion of some other person, her excessive anxiety concerning her aunt, at length, overcame her abhorrence of his presence, and she determined to go to him, and to entreat, that he would suffer her to see Madame Montoni.

Meanwhile, it was too certain, from the absence of Annette, that some accident had befallen Ludovico, and that she was still in confinement; Emily, therefore, resolved also to visit the chamber, where she had spoken to her, on the preceding night, and, if the poor girl was yet there, to inform Montoni of her situation.

It was near noon, before she ventured from her apartment, and went first to the south gallery, whither 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 Annette, whose lamentations were audible upon the first approach to the gallery, and who, bewailing her own and Ludovico's fate, told Emily, that she should certainly be starved to death, if she was not let out immediately. Emily replied, that she was going to beg her release of Montoni; but the terrors of hunger now yielded to those of the Signor, and, when Emily left her, she was loudly entreating, that her place of refuge might be concealed from him.

As Emily drew near the great hall, the sounds she heard and the people she met in the passages renewed her alarm. The latter, however, were peaceable, and did not interrupt her, though they looked earnestly at her, as she passed, and sometimes spoke. On crossing the hall towards the cedar room, where Montoni usually sat, she perceived, on the pavement, fragments of swords, some tattered garments stained with blood, and almost expected to have seen among them a dead body; but from such a spectacle she was, at present, spared. As she approached the room, the sound of several voices issued from within, and a dread of appearing before many strangers, as well as of irritating Montoni by such an intrusion, made her pause and falter from her purpose. She looked up through the long arcades of the hall, in search of a servant, who might bear a message, but no one appeared, and the urgency of what she had to request made her still linger near the door. The voices within were not in contention, though she distinguished those of several of the guests of the preceding day; but still her resolution failed, whenever she would have tapped at the door, and she had determined to walk in the hall, till some person should appear, who might call Montoni from the room, when, as she turned from the door, it was suddenly opened by himself. Emily trembled, and was confused, while he almost started with surprise, and all the terrors of his countenance unfolded themselves. She forgot all she would have said, and neither enquired for her aunt, or entreated for Annette, but stood silent and embarrassed.

After closing the door he reproved her for a meanness, of which she had not been guilty, and sternly questioned her what she had overheard; an accusation, which revived her recollection so far, that she assured him she had not come thither with an intention to listen to his conversation,

but to entreat his compassion for her aunt, and for Annette. Montoni seemed to doubt this assertion, for he regarded her with a scrutinizing look; and the doubt evidently arose from no trifling interest. Emily then further explained herself, and concluded with entreating him to inform her, where her aunt was placed, and to permit, that she might visit her; but he looked upon her only with a malignant smile, which instantaneously confirmed her worst fears for her aunt, and, at that moment, she had not courage to renew her entreaties.

‘For Annette,’ said he,—‘if you go to Carlo, he will release the girl; the foolish fellow, who shut her up, died yesterday.’ Emily shuddered.—‘But my aunt, Signor’—said she, ‘O tell me of my aunt!’

‘She is taken care of,’ replied Montoni hastily, ‘I have no time to answer idle questions.’

He would have passed on, but Emily, in a voice of agony, that could not be wholly resisted, conjured him to tell her, where Madame Montoni was; while he paused, and she anxiously watched his countenance, 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. She stood for a moment hesitating whether she should follow Montoni, who, at the sound of the trumpet, had passed through the hall, and, turning her eyes whence it came, she saw through the door, that opened beyond a long perspective of arches into the courts, a party of horsemen, whom she judged, as well as the distance and her embarrassment would allow, to be the same she had seen depart, a few days before. But she staid not to scrutinize, for, when the trumpet sounded again, the chevaliers rushed out of the cedar room, and men came running into the hall from every quarter of the castle. Emily once more hurried for shelter to her own apartment. Thither she was still pursued by images of horror. She re-considered Montoni’s manner and words, when he had spoken of his wife, and they served only to confirm her most terrible suspicions. Tears refused any longer to relieve her distress, and she had sat for a considerable time absorbed in thought, when a knocking at the chamber door aroused her, on opening which she found old Carlo.

‘Dear young lady,’ said he, ‘I have been so flurried, I never once thought of you till just now. I have brought you some fruit and wine, and I am sure you must stand in need of them by this time.’

‘Thank you, Carlo,’ said Emily, ‘this is very good of you Did the Signor remind you of me?’

‘No, Signora,’ replied Carlo, ‘his excellenza has business enough on his hands.’ Emily then renewed her enquiries, concerning Madame Montoni, but Carlo had been employed at the other end of the castle, during the time, that she was removed, and he had heard nothing since, concerning her.

While he spoke, Emily looked steadily at him, for she scarcely knew whether he was really ignorant, or concealed his knowledge of the truth from a fear of offending his master. To several questions, concerning the contentions of yesterday, he gave very limited answers; but told, that the disputes were now amicably settled, and that the Signor believed himself to have been mistaken in his suspicions of his guests. ‘The fighting was about that, Signora,’ said Carlo; ‘but I trust I shall never see such another day in this castle, though strange things are about to be done.’

On her enquiring his meaning, ‘Ah, Signora!’ added he, ‘it is not for me to betray secrets, or tell all I think, but time will tell.’

She then desired him to release Annette, and, having described the chamber in which the poor girl was confined, he promised to obey her immediately, and was departing, when she remembered to ask who were the persons just arrived. Her late conjecture was right; it was Verezzi, with his party.

Her spirits were somewhat soothed by this short conversation with Carlo; for, in her present circumstances, it afforded some comfort to hear the accents of compassion, and to meet the look of sympathy.

An hour passed before Annette appeared, who then came weeping and sobbing. 'O Ludovico—Ludovico!' cried she.

'My poor Annette!' said Emily, and made her sit down.

'Who could have foreseen this, ma'amselle? O miserable, wretched, day—that ever I should live to see it!' and she continued to moan and lament, till Emily thought it necessary to check her excess of grief. 'We are continually losing dear friends by death,' said she, with a sigh, that came from her heart. 'We must submit to the will of Heaven—our tears, alas! cannot recall the dead!'

Annette took the handkerchief from her face.

'You will meet Ludovico in a better world, I hope,' added Emily.

'Yes—yes,—ma'amselle,' sobbed Annette, 'but I hope I shall meet him again in this—though he is so wounded!'

'Wounded!' exclaimed Emily, 'does he live?'

'Yes, ma'am, but—but he has a terrible wound, and could not come to let me out. They thought him dead, at first, and he has not been rightly himself, till within this hour.'

'Well, Annette, I rejoice to hear he lives.'

'Lives! Holy Saints! why he will not die, surely!'

Emily said she hoped not, but this expression of hope Annette thought implied fear, and her own increased in proportion, as Emily endeavoured to encourage her. To enquiries, concerning Madame Montoni, she could give no satisfactory answers.

'I quite forgot to ask among the servants, ma'amselle,' said she, 'for I could think of nobody but poor Ludovico.'

Annette's grief was now somewhat assuaged, and Emily sent her to make enquiries, concerning her lady, of whom, however, she could obtain no intelligence, some of the people she spoke with being really ignorant of her fate, and others having probably received orders to conceal it.

This day passed with Emily in continued grief and anxiety for her aunt; but she was unmolested by any notice from Montoni; and, now that Annette was liberated, she obtained food, without exposing herself to danger, or impertinence.

Two following days passed in the same manner, unmarked by any occurrence, during which she obtained no information of Madame Montoni. On the evening of the second, having dismissed Annette, and retired to bed, her mind became haunted by the most dismal images, such as her long anxiety, concerning her aunt, suggested; and, unable to forget herself, for a moment, or to vanquish the phantoms, that tormented her, she rose from her bed, and went to one of the casements of her chamber, to breathe a freer air.

All without was silent and dark, unless that could be called light, which was only the faint glimmer of the stars, shewing imperfectly the outline of the mountains, the western towers of the castle and the ramparts below, where a solitary sentinel was pacing. What an image of repose did this scene present! The fierce and terrible passions, too, which so often agitated the inhabitants of this edifice, seemed now hushed in sleep;—those mysterious workings, that rouse the elements of man's nature into tempest—were calm. Emily's heart was not so; but her sufferings, though deep, partook of the gentle character of her mind. Hers was a silent anguish, weeping, yet enduring; not the wild energy of passion, inflaming imagination, bearing down the barriers of reason and living in a world of its own.

The air refreshed her, and she continued at the casement, looking on the shadowy scene, over which the planets burned with a clear light, amid the deep blue aether, as they silently moved in their destined course. She remembered how often she had gazed on them with her dear father, how often he had pointed out their way in the heavens, and explained their laws; and these reflections led to others, which, in an almost equal degree, awakened her grief and astonishment.

They brought a retrospect of all the strange and mournful events, which had occurred since she lived in peace with her parents. And to Emily, who had been so tenderly educated, so tenderly loved, who once knew only goodness and happiness—to her, the late events and her present situation—in a foreign land—in a remote castle—surrounded by vice and violence—seemed more like the visions of a distempered imagination, than the circumstances of truth. She wept to think of what her parents would have suffered, could they have foreseen the events of her future life.

While she raised her streaming eyes to heaven, she observed the same planet, which she had seen in Languedoc, on the night, preceding her father's death, rise above the eastern towers of the castle, while she remembered the conversation, which has passed, concerning the probable state of departed souls; remembered, also, the solemn music she had heard, and to which the tenderness of her spirits had, in spite of her reason, given a superstitious meaning. At these recollections she wept again, and continued musing, when suddenly the notes of sweet music passed on the air. A superstitious dread stole over her; she stood listening, for some moments, in trembling expectation, and then endeavoured to re-collect her thoughts, and to reason herself into composure; but human reason cannot establish her laws on subjects, lost in the obscurity of imagination, any more than the eye can ascertain the form of objects, that only glimmer through the dimness of night.

Her surprise, on hearing such soothing and delicious sounds, was, at least, justifiable; for it was long—very long, since she had listened to any thing like melody. The fierce trumpet and the shrill fife were the only instruments she had heard, since her arrival at Udolpho.

When her mind was somewhat more composed, she tried to ascertain from what quarter the sounds proceeded, and thought they came from below; but whether from a room of the castle, or from the terrace, she could not with certainty judge. Fear and surprise now yielded to the enchantment of a strain, that floated on the silent night, with the most soft and melancholy sweetness. Suddenly, it seemed removed to a distance, trembled faintly, and then entirely ceased.

She continued to listen, sunk in that pleasing repose, which soft music leaves on the mind—but it came no more. Upon this strange circumstance her thoughts were long engaged, for strange it certainly was to hear music at midnight, when every inhabitant of the castle had long since retired to rest, and in a place, where nothing like harmony had been heard before, probably, for many years. Long-suffering had made her spirits peculiarly sensible to terror, and liable to be affected by the illusions of superstition.—It now seemed to her, as if her dead father had spoken to her in that strain, to inspire her with comfort and confidence, on the subject, which had then occupied her mind. Yet reason told her, that this was a wild conjecture, and she was inclined to dismiss it; but, with the inconsistency so natural, when imagination guides the thoughts, she then wavered towards a belief as wild. She remembered the singular event, connected with the castle, which had given it into the possession of its present owner; and, when she considered the mysterious manner, in which its late possessor had disappeared, and that she had never since been heard of, her mind was impressed with an high degree of solemn awe; so that, though there appeared no clue to connect that event with the late music, she was inclined fancifully to think they had some relation to each other. At this conjecture, a sudden chillness ran through her

frame; she looked fearfully upon the duskiness of her chamber, and the dead silence, that prevailed there, heightened to her fancy its gloomy aspect.

At length, she left the casement, but her steps faltered, as she approached the bed, and she stopped and looked round. The single lamp, that burned in her spacious chamber, was expiring; for a moment, she shrunk from the darkness beyond; and then, ashamed of the weakness, which, however, she could not wholly conquer, went forward to the bed, where her mind did not soon know the soothings of sleep. She still mused on the late occurrence, and looked with anxiety to the next night, when, at the same hour, she determined to watch whether the music returned. 'If those sounds were human,' said she, 'I shall probably hear them again.'

CHAPTER XII

Then, oh, you blessed ministers above,
Keep me in patience; and, in ripen'd time,
Unfold the evil which is here wrapt up
In countenance.—SHAKESPEARE

Annette came almost breathless to Emily's apartment in the morning. 'O ma'amselle!' said she, in broken sentences, 'what news I have to tell! I have found out who the prisoner is—but he was no prisoner, neither;—he that was shut up in the chamber I told you of. I must think him a ghost, forsooth!'

'Who was the prisoner?' enquired Emily, while her thoughts glanced back to the circumstance of the preceding night.

'You mistake, ma'am,' said Annette; 'he was not a prisoner, after all.'

'Who is the person, then?'

'Holy Saints!' rejoined Annette; 'How I was surprised! I met him just now, on the rampart below, there. I never was so surprised in my life! Ah! ma'amselle! this is a strange place! I should never have done wondering, if I was to live here an hundred years. But, as I was saying, I met him just now on the rampart, and I was thinking of nobody less than of him.'

'This trifling is insupportable,' said Emily; 'prythee, Annette, do not torture my patience any longer.'

'Nay, ma'amselle, guess—guess who it was; it was somebody you know very well.'

'I cannot guess,' said Emily impatiently.

'Nay, ma'amselle, I'll tell you something to guess by—A tall Signor, with a longish face, who walks so stately, and used to wear such a high feather in his hat; and used often to look down upon the ground, when people spoke to him; and to look at people from under his eyebrows, as it were, all so dark and frowning. You have seen him, often and often, at Venice, ma'am. Then he was so intimate with the Signor, too. And, now I think of it, I wonder what he could be afraid of in this lonely old castle, that he should shut himself up for. But he is come abroad now, for I met him on the rampart just this minute. I trembled when I saw him, for I always was afraid of him, somehow; but I determined I would not let him see it; so I went up to him, and made him a low curtesy, "You are welcome to the castle, Signor Orsino," said I.'

'O, it was Signor Orsino, then!' said Emily.

'Yes, ma'amselle, Signor Orsino, himself, who caused that Venetian gentleman to be killed, and has been popping about from place to place, ever since, as I hear.'

‘Good God!’ exclaimed Emily, recovering from the shock of this intelligence; ‘and is HE come to Udolpho! He does well to endeavour to conceal himself.’

‘Yes, ma’amselle, but if that was all, this desolate place would conceal him, without his shutting himself up in one room. Who would think of coming to look for him here? I am sure I should as soon think of going to look for any body in the other world.’

‘There is some truth in that,’ said Emily, who would now have concluded it was Orsino’s music, which she had heard, on the preceding night, had she not known, that he had neither taste, or skill in the art. But, though she was unwilling to add to the number of Annette’s surprises, by mentioning the subject of her own, she enquired, whether any person in the castle played on a musical instrument?

‘O yes, ma’amselle! there is Benedetto plays the great drum to admiration; and then, there is Launcelot the trumpeter; nay, for that matter, Ludovico himself can play on the trumpet;—but he is ill now. I remember once’—

Emily interrupted her; ‘Have you heard no other music since you came to the castle—none last night?’

‘Why, did YOU hear any last night, ma’amselle?’

Emily evaded this question, by repeating her own.

‘Why, no, ma’am,’ replied Annette; ‘I never heard any music here, I must say, but the drums and the trumpet; and, as for last night, I did nothing but dream I saw my late lady’s ghost.’

‘Your LATE lady’s,’ said Emily in a tremulous voice; ‘you have heard more, then. Tell me—tell me all, Annette, I entreat; tell me the worst at once.’

‘Nay, ma’amselle, you know the worst already.’

‘I know nothing,’ said Emily.

‘Yes, you do, ma’amselle; you know, that nobody knows any thing about her; and it is plain, therefore, she is gone, the way of the first lady of the castle—nobody ever knew any thing about her.’

Emily leaned her head upon her hand, and was, for some time, silent; then, telling Annette she wished to be alone, the latter left the room.

The remark of Annette had revived Emily’s terrible suspicion, concerning the fate of Madame Montoni; and she resolved to make another effort to obtain certainty on this subject, by applying to Montoni once more.

When Annette returned, a few hours after, she told Emily, that the porter of the castle wished very much to speak with her, for that he had something of importance to say; her spirits had, however, of late been so subject to alarm, that any new circumstance excited it; and this message from the porter, when her first surprise was over, made her look round for some lurking danger, the more suspiciously, perhaps, because she had frequently remarked the unpleasant air and countenance of this man. She now hesitated, whether to speak with him, doubting even, that this request was only a pretext to draw her into some danger; but a little reflection shewed her the improbability of this, and she blushed at her weak fears.

‘I will speak to him, Annette,’ said she; ‘desire him to come to the corridor immediately.’

Annette departed, and soon after returned.

‘Barnardine, ma’amselle,’ said she, ‘dare not come to the corridor, lest he should be discovered, it is so far from his post; and he dare not even leave the gates for a moment now; but, if you will come to him at the portal, through some roundabout passages he told me of, without crossing the courts, he has that to tell, which will surprise you. But you must not come through the courts, lest the Signor should see you.’

Emily, neither approving these 'roundabout passage,' nor the other part of the request, now positively refused to go. 'Tell him,' said she, 'if he has any thing of consequence to impart, I will hear him in the corridor, whenever he has an opportunity of coming thither.'

Annette went to deliver this message, and was absent a considerable time. When she returned, 'It won't do, ma'amselle,' said she. 'Barnardine has been considering all this time what can be done, for it is as much as his place is worth to leave his post now. But, if you will come to the east rampart in the dusk of the evening, he can, perhaps, steal away, and tell you all he has to say.'

Emily was surprised and alarmed, at the secrecy which this man seemed to think so necessary, and hesitated whether to meet him, till, considering, that he might mean to warn her of some serious danger, she resolved to go.

'Soon after sun-set,' said she, 'I will be at the end of the east rampart. But then the watch will be set,' she added, recollecting herself, 'and how can Barnardine pass unobserved?'

'That is just what I said to him, ma'am, and he answered me, that he had the key of the gate, at the end of the rampart, that leads towards the courts, and could let himself through that way; and as for the sentinels, there were none at this end of the terrace, because the place is guarded enough by the high walls of the castle, and the east turret; and he said those at the other end were too far off to see him, if it was pretty duskyish.'

'Well,' said Emily, 'I must hear what he has to tell; and, therefore, desire you will go with me to the terrace, this evening.'

'He desired it might be pretty duskyish, ma'amselle,' repeated Annette, 'because of the watch.'

Emily paused, and then said she would be on the terrace, an hour after sun-set;—'and tell Barnardine,' she added, 'to be punctual to the time; for that I, also, may be observed by Signor Montoni. Where is the Signor? I would speak with him.'

'He is in the cedar chamber, ma'am, counselling with the other Signors. He is going to give them a sort of treat to-day, to make up for what passed at the last, I suppose; the people are all very busy in the kitchen.'

Emily now enquired, if Montoni expected any new guests? and Annette believed that he did not. 'Poor Ludovico!' added she, 'he would be as merry as the best of them, if he was well; but he may recover yet. Count Morano was wounded as bad, as he, and he is got well again, and is gone back to Venice.'

'Is he so?' said Emily, 'when did you hear this?'

'I heard it, last night, ma'amselle, but I forgot to tell it.'

Emily asked some further questions, and then, desiring Annette would observe and inform her, when Montoni was alone, the girl went to deliver her message to Barnardine.

Montoni was, however, so much engaged, during the whole day, that Emily had no opportunity of seeking a release from her terrible suspense, concerning her aunt. Annette was employed in watching his steps, and in attending upon Ludovico, whom she, assisted by Caterina, nursed with the utmost care; and Emily was, of course, left much alone. Her thoughts dwelt often on the message of the porter, and were employed in conjecturing the subject, that occasioned it, which she sometimes imagined concerned the fate of Madame Montoni; at others, that it related to some personal danger, which threatened herself. The cautious secrecy which Barnardine observed in his conduct, inclined her to believe the latter.

As the hour of appointment drew near, her impatience increased. At length, the sun set; she heard the passing steps of the sentinels going to their posts; and waited only for Annette to accompany her to the terrace, who, soon after, came, and they descended together. When Emily

expressed apprehensions of meeting Montoni, or some of his guests, 'O, there is no fear of that, ma'amselle,' said Annette, 'they are all set in to feasting yet, and that Barnardine knows.'

They reached the first terrace, where the sentinels demanded who passed; and Emily, having answered, walked on to the east rampart, at the entrance of which they were again stopped; and, having again replied, were permitted to proceed. But Emily did not like to expose herself to the discretion of these men, at such an hour; and, impatient to withdraw from the situation, she stepped hastily on in search of Barnardine. He was not yet come. She leaned pensively on the wall of the rampart, and waited for him. The gloom of twilight sat deep on the surrounding objects, blending in soft confusion the valley, the mountains, and the woods, whose tall heads, stirred by the evening breeze, gave the only sounds, that stole on silence, except a faint, faint chorus of distant voices, that arose from within the castle.

'What voices are those?' said Emily, as she fearfully listened.

'It is only the Signor and his guests, carousing,' replied Annette.

'Good God!' thought Emily, 'can this man's heart be so gay, when he has made another being so wretched; if, indeed, my aunt is yet suffered to feel her wretchedness? O! whatever are my own sufferings, may my heart never, never be hardened against those of others!'

She looked up, with a sensation of horror, to the east turret, near which she then stood; a light glimmered through the grates of the lower chamber, but those of the upper one were dark. Presently, she perceived a person moving with a lamp across the lower room; but this circumstance revived no hope, concerning Madame Montoni, whom she had vainly sought in that apartment, which had appeared to contain only soldiers' accoutrements. Emily, however, determined to attempt the outer door of the turret, as soon as Barnardine should withdraw; and, if it was unfastened, to make another effort to discover her aunt.

The moments passed, but still Barnardine did not appear; and Emily, becoming uneasy, hesitated whether to wait any longer. She would have sent Annette to the portal to hasten him, but feared to be left alone, for it was now almost dark, and a melancholy streak of red, that still lingered in the west, was the only vestige of departed day. The strong interest, however, which Barnardine's message had awakened, overcame other apprehensions, and still detained her.

While she was conjecturing with Annette what could thus occasion his absence, they heard a key turn in the lock of the gate near them, and presently saw a man advancing. It was Barnardine, of whom Emily hastily enquired what he had to communicate, and desired, that he would tell her quickly, 'for I am chilled with this evening air,' said she.

'You must dismiss your maid, lady,' said the man in a voice, the deep tone of which shocked her, 'what I have to tell is to you only.'

Emily, after some hesitation, desired Annette to withdraw to a little distance. 'Now, my friend, what would you say?'

He was silent a moment, as if considering, and then said,—

'That which would cost me my place, at least, if it came to the Signor's ears. You must promise, lady, that nothing shall ever make you tell a syllable of the matter; I have been trusted in this affair, and, if it was known, that I betrayed my trust, my life, perhaps, might answer it. But I was concerned for you, lady, and I resolved to tell you.' He paused.—

Emily thanked him, assured him that he might repose on her discretion, and entreated him to dispatch.

'Annette told us in the hall how unhappy you was about Signora Montoni, and how much you wished to know what was become of her.'

‘Most true,’ said Emily eagerly, ‘and you can inform me. I conjure you tell me the worst, without hesitation.’ She rested her trembling arm upon the wall.

‘I can tell you,’ said Barnardine, and paused.—

Emily had no power to enforce her entreaties.

‘I CAN tell you,’ resumed Barnardine,—‘but’—

‘But what?’ exclaimed Emily, recovering her resolution.

‘Here I am, ma’amselle,’ said Annette, who, having heard the eager tone, in which Emily pronounced these words, came running towards her.

‘Retire!’ said Barnardine, sternly; ‘you are not wanted;’ and, as Emily said nothing, Annette obeyed.

‘I CAN tell you,’ repeated the porter,—‘but I know not how—you was afflicted before.’—

‘I am prepared for the worst, my friend,’ said Emily, in a firm and solemn voice. ‘I can support any certainty better than this suspense.’

‘Well, Signora, if that is the case, you shall hear.—You know, I suppose, that the Signor and his lady used sometimes to disagree. It is none of my concerns to enquire what it was about, but I believe you know it was so.’

‘Well,’ said Emily, ‘proceed.’

‘The Signor, it seems, had lately been very wrath against her. I saw all, and heard all,—a great deal more than people thought for; but it was none of my business, so I said nothing. A few days ago, the Signor sent for me. “Barnardine,” says he, “you are—an honest man, I think I can trust you.” I assured his excellenza that he could. “Then,” says he, as near as I can remember, “I have an affair in hand, which I want you to assist me in.”—Then he told me what I was to do; but that I shall say nothing about—it concerned only the Signora.’

‘O Heavens!’ exclaimed Emily—‘what have you done?’

Barnardine hesitated, and was silent. ‘What fiend could tempt him, or you, to such an act!’ cried Emily, chilled with horror, and scarcely able to support her fainting spirits.

‘It was a fiend,’ said Barnardine in a gloomy tone of voice. They were now both silent;—Emily had not courage to enquire further, and Barnardine seemed to shrink from telling more. At length he said, ‘It is of no use to think of the past; the Signor was cruel enough, but he would be obeyed. What signified my refusing? He would have found others, who had no scruples.’

‘You have murdered her, then!’ said Emily, in a hollow and inward voice—‘I am talking with a murderer!’ Barnardine stood silent; while Emily turned from him, and attempted to leave the place.

‘Stay, lady!’ said he, ‘You deserve to think so still—since you can believe me capable of such a deed.’

‘If you are innocent, tell me quickly,’ said Emily, in faint accents, ‘for I feel I shall not be able to hear you long.’

‘I will tell you no more,’ said he, and walked away. Emily had just strength enough to bid him stay, and then to call Annette, on whose arm she leaned, and they walked slowly up the rampart, till they heard steps behind them. It was Barnardine again.

‘Send away the girl,’ said he, ‘and I will tell you more.’

‘She must not go,’ said Emily; ‘what you have to say, she may hear.’

‘May she so, lady?’ said he. ‘You shall know no more, then;’ and he was going, though slowly, when Emily’s anxiety, overcoming the resentment and fear, which the man’s behaviour had roused, she desired him to stay, and bade Annette retire.

‘The Signora is alive,’ said he, ‘for me. She is my prisoner, though; his excellenza has shut her up in the chamber over the great gates of the court, and I have the charge of her. I was going to have told you, you might see her—but now—’

Emily, relieved from an unutterable load of anguish by this speech, had now only to ask Barnardine’s forgiveness, and to conjure, that he would let her visit her aunt.

He complied with less reluctance, than she expected, and told her, that, if she would repair, on the following night, when the Signor was retired to rest, to the postern-gate of the castle, she should, perhaps, see Madame Montoni.

Amid all the thankfulness, which Emily felt for this concession, she thought she observed a malicious triumph in his manner, when he pronounced the last words; but, in the next moment, she dismissed the thought, and, having again thanked him, commended her aunt to his pity, and assured him, that she would herself reward him, and would be punctual to her appointment, she bade him good night, and retired, unobserved, to her chamber. It was a considerable time, before the tumult of joy, which Barnardine’s unexpected intelligence had occasioned, allowed Emily to think with clearness, or to be conscious of the real dangers, that still surrounded Madame Montoni and herself. When this agitation subsided, she perceived, that her aunt was yet the prisoner of a man, to whose vengeance, or avarice, she might fall a sacrifice; and, when she further considered the savage aspect of the person, who was appointed to guard Madame Montoni, her doom appeared to be already sealed, for the countenance of Barnardine seemed to bear the stamp of a murderer; and, when she had looked upon it, she felt inclined to believe, that there was no deed, however black, which he might not be prevailed upon to execute. These reflections brought to her remembrance the tone of voice, in which he had promised to grant her request to see his prisoner; and she mused upon it long in uneasiness and doubt. Sometimes, she even hesitated, whether to trust herself with him at the lonely hour he had appointed; and once, and only once, it struck her, that Madame Montoni might be already murdered, and that this ruffian was appointed to decoy herself to some secret place, where her life also was to be sacrificed to the avarice of Montoni, who then would claim securely the contested estates in Languedoc. The consideration of the enormity of such guilt did, at length, relieve her from the belief of its probability, but not from all the doubts and fears, which a recollection of Barnardine’s manner had occasioned. From these subjects, her thoughts, at length, passed to others; and, as the evening advanced, she remembered, with somewhat more than surprise, the music she had heard, on the preceding night, and now awaited its return, with more than curiosity.

She distinguished, till a late hour, the distant carousals of Montoni and his companions—the loud contest, the dissolute laugh and the choral song, that made the halls re-echo. At length, she heard the heavy gates of the castle shut for the night, and those sounds instantly sunk into a silence, which was disturbed only by the whispering steps of persons, passing through the galleries to their remote rooms. Emily now judging it to be about the time, when she had heard the music, on the preceding night, dismissed Annette, and gently opened the casement to watch for its return. The planet she had so particularly noticed, at the recurrence of the music, was not yet risen; but, with superstitious weakness, she kept her eyes fixed on that part of the hemisphere, where it would rise, almost expecting, that, when it appeared, the sounds would return. At length, it came, serenely bright, over the eastern towers of the castle. Her heart trembled, when she perceived it, and she had scarcely courage to remain at the casement, lest the returning music should confirm her terror, and subdue the little strength she yet retained. The clock soon after struck one, and, knowing this to be about the time, when the sounds had

occurred, she sat down in a chair, near the casement, and endeavoured to compose her spirits; but the anxiety of expectation yet disturbed them. Every thing, however, remained still; she heard only the solitary step of a sentinel, and the lulling murmur of the woods below, and she again leaned from the casement, and again looked, as if for intelligence, to the planet, which was now risen high above the towers.

Emily continued to listen, but no music came. 'Those were surely no mortal sounds!' said she, recollecting their entrancing melody. 'No inhabitant of this castle could utter such; and, where is the feeling, that could modulate such exquisite expression? We all know, that it has been affirmed celestial sounds have sometimes been heard on earth. Father Pierre and Father Antoine declared, that they had sometimes heard them in the stillness of night, when they alone were waking to offer their orisons to heaven. Nay, my dear father himself, once said, that, soon after my mother's death, as he lay watchful in grief, sounds of uncommon sweetness called him from his bed; and, on opening his window, he heard lofty music pass along the midnight air. It soothed him, he said; he looked up with confidence to heaven, and resigned her to his God.'

Emily paused to weep at this recollection. 'Perhaps,' resumed she, 'perhaps, those strains I heard were sent to comfort,—to encourage me! Never shall I forget those I heard, at this hour, in Languedoc! Perhaps, my father watches over me, at this moment!' She wept again in tenderness. Thus passed the hour in watchfulness and solemn thought; but no sounds returned; and, after remaining at the casement, till the light tint of dawn began to edge the mountain-tops and steal upon the night-shade, she concluded, that they would not return, and retired reluctantly to repose.