



Vanina Vanini
Stendhal
(Translator: C K Scott Moncrieff)

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About Stendhal:

Marie-Henri Beyle (January 23, 1783 – March 23, 1842), better known by his penname Stendhal, was a 19th century French writer. Known for his acute analysis of his characters' psychology, he is considered one of the earliest and foremost practitioners of the realism in his two novels *Le Rouge et le Noir* (The Red and the Black, 1830) and *La Chartreuse de Parme* (The Charterhouse of Parma, 1839). Source: Wikipedia

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It was a spring evening in 182—. All Rome was astir: the Duca di B——, the famous banker, was giving a ball in his new palazzo on the Piazza di Venezia. All the most sumptuous treasures that the arts of Italy, the luxury of Paris and London can furnish had been collected for the adornment of this palace. The gathering was immense. The fair, retiring beauties of noble England had intrigued for the honour of being present at this ball; they arrived in crowds. The most beautiful women of Rome vied with them for the prize of beauty. A girl whom her sparkling eyes and ebon tresses proclaimed of Roman birth entered, escorted by her father; every eye followed her. A singular pride was displayed in her every gesture.

One could see the foreigners who entered the room struck by the magnificence of this ball. "None of the courts of Europe," they were saying, "can compare with this."

Kings have not a palace of Roman architecture: they are obliged to invite the great ladies of their courts; the Duca di B—— invites only lovely women. This evening he had been fortunate in his invitations; the men seemed dazzled. Amid so many remarkable women it was hard to decide which was the most beautiful: the award was for some time undetermined; but at length Principessa Vanina Vanini, the girl with the raven hair and fiery eye, was proclaimed queen of the ball. Immediately the foreigners and the young Romans, deserting all the other rooms, crowded into the room in which she was.

Her father, Principe Don Asdrubale Vanini, had wished her to dance first of all with two or three Sovereign Princes from Germany. She then accepted the invitations of certain extremely handsome and extremely noble Englishmen; their starched manner irritated her. She appeared to find more pleasure in teasing young Livio Savelli, who seemed deeply in love. He was the most brilliant young man in Rome, and a Prince to boot; but, if you had given him a novel to read, he would have flung the book away after twenty pages, saying that it made his head ache. This was a disadvantage in Vanina's eyes.

Towards midnight a report ran through the ball-room, which caused quite a stir. A young carbonaro, in detention in the Castel S'ant' Angelo, had escaped that evening, with the help of a disguise, and, with an excess of romantic daring, on coming to the outermost guardroom of the prison, had attacked the soldiers there with a dagger; but he had been wounded himself, the sbirri were pursuing him through the streets, following the track of his blood, and hoped to recapture him.

While this story was going round, Don Livio Savelli, dazzled by the charms and the success of Vanina, with whom he had just been dancing, said to her as he led her back to her seat, being almost mad with love:

"Why, in heaven's name, what sort of person could please you?"

"This young carbonaro who has just made his escape," was Vanina's reply; "he at least has done something more than take the trouble to be born."

Principe Don Asdrubale approached his daughter. He is a wealthy man who for the last twenty years has kept no accounts with his steward, who lends him his own income at a high rate of interest. If you should pass him in the street, you would take him for an elderly actor; you would not notice that his fingers were loaded with five or six enormous rings set with huge diamonds. His two sons became Jesuits, and afterwards died insane. He has forgotten them, but it vexes him that his only daughter, Vanina, declines to marry. She is already nineteen, and has refused the most brilliant suitors. What is her reason? The same that led Sulla to abdicate, her *contempt for the Romans*.

On the day after the ball, Vanina remarked that her father, the most casual of men, who never in his life had taken the trouble to carry a key, was very careful in shutting the door of a little stair which led to an apartment on the third floor of the palazzo. The windows of this apartment looked on to a terrace planted with orange trees. Vanina went out to pay some calls in Rome; on her return, the main door of the palazzo was blocked with the preparations for an illumination, the carriage drove in through the courtyards at the back. Vanina raised her eyes, and saw with astonishment that one of the windows of the apartment which her father had so carefully closed was now open. She got rid of her companion, climbed up to the attics of the palazzo and after a long search succeeded in finding a small barred window which overlooked the orange tree terrace. The open window which she had observed from below was within a few feet of her. Evidently the room was occupied; but by whom? Next day, Vanina managed to secure the key of a small door which opened on to the terrace planted with orange trees.

She stole on tiptoe to the window, which was still open. It was screened by a sunblind. Inside the room was a bed, and somebody in the bed. Her first impulse was to retire; but she caught sight of a woman's gown flung over a chair. On looking more closely at the person in the bed, she saw that this person was fair, and evidently quite young. She had no longer any doubt that it was a woman. The gown flung over the chair was stained with blood; there was blood also on the woman's shoes

placed beneath a table. The stranger moved in the bed; Vanina saw that she had been wounded. A great bandage stained with blood covered her bosom; this bandage was fastened with ribbons only; it was not a surgeon's hand that had so arranged it. Vanina noticed that every day, about four o'clock, her father shut himself up in his own rooms, and then went to visit the stranger; presently he came downstairs and took his carriage to call upon the Contessa Vitelleschi. As soon as he had left the house, Vanina went up to the little terrace, from which she could see the stranger. Her compassion was strongly aroused towards this young woman who was in such a plight; she tried to imagine what could have befallen her. The bloodstained gown that lay on the chair appeared to have been stabbed with a dagger. Vanina could count the rents in it. One day she saw the stranger more distinctly: her blue eyes were fastened on the ceiling; she seemed to be praying. Presently tears welled in those lovely eyes; the young Princess could hardly refrain from addressing her. Next day, Vanina ventured to hide on the little terrace before her father came upstairs. She saw Don Asdrubale enter the stranger's room; he was carrying a small basket in which were provisions. The Prince appeared ill at ease, and said but little. He spoke so low that, although the window stood open, Vanina could not overhear his words. He soon left.

"That poor woman must have very terrible enemies," Vanina said to herself, "for my father, who is so careless by nature, not to dare to confide in anyone and to take the trouble to climb a hundred and twenty steps every day."

One evening, as Vanina was cautiously extending her head towards the stranger's window, their eyes met, and she was discovered. Vanina fell on her knees, crying:

"I love you, I am your devoted servant."

The stranger beckoned to her to come in.

"How can I apologise to you?" cried Vanina; "how offensive my foolish curiosity must appear to you! I swear to keep your secret, and, if you insist on it, I will never come again."

"Who would not be delighted to see you?" said the stranger. "Do you live in this palazzo?"

"Certainly," replied Vanina. "But I see that you do not know me: I am Vanina, Don Asdrubale's daughter."

The stranger looked at her with an air of surprise, then went on:

"Please let me hope that you will come to see me every day; but I should prefer the Prince not to know of your visits."

Vanina's heart beat violently; the stranger's manner seemed to her most distinguished. This poor young woman had doubtless given offence to some powerful man; possibly in a moment of jealousy she had killed her lover. Vanina could not conceive any common reason for her trouble. The stranger told her that she had received a wound in the shoulder, which had penetrated her breast and gave her great pain. Often she found her mouth filled with blood.

"And you have no surgeon!" cried Vanina.

"You know that in Rome," said the stranger, "the surgeons have to furnish the police with an exact report of all the injuries that they treat. The Prince is kind enough to dress my wounds himself with the bandage you see here."

The stranger refrained with the most perfect taste from any commiseration of her accident; Vanina loved her madly. One incident, however, greatly surprised the young Princess, which was that in the middle of a conversation which was certainly most serious the stranger had great difficulty in suppressing a sudden impulse to laughter.

"I should be happy," Vanina said to her, "to know your name."

"I am called Clementina."

"Very well, dear Clementina, to-morrow at five I shall come to see you."

Next day Vanina found her new friend in great pain.

"I am going to bring you a surgeon," said Vanina as she embraced her.

"I would rather die," said the stranger. "Would you have me compromise my benefactors?"

"The surgeon of Monsignor Savelli-Catanzara, the Governor of Rome, is the son of one of our servants," Vanina answered firmly; "he is devoted to us, and in his position has no fear of anyone. My father does not do justice to his loyalty; I am going to send for him."

"I do not want any surgeon!" cried the stranger with a vivacity which surprised Vanina. "Come and see me, and if God is to call me to Himself, I shall die happy in your arms."

On the following day the stranger was worse.

"If you love me," said Vanina as she left her, "you will see a surgeon."

"If he comes, my happiness is at an end."

"I am going to send to fetch him," replied Vanina.

Without saying a word, the stranger seized hold of her, and took her hand, which she covered with kisses. A long silence followed; tears filled the stranger's eyes. At length she let go Vanina's hand, and with the air of one going to her death, said to her:

"I have a confession to—make to you. The day before yesterday, I lied when I said that my name was Clementina; I am an unhappy carbonaro... "

Vanina in her astonishment thrust back her chair, and presently rose.

"I feel," went on the carbonaro, "that this confession is going to make me forfeit the one blessing which keeps me alive; but I should be unworthy of myself were I to deceive you. My name is Pietro Missirilli; I am nineteen; my father is a poor surgeon at Sant' Angelo in Vado, I myself am a carbonaro. Our venuta was surprised; I was brought, in chains, from the Romagna to Rome. Cast into a dungeon lighted day and night by a lamp, I lay there for thirteen months. A charitable soul conceived the idea of helping me to escape. I was dressed as a woman. As I was leaving the prison and passing by the guard at the outer gate, one of them cursed the carbonari; I dealt him a blow. I swear to you that it was not a piece of vain bravado, but simply that I was not thinking. Pursued by night through the streets of Rome after that act of folly, stabbed with bayonet wounds, I had begun to lose my strength, I entered a house the door of which stood open, I heard the soldiers coming in after me, I sprang into a garden; I fell to the ground within a few feet of a woman who was walking there."

"Contessa Vitelleschi! My father's mistress," said Vanina.

"What! Has she told you?" cried Missirilli. "However that may be, this lady, whose name must never be uttered, saved my life. As the soldiers were coming into her house to seize me, your father took me away in his carriage. I feel very ill: for some days this bayonet wound in my shoulder has prevented me from breathing. I am going to die, and in despair, since I shall not see you again."

Vanina had listened with impatience; she swiftly withdrew from the room. Missirilli read no pity in those lovely eyes, but only the signs of a proud nature which had been deeply offended.

When it was dark, a surgeon appeared; he was alone. Missirilli was in despair; he was afraid that he would never see Vanina again. He questioned the surgeon, who bled him and made no reply. A similar silence on each of the days that followed. Pietro's eyes never left the window on the terrace by which Vanina used to enter; he was very miserable. Once, about midnight, he thought he could see someone in the dark on the terrace: was it Vanina?

Vanina came each night to press her face against the panes of the young carbonaro's window.

"If I speak to him," she said to herself, "I am lost! No, I must never see him again!"

Having come to this resolution, she recalled, in spite of herself, the affection that she had formed for this young man when she had so stupidly taken him for a woman. After so pleasant an intimacy, must she then forget him? In her most reasonable moments, Vanina was alarmed by the change that was occurring in her ideas. Ever since Missirilli had told her his name, all the things of which she was in the habit of thinking were, so to speak, wrapped in a veil of mist, and appeared to her now only at a distance.

A week had not gone by before Vanina, pale and trembling, entered the young carbonaro's room with the surgeon. She had come to tell him that he must make the Prince promise to let his place be taken by a servant. She was not in the room for ten seconds; but some days later she came back again with the surgeon, from a sense of humanity. One evening, although Missirilli was much better, and Vanina had no longer the excuse of being alarmed for his life, she ventured to come unaccompanied. On seeing her, Missirilli was raised to a pinnacle of joy, but he was careful to conceal his love; whatever happened, he was determined not to forget the dignity befitting a man. Vanina, who had come into the room blushing a deep crimson, and dreading amorous speeches, was disconcerted by the noble and devoted, but by no means tender friendliness with which he greeted her. She left without his making any attempt to detain her.

A few days later, when she returned, the same conduct, the same assurances of respectful devotion and eternal gratitude. So far from being occupied in putting a check on the transports of the young carbonaro, Vanina asked herself whether she alone were in love. This girl, hitherto so proud, was bitterly aware of the full extent of her folly. She made a pretence of gaiety, and even of coldness, came less frequently, but could not bring herself to abandon her visits to the young invalid.

Missirilli, burning with love, but mindful of his humble birth and of what he owed to himself, had made a vow that he would not stoop to talk of love unless Vanina were to spend a week without seeing him. The pride of the young Princess contested every inch of ground.

"After all," she said to herself at length, "if I see him, it is for my own sake, to please myself, and I will never confess to him the interest that he arouses in me."

She paid long visits to Missirilli, who talked to her as he might have done had there been a score of persons present. One evening, after she

had spent the day hating him, and promising herself that she would be even colder and more severe with him than usual, she told him that she loved him. Soon there was nothing left that she could withhold from him.

Great as her folly may have been, it must be admitted that Vanina was sublimely happy. Missirilli no longer thought of what he believed to be due to his dignity as a man; he loved as people love for the first time at nineteen and in Italy. He felt all the scruples of "impassioned love," going so far as to confess to this haughty young Princess the stratagem which he had employed to make her love him. He was astounded by the fulness of his happiness. Four months passed rapidly enough. One day the surgeon set his patient at liberty. "What am I to do now?" thought Missirilli; "lie concealed in the house of one of the most beautiful people in Rome? And the vile tyrants who kept me for thirteen months in prison without ever allowing me to see the light of day will think they have disheartened me! Italy, thou art indeed unfortunate, if thy sons forsake thee for so slight a cause!"

Vanina never doubted that Pietro's greatest happiness lay in remaining permanently attached to herself; he seemed only too happy; but a saying of General Bonaparte echoed harshly in the young man's heart and influenced the whole of his conduct with regard to women. In 1796, as General Bonaparte was leaving Brescia, the municipal councillors who were escorting him to the gate of the city told him that the Brescians loved freedom more than any of the Italians.

"Yes," he replied, "they love to talk about it to their mistresses."

Missirilli said to Vanina with a visible air of constraint:

"As soon as it is dark, I must go out."

"Be careful to come in again before daybreak; I shall be waiting for you."

"By daybreak I shall be many miles from Rome."

"Very well," said Vanina coldly, "and where are you going?"

"To the Romagna, to have my revenge."

"As I am rich," Vanina went on with perfect calmness, "I hope that you will let me supply you with arms and money."

Missirilli looked at her for some moments without moving a muscle; then, flinging himself into her arms:

"Soul of my life," he said to her, "you make me forget everything, even my duty. But the nobler your heart is, the better you must understand me."

Vanina wept freely, and it was agreed that he should not leave Rome until the following night.

"Pietro," she said to him on the morrow, "you have often told me that a well-known man, a Roman Prince, for instance, with plenty of money at his disposal, would be in a position to render the utmost services to the cause of freedom, should Austria ever be engaged abroad, in some great war."

"Undoubtedly," said Pietro in surprise.

"Very well, you have a stout heart; all you lack is an exalted position: I have come to offer you my hand and an income of two hundred thousand lire. I undertake to obtain my father's consent."

Pietro fell at her feet; Vanina was radiant with joy.

"I love you passionately," he told her; "but I am a humble servant of the Fatherland; the more unhappy Italy is, the more loyal I should be to her. To obtain Don Asdrubale's consent, I shall have to play a sorry part for many years. Vanina, I decline your offer."

Missirilli made haste to bind himself by this utterance. His courage was failing him.

"My misfortune," he cried, "is that I love you more than life itself, that to leave Rome is for me the most agonising torture. Oh, that Italy were set free from the barbarians! With what joy would I set sail with you to go and live in America."

Vanina's heart was frozen. The refusal of her hand had dealt a blow to her pride; but presently she threw herself into Missirilli's arms.

"Never have you seemed so adorable," she cried; "yes, my little country surgeon, I am yours for ever. You are a great man, like our ancient Romans."

All thoughts of the future, every depressing suggestion of common sense vanished; it was a moment of perfect love. When they were able to talk reasonably:

"I shall be in the Romagna almost as soon as you," said Vanina. "I am going to have myself sent to the baths of la Porretta. I shall stop at the villa we have at San Niccolo, close to Forli... ."

"There I shall spend my life with you!" cried Missirilli.

"My lot henceforward is to dare all," Vanina continued with a sigh. "I shall ruin myself for you, but no matter... . Will you be able to love a girl who has lost her honour?"

"Are you not my wife," said Missirilli, "and the object of my lifelong adoration? I shall know how to love and protect you."

Vanina was obliged to go out, on social errands. She had barely left Missirilli before he began to feel that his conduct was barbarous.

"What is the *Fatherland*?" he asked himself. "It is not a person to whom we owe gratitude for benefits received, or who may suffer and call down curses on us if we fail him. The *Fatherland* and *Freedom* are like my cloak, a thing which is useful to me, which I must purchase, it is true, when I have not acquired it by inheritance from my father; but after all I love the *Fatherland* and *Freedom* because they are both useful to me. If I have no use for them, if they are to me like a cloak in the month of August, what is the good of purchasing them, and at an enormous price? Vanina is so beautiful! She has so singular a nature! Others will seek to attract her; she will forget me. What woman is there who has never had more than one lover? Those Roman Princes, whom I despise as citizens, have so many advantages over me! They must indeed be attractive! Ah, if I go, she will forget me, and I shall lose her for ever."

In the middle of the night, Vanina came to see him; he told her of the uncertainty in which he had been plunged, and the criticism to which, because he loved her, he had subjected that great word "*Fatherland*." Vanina was very happy.

"If he were absolutely forced to choose between his country and me," she told herself, "I should have the preference."

The clock of the neighbouring church struck three, the time had come for a final leave-taking. Pietro tore himself from the arms of his mistress. He had begun to descend the little stair, when Vanina, restraining her tears, said to him with a smile:

"If you had been nursed by some poor woman in the country, would you do nothing to shew your gratitude? Would you not seek to repay her? The future is uncertain, you are going on a journey through the midst of your enemies: give me three days out of gratitude, as if I were a poor woman, and to pay me for the care I have taken of you."

Missirilli stayed. At length he left Rome. Thanks to a passport bought from a foreign embassy, he returned in safety to his family. This was a great joy to them; they had given him up for dead. His friends wished to celebrate his home-coming by killing a carabinieri or two (such is the title borne by the police in the Papal States).

"We must not, when it is not necessary, kill an Italian who knows how to handle arms," said Missirilli; "our country is not an island, like happy England: it is soldiers that we need to resist the intervention of the Sovereigns of Europe."

Some time later Missirilli, hard pressed by the carabinieri, killed a couple of them with the pistols which Vanina had given him. A price was set on his head.

Vanina did not appear in the Romagna: Missirilli imagined himself forgotten. His vanity was hurt; his thoughts began to dwell upon the difference in rank which divided him from his mistress. In a moment of weakness and regret for his past happiness it occurred to him that he might return to Rome to see what Vanina was doing. This mad idea was beginning to prevail over what he believed to be his duty when one evening the bell of a church in the mountains sounded the Angelus in a singular fashion, and as though the ringer were thinking of something else. It was the signal for the assembling of the *venuta* of carbonari which Missirilli had joined on his arrival in Romagna. That night, they all met at a certain hermitage in the woods. The two hermits, drugged with opium, knew nothing of the use to which their little dwelling was being put. Missirilli, who arrived in great depression, learned there that the leader of the *venuta* had been arrested, and that he, a young man not twenty years old, was about to be elected leader of a *venuta* which included men of fifty and more, who had taken part in all the conspiracies since Murat's expedition in 1815. On receiving this unexpected honour, Pietro felt his heart beat violently. As soon as he was alone, he determined to give no more thought to the young Roman who had forgotten him, and to devote his whole mind to the duty of *freeing Italy from the barbarians*. [Footnote: *Liberar l'Italia de' barbari*: the words used by Petrarch in 1350, and since then repeated by Julius II, Machiavelli and Conte Alfieri.]

Two days later, Missirilli saw in the reports of arrivals and departures which were supplied to him, as leader of the *venuta*, that the Principessa Vanina had just arrived at her villa of San Niccolo. The sight of that name caused him more uneasiness than pleasure. It was in vain that he imagined himself to be proving his loyalty to his country by undertaking not to fly that very evening to the villa of San Niccolo; the thought of Vanina, whom he was neglecting, prevented him from carrying out his duty in a reasonable manner. He saw her next day; she loved him still as in Rome. Her father, who wished her to marry, had delayed her departure. She brought him two thousand sequins. This unexpected assistance served admirably to accredit Missirilli in his new office. They had daggers made for them in Corfu; they won over the Legate's private secretary, whose duty it was to pursue the carbonari. Thus they obtained a list of the clergy who were acting as spies for the government.

It was at this time that the organisation was completed of one of the least senseless conspiracies that have been planned in unhappy Italy. I shall not enter here into irrelevant details. I shall merely say that if success had crowned the attempt, Missirilli would have been able to claim a good share of the glory. At a signal from him, several thousands of insurgents would have risen, and awaited, armed, the coming of their superior leaders. The decisive moment was approaching when, as invariably happens, the conspiracy was paralyzed by the arrest of the leaders.

Immediately on her arrival in Romagna, Vanina felt that his love of his country would make her young lover forget all other love. The young Roman's pride was stung. She tried in vain to reason with herself; a black melancholy seized her: she found herself cursing freedom. One day when she had come to Forli to see Missirilli, she was powerless to check her grief, which until then her pride had managed to control.

"Truly," she said to him, "you love me like a husband; that is not what I have a right to expect."

Soon her tears flowed; but they were tears of shame at having so far lowered herself as to reproach him. Missirilli responded to these tears like a man preoccupied with other things. Suddenly it occurred to Vanina to leave him and return to Rome. She found a cruel joy in punishing herself for the weakness that had made her speak. After a brief interval of silence, her mind was made up; she would feel herself unworthy of Missirilli if she did not leave him. She rejoiced in the thought of his pained surprise when he should look around for her in vain. Presently the reflexion that she had not succeeded in obtaining the love of the man for whom she had done so many foolish things moved her profoundly. Then she broke the silence, and did everything in the world to wring from him a word of love. He said, with a distracted air, certain quite tender things to her; but it was in a very different tone that, in speaking of his political enterprises, he sorrowfully exclaimed:

"Ah, if this attempt does not succeed, if the government discovers it again, I give up the struggle."

Vanina remained motionless. For the last hour, she had felt that she would never look upon her lover again. The words he had now uttered struck a fatal spark in her mind. She said to herself:

"The carbonari have had several thousands from me. No one can doubt my devotion to the conspiracy."

Vanina emerged from her musings only to say to Pietro:

"Will you come and spend the night with me at San Niccolo? Your meeting this evening can do without you. To-morrow morning, at San

Niccolo, we can take the air together; that will calm your agitation and restore the cool judgment you require on great occasions."

Pietro agreed.

Vanina left him to make ready for the journey, locking the door, as usual, of the little room in which she had hidden him.

She hastened to the house of one of her former maids who had left her service to marry and keep a small shop in Forli. On reaching the house, she wrote in haste on the margin of a Book of Hours which she found in the woman's room, an exact indication of the spot at which the venuta of carbonari was to assemble that evening. She concluded her denunciation with the words: "This venuta is composed of nineteen members; their names and addresses are as follows." Having written this list, which was quite accurate except that the name of Missirilli was omitted, she said to the woman, on whom she could rely:

"Take this book to the Cardinal Legate; make him read what is written in it, and give you back the book. Here are ten sequins; if the Legate ever utters your name, your death is certain; but you will save my life if you make the Legate read the page I have just written."

All went well. The Legate's fear prevented him from standing upon his dignity. He allowed the humble woman who asked to speak with him to appear before him with only a mask, but on condition that her hands were tied. In this state the shop-keeper was brought into the presence of the great personage, whom she found entrenched behind an immense table, covered with a green cloth.

The Legate read the page in the Book of Hours, holding it at a distance, for fear of some subtle poison. He gave it back to the woman, and did not have her followed. In less than forty minutes after she had left her lover, Vanina, who had seen her former maid return, appeared once more before Missirilli, imagining that for the future he was entirely hers. She told him that there was an extraordinary commotion in the town; patrols of carabinieri were to be seen in streets along which they never went as a rule.

"If you will take my advice," she went on, "we will start this very instant for San Niccolo."

Missirilli agreed. They proceeded on foot to the young Princess's carriage, which, with her companion, a discreet and well-rewarded confidant, was waiting for her half a league from the town.

Having reached the San Niccolo villa, Vanina, disturbed by the thought of what she had done, multiplied her attentions to her lover. But when speaking to him of love she felt that she was playing a part. The

day before, when she betrayed him, she had forgotten remorse. As she clasped her lover in her arms, she said to herself:

"There is a certain word which someone may say to him, and once that word is uttered, then and for all time, he will regard me with horror."

In the middle of the night, one of Vanina's servants came boldly into her room. This man was a carbonaro, and she had never known it. So Missirilli had secrets from her, even in these matters of detail. She shuddered. The man had come to inform Missirilli that during the night, at Forli, the houses of nineteen carbonari had been surrounded and they themselves arrested as they were returning from the *venuta*. Although taken unawares, nine of them had escaped. The carabinieri had managed to convey ten to the prison of the citadel. On their way in, one of these had flung himself down the well, which was deep, and had killed himself.

Vanina lost countenance; happily Pietro did not observe her; he could have read her crime in her eyes... . "At the present moment," the servant went on, "the Forli garrison is lining all the streets. Each soldier is close enough to the next to be able to speak to him. The inhabitants cannot cross from one side of the street to the other except at the places where there is an officer posted."

After the man had left them, Pietro remained pensive for a moment only.

"There is nothing to be done for the present," he said finally.

Vanina was half dead; she trembled under her lover's gaze.

"Why, what is the matter with you?" he asked her.

Then his thoughts turned to other things, and he ceased to look at her. Towards midday she ventured to say to him:

"And so another *venuta* has been surprised; I hope that you are going to be undisturbed now for some time."

"Quite undisturbed," replied Missirilli with a smile which made her shudder.

She went to pay a necessary call upon the parish priest of San Niccolo, who might perhaps be a spy of the Jesuits. On returning to dine at seven o'clock, she found the little room in which her lover had been concealed empty. Beside herself with alarm, she ran over the whole house in search of him. In despair, she returned to the little room, and it was only then that she saw a note; she read:

"I am going to give myself up to the Legate; I despair of our cause; heaven is against us. Who has betrayed us? Evidently the wretch who flung himself down the well. Since my life is of no use to poor Italy, I do

not wish that my comrades, seeing that I alone have not been arrested, should imagine that I have sold them. Farewell; if you love me, try to avenge me. Destroy, crush the scoundrel who has betrayed us, even if he should be my own father."

Vanina sank down on a chair, half unconscious, and plunged in the most agonizing grief. She could not utter a word; her eyes were parched and burning.

At length she flung herself upon her knees:

"Great God!" she cried, "hear my vow; yes, I will punish the scoundrel who has betrayed them; but first I must set Pietro free."

An hour later, she was on her way to Rome. Her father had long been pressing her to return. During her absence, he had arranged her marriage with Principe Livio Savelli. Immediately on Vanina's arrival, he spoke to her of this marriage, in fear and trembling. Greatly to his surprise, she consented from the first. That evening, at Contessa Vitelleschi's, her father presented to her, semi-officially, Don Livio; she conversed with him freely. He was the most exquisite young man, and had the finest horses of any; but although he was admitted to have plenty of intelligence, he was regarded as so frivolous that he was held in no suspicion by the government. Vanina reflected that, by first of all turning his head, she might make a useful agent of him. As he was the nephew of Monsignor Savelli-Catanzara, Governor of Rome and Minister of Police, she supposed that the government spies would not dare to follow him.

After shewing herself most kind, for some days, to the charming Don Livio, Vanina broke to him that he could never be her husband; he had, according to her, too light a mind.

"If you were not a mere boy," she told him, "your uncle's clerks would have no secrets for you. For instance, what action is being taken with regard to the carbonari who were surprised the other day at Forli?"

Don Livio came to inform her, a few days later, that all the carbonari taken at Forli had escaped. She let her large black eyes rest on him with a bitter smile of the most profound contempt, and did not condescend to speak to him throughout the evening. Two days later, Don Livio came to confess to her, blushing as he did so, that he had been misinformed at first.

"But," he told her, "I have secured a key to my uncle's room; I see from the papers I found there that a *congregation* (or commission) composed of the Cardinals and prelates who are most highly considered is meeting in the strictest secrecy, and discussing whether it would be better to try

these carbonari at Ravenna or in Rome. The nine carbonari taken at Forli and their leader, a certain Missirilli, who was fool enough to give himself up, are at this moment confined in the castle of San Leo." [Footnote: Near Rimini in Romagna. It was in this castle that the famous Cagliostro died; the local report is that he was smothered there.]

At the word "fool," Vanina gripped the Prince with all her strength.

"I wish," she said, "to see the official papers myself, and to go with you into your uncle's room; you must have misread what you saw."

At these words, Don Livio shuddered; Vanina asked a thing that was almost impossible; but the girl's eccentric nature intensified his love for her. A few days later, Vanina, disguised as a man and wearing a neat little jacket in the livery of the casa Savelli, was able to spend half an hour among the most secret documents of the Minister of Police. She started with joyful excitement when she came upon the daily report on *Pietro Missirilli, on remand*. Her hands shook as she seized the paper. On reading the name again, she felt as though she must faint. As they left the palace of the Governor of Rome, Vanina permitted Don Livio to embrace her.

"You are coming very well," she told him, "through the tests to which I mean to subject you."

After such a compliment, the young Prince would have set fire to the Vatican to please Vanina. That evening, there was a ball at the French Ambassador's; she danced frequently, and almost always with him. Don Livio was wild with joy; he must be kept from thinking.

"My father sometimes acts oddly," Vanina said to him one day; "this morning he dismissed two of his servants, who came to me in tears. One asked me to find him a place with your uncle the Governor of Rome; the other, who served as a gunner under the French, wishes to be employed in the Castel Sant' Angelo."

"I will take them both into my service," said the young Prince impulsively.

"Is that what I am asking you to do?" Vanina answered haughtily. "I repeat to you word for word the request made by these poor men; they must obtain what they have asked for, and nothing else."

It was the hardest thing imaginable. Monsignor Catan-zara was the most serious of men, and admitted into his household only people well known to himself. In the midst of a life filled, apparently, with every pleasure, Vanina, crushed by remorse, was most unhappy. The slow course of events was killing her. Her father's man of business had supplied her with money. Ought she to fly from the paternal roof and make

her way to the Romagna to try to compass her lover's escape? Absurd as this idea was, she was on the point of putting it into execution, when chance took pity on her.

Don Livio said to her:

"The ten carbonari of the Missirilli *venuta* are going to be transferred to Rome, except that they will be executed in the Romagna after they have been sentenced. My uncle obtained the Pope's authority for that this evening. You and I are the only two people in Rome who know this secret. Are you satisfied?"

"You are growing into a man," replied Vanina; "you may make me a present of your portrait."

On the day before that on which Missirilli was to reach Rome, Vanina found an excuse for going to Città Castellana. It is in the prison of this town that carbonari are lodged on their way from the Romagna to Rome. She saw Missirilli in the morning, as he was leaving the prison: he was chained by himself upon a cart; he struck her as very pale but not at all despondent. An old woman tossed him a bunch of violets; Missirilli thanked her with a smile.

Vanina had seen her lover, her mind seemed to revive; she felt fresh courage. Long before this she had procured a fine advancement for the Abate Cari, Chaplain of the Castel Sant' Angelo, in which her lover was to be confined; she had chosen this worthy priest as her confessor. It is no small matter in Rome to be the confessor of a Princess, who is the Governor's niece.

The trial of the carbonari from Forli did not take long. To be revenged for their transfer to Rome, which it had been unable to prevent, the "ultra" party had the commission which was to try them packed with the most ambitious prelates. Over this commission presided the Minister of Police.

The law against the carbonari is clear: the men from Forli could entertain no hope; they fought for their lives nevertheless by every possible subterfuge. Not only did their judges condemn them to death, but several were in favour of cruel tortures, amputation of the right hand, and so forth. The Minister of Police, whose fortune was made (for one leaves that office only to assume the Hat), was in no need of amputated hands: on submitting the sentence to the Pope, he had the penalty commuted to some years of imprisonment for all the prisoners. The sole exception was Pietro Missirilli. The Minister regarded the young man as a dangerous fanatic, in addition to which he had already been sentenced to death as guilty of the murder of the two carabinieri whom we have mentioned.

Vanina knew of the sentence and its commutation within a few minutes of the Minister's return from seeing the Pope.

On the following evening, when Monsignor Catanzara returned to his palace about midnight, his valet was not to be found; the Minister, somewhat surprised, rang several times; finally an aged and half-witted servant appeared; the Minister, losing patience, decided to undress himself. He turned the key in his door; it was a hot night: he took off his coat, and flung it in a heap upon a chair. This coat, thrown with excessive force, went beyond the chair, and fell against the muslin curtain of the window, behind which it outlined the figure of a man. The Minister sprang swiftly to his bedside and seized a pistol. As he was returning to the window, a man quite young, wearing his livery, came towards him, pistol in hand. Seeing him advance, the Minister raised his own pistol to his eye; and was about to fire. The young man said to him with a laugh:

"Why, Monsignor, do not you recognise Vanina Vanini?"

"What is the meaning of this ill-timed foolery?" replied the Minister angrily.

"Let us discuss the matter calmly," said the girl. "In the first place, your pistol is not loaded."

The Minister, taken aback, found that this was so; whereupon he took out a dagger from the pocket of his waistcoat. [Footnote: A Roman prelate would doubtless be incapable of commanding an Army Corps with gallantry, as happened more than once in the case of a divisional general who was Minister of Police in Paris, at the time of the Malet conspiracy; but he would never allow himself to be held up so simply as this in his own house. He would be too much afraid of the satirical comment of his colleagues. A Roman who knows himself to be hated always goes about well armed. It has not been thought necessary to give authority for various other slight differences between Parisian and Roman habits of speech and behaviour. So far from minimising these differences, we have felt it our duty to indicate them boldly. The Romans whom we are describing have not the honour to be French.]

Vanina said to him with a charming little air of authority:

"Let us be seated, Monsignore."

And she took her seat calmly upon a sofa.

"Are you alone, tell me that?" said the Minister.

"Absolutely alone, I swear to you!" cried Vanina.

The Minister took care to verify this assurance: he made a tour of the room and searched everywhere; after which he sat down upon a chair three paces away from Vanina.

"What object could I have," said Vanina with a calm and winning air, "in attempting the life of a man of moderate views, who would probably be succeeded by some weak hothead, capable of destroying himself and other people?"

"What is your purpose then, Signorina?" said the Minister crossly. "This scene is highly improper and must not continue."

"What I am going to add," Vanina went on haughtily, suddenly forgetting her gracious manner, "concerns you rather than myself. The life of the carbonaro Missirilli must be saved: if he is executed, you shall not outlive him by a week. I have no interest in the matter; the foolish action of which you complain was planned, first of all, for my own amusement, and also to oblige one of my friends. I wished," went on Vanina, resuming her air of good breeding, "to do a service to a man of talent, who will shortly become my uncle, and ought, one would say, to enhance considerably the fame and fortune of his house." The Minister ceased to appear angry: Vanina's beauty no doubt contributed to this rapid alteration. Monsignor Catanzara's fondness for pretty women was well known in Rome, and in her disguise as a footman of the casa Savelli, with close-fitting silk stockings, a red waistcoat, her little sky-blue jacket with its silver braid, and the pistol in her hand, Vanina was irresistible.

"My future niece," said the Minister, almost laughing, "you are doing a very foolish thing, and it will not be the last."

"I trust that so wise a person as yourself," replied Vanina, "will keep my secret, especially from Don Livio; and to bind you, my dear uncle, if you grant me the life of my friend's favourite, I will give you a kiss."

It was by continuing the conversation in this half jocular tone, with which Roman ladies know how to discuss the most serious matters, that Vanina succeeded in giving to this interview, begun pistol in hand, the semblance of a visit paid by the young Principessa Savelli to her uncle the Governor of Rome.

Soon Monsignor Catanzara, while rejecting with lofty scorn the idea that he could let himself be influenced by fear, found himself explaining to his niece all the difficulties that he would meet in trying to save Missirilli's life. As he talked, the Minister strolled up and down the room with Vanina; he took a decanter of lemonade that stood on the mantelpiece and poured some of the liquid into a crystal glass. Just as he was about to raise it to his lips, Vanina took it from him, and, after holding it in her hand for some time, let it fall into the garden, as though by accident. A moment later the Minister took a chocolate drop from a comfit box. Vanina seized it from him, saying with a smile:

"Take care, now; everything in the room is poisoned; for your death was intended. It was I who obtained a reprieve for my future uncle, that I might not enter the house of Cavelli absolutely empty handed."

Monsignor Catanzara, greatly astonished, thanked his niece, and gave her good reason to hope for the life of Missirilli.

"Our bargain is made!" cried Vanina, "and in proof of it, here is your reward," she said, kissing him.

The Minister accepted his reward.

"You must understand, my dear Vanina," he went on, "that I myself do not like bloodshed. Besides, I am still young, though to you perhaps I may appear very old, and I may survive to a time in which blood spilt to-day will leave a stain."

Two o'clock was striking when Monsignor Catanzara accompanied Vanina to the little gate of his garden.

A couple of days later, when the Minister appeared before the Pope, considerably embarrassed by the action which he had to take, His Holiness began:

"First of all, I have a favour to ask of you. There is one of those carbonari from Forli who is under sentence of death; the thought of him keeps me awake at night: the man's life must be spared."

The Minister, seeing that the Pope had made up his mind, raised a number of objections, and ended by writing out a decree or *motu proprio*, which the Pope signed, regardless of precedent.

Vanina had thought that she might perhaps obtain her lover's reprieve, but that an attempt would be made to poison him. The day before, Missirilli had received from the Abate Cari, his confessor, several little packets of ship's biscuit, with a warning not to touch the food supplied by the State.

Having afterwards learned that the carbonari from Forli were to be transferred to the Castle of San Leo, she decided to attempt to see Missirilli as he passed through Città Castellana; she arrived in that town twenty-four hours ahead of the prisoners; there she found the Abate Cari, who had preceded her by several days. He had obtained the concession from the gaoler that Missirilli might hear mass, at midnight, in the prison chapel. This was not all: if Missirilli would consent to have his arms and legs chained together, the gaoler would withdraw to the door of the chapel, in such a way as not to lose sight of the prisoner, for whom he was responsible, but to be out of hearing of anything he might say.

The day which was to decide Vanina's fate dawned at last. As soon as morning came, she shut herself up in the prison chapel. Who could

describe the thoughts that disturbed her mind during that long day? Did Missirilli love her sufficiently to forgive her? She had denounced his *venuta*, but she had saved his life. When reason prevailed in her tormented brain, Vanina hoped that he would consent to leave Italy with her: if she had sinned, it was from excess of love. As four was striking, she heard in the distance, on the cobbled street, the hooves of the carabinieri's horses. The sound of each hoof-beat seemed to strike an echo from her heart. Presently she could make out the rumbling of the carts in which the prisoners were being conveyed. They stopped in the little *piazza* outside the prison; she saw two carabinieri lift up Missirilli, who was alone on one cart, and so loaded with irons that he could not move. "At least he is alive," she said to herself, the tears welling into her eyes, "they have not poisoned him yet." The evening was agonising; the altar lamp, hanging at a great height, and sparingly supplied with oil by the gaoler, was the only light in the dark chapel. Vanina's eyes strayed over the tombs of various great nobles of the middle ages who had died in the adjoining prison. Their statues wore an air of ferocity.

All sounds had long ceased; Vanina was absorbed in her sombre thoughts. Shortly after midnight had struck, she thought she heard a faint sound, like the fluttering of a bat. She tried to walk, and fell half fainting against the altar rail. At that moment, two spectres appeared close beside her, whom she had not heard come in. They were the gaoler and Missirilli, so loaded with chains as to be almost smothered in them. The gaoler opened a dark lantern which he placed on the altar rail, by Vanina's side, in such a way as to give him a clear view of his prisoner. He then withdrew to the other end of the chapel, by the door. No sooner had the gaoler moved away than Vanina flung herself on Missirilli's bosom. As she clasped him in her arms, she felt only the cold edges of his chains. "To whom does he owe these chains?" was her thought. She felt no pleasure in embracing her lover. This grief was followed by another even more poignant; she fancied for a moment that Missirilli was aware of her crime, so frigid was his greeting.

"Dear friend," he said to her at length, "I regret the affection that you have formed for me; I seek in vain to discover what merit in me has been capable of inspiring it. Let us return, believe me, to more Christian sentiments, let us forget the illusions which hitherto have been leading us astray; I cannot belong to you. The constant misfortune that has dogged my undertakings is due perhaps to the state of mortal sin into which I have so often fallen. To listen only to the counsels of human prudence, why was not I arrested with my friends, on that fatal night at Forli? Why,

in the moment of danger, was I not found at my post? Why has my absence then furnished grounds for the most cruel suspicions? I had another passion besides that for the liberation of Italy."

Vanina could not get over her surprise at the change in Missirilli. Without being perceptibly thinner, he had the air of a man of thirty. Vanina attributed this change to the ill treatment which he had undergone in prison, and burst into tears.

"Ah!" she said, "the gaolers promised so faithfully that they would treat you well."

The fact was that at the approach of death all the religious principles consistent with his passion for the liberation of Italy had revived in the heart of the young carbonaro. Gradually Vanina realised that the astonishing change which she had remarked in her lover was entirely moral, and in no way the effect of bodily ill treatment. Her grief, which she had supposed to have reached its extreme limit, was intensified still further.

Missirilli was silent; Vanina seemed to be on the point of being suffocated by her sobs. He spoke, and himself also appeared slightly moved:

"If I loved any single thing in the world, it would be you, Vanina; but, thanks be to God, I have now but one object in life; I shall die either in prison or in seeking to give Italy freedom."

Another silence followed; evidently Vanina was incapable of speech: she attempted to speak, but in vain. Missirilli went on:

"Duty is cruel, my friend; but if it were not a little difficult to perform, where would be the heroism? Give me your word that you will not attempt to see me again."

So far as the chain that was wound tightly about him would allow, he made a slight movement with his wrist and held out his fingers to Vanina.

"If you will accept the advice of one who was once dear to you, be sensible and marry the deserving man whom your father has chosen for you. Do not confide in him anything that may lead to trouble; but, on the other hand, never seek to see me again; let us henceforward be strangers to one another. You have advanced a considerable sum for the service of the Fatherland; if ever it is delivered from its tyrants, that sum will be faithfully repaid to you in national bonds."

Vanina was crushed. While he was speaking, Pietro's eye had gleamed only at the moment when he mentioned the Fatherland.

At length pride came to the rescue of the young Princess; she had brought with her a supply of diamonds and small files. Without answering Missirilli, she offered him these.

"I accept from a sense of duty," he told her, "for I must seek to escape; but I will never see you, I swear it by this latest token of your bounty. Farewell, Vanina; promise me never to write, never to attempt to see me; leave me wholly to the Fatherland, I am dead to you: farewell."

"No," replied Vanina, grown furious, "I wish you to know what I have done, led on by the love that I bear you."

She then related to him all her activities from the moment when Missirilli had left the villa of San Niccolo to give himself up to the Legate. When her tale was finished:

"All this is nothing," said Vanina: "I have done more, in my love for you."

She then told him of her betrayal.

"Ah, monster," cried Pietro, mad with rage, hurling himself upon her; and sought to crush her to the ground with his chains.

He would have succeeded but for the gaoler, who came running at the sound of her cries. He seized Missirilli.

"There, monster, I will not owe anything to you," said Missirilli to Vanina, flinging at her, as violently as his chains would allow him, the files and diamonds, and he moved rapidly away.

Vanina was left speechless. She returned to Rome: and the newspapers announce that she has just been married to Principe Don Livio Savelli.

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