

**AFTER THE DIVORCE: A
ROMANCE. TRANSLATED
FROM THE ITALIAN BY
MARIA HORNOR LANSDALE**

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After the Divorce: A Romance. Translated from the Italian by Maria Hornor Lansdale by
Grazia Deledda & Maria Hornor Lansdale

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GRAZIA DELEDDA & MARIA HORNOR LANSDALE

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AFTER THE DIVORCE

A ROMANCE

BY

GRAZIA DELEDDA

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And they shall scourge him, and put him to death; . . .
And they understood none of these things: . . .

—St. Luke xviii. 33, 34



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PART I

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA
AFTER THE DIVORCE

CHAPTER I

NINETEEN Hundred and Seven. In the "strangers' room" of the Porru house a woman sat crying. Crouched on the floor near the bed, her knees drawn up, her arms resting on her knees, and her forehead on her arms, she wept and sobbed continuously, shaking her head from time to time as though to indicate that there was no more hope, absolutely none at all; while her plump shoulders and straight young back rose and fell in the tightly fitting yellow bodice, like a wave of the sea.

The room was nearly in darkness; there were no windows, but through the open door which gave upon a bricked gallery, a stretch of dull grey sky could be seen, growing momentarily darker; and far, far away, against this dusky background, gleamed the yellow ray of a little, solitary star. From the courtyard below came the shrill chirping of a cricket, and the occasional stamp of horses' hoofs on the stone pavement.

A short, heavy woman, clad in the Nuorese dress, with a large, fat, old-woman face, appeared in the doorway; she carried a four-branched iron candle-

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stick, in one socket of which burned a wick soaked in oil.

"Giovanna Era," said she in a gruff voice, "what are you about all in the dark? Are you there? What are you doing? I believe you are crying! You must be crazy! Upon my word, that's just what you are—crazy!"

The young woman began to sob convulsively.

"Oh, oh, oh!" said the other, drawing near, and in the tone of one who is deeply shocked and amazed. "I said you were crying. What are you crying for? There's your mother waiting for you downstairs, and you up here, crying like a crazy creature!"

The young woman wept more violently than ever, whereupon the other hung the candlestick on a large nail, gazed vaguely about her, and then began hovering over her disconsolate guest, searching for words wherewith to comfort her; she could only repeat, however: "But, Giovanna, you are crazy, just crazy!"

The "strangers' room"—the name given to that apartment which every Nuorese family, according to immemorial custom, reserves for the use of friends from the country—was large, white, and bare; it had a great wooden bedstead, a table covered with a cotton cloth and adorned with little glass cups and saucers, and a quantity of small pictures hung close to the unpainted wooden ceiling. Bunches of dried grapes and yellow pears hung

from the rafters, filling the room with a faint fragrance; and sacks of wool stood about on the floor.

The stout woman, who was the mistress of the house, laid hold of one of these sacks, dragged it to another part of the room, and then back again to where she had found it.

"Now then," said she, panting from her exertion, "do stop. What good does it do? And why should you give up, anyhow? What the devil, my dearie! Suppose the public prosecutor *has* asked for the galleys, that doesn't mean that the jury are all mad dogs like himself!"

But the other only kept on crying and shaking her head, moaning: "No, no, no!" between her sobs.

"Yes, yes, I tell you," urged the woman. "Get up now, and come to your mother," and, taking hold of her, she forced back her head.

The action revealed a charming countenance; rosy, framed in a thick mass of tumbled black hair; the big dark eyes swollen and glistening with tears, and surmounted by heavy black eyebrows that met in the middle.

"No, no," wailed Giovanna, shaking herself free. "Let me cry over my fate, Aunt Porredda."*

"Fate or no fate, you just get up!"

"No, I won't get up! I won't get up! They'll sentence him to thirty years at the very least! Do you hear me? Thirty years! That's what they'll give him!"

* Porredda, female diminutive for Porru.

"That remains to be seen. And after all, what is thirty years? Why, you carry on like a wild-cat!"

The other gave a shrill cry, and tore her hair in an access of wild despair.

"Thirty years! What is thirty years!" she shrieked. "A man's whole lifetime, Aunt Porredda! You don't know what you are talking about, Aunt Porredda! Go away, go away and leave me alone! for the love of Christ, oh, leave me to myself!"

"I'm not going away," said Aunt Porredda. "The idea! In my own house! Get up, you child of the devil! Stop this before you make yourself ill. To-morrow will be time enough to pull your hair out by the roots; your husband isn't in the galleys yet!"

Giovanna dropped her head, and began to cry again in a subdued, hopeless way, heartbreaking to listen to. "Costantino, Costantino," she moaned in the tone of one bewailing the dead, "I shall never see you again, never again! Those mad dogs have seized you and bound you fast, and they will never let you go; and our house will be empty, and the bed cold, and the family scattered. Oh, my beloved! my lamb! you are dead for this world. May those who have done it die the same death!"

Aunt Porredda, distracted by Giovanna's grief, and unable to think of anything more to say, went out on the gallery, and began calling: "Bachissia