

"You will pardon me, madam, for interrupting you at the critical moment; it is not etiquette, I am aware. But to one who understands things, it goes to the heart to see them bungled; and, what is more, I *will* not see them bungled. I have no doubt that the sentence of the Court is thoroughly unjust, but that is not my business. I am an artist, not a critic. Since this gentleman must die, spare him, at least, the cruelty—I may say the disgrace—of being decapitated by an amateur—and a heads-woman! There is no precedent for such a thing—none. For Heaven's sake, put my ransom at what you will, but do not condemn me to see a man beheaded by a woman—a woman who shuts her eyes! Permit *me* to act, for his sake and for mine. You shall see how things are done when an artist does them. And, what is more, I have a proper sword—my own; for I was on my way to perform an operation at Lugos when I was forced to accept the hospitality of this good company."

"You are yourself a headsman?"

"I have that honour. But—*Isten Anya!* Mein Herr—I knew it; I read it in the garden at Koros. We *have* met again!"

He was addressing *me*. . . .

"You are yourself a headsman?" repeated András Mári; no—Flamenka I have to call her now. András Mári was no more.

"A headsman? *Szentek's Angyal!* I am the Headsman of Koros; I am Vitéz Boldisár!" he answered, with all an artist's pride.

A sob seemed to tear Flamenka's bosom; but