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**DAUGHTERS
OF JOY**

By BARRY BENEFIELD

THE SQUAB

By GEORGE BRONSON-HOWARD

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A NOVELETTE

By the Author of
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BALTHAZAR'S DAUGHTER

By James Branch Cabell

GRACIOSA was Balthazar's youngest child, a white, slim girl with violet eyes and strange pale hair which had the color and glitter of stardust. "Some day at court," her father often thought complacently, "she, too, will make a good match." He was a necessitous lord, a smiling, supple man who had already marketed two daughters to his advantage. But Graciosa's time was not yet mature, for the girl was not quite eighteen. So Graciosa remained in his big cheerless house and was tutored in all needful accomplishments.

Now to the north of Balthazar's home stood a tall forest overhanging both the highway and the river whose windings the highway followed. Graciosa was very often to be encountered upon the outskirts of these woods. She loved the forest, whose tranquillity bred dreams, but was already a woman in so far that she found it more interesting to watch the highway.

Then destiny took a hand in the affair and Guido came. He reined in his gray horse at the sight of her sitting by the wayside and deferentially inquired how far it might be to the nearest inn. Graciosa told him. He thanked her and rode on. That was all, but the appraising glance of this sedate and handsome burgher obscurely troubled the girl afterward.

Next day he came again. He was a jewel merchant, he told her, and he thought it within the stretch of possibility that my lord Balthazar's daughter might wish to purchase some of his wares. She viewed them with admiration, chattered thriftily, and finally bought a topaz, dug from Mount

Zabarca, Guido assured her, which rendered its wearer immune to terrors of any kind.

Very often afterward these two met on the outskirts of the forest as Guido rode between the coast and the hill country about his vocation. Sometimes he laughingly offered her a bargain; on other days he paused to exhibit a notable gem which he had procured for this or that wealthy amateur. Count Eglamour, the young Duke's favorite yonder at court, bought most of them, it seemed. "The nobles complain against this upstart Eglamour very bitterly," said Guido, "but we merchants have no quarrel with him. He buys too lavishly. Eh, mistress, I wish that you could see his gems," cried Guido, growing fervent; and he lovingly catalogued a host of lapidary marvels.

"I fear I shall not see these jewels when I go to court," said Graciosa, rather wistfully, "for by that time, my father assures me, some honest gentleman will have contrived to cut the throat of this abominable Eglamour, and his collection of gems will be scattered." Her father's people, it should be premised, had been at bitter feud with the favorite ever since he detected and punished the conspiracy of the Marquis of Cibo, their kinsman. Then Graciosa continued: "Nevertheless, I shall see many beautiful sights when I am taken to court. And the Duke, too, you tell me, is a lover of gems?"

"Duke Alessandro," he returned, his dark eyes strangely mirthful, "is, as I take it, a catholic lover of beauty in all its forms."

"And is he as handsome as people report?"

Then Guido laughed a little. "Tastes differ, of course. But I think your father will assure you, mistress, that no duke possessing such a zealous tax collector as Count Eglamour was ever in his lifetime considered of repulsive person."

"And he is young?"

"Why, as to that, he is about of an age with me, and in consequence old enough to be far more sensible than either of us is ever likely to be," said Guido, and began to talk of other matters.

But presently Graciosa was questioning him again as to the court whither she was to go next year and enslave a marquis or, at worst, an opulent baron. Her thoughts turned toward the court's predominating figure. "Tell me of Eglamour, Guido."

"Mistress, some say that Eglamour was a brewer's son. Others—and your father's kinsmen in particular—insist that he was begot by Satan in person, just as Merlin was. Nobody knows anything about his origin." Guido was sitting upon the ground, his open pack between his knees. Between the thumb and forefinger of each hand he held caressingly a string of pearls which he inspected as he talked. "Nobody," he idly said—"nobody is very eager to discuss Count Eglamour's origin now that Eglamour has become indispensable to Duke Alessandro. Yes, it is thanks to Eglamour that the Duke has ample leisure and needful privacy for the pursuit of recreations which are reputed to be curious."

"I do not understand you, Guido." Graciosa was all wonder.

"It is perhaps as well," the merchant said, a trifle sadly. Then Guido shrugged. "To be brief, mistress, business annoys the Duke. He finds in this Eglamour an industrious person who affixes seals, draughts proclamations, makes treaties, musters armies, devises pageants and collects revenues, quite as efficiently, upon the whole, as Alessandro would be capable of doing these things. So Alessandro amuses himself as his inclinations prompt, and Alessandro's people are none the worse off on account of it."

"Heigho! I foresee that I shall never fall in love with the Duke," Graciosa declared. "It is unbecoming and it is a little cowardly for a prince to shirk the duties of his station. Now if I were the Duke I would grant my father a pension, and have Eglamour hanged, and purchase a new gown of silvery green in which I would be ravishingly beautiful, and afterward— Why, what would you do if you were the Duke, Master Guido?"

"What would I do if I were the Duke?" he echoed. "What would I do if I were a great lord instead of a mere tradesman? I think you know the answer, mistress."

"Oh, you would make me your duchess, of course. That is quite understood," said Graciosa, with the lightest of laughs. "But I was speaking seriously, Guido."

Guido at that considered her intently for a half-minute. His countenance was of portentous gravity, but in his eyes she seemed to detect a lurking impishness.

"And it is not a serious matter that a peddler of crystals should have dared to love a nobleman's daughter? You are perfectly right, mistress. That I worship you is an affair which does not concern any person save myself in any way whatsoever, although I think that knowledge of the fact would put your father to the trouble of sharpening his dagger. Indeed, I am not certain that I worship you, for in order to adore whole-heartedly the idolater must believe his idol to be perfect. Now your nails are of an ugly shape, like that of little fans; your mouth is too large, and I have long ago perceived that you are a trifle lame in spite of your constant care to conceal the fact. I do not admire these faults, for faults they are undoubtedly. Then, too, I know that you are vain and self-seeking, and look forward contentedly to the time when your father will transfer his ownership of such physical attractions as heaven gave you to that nobleman who offers the highest price for them. It is true you have no choice in the matter, but you will participate in a monstrous bar-

gain, and I would prefer that you exhibited distaste for it." And with that he returned composedly to inspection of his pearls.

"And to what end, Guido?" It was the first time Graciosa had completely waived the reticence of a superior caste. You saw that the child's parted lips were tremulous, and you divined her childish fits of dreading that glittering, inevitable court life shared with an unimaginable husband.

But Guido only grumbled whimsically. "I am afraid that men do not always love according to the strict laws of logic. I desire your happiness above all things; yet to see you so abysmally untroubled by anything that troubles me is another matter."

"But I am not untroubled, Guido—" she began swiftly. Graciosa broke off in speech, shrugged, flashed a smile at him. "For I cannot fathom you, Master Guido, and that troubles me. I am very fond of you, and yet I do not trust you. You tell me that you love me greatly. It pleases me to have you say this. You see that I am very candid this morning, Master Guido. Yes, it pleases me, and I know that for the sake of seeing me you daily endanger your life, for if my father heard of our meetings he would have you killed. You would not incur such hare-brained risks unless you cared very greatly, and yet, somehow, I do not believe that it is altogether for me you care."

Then Guido was in train to protest an all-mastering and entirely candid devotion, but he was interrupted.

"Most women have these awkward intuitions," spoke a melodious voice; and turning, Graciosa met the eyes of the intruder. This magnificent young man showed a proud and bloodless face which contrasted sharply with his painted lips and cheeks. His scanty beard was the color of dead grass. He was sumptuously clothed in white satin worked with silver, and around his cap was a gold chain hung with diamonds. Now he handed his fringed riding gloves to Guido to hold.

"Yes, mistress, I suspect that Eglamour here cares greatly for the fact that

you are Lord Balthazar's daughter, and cousin to the late Marquis of Cibo. For Cibo has many kinsmen at court who still resent the circumstance that the matching of his wits against Eglamour's earned for Cibo a deplorably public demise. So they conspire against Eglamour with vexatious industry, as an upstart, as a nobody thrust over people of proven descent; and Eglamour goes about in hourly apprehension of a knife thrust. If he could make a match with you, though, your father—thrifty man—would be easily appeased. Your cousins, those proud, grumbling Castel-Franchi, Strozzi and Valori, would not prove over-obdurate toward a kinsman who, whatever his past indiscretions, has so many pensions and offices at his disposal. Yes, honor would permit a truce, and Eglamour could bind them to his interests within ten days, and be rid of the necessity of sleeping in chain armor. Have I not unraveled the scheme correctly, Eglamour?"

"Your Highness was never lacking in penetration," replied the other man in a dull voice. He stood motionless, holding the gloves, his shoulders a little bowed as if under some physical load. His eyes were fixed upon the ground. He divined the change in Graciosa's face and did not care to see it.

"And so you are Count Eglamour!" said Graciosa, in a sort of whisper. "That is very strange. I had thought you were my friend, Guido. But I forget. I must not call you Guido any longer." She gave a little shiver here. He stayed motionless and did not look at her. "I have often wondered what manner of man you were. So it was you—whose hand I touched just now—you who poisoned Duke Cosmo, you who had the good cardinal assassinated, you who betrayed the brave lord of Paenza! Oh, yes, they openly accuse you of every imaginable crime—this patient Eglamour, this reptile who has crept into his power through filthy passages. It is very strange you should be capable of so much wickedness, for to me you seem only a sullen lackey."

He winced and raised his eyes at this. His face remained expressionless. He

knew these accusations at least to be demonstrable lies, for as it happened, he had never found his advancement to hinge upon the commission of any actual crime. But even so, the past was a cemetery he did not care to have revived.

"And it was you who detected the Marquis of Cibo's conspiracy. Tebaldeo was my cousin, Count Eglamour, and I loved him. We were reared together. We used to play here in these woods, and I remember how Tebaldeo once fetched me a wren's nest from that maple yonder. I stood just here. I was weeping because I was afraid that he would fall. If he had fallen and had been killed it would have been the luckier for him." Graciosa sighed. "They say that he conspired. I do not know. I only know that by your orders, Count Eglamour, my cousin Tebaldeo was fastened upon a Saint Andrew's cross and his arms and legs were each broken in two places with an iron bar. Then your servants took Tebaldeo, still living, and laid him upon a carriage wheel which was hung upon a pivot. The upper edge of this wheel was cut with very fine teeth like those of a saw, so that his agony might be complete. Tebaldeo's poor mangled legs were folded beneath his body so that his heels touched the back of his head, they tell me. In such a posture he died very slowly while the wheel turned very slowly there in the sunlit market place, and flies buzzed greedily about him, and the shopkeepers took holiday in order to watch Tebaldeo die—the same Tebaldeo who once fetched me a wren's nest from yonder maple."

Eglamour spoke now. "I gave the orders for the Marquis of Cibo's execution. I did not devise the manner of his death. The punishment for Cibo's crime was long ago fixed by our laws. Cibo plotted to kill the Duke. Cibo confessed as much."

But the girl waved this aside. "And then you plan this masquerade. You plan to make me care for you so greatly that even when I know you to be Count Eglamour I will still care for you. You plan to marry me, so as to placate Tebaldeo's kinsmen, so as to bind them

to your interests. It was a fine, bold stroke of policy, I know, to use me as a stepping stone to safety—but was it fair to me?" Her voice rose now a little. She seemed to plead with him. "Look you, Count Eglamour, I was a child only yesterday. I have never loved any man. But you have loved many women, I know, and long experience has taught you many ways of moving a woman's heart. Oh, was it fair, was it worth while, to match your skill against my ignorance? Think how unhappy I would be if even now I loved you, and how I would loathe myself!

"But I am getting angry over nothing. Nothing has happened except that I have dreamed in idle moments of a brave and comely lover who held his head so high that all other women envied me; and now I have awakened."

Then the young man in white spoke cheerily. "Fie, Mistress Graciosa, you must not be too harsh with Eglamour. It is his nature to scheme, and he weaves his plots as inevitably as the spider does her web. Believe me, it is wiser to forget the rascal—as I do—until there is need of him; and I think you will have no more need to consider Eglamour's trickeries, for you are very beautiful, Graciosa."

He had drawn closer to the girl, and he brought a cloying odor of frangipani, bergamot and vervain. His nostrils quivered; his face had taken on an odd pinched look; for all that he smiled as over some occult jest. Graciosa was a little frightened by his bearing, which was both furtive and predatory.

"Oh, do not be offended, for I have some rights to say what I desire in these parts. For, *Dei gratia*, I am the overlord of these parts, Graciosa—a neglected prince who wondered over the frequent absences of his chief counselor and secretly set spies upon him. Eglamour here will attest as much. Or if you cannot believe poor Eglamour any longer, I shall have other witnesses within the half-hour. Oh, yes, they are to meet me here at noon—some twenty crop-haired, stalwart cutthroats. They will come riding upon beautiful broad-chested horses covered with red velvet

trappings that are hung with little silver bells which jingle delightfully. They will come very soon, and then we will ride back to court."

Duke Alessandro touched his painted mouth with his forefinger as if in fantastic mimicry of a man imparting a confidence.

"I think that I shall take you with me, Graciosa, for you are very beautiful. You are as slim as a lily and more white, and your eyes are two purple mirrors in each of which I see a tiny image of Duke Alessandro. The woman I loved yesterday was a big splendid wench with cheeks like apples. It is not desirable that women should be so large. All women should be little creatures that fear you. They should have thin, plaintive voices, and in shrinking from you be as slight to the touch as a cobweb. It is not possible to love a woman ardently save when you realize how easy it would be to murder her."

"God! God!" said Count Eglamour, very softly, for he was familiar with the look which had now come into Duke Alessandro's face. Indeed, all persons about court were quick to notice this odd pinched look, like that of a traveler nipped at by frosts, and people at court became obsequious within the instant in dealing with the fortunate woman who had aroused it, Count Eglamour remembered.

And the girl did not speak at all, but stood motionless, staring in bewildered, pitiable, childlike fashion, and the color had ebbed from her countenance.

Alessandro was frankly pleased. "You fear me, do you not, Graciosa? See now, when I touch your hand it is soft and cold as a serpent's skin, and you shudder. I am very tired of women who love me, of all women with bold, hungry eyes. To you my touch will always be a martyrdom; you will always loathe me, and therefore I shall not weary of you for a long while. Come, Graciosa. Your father shall have all the wealth and state that even his greedy imaginings can devise, so long as you can contrive to loathe me. We will find you a suitable husband. You shall have flattery and titles, gold and jewels, soft stuffs

and superb palaces such as are your beauty's due henceforward."

"Highness!" cried Eglamour. "Highness, I love this girl."

"Ah, then you cannot ever be her husband," Duke Alessandro returned. "You would have suited otherwise. No, no, we must seek out some other person of discretion. It will all be very amusing, for I think that she is now quite innocent, as pure as the high angels are. See, Eglamour, she cannot speak; she stays still as a lark that has been taken in a snare. It will be very marvelous to make her as I am." He meditated, as obscurely aware of opposition; his shoulders twitched fretfully, and momentarily his eyes lightened like the glare of a cannon through its smoke. "You made a beast of me, some long-faced people say. Beware lest the beast turn and rend you."

Count Eglamour plucked aimlessly at his chin. Then he laughed as a dog yelps. He dropped the gloves which he had held till this, deliberately, as if the act were a rite. His shoulders straightened and purpose seemed to flow into the man. "No," he said, quietly, "I will not have it. It was not I who made a brainsick beast of you, my prince, but even so, I have never been too nice to profit by your vices. I have taken my thrifty toll of abomination; I have stood by contentedly, not urging you on, yet never trying to stay you, as you waded deeper and ever deeper into the filth of your debaucheries, because meanwhile you left me so much power. Yes, in some part it is my own handiwork which is my ruin. I accept it. Nevertheless, you shall not harm this child."

"I venture to remind you, Eglamour, that I am still the master of this duchy." Alessandro was languidly amused, and had begun to regard his adversary with genuine curiosity.

"Oh, yes, but that is nothing to me. At court you are the master. At court I have seen mothers raise the veils from their daughters' faces, with smiles that were more loathsome than the grimaces of a fiend, because you happened to be passing. But here in these woods, Your Highness, I see only the woman

I love and the man who has insulted her."

"This is very admirable fooling," the Duke considered. "So all the world is changed and Pandarus is transformed into Hector! These are sonorous words, Eglamour, but with what deeds do you propose to back them?"

"By killing you, Your Highness."

"So!" said the Duke. "The farce ascends in interest." He drew with a flourish, with actual animation, for sottish, debauched and power-crazed as this young man was, he came of a race to whom danger was a cordial. "Very luckily a sword forms part of your disguise, so let us amuse ourselves. It is always diverting to kill, and if by any chance you kill me, I shall at least be rid of the intolerable knowledge that tomorrow will be just like today." The Duke descended blithely into the level road and placed himself on guard.

Then both men silently went about the business in hand. Both were oddly calm, almost as if preoccupied by some more important matter to be settled later on. The two swords clashed, gleamed rigidly for an instant, and then their rapid interplay, so far as vision went, melted into a flickering snarl of silver, for the sun was high and each man's shadow was huddled under him. Then Eglamour thrust savagely, and in the act trod the edge of a puddle and fell ignominiously prostrate. His sword was wrenched ten feet from him, for the Duke had parried skillfully. Eglamour lay thus at Alessandro's mercy.

"Well, well!" the Duke cried petulantly. "And am I to be kept waiting forever? You were a thought quicker in obeying my caprices yesterday. Get up, you muddy lout, and let us kill each other with some pretension of adroitness."

Eglamour rose, and, sobbing, caught up his sword and rushed toward the Duke in an agony of shame and rage. His attack now was that of a frenzied animal, quite careless of defense and desirous only of murder. Twice the Duke wounded him, but it was Alessandro who drew backward, composedly hindering the brutal onslaught he was

powerless to check. Then Eglamour ran him through the chest, and gave vent to a strangled growling cry as Alessandro fell. Eglamour wrenched his sword free and grasped it by the blade so that he might stab the Duke again and again. He meant to hack the abominable flesh, to slash and mutilate that haughty mask of infamy, but Graciosa clutched his weapon by the hilt.

The girl panted and her breath came thick. "He gave you your life."

Eglamour looked up. She leaned now upon his shoulder, her face now almost brushing his as he knelt over the unconscious Duke, and Eglamour found that at her dear touch all passion had gone out of him.

"Mistress Graciosa," he said equably, "the Duke is not yet dead. It is impossible to let him live. You may think that he voiced only a caprice just now. I think so, too, but I know the man, and I realize that this madman's whims are ruthless and irresistible. Living, Duke Alessandro's appetites are merely whetted by opposition, so much so that he finds no pleasures sufficiently piquant unless they have God's interdiction as a sauce. Living, he will make of you his amusement, and a little later his broken, soiled and cast-by plaything. It is therefore necessary that I kill him."

She parted from him, and he, too, rose to his feet.

"And afterward," she said quietly—"and afterward you must die just as Tebaldeo died."

"That is the law, mistress. But I am a lost man now, whether Alessandro lives or dies."

"Oh, that is very true," she said. "A moment since you were Count Eglamour, whom every person feared. Now there is not a beggar in the kingdom who would change lots with you, for you are a friendless and hunted man in peril of dreadful death. But even so, you are not penniless, Count Eglamour, for these jewels here which formed part of your masquerade are of great value, and there is a world outside. The frontier is not two miles distant. You have only to escape through the forest into the hill country, and you need not kill Duke

Alessandro after all. I would have you go hence with hands as clean as possible."

"Perhaps I might escape." He found it quaint to note how calm she was and how tranquilly his own thoughts ran. "But first the Duke must die, because I dare not leave you to his mercy."

"How does that matter?" she returned. "You know very well that my father intends to market me as best suits his interests. Here I am so much merchandise. The Duke is as free as any other man to cry a bargain." He would have spoken in protest, but Graciosa interrupted wearily: "Oh, yes, it is to this end only that we daughters of Duke Alessandro's vassals are nurtured, just as you told me—oh, how long ago!—that we may market such physical attractions as heaven accords us. And I do not see how a wedding can in any way ennoble the transaction by causing it to profane a holy sacrament. Ah, no, Balthazar's daughter was near attaining all that she had been taught to desire, for a purchaser came and he bid lavishly. You know very well that my father would have been delighted. But you must need upset the bargain. 'No I will not have it!' Count Eglamour must cry. It cost you very highly to speak those words. I think it would have puzzled my father to hear you speak those words at which so many fertile lands, stout castles, well timbered woodlands, herds of cattle, gilded coaches, liveries and curious tapestries, fine clothing and spiced foods, all vanished like a puff of smoke. Ah, yes, my father would have thought you mad."

"I had no choice," he said, and waved a little gesture of impotence. He spoke as with difficulty, almost wearily. "I love you. It is a theme on which I do not embroider. So long as I had thought to use you as an instrument I could woo fluently enough. Today I saw that you were frightened and helpless—oh, quite helpless. And something changed in me. I knew for the first time that I loved you and that I was not clean as you are clean. What it was of passion and horror, of despair and adoration and yearning, which struggled in my being then I cannot tell you of.

It spurred me on to speak as I did then, but it has robbed me of sugared eloquence, it has left me chary of speech. It is necessary that I climb very high because of my love for you, and upon the heights there is silence."

And Graciosa meditated. "Here I am so much merchandise. Heigho, since I cannot help it—since bought and sold I must be, one day or another—at least I will go at a noble price. Yet I do not think I am quite worth the value of these castles and lands and other things which you gave up because of me, so that it will be necessary to make up the difference, dear, by loving you very much."

And at that he touched her chin, gently and masterfully, for Graciosa would have averted her face, and it seemed to Eglamour that he could never have his fill of gazing on the radiant, shamed tenderness of Graciosa's face. "Oh, my girl!" he whispered. "Oh, my wonderful worshiped merry girl, whom God has fashioned with such loving care, you who had only scorn to give me when I was a kingdom's master! And would you go with me now that I am friendless and homeless?"

"But I shall always have a friend," she answered—"a friend who showed me what Balthazar's daughter was and what love is. And I am vain enough to believe I shall not ever be very far from home so long as I am near his heart."

A mortal man could not but take her in his arms.

Then these two turned toward the hills, leaving Duke Alessandro where he lay in the road, a very lamentable figure in much bloodied finery. They turned toward the hills and entered a forest whose ordering was time's contemporary and where there was no grandeur save that of the trees.

But upon the summit of the nearest hill they paused and looked over a restless welter of foliage that glittered in the sun, far down into the highway. It bustled like an unroofed anthill, for the road was alive with men who seemed from this distance very small. Duke Alessandro's attendants had found him and were clustered in a great hubbub about their reviving master.

Beyond was the broad river, seen as a ribbon of silver now, and on its remoter bank the leaded roofs of a strong fortress glistened like a child's new toy. Tilled fields showed here and there, no larger in appearance than so many outspread handkerchiefs. Far down in the east a small black smudge upon the pearl-colored and vaporous horizon was all they could discern of a walled city

filled with factories for the working of hemp and furs and alum and silk and bitumen.

"It is a very rich and lovely land," said Eglamour—"this kingdom which a half-hour since lay in the hollow of my hand." He viewed it for a while, and not without pensiveness. Then he took Graciosa's hand and looked into her face, and he laughed joyously.



BALLADE OF YOUTH TO SWINBURNE

By Orrick Johns

O POET, have you gone to lave
 In the great sea that wooed your soul?
 O Singer, who to England gave
 Her brightest lore of love and dole—
 In some sweet place beneath the roll
 Of mighty waves you sing, I ween,
 The Lesbian fragments you made whole
 Who had a lute from Mitylene.

With cool-browed Sappho do you sing
 Such loves as made her dark eyes glow,
 While shining maidens nectar bring
 And perfumed hyacinth bestow?
 Or with Theocritus you go
 Through meadows dressed in gold and green—
 We would so dream of you, who know
 You had a lute from Mitylene.

That "sad, bad, glad" Villon of France
 Ere this has thanked you for the care
 You bore him, and by lovely chance
 Catullus smiled upon you there;
 With bay-wreathed heads what joys you share
 Along fleet days beyond the screen
 Death lowered when you took the Stair,
 Who had a lute from Mitylene!

ENVOI

O Death, his little brothers, we,
 Who found that piercing song too keen,
 Make mourn . . . "Dost thou know this was he
 Who had a lute from Mitylene?"