

THE  
DUKE OF MANTUA,  
A TRAGEDY.

BY

*Surgeon Royal - 1831*

447



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THE  
DUKE OF MANTUA.

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## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

### MEN.

ANDREA, *Duke of Mantua.*  
RIDOLFI, *the Duke's Foster-brother.*  
CARLOS, *in love with Hermione.*  
BERTRAND, *Friend to Carlos.*  
FABIAN, } *Pages attending on the Duke.*  
SYLVIO, }  
GIULIO, *a Minstrel attending on Carlos.*  
STEPHANO, } *Servants to Ridolfi.*  
ROLAND, }  
Priest.  
Grave-Digger.  
Citizens of Mantua.

### WOMEN.

BEATRICE, *Duchess of Mantua.*  
HERMIONE, *Cousin to Ridolfi.*  
LAURA, *Sister to Ridolfi.*  
ZORAYDA, *a Gipsy.*  
BLANCH, *Servant to Hermione.*

*Guards, Soldiers, &c.*

*Scene—Mantua.*



THE  
DUKE OF MANTUA.

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ACT I.—SCENE I.

*A Room in the Duke's Palace at Mantua.*

*Enter the DUKE and RIDOLFI.*

RIDOLFI.

HERMIONE again visits my house.—

Your presence, good my lord, with your fair dame,  
I would solicit.

DUKE.

Well, Ridolfi, be it so :—to-day,  
If nought forbid the time :—Hermione,  
Thou say'st ?—I do remember, yet so slight, 'tis scarce  
The shadow of her form. But once, my brother,  
'Twas one fair summer's eve, awhile I saw  
Thy sprightly coz : a laughter-loving spirit,



She threw quick mirth as the unbidden shafts  
Of innocent love, scattering with hand profuse  
Her joyous pranks. I was but newly wedded,  
Scarce past the honey-moon; Beatrice hung  
Fondly upon mine arm, and we too laugh'd,  
On that still night, until the whispering woods  
Grew loud, and thousand voices started forth  
From bough and hoary stem, bursting as if  
To riotous life; and yet her giddy face,  
Playful and changing as the restless wave,  
I cannot fashion now from memory's storehouse —  
How fares thy cousin?

RIDOLFI.

Still by love, my lord,  
She comes untamed; but time, one delicate shade  
Hath slightly pass'd upon her wanton mirth,  
Softening the ruder bursts of her high spirit,  
Tinged ofttime now with gentler thought.

DUKE.

'Tis well

When ripening years mellow the gaudy hue  
Of youth's rich fancies, sparkling else too bright  
For its repose. — We visit thee to-day. —  
This tribute say we give Hermione.

RIDOLFI.

• Much honour hold we from your presence :  
Our poorer hospitality excuse,  
As you are wont. Adieu ! No costly feast  
We give, but our glad welcome.

[Exit.]

DUKE.

A brother still,—a friend  
To cheer my way through life's dark wilderness.  
Thou art a feeble light, and yet I love  
To watch thy tremulous blaze, blessing the gloom,  
And shedding round my path its thousand gems,  
Sprinkling perchance some loathed and hideous form  
With thy pale gleam. How tender hast thou been  
To my worst weaknesses, my foibles, all  
Heart-withering cares ! Though born to humbler honours,  
I call thee friend. Well hast thou earn'd from me  
That sacred name ! One bosom nourish'd us ;  
One hand our childhood rear'd ; twining we grew  
Unto one stem, till riches and high birth  
Bore me brief space from that beloved soil,—  
That home, to which our very nature yet  
Seems most akin.—  
Of proud descent, unsullied as mine own,  
Thou yet canst boast : if not of titled wealth,



Of outward garb, thy suit becomes thee well;  
And I do love thee more than if array'd  
In ducal coronet. Beatrice too  
Hath prized him for my sake, and her esteem  
I do-repay with tenfold love.—  
Fierce, feverish love!—thine idle dreams,—fleeting  
As cloud-fed vapour, yon o'erarching bow  
Bestrides,—fade as the sunbeam on the sky  
Dispels the glowing mist. 'Tis well, if then  
The welkin clear'd, each circumstance and form,—  
Fashion'd realities by truth impress'd  
Upon the craving eye-balls,—O 'tis well  
If on these fix'd and palpable images  
Of roused and wakening sense, the eye may rest  
With unappeased delight! But if the while  
Love's light-wing'd visions fade, nought fills the void  
Save chilling wastes, trackless, unlimited,  
That echo back their own grim desolation  
To the appalled spirit. What escape  
The shrinking soul is left, save one dark path  
To unappointed death? I thank thee, Heaven,  
Thou sparest me this trial! Love hath still  
With proud esteem held equal sway: in peace,  
Untroubled they divide their several empire.—

But I must hence : Beatrice I would greet  
First with these tidings of Hermione.

[*Exit.*]

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SCENE II.

*A Hall in the House of Ridolfi.*

*Enter Servants, preparing for an Entertainment.*

ROLAND.

Help me with this wine, Stephano.

STEPHANO.

Help thee? yea, my wishes be thy help. I hope thou  
wilt have unhelped speed.

ROLAND.

Truce to thy wit, comrade, for it helpeth me not, save  
an' my fingers to this cudgel, and thine hide to a basting.

STEPHANO.

Nay, spare thy wit, and thy cudgel to boot: mine  
hide endureth it not tenderly. If I should wince, thou  
mightest come to harm. A dainty flagon this: would



that thy mouth were as dry as my lips, and our bellies had changed occupants ! Thy lazy body would be lighter, methinks, and I better able to carry thee.—

ROLANDO.

The Lady Hermione ! Oh, I do love her sweet face, Stephano ! She smiles an' it were so temptingly when she speaks ! " Good Roland," says she, " give me of that wine."—" Kind Roland, do go to the bath, and carry my little spaniel :"—or thus, " Honest master Roland, pray take my basket, and bring me thy master's garden mittens." This house, I trow, Stephano, she makes like to some gay palace, when she visits it ; as pleasant and full of goodness as the Duke's pantry, who comes to the feast to-day. She was here some two years ago, and I thought I should have pined away at heart when she left.

STEPHANO.

Tush ! thou star-stricken marriose ! Is she not a woman ? Are not all women as full of deceit as their grandmothers ? Is not Eve's flesh upon the bones of the very best jade in christendom ? and this blowzy-bell of thine, beshrew me, has no better a covering than the rest of 'em. This dainty hoyden thou delightest to worship, man, can be as chary of her winning looks as any of her sisterhood ; and if I have not seen a storm brewing in her

face, I have seen a water-spout in her eye, marry, which is almost fathomless. Mark me, Roland: if any good comes of her mummery, I am no true prophet, that's all.

ROLAND.

Envious in this, I do guess, Stephano. Why does she not smile on thee—eh? Thy stupid face, seamed like a beggar's coat; thy marvellous bright eyes and small nostrils; or, mayhap, I might the rather mean, thy marvellous bright nostrils and small eyes, make tears come into her delicate organs by sympathy, like the stroke of a dull razor. I tell thee, man, she cannot smile fronting thy mis-shapened countenance. I know many gentlewomen that bear not an ugly serving-man about them; and the delicate Hermione, I should be-think me, hath aversion to such.—I like her the better, Stephano, for thine ugliness.

STEPHANO.

Thou mis-shapen cur, time serves not to correct thee. What! dost brag if thy grinning leer provoke her mirth? "Sweet Roland," ah, "good Roland," put thy nose to the curling irons, and twist thy mouth with thy garters. I can tell thee, "Master Roland," this favourite hath her privy counsellors, and she not a wit loth to trust 'em.



Ah, ah! "honest Roland," perhaps thou didst help her to the terrace key o' yesternight; and it was "kind Roland, fetch me"—oh, her pretty spaniel was it, "Master Roland?"

ROLAND.

Nay, thou art in jest. Sawest thou the Lady Hermione with the key last night?

STEPHANO.

I heard a noise in the gallery, and I jumped hastily from my mattress, and who should I see but Hermione, with her chamber-lamp, opening the door which leads to the garden terrace. What sayest thou, Roland?

ROLAND.

The key I fetched not.

STEPHANO.

Then, it seems, she lacks not other "honest" friends for matters of more need, and they in nothing loth to serve her.

ROLAND.

Didst thou watch her further?

STEPHANO.

Ay, good Roland, or I do not deserve to know the worth of a pretty secret.

ROLAND.

Well?—

STEPHANO.

Thou art curious, i' faith. What makes thee look so wistful?

ROLAND.

Come, thou lucky knave, I want the burden of thy song. How sped she?

STEPHANO.

I hied me to the topmost lattice, overlooking—

ROLAND.

Who was the gallant?

STEPHANO.

Why truly he had a brighter face than thine own, but shorn off somewhat from the left cheek.

ROLAND.

Thou speakest parables, Stephano. Out with it, friend: a secret cometh to no good if kept in thy stomach.

STEPHANO.

A fair face; eyes, mouth, and nose, though none of the best;—I think not half so well made as mine own.

ROLAND.

In troth, a dainty lover. What more?



STEPHANO.

But then she gave him such a look of devotion, it would have done thine heart good to have watched the turn of her face, and to have looked at the glistening of her eye,—and yet this platter-faced gallant seemed all unmoved.

ROLAND.

His name knowest thou?

STEPHANO.

Verily, he hath many titles, and I should be puzzled to suit my respect with his proper quality, should we meet.

ROLAND.

I'll watch to-night;—but pr'ythee whisper me his name gently; I am not quick at solving a riddle.

STEPHANO.

Nay, nay; watch and satisfy thine own prying fancy, as I have mine. If she walks to-night I'll call thee.

[*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE III.

*A Chamber in Ridolfi's House.**HERMIONE, sitting at a Table.*

HERMIONE.

Two years ago—this self-same chamber—  
Just as 'twas wont;—that ebony casket—still  
Yon little crucifix hung o'er the mirror,—  
That plaited riband, on its flower-carved pillars,  
I wore in sport for love's fair guerdon;  
Its chequer'd noose I vow'd to cast on him  
Who caught me first in some wild reckless game  
Of wanton mirth; but none, as I remember,  
Th' adventure gain'd,—it hangs unclaimed still.  
But why this heaviness?—as if some secret,  
Some long-forgotten grief, waked from its slumber,  
Roused at the voice of these loud recollections,  
Ah! dread dissembler! once I thought thee dead,  
And thou but slept! Away! haunt not my spirit!  
Is it thy form, fell demon? Hence!—thy strength



Is nurtured but with present loneliness,  
And on the wings of some reviving thought  
Admittance hast thou gain'd to mock me.

[*Knocking without.*

Who knocks?—

BLANCH.

'Tis time, lady, you adorn for the guests. The Duke  
sends word he will attend, and with it his gracious love  
to Hermione. This billet greets you with his welcome.

HERMIONE.

A billet!—Welcome!—Stay,  
Thou shalt attire me in some simple garb,  
Some unassuming robe; its modest hue  
Unnoticed, I can there observe  
The humours of this feast.

BLANCH.

Your crimson bodice, lady, becomes you best, and  
your lilac kerchief, with the blue purple—or do you  
choose your orange tiffany dress, and your coif and far-  
thingale?

HERMIONE.

Neither, good Blanch. Where is mine old spotted  
robe, with the silk sleeves and violet-flowered stomacher?

## BLANCH.

Lady, what unlucky accident should bethink you of the garment? I fear your memory is but indifferently served. Once, my kind mistress, you gave it to me; and I remember well I said the dress was too gay, when straight you replied, with a sigh, (and I do always grieve to hear you sigh, lady), "Take it, good Blanch; I wear it not again:" which I the more marvelled at, being, as you remember, made up for your last visit to Mantua, nor did you inquire for it, after you left this gay city; but methinks none other serves you so well for this same soft-air'd clime. I will away for it speedily, right glad, I trow, the roguish pedler hath not fetched it, who gathers the cast off dresses from your house. I have not worn the apparel, lady.

## HERMIONE.

Thou art a kind-hearted gossip. Choose thee the best suit from my clothes-press, and take it for the exchange.—Nay, good Blanch, I allow not thy gainsay:—it will, peradventure, help thee to a husband.

## BLANCH.

I will but keep it then, my sweet mistress, to answer at your bidding; mayhap, you will fancy it on your wedding-day.



HERMIONE.

I shall need no garment then, but the one thy grandmother wore, when she scared thy father in the forest.

BLANCH.

Save you, my lady! mean you her winding-sheet?

HERMIONE.

I mean mine own, Blanch; hers being worn out, be-like, ere now, with much travel.

BLANCH.

Oh, mercy!—but you are ever at a jest.

HERMIONE.

Nay, girl, my spirits are too heavy.

BLANCH.

What mean you, fair mistress? I do fear me a few hours of this Mantuan air have wrought untowardly with you. Are you ill, lady?

HERMIONE.

No, girl.

BLANCH.

It is a secret that disturbs you?

HERMIONE.

Thou canst sing, Blanch?—

BLANCH.

Ay, sweet lady, that can I,—and your favourite carol too. List.

[Sings.]

“ The miller was blithe in the red, red morn,  
And he sung ere the lark left her nest ;  
His heart was bright as the gold, gold light  
That comes o’er the dappled east.”

HERMIONE.

Nay, that sorts not with my humour, Blanch.

BLANCH.

Shall I try the merry troll you were always right glad  
to hear, which the old steward taught us ?

“ Roundabout, roundabout, laugh and glee  
So merry, so merry—”

HERMIONE.

Stay :—not now :—some other song, and we’ll in to  
the toilet : let it be brief—I know not why,—save that  
I think thy singing hath not now such a jocund and  
mirthful spirit in it.

BLANCH.

Ah, lady !—but strange purposes are i’ the wind when  
the mirth-giving Hermione becometh a lover of lament-  
able ditties !—Stay, shall it be of love ?—a sleepy tale of



love, as you were wont to call it?—I know a ballad of this hue.

HERMIONE.

I care not : another, it may be, would have chimed better. Yet, I'll hear thee as a babbler of strange stories.

BLANCH (*sings*).

“ Up with the light,  
My maiden bright,  
The thrush twitters on the tree ;  
Each merry, merry bird to his mate doth call,  
And the bridal waits for thee !”

“ The sunbeams pass  
On the dew-spread grass,  
And gold gleams are in the sky ;  
The morn's balmy breeze to thy casement hies,  
And thy bridegroom is waiting for thee.”

The lover spake,  
“ Fair maid, awake,”  
Yet the maiden still she slept !  
“ Why tarries she from me?—thy bonny face I'll see,”  
And lightly to her window he leapt.

One cry he gave,  
Then still as the grave  
In dim horror he fix'd his dark eye;  
For there his lady bright slept her long, long changeless  
night,  
And a blood-sprinkled corpse welter'd nigh !

BLANCH.

How like you the song ?

HERMIONE.

Indifferent well ;—methinks it were too sad. But sadness and I must have closer fellowship ere long, or I mistake the note of her approach. Away, Blanch ; we must not delay the honours of the feast. [Exeunt.





## SCENE IV.

*An Inn at Mantua.**Enter BERTRAND and CARLOS, fatigued with travel.*

BERTRAND.

'Tis well, good Carlos, in this noble city,  
Thanks to all proper instruments, we now  
Enter safe housed. Nay, nay, dole-stricken friend,  
Put off these looks, drench'd still in woe. Why, man,  
Love ne'er was waked with weeping; woman's eye  
E'er kept her heart, and thou must henceforth bribe  
With gayer looks that restless, twinkling organ,  
Ere thou may'st gain admittance to her breast.  
Rouse thee!—Accost her thus, with careless look  
And laughing eye;—bid her “good day;”—  
Wring her fair hand; and if withdrawn,  
Why seize her by the waist: her sullen looks  
Heed not; an' if she chide, toss back her words;—  
Let her not learn from thy woe-tinctured face,  
Ere yet the tremulous voice its utterance shape,  
Thou pinest a love-sick fool!—

CARLOS.

Bertrand, forbear.

Thou speakest like to one whose lofty spirit  
Love hath not quell'd. I cannot now th' oppressor  
Lift from my soul; I am bow'd down,—subdued,—  
Crush'd even to earth,—yet crawling heavily,  
A cumbrous burden, wearied, useless here,  
And without purport to my fellow-men!—  
I seem aloof from all connexion, tie,  
Or kindred with mankind. The very earth,  
My parent dust, claims not its fellowship  
With mine! Would that yon chill and rayless dwelling  
Had shut me out, and all mine hated sorrow,  
Far from the gaze, the cold, un pitying gaze,  
Alike of stranger and of friend!  
Soon shall the darkness cover me,—the tomb  
Close mine account for ever. Then shall I rest;—  
No glance of cool-eyed scorn shall meet me there,  
Nor woman's charm'd and traitorous tongue shall mock me.  
They seek not victims i' the grave!—My grief  
Shall there be spent; the heart's last ebbing throes  
To earth in quiet nothingness shall leave me,  
Loosed from my dungeon and my chain!—



BERTRAND.

Carlos,

Thy troubled spirit hath no appetite  
 For aught but evil. Fancy, diseased,  
 Shapeth its wrongs from what itself doth breed,—  
 E'en as the timid and belated hind  
 From out his spectre-haunted brain brings forth  
 The shadow most he fears.—I do not mock thee;  
 Cold scorn lurks not in the same laughing orbit  
 Of an unfraudulent eye. Thou know'st it well,  
 Thy peace alone I've sought; and this coy dame,  
 Woo'd as mine hopes commend, would free my bosom  
 From half its load. For these remediless griefs  
 With equal weight oppress mine anguish'd spirit,  
 As the united woe this breast e'er smote,  
 The sum untold of this world's misery.

CARLOS.

Forgive a wayward tongue, fretful—unkind:  
 My breaking heart still holds thee dear.

BERTRAND.

Forgive!—

Nay, ask not this;—man asks but favours.  
 What waits our bolder claim we crave not. Hold!—

'Tis needful we devise, touching our errand,  
Some scheme for its adventure. Shrewd my guess,  
Thou would'st e'en now return, unwoo'd, unsought  
This dainty maiden, and to others leave  
The fond pursuit, then lay thee down and weep!  
I've led thee hither, Carlos;—here I vow,  
Ere this same gallant city hath disgorged  
Such useless habitants, to her dull ear  
Thou shalt commend thy love.

CARLOS.

I've penn'd a fragrant billet——

BERTRAND.

Or a sonnet,

Mayhap, unto her eyne. Nay, 'tis not thus  
Her fickle love is caught:—canst find no speech?  
'Tis said love's eloquent, and pleadeth nobly,  
Using such vehement passion as doth rouse  
The listening heart. Pour thy whole soul to hers:  
Give her no space for thought—'twill bring resistance.  
Reflection's chill and polish'd surface soon  
Would glance off thine artillery, rolling back  
The warm flood to thine heart. But I forbear:—  
My wish is ever foremost on my tongue,  
And still outstrips thy power! Well, thou canst sing,



Play on the cittern, trill the soft-voiced lute  
Beneath a lady's chamber; thou canst fill  
A delicate ear with ditties framed so deftly,  
And with such wondrous skill, another's woe  
Shall seem thine own. 'Tis said, in that soft hour  
The maiden's heart is tender, and well nurtured  
To cherish love's impressions. Then, I tell thee,  
Upask'd attend, and with some vagrant band  
Of hired melodists, at once discourse,  
To thine heart's easing, of pale woe, sighs, groans,  
And love forsaken. Thus prepared, her thought  
Will wondering turn to her moon-driven warbler.  
Thou knowest well in woman's restless soul  
A lurking fondness lies for mystery.  
If thou but win her thought to some connexion,  
Some yet scarce-felt recurrence with thine own,  
And pleasure once associate with the thought—  
These outworks gain'd, cheer thee, thou gloomy knight,  
The lady shall be won. [Exeunt.

## SCENE

*The Terrace. Moonlight.*

*Enter HERMIONE.*

HERMIONE.

Calm orb, how tranquil is thy path!—  
Amid the stars thou walkest, clad in light  
As with a garment. Still thy borrow'd robe  
The darkness compasseth, and sullen night  
His cloud-spread visage cleareth at thy beam.—  
How calm on yonder stream the moonlight sleeps!  
Fair image, woman, of thy maiden breast,  
Unmoved by love. Anon, some vagrant breath  
Ruffles its surface, and its pure still light  
In tremulous pulses heaves:—brighter, perchance,  
That feverish glitter, but its rest is o'er!—  
How fresh the dewy air falls on my cheek,  
As if some spirit, clothed in its influence, came  
Upon my soul, with one heaven-given drop,  
To cool its torment! Would that I could bind  
Thine incorporeal essence! I would chain thee



Here!—on my heart! Benevolent visitor,  
 Whether from yon bright sphere to mortals sent,  
 On moonbeams gliding,—fairy gnome or sylph,  
 Whate'er thy name;—or from earth's glistening caves,  
 Or from the forest-coral'd deep thou comest,  
 In these chill drops that stud my dew-deck'd hair,  
 Its every braid impearling:—fly me not,  
 I charge thee, gentle spirit!—Hark! he comes!

[*Music at a distance.*]

I thank thee——

[*The sound gradually approaches, until heard  
 apparently from beneath the Terrace.*]

A voice!—I'll hear thy words. Breathe not too loud,  
 Ye winds.—

### SONG.

Lady, list to me!  
 Thy gentle spirit I'll be;  
 The fire is my garment, the flood is my bed,  
 And I paint the first cloud with the sunbeam red  
 That rolls o'er the broad blue sea.

Lady, list to me!  
 To the mountain-top I flee:

There I watch the first wave that comes laden with light,  
And its soft hue I spread o'er each billow so bright,  
With its beam I enkindle each heaven-peering height,  
And the morn's radiant canopy.—

*[The voice ceases, and the music slowly retires.]*

## HERMIONE.

Oh fly not!—bear me on thy wing!—from earth—  
From——Why this shudder?—Save me, spirit of air,  
Or earth, or sea! Tear me but hence; and yet  
I cannot part. Oh! why in mercy once  
Was I conceived, and not to nothing crush'd  
Ere the first feeble pulse, unconscious life,  
Crept through this viewless form?—Why was I kept  
Unharm'd through infinite perils?—spared, yet doom'd  
To writhe unpitied—succourless—alone,  
Beneath one cruel, one remorseless woe,—  
From hope shut out—from common sympathy,  
And all communion of sorrow,—e'en  
To the veriest wretch upon thy bosom earth  
Ne'er yet denied?—This boon I dare not ask:  
Wither'd, consumed, companionless, unwept,  
I meet mine hastening doom. Yet, clad in smiles,  
A flower-wreathed sacrifice, I gaily bound,



With gambols playful as the innocent lamb,  
To the devouring altar. The knife is bared!—  
Uplifted,—glittering! Yet I woo thee, tyrant,  
And madly kiss my chain. This night the feast  
I left;—arm'd, I had proudly thought—vain hope!  
With such resolve as, on this moonlit terrace,  
Where, freed awhile from earth's disquietude,  
My thrall'd heart might here unchain for ever!—

*[Takes a billet from her bosom.]*

I vow'd to snatch thee from my breast!  
To tear thee hence! and to the winds, unseen,  
Commit thy perishing fragments, e'en as now  
This unoffending page I rend, far scattering  
Its frail memorial to the air.—

*[Makes an effort to tear the paper.]*

Some power withholds me. What! for this thou yearnest?  
Weak, foolish heart, some other hour, thou say'st,  
Better thou canst resign this fluttering relic  
Of thy——hope, whisperest thou?  
Nay, folly—madness,—call it but aright,  
Thou throbbing fool, and I will give thee back  
Thy doted bauble.

*[Returns it into her bosom.]*

There—there!—watch over it!  
Brood on thy minion!—cherish and pamper it

Until it mock thee!—prey on thy young blood,—  
Poison each spring of natural affection,  
And all the sympathies that flesh inherits,—  
Then wilt thou curse thine idol!—Impotent rage,—  
It will deride thee, and will fiercely cling  
To thine undoing for ever. Fare thee well,  
Thou star-hung canopy!—far-smiling orb,  
Farewell! No more sweet influences ye fling,  
As ye were wont, around my desolate heart;  
I cannot bear your stillness:—Earthquake—storm—  
The mighty war of the vex'd elements,  
Would best comport with my disquiet:—now,  
On thy calm face I dare not look again! *[Exit.]*

*Enter ROLAND and STEPHANO.*

STEPHANO.

So, so, my moon-eyed maiden. Ah, "Good Roland,"  
gallants breed not i' the sun; they thrive best belike i' the  
moonbeams.

ROLAND.

I saw no gallant.

STEPHANO.

Why, poor wretch, I pity thee. Perhaps she hath



fallen sick for the moon; thou seest his cheek is somewhat shorn off, and I verily think he favours the lover that I told thee of.

ROLAND.

Thou art an old and a wicked rogue. But what waked such pleasant music? Came that from the moon too?

STEPHANO.

Ah, ah, honest friend, dost thou breed suspicions?—Ask the gardener who brought the music-men so late under the garden terrace.

*Enter LAURA cautiously, carrying a light.*

LAURA.

How now, masters, wot ye,—a pretty time o' night for secret whisperings! What brings you to the terrace, worthy sirs, so nigh upon midnight? Pleasant discourse truly, you unseasonable villains! Can't you stay a-bed?

ROLAND.

Sweet mistress, we came to hear the music.

LAURA.

And what should lug your dainty ears to the screenade?—I' faith, 'tis high time for your betters to stop their ears, when asses jog to the pipe. So, you guessed

the music came to benefit your private discourse. An excellent jest this!—a serenade to a couple of owls.—Get in, you lazy dolts, and thank your stars, and not your ears, that you have 'scaped a beating.—[*Exeunt ROLAND and STEPHANO.*]—I wonder these idiots guessed not who drew the serenade to this long-deserted house. True, it may be some dozen years or more since this same salute awoke me; nevertheless, I was not past hope of its return. That gallant stranger whom I saw at vespers yesterday eyed me not, nor did he watch the corner of the street, for nought.—Well, it is a noble-looking cavalier, and a steady, well-ordered person, I warrant, from his noticing me so properly, and not that giddy coz of mine, the love-unheeding Hermione.—I hope he will return. Virgin decorum permitteth not my regard to his first appearance.—Hark!—[*Music.*]—Oh! how my heart flutters! Sweet harbinger of love! I must show myself, or he will die of despair, or, perchance, he will not come again, which will suit me still worse. Though, certes, it would be mightily amusing to feel oneself the cause of a gay cavalier hanging himself in his garters! What a precious revenge for the many slights we maidens are subject to! And then, to have it said, “there goes the signora for whom signor



so and so hanged himself." Oh, how charming is this moonlight! Really, I am younger to-night than when I was but one year past thirty. Hush!—ay, I warrant thou art in love;—I can tell by the turn of thy voice. Senor Antonio quavered just as thou dost;—but—he was fickle, and quavered so far he could not get back again. I never saw him again after his second sky alto!—Hark!

## SONG.

Fair as the moonbeam,  
Bright as the running stream,  
Sparkling, yet cold.  
In Love's tiny fingers  
A shaft yet there lingers,  
And he creeps near thy bosom and smiles, lady.  
Soon his soft wings will cherish  
A flame round thine heart,  
And, ere it may perish,  
Thy peace shall depart.  
O listen, listen, lady gay,  
Love doth not always sue;  
The brightest flame will oft decay,  
The fondest lover rue, lady!

LAURA.

I cannot resist,

*[She waves her hand over the Terrace. A letter is thrown—she takes it to the lamp, and reads—*

“Say, fairest, canst thou love? or doth cold scorn  
“compose the sum of thy affections? Can thine eyes  
“enkindle so suddenly another’s heart, and yet shed no  
“warmth on thine own? Give me but one smile, and  
“thou shalt frown upon me for ever: so shall that  
“cheering beam outlive a thousand dark winters. I am  
“grown bold, for I have but a simple tale, and if thou  
“wilt lend an ear to my suit, on the Terrace, to-morrow  
“night at this hour, my presence will not offend thee  
“again unless thou judgest in my favour.

“CARLOS.”

So, so,—rather a bold gallant I trow, seeing it is the first  
he hath asked of my company; but I guess it is the  
fashion of these perilous days. Peradventure, if I had  
not been beforetime so careful of my favours, I had been  
woo’d and wedded with the best of ’em. After all, I  
see no great harm in the company of a handsome young  
spark, save that the uncourtèd dames are envious withal!



but verily they would change their minds mayhap as I do, though every one doth not judge so charitably as the person who hath chanced to ride on the other side of his opinion. I scolded the maids though but yesterday for a night frolic with their sweethearts, and bravely will Hermione laugh at my sermon, with the practice thereto appended. Well, I care not—"let those laugh that get the magpie's nest."—When I am married, 'grin who dare;—Carlos, I meet thee! [Exit.

## ACT II.—SCENE I.

*The Duke's Chamber.*

*Enter DUKE.*

DUKE.

A strange conceit:—where dwellest thou,  
And on what nurtured?—Love on air-fed dreams  
Yet lives not: if in the heart nor hope there be,  
Nor thought, nor token'd glimpse on which to cling  
For daily sustenance, the recreant dies.—

Repliest thou?—What, nought my monitor?—  
Nay, thou didst rise unbidden on my path,  
With threatening front, and sternly stalked thee forth  
From out thy covert, sent, forsooth, as though  
To warn of menaced danger. Back to thy den!  
Dream there of mischief and invent new terrors;  
I yet can jest, laugh with the laughing dames,  
Sport in their transient blaze, unharm'd, uncensured,  
And ever to thy fond embrace return,  
Beatrice, thence more wedded to thine heart!  
In quiet cease thine oft foreboding ill,  
Nor with unreal fears haunt my repose,  
Lest when thou shouldst arouse, erewhile to rush  
Betwixt me and my purpose, thine alarms  
I heed not, if so oft thy drivelling fancies  
Arise to fool me!—

*Enter an ATTENDANT.*

ATTENDANT.

My Lord, the Lady Hermione visits you to-day.

DUKE.

My pages—are they summoned?

ATTENDANT.

Fabian waits below, in the great hall, just equipped for  
the chase.



DUKE.

Let him attend.

[Exit ATTENDANT.]

The tongue of that gay damsel in mine ear  
Yet rings. I like her wit well, she doth sport  
These humours nobly. Words from her charmed lips  
Do gather sweetness, and the sharpest taunt  
Falls from her harmless, veil'd i' the soft tones  
Of her most delicate voice. And yet her presence  
I would not seek; a lurking mystery  
Hangs, or my thought deceives me, fathomless,  
Inscrutable, and dazzling as the veil  
That quells th' intruder's gaze. I watch'd her eye  
In secret yesternight, amid the feast;  
The soul that sate there laugh'd not, but her face  
With radiant smiles was sprinkled, dimpling o'er  
Like the soft waves on summer seas, with such  
Smooth, gentle undulation. Yet her eye  
Ne'er rose nor fell, but fix'd as some stern rock  
Amid that smiling wave. I like not this—  
There's witchery in that glance.

*Enter FABIAN.*

Bring here my tablets, boy:—how goes the news?

FABIAN.

Your grace, perchance, hath heard two gentle strangers  
The abode inquiring of Hermione.  
Beneath Ridolfi's terrace, yesternight,  
Unto her ear they gave, with pipe and lute,  
Sweet signal of their presence.

DUKE.

Where?—the terrace!—

I'll have them seiz'd. Ho!—guards!

*Enter Guard.*

FABIAN.

Oh, stay!—why thus, my lord!—

The men purpose no mischief, hither bent  
On some love errand; they in this can plot  
None other hurt.

DUKE.

Love! sayest thou?—Whom seek they?—

FABIAN.

Hermione, my lord, and she——

DUKE.

Admits their coming?—Seize them, guards!—  
Why this delay?



GUARD.

My lord, we know not where  
Your message hath its reference.

DUKE.

Where lurk the caitiff, boy?

FABIAN.

Alas! alas! some frenzy masters you:  
One moment wait, one precious moment, ere  
Upon the spotless robe of your fair justice  
Fall this abhorred stain. Pause, I beseech you,

[*The DUKE motions the Guards to withdraw.*

'Tis for yourself I plead! [Kneels.

DUKE.

Up, boy!—what ails thee? Knowest thou, Fabian,  
Of these intruders?—Speak!

FABIAN.

I know them not.

DUKE.

Then why such ready zeal in their good service?

FABIAN.

My lord, the zeal I now profess  
Seeks but your own. To strangers, courtesy,—  
And faith reciprocal, demands protection.  
This need I tell to Andrea!  
Whose name with purest honour coupled, grew

Into its likeness, till the very words  
Had but one sense. Need I to Andrea  
Interpret honour's laws? its high-born chivalry,  
In whose once noble breast her temple rose  
Unsullied, unapproach'd by aught of earth,  
To which defilement clung. Think but on this—  
One moment on the past now gaze—'tis bright!  
Oh let not one dark cloud, gathering but yet  
Upon the whirlwind of this turbulent passion,  
Obscure yon sunny glade, where stilly winds  
'Mid verdant hills, calm waters, glittering plains,  
The beamy path of an unclouded life,—  
At one fell sweep, let not this merciless blast  
O'erwhelm its wonted pride!

*Enter DUCHESS.*

BEATRICE

Your presence, Andrea, I crave  
To greet our visitors.

DUKE.

Not now, Beatrice,—  
I cannot come. Where sayest thou?—

BEATRICE.

My lord! you are disturb'd!



What!—Fabian, and in tears!—Why this reproof?  
The boy is gentle, and ill brooks harsh words;  
You were not wont to chide him thus!

DUKE.

'Tis Fabian, I ween, his master chiding.  
'Twas thus:—Two prying and suspicious elves  
I mark'd, to punish. Issuing forth command  
For their arrest, this silly, wayward boy,  
With words and tears, hath temper'd mine intent  
To his entreaty. True, I might but gain  
Small honour by their seizure, hence I've given  
The stripling his desire; yet mark me, Fabian,—  
I watch them closely.——

*Enter HERMIONE and LAURA.*

My soul seems pain'd at her approach. [Aside.  
My gentle cousins, hail! None other name  
Wherewith I greet you sounds so consonant,  
So kin to mine affection. How hath fared  
Each friend in Mantua? Laura, yet as fresh  
As when my childhood knew thee, and thine hand  
Supplied a mother's fondness. Look not grave,  
Thou art not half so old as thou art aged.

In mine esteem.—Hermione, to you

I publish greeting.

HERMIONE.

Our beloved cousin,—

The form I trow your greeting takes.

DUKE.

Sweet coz!

No form I use, I greet thee well, and crave

Thy long abode in Mantua. Ladies' eyes

Have most miraculous virtue; they can draw

The moon from his orbit, and the little stars

To watch their tender sighs at the soft wail

Breath'd from a timorous lute. You love the moonlight?

Why do ye start?—'tis not the first fair dame

That in our city listen'd i' the cool

And passionless night, to piped sighs, and vows

Enamour'd, breathed from reed and flageolet!

HERMIONE.

Mean you the serenade? 'Twas meant, my lord,

For other ears than mine.

DUKE.

How? For the maid's, belike! Sweet, innocent fool,

Love e'er was held a story-telling urchin;

Pr'ythee forswear such idle company.



But whence upon that cheek such tell-tale hues,  
Wrought suddenly in their bright texture?—whence  
That strange confusion? Love's unquenched flame  
Defies control.

HERMIONE.

I do confess,—one night,  
To while a feverish hour,—I had walk'd forth,—  
I sought the garden-terrace. True, surprise  
A moment cross'd me, when your ear I found  
Such marvellous tidings heard!

DUKE.

Well, to the maids  
'Tis like we are beholden for this minstrelsy.  
Nought living now in that good house would tempt  
Our gallants from their beds.

LAURA.

And why, your grace?  
If older ears enjoy such ravishment,  
I'm not so old, beshrew me, potent Duke,  
But I can wake at true-love's bidding!

DUKE.

Well said,  
My maiden-queen! The fire of Zampria's house

Yet quenches not, nor through thy cooler veins  
Flows in its current.

HERMIONE.

Yesternight

She sought my chamber. I had left the terrace  
Ere the unyielding maid answer'd her call;  
She came all radiant with love's virgin fire,  
She trod on air, and her quick-throbbing bosom  
All o'er the god confess'd. What says our cousin?

LAURA.

No need that maiden's blush reveal her secret,  
If such rude, giddy, and discretionless tongues  
Are left abroad.

HERMIONE.

Nay, Laura, thou hast lived

But in that snowy page, so prettily crimp'd,  
O'er which, thou sayest, love whilom hath brush'd  
His tiny wings, and deftly to thine heart  
From thence hath sprung. Ah! gentle maid! in mercy  
Vouchsafe to me one touch,—one thrilling touch  
Of that same love-wrought billet,—haply, thence  
The god may come: I'll make the urchin room;  
Or some stray rubbish, hoarded, yet to me  
As worthless, I'll remove.



LAURA.

So fair a jewel,  
To thy rude hand I yield not.

DUKE.

Excellent maid!

Thy jewel I had thought would hence have pass'd,  
A legacy to earth. I'd give my cap  
To view this comely gallant.—So, to thee,  
Hermione, hath love ne'er yet approach'd,—  
Or, if perchance he came, 'twas clad in guise  
Of other import. If on thy chill bosom,  
Smiling, he yet should nestle, archly pouting  
His pretty lip for entrance, wouldst thou grant  
The wanderer room?

HERMIONE.

I know not:—now, mayhap,  
'Tis not much worth his lodging.

DUKE.

Then its chambers  
Are still defil'd with many visitors.  
Or, it may chance, some envious power usurps  
His lawful birthright. Rid thee of such guest,—  
To thy liege lord submit, and pardon crave  
For past offences.

HERMIONE.

Where shall I begin  
My maiden suit?

DUKE.

Lay but that garb aside,  
That glittering panoply, its surface, bright,  
Yet harder than the thrice-quench'd steel,  
No bolt can pierce; and I do promise thee  
A hundred shafts from some well-furnish'd quiver.

HERMIONE.

But if those shafts are pointless and unfledg'd,  
A hundred more would boot not!  
Of what avail, though twice ten thousand fell  
Unspeeding at my feet!

DUKE.

Thy fickle fancy,  
Yet unfetter'd, will not always thus,  
Gay as the light breeze, rove where'er she list,  
Nor heeding ought she passes. She will droop,  
And, sighing, linger o'er some cherish'd form,  
Enamour'd while she worships.

HERMIONE.

Mine roves not!  
One form I cherish! None I wot beside  
Comes forth at fancy's call. 'Tis not mine own!



DUKE.

Thou speakest riddles.

HERMIONE.

And must ever thus.

Whate'er on this dark theme I could reveal  
Were mystery still, trackless, inscrutable,  
The subtle web in which my fate is bound  
Time serves not to unravel: all beside  
Basks in the broad moonlight. All hopes, desires,  
Each changing hue, as cloud or sunshine sweeps  
Their varied surface, pass without concealment  
Before the eye of watchful day.—

BEATRICE.

And every maid hath some fond secret,  
Some stored love, that she unwilling keeps  
Until claim'd thence for its blest owner. Why  
That face of solemn mystery brought forth,  
As if thine own were some peculiar fate  
None ever knew?

HERMIONE.

Our light burden galls  
More than the heaviest load our neighbours bear.  
But we return. The day unwitting slides  
Adown the cope of yon bright heaven. Few hours

Yet come till eve, and Laura looks impatient.  
 And wherefore thus, bright cousin?—no sly meeting,  
 No time-drawn assignation? Well I know  
 The disrespect thou bearest them, or now  
 My thoughts would judge thee!

DUKE.

Guard well your giddy charge,  
 Most vigilant dame, most excellent duenna,  
 Lest some gay treacherous gallant should beguile  
 Her tender years. Farewell.

LAURA.

I thank your duteous care. Farewell.

[*Exit* HERMIONE and LAURA, followed by  
 the DUCHESS.

DUKE.

A strange wrought mixture thou  
 Of our mortality; mingled, perchance,  
 By nature in some freakish mood, when tired  
 Of that same endless reproduction, man,—  
 Still to his fellow mortal answering,  
 As, in a mirror, face to face.

FABIAN.

Go you, my lord, to-day, upon the Prado?

E



DUKE.

To-day?—yes, boy. But I would change this habit,  
And mix unknown with that gay crowd. 'Tis well—  
Hermione, or strange my thoughts misgave me,  
Now seeks the walk. I'll watch; this paramour  
Or hers or Laura's I may chance discover.

[*Exeunt separately.*]

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SCENE II.

*A Street.*

*Enter CARLOS and BERTRAND.*

BERTRAND.

Thou speedest well, thanks to my shrewd invention.  
Yon babbling rogue, Stephano, gave me note  
Of her night walk upon the terrace, where  
I bribed the keeper to admit ye.

CARLOS.

Thanks,  
Thrice worthy friend. But I do fear mine errand;

Some secret terror burdens mine intent,  
And heavily droops the wing of my firm purpose.  
Dull hope's uncertain beam, foreboding, quivers,  
While the rude blast, low howling in mine ear  
The roar of muttering tempests, sweeps it by,  
And, in that flickering glare, pale spectres glide,  
A mournful train,—sullen despair, pale woe,  
And grisly terror, dwell in their pale looks.  
Would this dread night were o'er!

BERTRAND.

Some rancorous fiend

Possesses thee. Some stroke of sudden madness  
To thy weak brain hath sped, reversed thy thoughts,  
Turn'd each unto its contrary,—what once  
Waked smiling hope, now brings despair,—love, hate!—  
Joy, measureless sorrow!—Rouse thee! Once thou wert  
Of different mood, and, ere thy clouded sun  
Sinks to his gloomy bed, again his glance  
Shall be unveil'd. I'll be thy prophet! Haste  
From this inglorious sleep! As he of old,  
Thy fetters from thee shake, in terrible night  
Uprising, when awaked from the soft lap  
Of indolent love. Thou lovest but too well,  
Nor mayest thou speed, until she find thee oft,



With careless port, braving her frown. Wayward,  
The maiden scorns true lover's tenderest sigh,  
And inward pines for some ungracious churl,  
Who slights such light-won favours. 'Tis the good  
We might possess we loath and sicken at,  
For that beyond our reach, we moan and fret,  
As if our very soul were thither urged,  
And life itself but hung on its frail tenure.  
We'll seek the public walk : (woman e'er follows  
The giddy crowd, as doth your swift-winged hornet  
Hunt forth its prey) : it will beguile the hours,  
Till night, with drowsy tongue, calls thee to love  
And to Hermione !

[*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE III.

*A Chamber.**Enter LAURA.*

LAURA.

How this little tyrant rules it over me! Again—  
[*Takes a letter from her bosom.*—I can repeat the words  
backwards, tell every turn of a letter, count the dots,  
blurs, and crossings; but—[*In attempting to replace the  
billet, it drops on the floor, unperceived.*—I think the  
sun creeps backward, and then returns, out of sheer spite  
and maliciousness. I must not be on the terrace too  
soon: I'll have him wait now; it looks more as if it were  
as if I had other business by the nose than dancing to  
the pipe of a gay gallant. Three full hours yet. Alack,  
alack! I can neither scold the maids, darn the Venice  
lace, sort my brother's hose, nor even turn up the plait-  
ings of my own hair. I'll bethink me of the gown I  
must wear that shall best please my cavalier, and lay it  
down, to smooth out the folds. Oh, sweet heart! how



tender he looked on me at the Prado to-day. Yes,—the same,—I gave him an encouraging glance betimes, lest the youth should wax timorous and melancholy. I hope we may have a quiet night: the sky looks somewhat wild and turbid. *[Exit.*

*Enter HERMIONE.*

HERMIONE.

How fierce the sun gazes from below that bank of clouds he has just quitted, as if he threatened us at his going with some terrible disaster. His beam wraps the city, as with a mantle of fire bespangled with stars,—here and there a glittering cross studding its purple vestment: one by one they are quenched, and the glowing mantle itself fades. A dark dun haze rests upon the city, and in the west a fiery streak alone tells of the past. I fear me the night forebodes a storm.—Carlos, I find, follows me to Mantua. How the moody wretch and his companion dogged us at the Prado to-day: I doubled more than a hare at its last shifts, to keep out of their ken. I had hoped he would have forgotten me ere this; but you may not cram wisdom even down a mallard's throat.—

*Enter SYLVIO.*

Whose message bring you here?

SYLVIO.

My Lord Duke sends greeting.

HERMIONE.

Thanks, boy, for his intent. I lack not pleasant compliments.

SYLVIO.

He hopes, lady, the air of our public walk suits well your delicate health, and that your spirits droop not in this gay city.

HERMIONE.

Tell my Lord Duke, when he next goes with the crowd, to veil the dark fringe of his eye, and to fashion the bend of his nose afresh; or the fire of his eye, and his lordly beak, will betray to every idle flutterer the presence of the proud Duke of Mantua. Good b'ye, Sylvio.

*[Exit.]*

SYLVIO.

I cannot read this haughty damsel. Ah! what have we here?—*[Picks up the paper Laura has just dropped.]*  
—Something, I trow, more legible than maiden's breast.

*[Reads.]*



"Say, fairest, canst thou love,"—I warrant thee—"or does cold scorn compose the sum of thine affections"—

"Grown bold"—"If thou wilt lend thine ear to my suit on the terrace to-morrow night at this hour"—A bold suitor, truly—"I will not offend thee again unless thou judgest in my favour."

"CARLOS."

Good b'ye, lady.—[*Mimicks her.*]—The Duke shall enjoy this tender morsel. Tell my Lady Hermione, when she next gives a private meeting to her gallant, to keep her billet safe, to veil the fringe of her bodice, and raise the beak of her stomacher, else their shallow covering will betray to every idle flutterer the secrets of the haughtiest beauty in Christendom. [Exit.]



## SCENE IV.

*The Terrace. The night dark and tempestuous, with distant thunder.*

*Enter CARLOS.*

CARLOS.

The night broods heavily, as though  
Gaunt mischief were abroad, and its dun cloak  
Would hide some horror, the yet timid eye  
Shrinks to behold. An hour—a minuted age,  
Ere the appointed moment can break in  
Upon its tedious march. Hark! footsteps.  
I must conceal——this friendly——Ah, Hermione!  
Thus anxious for the meeting?

*[Steps behind a pillar.]*

*Enter HERMIONE, with a light; she sets it down at the entrance,  
and walks across the Terrace.*

HERMIONE.

Roll on, thou terrible storm,—



On thy dark brow, the lightnings, as they play,  
Reveal thy rapid march!—

Spirit of air, that on the untamed winds  
Dost walk, or, on the rushing elements  
Upborne, thy chariot cleaves the groaning sky,—  
Whether to me thou speakest with rude voice  
Of unstill'd tempest, or in whispering breath  
From morn's flower-fragrant breeze,—I hail thy presence.  
Bear in thine hand hot thunder-bolts,  
The whirlwind on thy wing, the cloud-swoln cataract  
Burst on the reeking earth,—dauntless I'll make  
Terror my pastime, sport in their turmoil,  
And with the storm-careering demon's shriek  
My bitter laugh shall mingle. These are but  
The harmless play of innocent childhood,—  
So fierce the storm that desolates my soul!

[CARLOS comes from behind the pillar, and hesitatingly approaches.]

Soft—Who approaches?—How!—Don Carlos!  
Whence this intrusion?—Speak not, but begone!  
I hear thee not. Touch but my garment,  
Shuddering, I'll shake thee off, as some vile reptile  
My senses loathe. Hence, ere I spurn thee!

*Enter the DUKE hastily, his sword drawn.*

DUKE.

Draw, villain!—guard thine hated carcass!  
Unsheathe, bewildered fool, lest I should spike thee  
On this good weapon!

*[They engage.]*

HERMIONE.

Help!—How fierce they fight!—Lights!  
Ho!—within!—

*[CARLOS falls.]*

CARLOS.

Oh, I'm wounded!—

There, may thy paramour complete thy work,  
Unblushing traitress!—Home to my heart—  
Strike deep! thou canst not give so keen a thrust  
As her rude tongue!—Haste, ere thy weapon cool;—  
Yet, ere I die, Hermione—I loved thee once,  
Now—from my heart I proudly tear thine image,  
Blotting it out for ever, as the memory  
Of some loathed wanton!—Hence!—haunt not my sight,  
Fell murderess!—Now unbar my prison, death!—



DUKE.

Nay,—I'll not haste thee to thy last acquittance,  
Ill-fated wretch!—I do repent mine haste.

*Enter BERTRAND.*

BERTRAND.

Foul deeds betray ye, sirs!—Carlos!  
Wounded!—Unhand him, villain!—'tis to thee  
He owes this bitter thrust. If thou art aught  
But what I deem thee, by the earliest dawn  
Again we meet. The outskirts of yon wood,  
Nigh to the city, with thy weapon; there  
Uphold thee for this most unjust assault.  
An innocent man, if yet protection be  
Upon the stranger in proud Mantua,  
I bear to his abode; but on thy head  
His blood doth rest, a dastard's recreant crow  
Down drawing Heaven's hot vengeance!

*Enter RIDOLFI, LAURA, and Attendants, with lights.*

LAURA.

Oh! they have slain him! Help! Who dealt this blow?  
Sweetheart, for love thou diest, and for love,

Malicious fate ! thy maiden too must die.

[BERTRAND *bears off* CARLOS.

Yet stay, Carlos ! I follow thee.

RIDOLFI.

Nay, maid, content thee ;

Thou followest not this stranger.

LAURA.

Oh, he was mine !

But they have ta'en him.

RIDOLFI.

Thine ! Some demon sure

Makes ye his sport. My lord—the Duke—I dream—

This night, methinks, the storm doth send confusion

To men's calm thoughts, o'er-master'd with its frenzy.

On they would rush, malign, to the fulfilment

Of some sure, unscaped doom.

HERMIONE.

I know not whence

These changes come,—inexplicable, dark

As lies my fate,—th' abyss to which I hasten !

My lord, can you unriddle these events,

Your presence would denote, at least to me,

Some knowledge of their bearing.



DUKE.

A pleasant jest, from me to ask the key!  
It hangs i' thy bosom, lady. Friends, farewell!  
I hasten hence ere this un pitying tempest  
Its fiercest burst, its gathering deluge pour  
Cataracts of forked fire, commingled torrents,  
From the wide womb of the vexed elements.

HERMIONE.

Farewell, my lord! some other time we meet.

DUKE.

Farewell, my friends! another hour must tell  
My purpose here this night.

[*Exeunt.*]

## ACT III.—SCENE I.

*A Chamber in the Palace.*

*The DUKE at a table, surveying his sword.*

DUKE.

Mischievous weapon!

I would forswear thy company; but now

We cannot part. Blameless,—inanimate,—  
The heart alone makes thee its passive tool  
To work the several ills its thought conceives!  
What art thou, senseless steel? cold, motionless,  
Incapable of ought, or fraud or injury,—  
No dire intent there broods, no passionate flame,  
Mix'd with thy temper, flashes o'er the obscure;  
The restless gulf within, troubling the spirit,  
A fitful gleam, on the dark surges wreathing,  
Forms of unutterable horror,—wide  
Disclosing from the womb—the fathomless womb  
Of that abyss!—Would the events,  
The brief record of time, the narrow space  
By yesternight enclosed, were blotted out,  
Effaced for ever. I must meet thee, stranger,—  
Thou may'st avenge thy friend.—Hermione!—  
Why should I start?—a sound—a bursting bubble  
Moves me. Hermione!—Again!—This heart  
Not so hath leapt in the loud roar of battle!  
'Tis folly—madness,—yet she marks me out—  
Gazes so strangely,—'twere an idle thought,  
But from her soul, methinks, such pulses come  
Of wild, unworded passion, as they'd mingle,  
Perforce, with every faculty, desire,



And through each avenue rush, thralling the will  
Unto its influence. Those basilisk eyes  
Are on me ever ! Asleep, awake, they change not.  
'Tis fascination ; If such spell there be,  
Hermione doth use it ! Yet enchains she not  
Others unto the like. I've watch'd her thus,  
How angrily, as the quick lightning sped,  
The night uncovering from her form, I saw  
Her eagle-glance the timorous love-sick wretch  
Strike helpless at her feet. It is not love,—  
A spell earth owns not hangs upon my heart !—  
I love Beatrice ; yet more tenderly  
Unto her bosom mine affections cling,  
The more this parasite, this foul excrescence  
Preys on my vitals, wastes mine healthful spirit,  
Poisoning life's current even at its source.  
I'll shake me from these toils : I knew not when  
The cunning net was thrown, so light the texture ;  
And warily I wot the snare was laid,  
Or I had 'scaped it.

This unwelcome dawn

Comes dimly on the casement ;—heavily  
The day's dull beam seems labouring up the sky,—  
Low hang the clouds, huge relics of the storm,  
Like dark reflections brooding o'er the mind

When passion's rudest burst hath pass'd, and reason,  
As yon pale gleam, thus struggling forth its way  
Through adverse clouds, visits again the soul—  
'Tis then the mind, shuddering, at once recoils  
From the dire consequence, and conjures up  
A thousand possibilities to scare  
The resolute purpose. I linger at the threshold  
Of this proceeding. I will not fight thee, stranger;  
I've wrong'd thy friend. His death, yet unappeased,  
Clings to my burden'd spirit: I'll atone  
If yet there be of reparation aught  
This hand can give. Sylvio!

*Enter SYLVIO.*

Attend me with the weapons.

*[Exeunt.]*



## SCENE II.

*An unfrequented Place, on the Outskirts of a Wood,  
without the Walls.*

*Enter BERTRAND and two Attendants.*

BERTRAND.

How goes the morn?

FIRST ATTENDANT.

When past the rock,  
Methought the convent bell chimed there for matins.  
Heard you it, signor?

BERTRAND.

I know not. Is the hour yet gone?

FIRST ATTENDANT.

What hour?

BERTRAND.

Does the day dawn?

SECOND ATTENDANT.

Ay; but night-lurking clouds  
Shut out the approaching light. One short, wan streak,  
As if i' the branches of yon distant oak,  
Alone brings niggard tidings.

BERTRAND,

Hark!—footsteps.

FIRST ATTENDANT,

It is the tread

Of some roused deer : upon the rustling leaves  
Man's bolder foot falls not so lightly.

BERTRAND,

The day its custom'd hour forgets,  
And lingers in its chamber, loth to rise,  
With unveil'd face, on the wide ruin  
Of this hush'd tempest.

FIRST ATTENDANT,

Look towards the east!

The light breaks rapidly athwart its face.  
You look not, signor. Hear you the——

*Enter DUKE, disguised.*

BERTRAND,

Welcome, if thou art he—the foe I meet.

DUKE,

The same ; but not thy foe.

BERTRAND,

That hated voice!



Revenge it cries. Prepare! no more delay!  
Draw, dastard! or thy recreant blood I'll pour  
Unfought for to this earth.

[BERTRAND makes the attack, the DUKE  
keeping on the defensive.

BERTRAND.

Thou wardest but my blows: fight, villain!

[The DUKE makes a parry, and immediately  
disarms BERTRAND.

I seek not mercy. None would I have given  
If I had seen thee thus.

DUKE.

Take back thy sword. How fares thy friend?

BERTRAND.

If he recover, hate to thee, unceasing,  
And to Hermione, he vows for ever!

DUKE.

Does he recover?

BERTRAND.

Wherefore askest thou?

DUKE.

Nay, chafe me not:—passion but slowly sinks  
If still the wind buffet the boiling wave!

BERTRAND.

Thou threatenest well. I can defy thy wrath.  
Another stroke might change the haughty hue  
Of thy proud boast.

FIRST ATTENDANT.

Nay, be at peace—again  
Ye may not quarrel. Soft, good signor, sheath  
Your perilous weapon. 'Tis not just we wait  
Another issue with decided strife.

DUKE.

Farewell!

I would depart while better reason yet  
Keeps stedfast watch.

*[Exit.]*

BERTRAND.

Cool-hearted wretch!

Thy passion kept not pace with thine occasion,  
Else had it minister'd to other issues.  
Anger disarm'd me—not thine arm, assassin.

FIRST ATTENDANT.

Yet hath he braved it nobly, and, methinks,  
A better name hath earn'd in thy report.

SECOND ATTENDANT.

Knowest thou thy foe?



BERTRAND.

What need ? His name I wot not.

SECOND ATTENDANT.

The Duke !

BERTRAND.

The Duke ?—of Mantua !

SECOND ATTENDANT.

'Tis he !

A nobler heart beneath a truer breast  
 Ne'er beat. I watch'd his bearing as he gave  
 The weapon back to thy reluctant grasp :  
 'Twas just the air, the lofty temper'd port,  
 I've seen him use, when, with proud condescension,  
 Gracious—yet bating nought his dignity,—  
 He deals such pardon to the trembling culprit  
 As makes the offence yet doubly heinous.

BERTRAND.

I ask'd of him no favour—where the crime ?  
 'Twas unprovoked ; he rush'd upon my friend,—  
 They fought,—he fell,—and I had hoped t' avenge  
 The sufferer's wrong. But whence ?—'tis wondrous  
 strange.

Hermione !—the Duke !—the proud Hermione  
 A prince's paramour ! It cannot be.

So fair, so noble, yet——There's mystery here:

I must unravel this perplexed web,

Or perish in its toils!

[*Exeunt.*]

---

SCENE III.

*A Balcony, overlooking the Garden.*

HERMIONE and BLANCH.

HERMIONE.

I am sad, Blanch.

BLANCH.

I would, lady, you were in your little toilet-chamber at Venice. You were not sad there once. Why stay you in this unlucky house? I do conceive, that I shall have no more heart soon than hath your goose-quill, nor life within me than a dried puff-ball. When go you to Venice, lady?

HERMIONE.

Never!



BLANCH.

Oh, sweet mistress; and must we die in this dismal city? My very countenance hath changed its fashion, forsooth; being smoke-dried and tarnished, like your two years' hung stock-fish. I do fear me that I shall pine with home-longings: and the sight of yon garlick-faced knave, Stephano, for ever at my heels, turns me sick when he gets within stride of me. But you jest, lady.

HERMIONE.

Blanch, thou hast been kinder to me than my fate hath answered for; and I give thee good counsel when I tell thee to return to Venice. Stay not with me; for soon the high, the proud-spirited Hermione will—I shall soon lay me in the quiet grave—and thou wilt grieve to see me sink—so young—so *early* to my doom. I look fresh, mayhap, and blooming, and they call me happy; but I am withered—here!

BLANCH.

Oh, lady, you will break my heart! (*Weeps.*) I will not go! If they bear you to the grave, I will follow you there to weep, and to quiet myself beside you.

HERMIONE.

Thou art kind, Blanch. I would thou hadst a happier mistress, thou wouldest, peradventure, be happy too.

BLANCH.

What frets you so keenly? I would compass sea and land to fetch you a morsel of comfort. Do tell me, lady. They say sorrow hath companionship, and loves its like.

HERMIONE.

Ask it not, girl: I would not tell it to the winds, lest they should babble it again; I would not whisper it to mine own heart, lest each pulse should echo it back to mine ear; I dare not think on't, lest my very thoughts should create a corporal voice to utter it withal. Other sorrows have companionship, but mine hath none!

*Enter Servant.*

SERVANT.

The strange gipsy woman your ladyship gave an alms to yesterday waits without, asking to see you. I would have put her away, but she looked on me, and I shuddered as I approached her.

HERMIONE.

Bid her come in.

BLANCH.

How it would delight me to have my fortune cast; but—my fate answers to your own!



*Enter ZORAYDA.*

HERMIONE.

Why this silence?—Thy message.

ZORAYDA.

Askest thou?—Thanks!—What marvel? they speak not  
With unembodied tongue!

HERMIONE.

Thou comest, then,  
But on a thankless errand; I dispense  
With empty words.

ZORAYDA.

Why then I go unaudienccd.  
I would not vex thee, lady;—thou art strung  
By unseen anguish, e'en to the topmost pitch  
Thy nature bears. One other strain, it breaks!

HERMIONE.

What knowest thou?

ZORAYDA.

That other comes!

HERMIONE.

Too soon,

I wot, these heart-strings break not. How, beldame?

Thy prying eyes gather some secret. Hence  
With the silly maids thou tamperest, and anon  
The mistress' ear greets her own confidence;  
But not on me impose thy mummeries:  
None other breast than mine yet holds its trust.

ZORAYDA.

What proof requirest thou, ere faith admit  
My proffer'd testimony?

HERMIONE.

Proof!

What thou, weak fool—the crazed and worn out play-  
thing  
Of thy too credulous fancies—cannot give.  
Reveal my thoughts!

ZORAYDA.

But if disclosed, there now  
Be other ears to listen, lady.

HERMIONE.

Blanch,

Awhile thou may'st withdraw.

BLANCH.

How fierce her eye scowls! I marvel that her brows  
should escape a singeing.—I would not leave you, gentle  
mistress, until——



ZORAYDA.

Begone!—— [HERMIONE *smiles, and motions* BLANCH  
*to depart.* Exit BLANCH.

HERMIONE.

Now to thy task.

ZORAYDA.

What bearest thou, with such o'er-vigilant watch,  
In that fair bosom?

HERMIONE.

Marry, my heart; what more?

ZORAYDA.

'Tis then but late return'd: the truant once  
Had left its home—what served thee in its place,  
Knowest thou yet, gentle dame?

HERMIONE.

I note thy craft:

Thou busiest me with questions, hoping thus  
To catch unheeded words for thine advantage—  
I answer nothing.

ZORAYDA.

None I crave, fair maiden.

An empty billet is but poor exchange  
For the heart's losing!

HERMIONE.

How—a billet! Where?

ZORAYDA.

In that bright bosom, lady. Search it well—  
And yet a thing of nought; 'tis but a form,  
An every-day express of custom'd greeting,  
But as a precious relic thou dost wear it;  
And 'tis to thee a coveted possession  
Of more esteem than the sun-ripen'd gems  
Golconda bears!

HERMIONE.

Is this my unveil'd thought?

Not thus I'm fool'd. Perchance thy cunning eye,  
For ever on the watch, hath spied this billet.  
'Tis here. What more knowest thou?

ZORAYDA.

Reserve thy scorn,

'T will soon give place—Hark! [*Distant music.*]

Ah! start not thus.—Why that frail shudder?

Yon guest within the chamber of thine ear  
Ere this hath had sweet audience. But come,

My pretty spirit, hither speed, and frame  
Thine uncorporeal organ to the sound



Of bodily voice.—[*Music approaches.*]—Hark, lady!—  
ever knew

Your car aforetime yon wild melody?

SONG.

Lady, list to me,

Thy gentle spirit I'll be;

The fire is my garment, the flood is my bed,

And I paint the first cloud with the sunbeam red

That rolls o'er the broad blue sea.

Lady, list to me;

To the mountain top I flee,

There I watch the first wave that comes laden with light,

And its soft hue I spread o'er each billow so bright;

With its beam I enkindle each heaven-peering height,

And the morn's radiant canopy.

HERMIONE.

Mysterious being, say from whence that voice!

But once—and on such feverish perception,

The sound did strike, I thought some air-form'd vision,

Some fantasy, hot from the teeming brain,

Imposed unreal conceptions on mine ear,

To which sense held no cognizance. Say where,  
Thou awful visitor!

ZORAYDA.

'Twas on the terrace, when the charmed moon  
Hung o'er the trembling stream. And thinkest thou  
Spirits have not such utterance?—Oft unseen,  
Upon the viewless air, strange visions float,  
And voices people the unfetter'd blast,  
Vouchsafed not save to those who reverence  
And bow to their high bidding. Now—they speak!

HERMIONE.

And to what import?

ZORAYDA.

Thus the mystic chant.

When the proud eagle  
Sighs to the dove,  
And his dark wing spreads o'er her  
While fluttering with love:

That eagle's bright crest,  
And that dove's timid eye,  
Are quench'd in the storm  
That rolls recklessly by!



That storm the proud eagle  
Hath swept from his nest ;  
But where is the dove  
Shelter'd once in his breast ?

She clings to his plume,  
But in death they shall sever ;  
The eagle and dove  
They have perish'd for ever !

HERMIONE.

The eagle ?—Mantua's crest !—But who the dove ?

ZORAYDA.

Tempt not yet further to thine harm : we rue  
If thou break silence !

The spirit sings, but mine imperfect hearing  
Shapes not its voice to aught articulate  
That human utterance owns. Again—speak not—  
'Twas thus he sang :

A sprite in the moon-beam,  
A mote in the sun,  
I dive in the smooth stream,  
Through the curl'd flame I run.

I see o'er proud Mantua  
The beacon's red light;  
As the taper 'tis quench'd  
In the chill blast of night!

I see from the turret  
A maiden's dim form,  
And her white robe waves high  
On the wing of the storm!

I hear a loud shriek,  
With the wail of the dead;  
And that spirit from thence  
To its giver hath fled!

Some dire event breaks from the womb of time:  
To thee the spirit speaks. Hermione,  
If yet three days on this forbidden air  
Thou breathest, Mantua and her lord  
May dearly rue thy longer stay. 'Tis past,  
I heed not further question. Well I know  
The winds I counsel, and the turbulent flood  
To soothe its rage. On, if some power prevent not,  
Madly ye rush to your undoing; then,



Fair city, thy glad voice to woe shall turn;  
The loud lament, the chill and desolate wail  
Of thy bereavement shall ascend, piercing,  
Unpitied, the duff pall of heaven!

Follow me not——

Once more I meet thee:—if too soon, beware!

Thine hours are number'd.

[Exit.]

HERMIONE.

Three days!—Where shall I fly?—To what lone spot  
Can I escape? Has this wide earth no room?—  
Measureless woe!—too vast for mortal limit!—

Yon wild enthusiast, her impostor's craft

Hath here some secret consequence to which

These bodings tend—cheat! Nay, thou didst affix

Fearful credentials to thy testimony;

They wore th' impress of truth. None but that gaze

Which scans the soul may the unvisited depths

Of mind reveal, its untold subtilties

Unto the eye disclosing. But three days!

Yet once—one sad farewell!

[Exit.]



## SCENE IV.

*A Chamber in the Inn.**CARLOS on a couch, attended by GIULIO.*

CARLOS.

I thank thee, Giulio.

The couch feels easier from thine hand. 'Tis now  
But as a troublesome scratch, scarce worth the pains  
To work its cure. Another strain—thy lute  
Strange chords doth waken, long untuned, forgot,  
Slumbering untouch'd within my breast, the sound  
Breathes on them sweetly; at its marvellous bidding,  
Startled they wake, quivering once more to life.  
I love these ancient ballads, they do savour  
O' the olden time.

GIULIO.

Good signor, my poor music  
Suits not this garnish'd age:—a simple air  
That lives i' the heart, and floats o'er the still depths  
Of long lapsed recollections, freshening



Their stagnant surface with soft impulse—this,  
Brief skill!—'tis all I claim.

[*Touches the chords to a slight prelude.*]

They are but snatches of old songs, signor;  
Broken as fragments of th' imperishing columns  
Whitening some arid desert; but they are hallow'd  
By the same hand that spoil'd them!

CARLOS.

They are bonds  
That with the past yet link our purer thoughts,  
Our most unsullied affections. Still  
The voice of other years breathes through them,  
As the low breeze, while creeping timorously  
Around some ancient ruin, wailing there  
Sad echoes of departed greatness.

GIULIO *sings.*

There is a wood, there is a cot,  
There is a gentle river;  
There is a home where I am not,  
But where I would be ever.  
And adown the green valley the meadows were fair,  
And the breeze came to woo the young daffodils there.

There is a lip I have not press'd,  
 A heart yet coldly beating;  
 But true love's throb within that breast  
 Will wake at others greeting.  
 And adown through the valley the morn shone so fair,  
 When the breeze gently kiss'd the young bud blushing  
 there.

And thou wilt light thy taper cold  
 At some gay, treacherous eye;  
 Its flame shall still thy soul enfold  
 When lovers' glance shall die!  
 And adown the green valley, while morn shone so fair,  
 The breeze sigh'd, and left the young bud weeping there!

CARLOS.

Woman loves not her true lover,  
 A treacherous lewdster best o'ersteps her grace!—  
 Another, Giulio: I could live in them—  
 They feed the soul, as doth ambrosia  
 The mighty gods.

GIULIO *sings*.

Let me rest mine head, lady,  
 On thy bended knee:



Every pulse to thine beats true;  
I would 'twere so with thee.  
Sing heigho!  
Under the willow tree.

My cheek will not harm thee,  
Start not from thy rest——

CARLOS.

Cease!—I do remember me the ballad  
Thou gavest yesterday. Upon my brain  
So loud the music rings, this chaunt I hear not.—  
Prithee again thy strings touch to the carol.

GIULIO.

Yet by your preference I know it not.  
How name you the ballad?

CARLOS.

'Twas of the pilgrim, and his goodly benison.

GIULIO.

Thus? (*Plays*).

CARLOS.

The same.

GIULIO *sings*.

The chase was done, the feast was begun,  
When the monarch sate proudly high;  
And the revelry rode on the wind afar,  
As it swept from the darkening sky.

No lordly guest that feast had bless'd,  
No solemn prayer was said;  
But with ravenous hands, unthankfully,  
They brake their daily bread.

The chase was done, the feast was begun,  
When a palmer sate in that hall;  
But his pale dim eye from its rest ne'er rose  
To gaze on that festival!

The crackling blaze on his wan cheek plays,  
And athwart his gloomy brow;  
While his hands are spread to the rising flame,  
And his feet to the embers' glow;

For the blast came chill o'er the mist-cover'd hill,  
And the palmer's limbs were cold;  
And weary the way his feet had trod,  
Since the matin-bell had toll'd.



The monarch spake—' This morsel take,  
And yon pilgrim greet from me'——

*Enter BERTRAND.*

CARLOS.

Welcome. I grew oppress'd from thy long absence—  
But why that heavy, that disquieted brow?  
Some choler, scarce dismiss'd, hath moved thee!

BERTRAND.

The Duke——

CARLOS.

Didst thou complain to him  
Touching my wrong?

BERTRAND.

I did.

CARLOS.

Yet I have heard

This prince o'er all his peers hereto extoll'd,  
The mirror of true courtesy; embodying  
The proud and chivalrous spirit of his time.—  
How spake he?

BERTRAND.

Few his words;—but this good sword—

Bitter degradation!—Yon proud Duke, he gave—  
When from this recreant hand the traitor fell!  
He had disarm'd me, Carlos!

CARLOS.

Ho!—You fought?

BERTRAND.

Ay, with the Duke—thy mistress' paramour!

CARLOS.

The Duke!—*Her* paramour!—

'Tis fuel to my hate.

BERTRAND.

How fares thy wound?

CARLOS.

This?—where?—'tis well,—These garments I shake off,  
And put on my revenge—its panoply  
Shall case my bosom.—Henceforth unto all  
Compunction dead, and steel'd to every touch  
Of natural sympathy, mine o'ercharged hate,  
As the veil'd fire, pent in yon gathering cloud,  
Deep-brooding waits, in fearful silence crouching,  
Or ere it strike——'T was for this minion  
She spurn'd me!

BERTRAND.

Such my hate to Andrea.



Together and in secret we devise—

Yet not with such precipitate haste, our counsel,

As shall defeat its own resolve—some plan

To furnish our revenge.

[*Exeunt.*]

---

SCENE V.

*A Chamber in the Palace.*

*Enter the DUKE.*

DUKE.

Arouse thee!—fly—

Ere yet the fetters closer to thine heart

Are riveted—immoved for ever!

Thou counsell'st well—these are ignoble trammels,

And I do rid me of them. Once—'tis fix'd—

A short, sad hour we meet, and then farewell!

Duty, remorseless, bids me.—There I'll pour

Into her wondering ear a hapless tale

Of thwarted love—hearts broken, severed

By obdurate fate—and in that feign'd lament,

Bewail mine own.—I must my story tell;  
None other cause could I with honour urge  
Why thus we part—for ever!

*Enter FABIAN.*

FABIAN.

My lord, a woman of strange aspect,  
And habited in Eastern garb, sits now  
Within the western porch, waiting your presence.  
She would not tell to me her errand.

DUKE.

How—

A stranger, and from whence?—Knowest thou her name?

FABIAN.

She holds most resolute silence—I forbore  
To question her.

DUKE.

Describe this sullen guest.

FABIAN.

A turban girds her brow, white as the sea-foam,  
Whence, all untrammelled, her dark thin hair  
Streams fitfully upon her storm-beat front;  
Her eye at rest, pale fire in its black orb



Innocuous sleeps—but roused, Jove's thunder-cloud  
Enkindles not so fiercely! Once it shot  
Full on mine eye:—in dazzling terror yet  
It haunts my brain!

DUKE.

How eloquent the tongue  
When the soul stirs it!—I would see, unharm'd,  
This quicken'd volcano! [Exit FABIAN.

Some moon-struck wanderer  
Craving redress for her wrong'd fancies.

*Enter FABIAN followed by ZORAYDA; she stands in silence  
gazing at the DUKE.*

Woman, what seekest thou?—Doth silence best  
Declare thine errand?

ZORAYDA.

Silence best, my lord,  
Should tell thy destiny—Heaven hath commanded  
To speak no evil.

DUKE.

A rare conceit.—What more?—Is this thy message?  
Haste,—we command not back the passing time:—  
To thy request.

ZORAYDA.

Much need hast thou to note  
These priceless minutes;—let no fragment slip  
Ungathered.—Yet my boon thou wilt not grant!  
Seest thou yon shadow?—

*[She beckons him to the window.]*

DUKE.

Nought this ungifted eye beholds  
But the dark battlement upon the stream,  
Spread by the tranquil moon.

ZORAYDA.

Seest thou yon pennon  
Furl'd from the turret, floating on the verge  
Of that still, sedgy shore?—

DUKE.

Its shadow falls  
Where thou dost point;—but how may this befit  
With thy request?

ZORAYDA.

At thy far-echoing birth,  
When hoarse artillery told to Mantua,  
Thy wailing entrance to a troublous life,  
Yon trembling shadow fell, as now it meets,  
Just on the rippled bank,—uniting each—  
The calm wave and the shore.—



DUKE.

Thy meaning, stranger.

ZORAYDA.

Ere yet the bubbling life crept through thy veins,  
 'T was thus decreed : thine hour of danger comes,  
 And sudden death, when that dim shadow passes  
 Where at thy birth it brooded.—

DUKE.

(*Aside to EABIAN*). Watch this woman;  
 Suspicion wakes at her discourse.—(*To ZORAYDA*).—

That shadow  
 Hath oft-time pass'd, no danger thence betiding.

ZORADYA.

Thy death can happen not, save when, as now,  
 The pale moon flings yon omen from her beam;  
 But ever it bodes danger.

DUKE.

For this purpose  
 Enterest thou my chamber?

ZORAYDA.

I have sought thee  
 To give rejected counsel.—What! some treachery  
 From me thou fearest!—Bind me—gird my chains  
 To the unhewn rock beneath the unvisited depths.

Of these abhorr'd foundations—I would wear them  
 Without a murmur could'st thou listen!—Hark!  
 Thus runs the record of thy house:

*“ When the proud eagle  
 From his cloud-wreath'd nest  
 Enamour'd meets the dove,  
 And sighs on her soft bosom,  
 One shaft shall pierce them.”*

Duke, beware——that shaft shall come!  
 Let it not find thee in that perilous hour,  
 Prescience forebodes thee, at some lady's ear  
 Sighing unhallowed love.—Its malice then  
 Harms not thy breast, another bears the stroke!  
 Remember—once again I meet thee.

[*Exit ZORAYDA.*]

FABIAN.

My lord, the guard shall rid you of the witch.

DUKE.

Let her depart, she harms me not.

FABIAN.

You seem

O'erspent with watching, and forget your couch.—

Betake you now to your accustomed rest?



DUKE.

My rest?—'Tis well;—but will the couch give rest?

Ay, to the wearied limb—but not the weary breast!

Follow me, boy, unto my chamber. [Exeunt.

## ACT IV.—SCENE I.

*A Church.*

*Enter Two CITIZENS.*

FIRST CITIZEN.

Strange omens these!

SECOND CITIZEN.

They bode disaster, else

Hath Nature changed, and her accustom'd course

No longer holds.—See, from the ducal vault

The stone—o'er which its mailed warrior rests

In such grim pomp—is roll'd, as if that mouth

Expectant yawn'd for prey.—How comes it thus?

SECOND CITIZEN.

Some swarth attendant, late within the tomb,

Hath left unclosed its yet insatiate gulf;

And he returns ere long.—His task complete,

This stone, oft visited, regains its place;—  
Would it were closed for ever!

## SECOND CITIZEN.

Ne'er to his country's weal a truer prince  
Shall rise in Mantua—all proper tongues  
To his just praise are eloquent;—no voice  
But gathers blessing, when it speaks of Andrea.  
I'll peep o'er the dark wall of this huge grave.  
Fresh wonders still!—Here lie funereal trappings  
Covering the entrance:—an inscription too  
Upon the pall.—[*Reads*].—“*Andrea, the fifth Duke  
Of Mantua*”—a goodly list of honours,  
Names, and illustrious acts, now follow—“*Died*”—  
I cannot tell those mystic characters—  
Canst thou assign their import?

## FIRST CITIZEN.

I am not skill'd

To interpret mysteries; but they are form'd  
By cabalistic art. Elsewhere I've seen  
The conjuror, Aldenbert, those uncouth shapes  
Upon his tablets tracing. 'Tis not language  
Akin to mortal tongue.

## SECOND CITIZEN.

Treason, I wot, with bold and impious front,



Stalks forth uncheck'd :—it skulks not now abroad,  
But in the open day roams unabash'd,  
Nor shuns the sunbeam. Some uniform'd event  
Is yet in ripening—its bursts ere long  
The shell of this dread mystery.

*Enter GRAVE-DIGGER and PRIEST.*

GRAVE-DIGGER.

None, father, save the Egyptian woman, who so troubles  
the church. She slept in the porch yesternight, and I  
sent her away this morning betimes.

PRIEST.

Thou hast sent a message to the Duke?

GRAVE-DIGGER.

Some half-hour ago.—I expect his highness in person  
will take special note of this matter.

PRIEST.

I fear me they be foes, enemies to the Duke, who have  
done this.—Treachery puts on bold aspects, when such  
foretokenings as these go before her, with loud admonish-  
ing of her approach. Here comes the Duke.

*Enter DUKE with ATTENDANTS.*

DUKE.

Good morrow, friends. I am something curious to behold this device.—Some trick of intimidation, your petty wonder-monger breeds, to set our citizens agape.—You have not disturbed this masked frolic?

GRAVE-DIGGER.

My lord, it rests in such shape as when it scared me dismally ere the light was well out, about cock-crowing.

DUKE.

Knowest thou any skulking vagrant of late loitering near the church?

GRAVE-DIGGER.

None, your grace, save the tall gipsy—she slept in the porch yesternight.

DUKE.

The gipsy woman?

GRAVE-DIGGER.

She, with the linen turban, that walks the city with her arms folded—thus.

DUKE.

She was in the porch?



## GRAVE-DIGGER.

I waked her there, but roughly, an hour ago.

## DUKE.

Here hangs some clue to guide us.—I'll have the beldame seized.—Raise that unseemly pall from the tomb, and close its mouth.—This inscription I'll keep as a brief chronicle of the event.—[*Takes off the inscription, a billet falls from beneath it.*]—What counsels us here? One wonder treads fast upon another's heels, and o'ertops its neighbour.—[*Reads*]—" *I have garnished thy tomb, and it waiteth not for its prey. Depart!—When thou goest forth, but once shalt thou return hither!*"—Guards, search the city—every chink and avenue.—To your utmost speed.—This hag shall not escape.—Hence!—[*Exit Guard.*]—My friends, let not this matter trouble you; some mischievous spirit hath malice at our peace, and hopes to work confusion within the city.—Soon we unravel the flimsy web of this strange craft.

[*Excunt.*]

## SCENE II.

*Enter DUCHESS and HERMIONE.*

HERMIONE.

Laura hath not yet  
Put off her sorrow.—Still doth fancy cherish  
The darling form of yon misguided youth  
Your lord encounter'd on the terrace.—  
With long entreaty I have learnt his name;  
And, as my yet unquestion'd word befits,  
'Tis but a cast off suitor of mine own!

DUCHESS.

I fear me this adventure still broods mischief.  
The Duke somehow had strange intelligence  
Of danger threatened to Hermione.—  
On that same night he watch'd, and foil'd the ruffian,  
But he forbore t' afflict him farther.

HERMIONE.

Strange—

This brief-told tale——

*Enter DUKE.*

Welcome—thrice welcome now.



By what good chance, my lord, sought you the terrace  
Few nights ago?—Some stray intelligence,  
The Duchess tells, crept to your ear of danger  
To me denounced?

DUKE.

Some secret whisper met me of the matter.  
Know you this billet?

HERMIONE.

Forsooth its fair outside  
Small import gives of such unworthy deed.—  
I know not, save at once you dare commit  
Its contents to my ken.

DUKE.

Well spoken, lady.—

What read you?

HERMIONE.

Carlos!—(*Reads.*)

Some strange mistake rests here.—As my good word  
Earns your belief—till now, I ne'er beheld  
This love-lorn billet.

DUKE.

Ah, woman, pleasant still,  
But full of subtlety;—perverse, untoward—  
Thy ways mark'd deep by unabash'd deceit:  
Well thou mayst laugh at tmine imposture.

HERMIONE.

The riddle solves :—this billet by mistake  
Hath found its way to yon same hapless virgin.  
Laura hath dropp'd it—some officious friend  
Unto your eye the unoffending page  
Hath straight convey'd.

DUKE.

Thou answerest plausibly ; —

I would believe thy homied tongue.

HERMIONE.

I did repulse him, sore amazed  
At his approach.—He threaten'd with his hate,  
Which I do love more than his unprized favour !

DUKE.

I well remember thy reproof.

DUCHESS.

Our rebel cousin hither comes with word  
Of her departure from our city.—Hence,  
To-morrow, by the saffron-breaking dawn,  
To Venice she returns. I urge in vain  
Some further hindrance.—Wilt thou again make suit  
To lady's ear, and win her stay ?

DUKE.

To-morrow !



"Let then to-morrow come, if e'er it may;  
But when to-morrow comes, 'tis still to-day—  
To-morrow go, and thou art never gone,  
Till yon to-morrow and to-day are one!"

HERMIONE.

I must hence:

Urge me not further.

DUKE.

"Nay, I urge thee not.

My will in Mantua e'er was held injunction.  
I'll be thy tyrant, lady—thy stern keeper.  
This day, within our palace, thou shalt be,  
If willing and obedient, our guest:  
If stubborn and self-will'd, our prisoner!  
I'll compass thee with such delicious chains,  
Thou shalt not wish e'en thine own thought were free!

HERMIONE.

Your guest this day, the last I spend in Mantua.  
The night I give to Laura.

DUCHESS.

This proud night  
Shall so out-mimic day, thou shalt not guess  
When night hath drawn the twilight to his bosom.

*Enter SYLVIO.*

SYLVIO (*aside to the DUKE*).

The guard hath yet no tidings:

The woman hides her warily.

DUKE.

Not yet!

I would, ere night, this mumming witch were found.

Without the walls, perchance, she lurks. Command

Their search unto the outskirts: large reward

Will follow their success.

[*Exit SYLVIO.*]

DUCHESS.

At this inviting hour, we taste

The fragrance from our incense-breathing flowers:

My lord, attend you us?

The roses are fresh sprinkled,—the soft breeze

Comes heavily from their odour-blushing heads,

Faint and oppress'd with its delicious burden.

DUKE.

My spouse hath set her love on some tall poppy,

Some velvet-cheek'd, young tulip; drinking nectar

From his soft, balmy lip. I must be jealous

Of these same gentle favours.



DUCHESS.

You shall attend

Our fragrant courtship—the unwitting pander  
To my stolen pleasures. Ah, my lord! what mean you?  
Comes that dark frown to me, or to my lovers?

DUKE.

Nothing, Beatrice,—a passing jest,—'tis gone,—  
I needs must frown when I am jealous. Now,  
Fair, love-sick dames, I would attend you.

*[Exeunt.]*

## SCENE III.

*A Wood.**ZORAYDA, sitting at the foot of an oak.*

ZORAYDA.

An outcast from an outcast race,—spurn'd, chid,  
From the churl's threshold. Shunn'd, unblest'd by all;

Nor home nor heritage—I live, alone,  
Without associate, tie, or fellowship  
E'en to my kin I might from these consist  
Of other nature; other substance might  
Enfold my spirit,—other shape  
Envelope me, than wraps th' affrighted herd  
Who stand aloof and gaze! Th' inanimate forms,  
Nature's unchisel'd workmanship—unsullied  
By man's rude contact—'tis with these I hold  
Converse and high communion;  
And from the spirit that lives in them, free  
And uncommunicable intercourse  
My soul receives. In all things there exists  
Distinct peculiar essence, like the soul  
Our being animates; at seasons oft,  
In presence, though unseen, yet to the mind  
Internal, manifest, imparting there  
Miraculous influence. In secret, too—  
The bodily eye, from grosser matter freed,—  
In shape as palpable they come, as doth  
Each outward image rise to corporal sense.  
I am not mad. The heated brain creates not  
These uncall'd phantoms: yet men say I'm crazed.  
They know not, dream not, of the mighty world



That lives around them. Other orbs might hold us!

—By mine art, with potent spell,

And wily stratagem, the Duke I've warn'd.

Hermione—proud victim! Love unhallow'd

Yet lingers in their breasts, and they must sever,

Though one heart break in that most cruel parting!

There's a foul taint of murder i' the wind—

I do suspect her lover—yon Venetian,

Her suitor once—rejected. Such revenge

Will oftentimes rouse the spirit up to mischief,

Loathing, it would abhor e'en if beheld

But as a guilty dream. If this fond Duke

Seek not again her presence I have hope.

To-morrow she departs from Mantua—

No power can harm thee, save in that brief space

Appointed with thy birth. Here comes my spy:

The urchin loves me for the good he owes.

*Enter GIULIO.*

Welcome, boy!

Thine errand?

GIULIO.

Some whisperings I've caught,

Yet know not to what purpose they should tend.  
 I heard "to-night," twice to each listener told,  
 And oft a cautious glance where I but stood,  
 Tuning my simple lute. As thou hast bid me,  
 With careful eye, note well their secret converse,  
 I hasten'd with the news; and now, good mother,  
 Say me farewell.

ZORAYDA.

A toward child;

Great largess thou mayest earn for thy discourse:  
 Hence! lest this absence tell what thine excuse  
 May not conceal.

[Exit GIULIO.]

To-night!—I'll watch. This hour of danger past,  
 I'll pledge me to thy safety. Noble Mantua,  
 In that dread day, my parent's forfeit life  
 When thou didst spare, I vow'd to seek thy welfare,  
 And my good power, for thee and for thine house,  
 Hath not its use in vain. Yet, I do fear  
 The issue of this night: the vision told  
 Mortal conclusion nigh—"they will not hear  
 "Warning oft utter'd, but impetuous rush  
 "Unheeding, to their doom."  
 Perchance some hidden meaning lurks beneath  
 This fearful message; an ambiguous sense,



Its proper import framing, when th' event  
From which it springs, like day-betokening morn,  
Is past. His death it may not show. I'll save thee,  
Or my destruction—soft!—the tramp of men:  
Scouts, peradventure, on my track. Go, follow  
The wild bee to its nest!—or to yon cliff  
Climb with the eagle!—then ye mark my course! [*Exit.*]

*Enter CARLOS and BERTRAND, meeting.*

BERTRAND.

My messenger brings welcome news: to-day  
Hermione again visits the palace.  
Till this dim light shall fade, her promised stay—  
But the first watch of night, perchance, may find  
This cuckoo harbour'd yet in others' nest!

CARLOS.

Tis well:—our friends with th' opportunity  
Alone are arm'd; and as the time may note  
Their several parts. From the west turret  
Th' accomplice issues signal, if to-night  
The Duke refreshes in the mountain-breeze,  
As 'tis his wont, around the platform. When  
Upon its staff the turret pennon sinks

(The moon to this good signal will suffice),  
We climb the unguarded stair, and it conducts  
To our dark enterprise.

[*Exeunt.*]

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SCÈNE IV.

*Part of the Platform, sloping to the Palace Walls.*

*Enter DUKE, DUCHESS, HERMIONE, RIDOLFI.*

DUKE.

We love these moon-lit walks, Hermione,  
Whilst in her wane: you like her visage best,  
Perchance, increasing. More I love to mark  
Her gradual decay—retreating, coy,  
And half aside, as if ashamed to meet  
The full gaze of the sun.

HERMIONE.

I love the waxing  
Yet, rather than the wane of yon pale light:



Like timid maid, when first her opening charms  
Meet love's warm beam. Scarce on the wanton boy  
She dares to gaze, till, bolder grown, her eye  
Averted still, or half withdrawn, drinks in,  
With silent ecstasy, love's treacherous glance.  
Now his fond smile, full orb'd, the embolden'd sight  
Enamour'd meets: her very being, essence,  
And every faculty absorb'd—each thought  
Rising impregn'd with love's fierce fire; anon  
There comes a change—shy gleams succeed, her brow  
Hath one slight shade, scarce seen, but on its light  
The darkness grows—love's brightest dream is o'er,  
And his pale taper quench'd in utter gloom!

RIDOLFI.

Ay, till another change. Yon fickle goddess  
Her fond, fool'd swain entices, till enamour'd  
E'en to his heart's last core; she then averts  
Her love-impassion'd glance, and, scorning, shuns him!

DUCHESS.

If from deserted maid, Hermione,  
Whose charms were withering in the fallow wane  
Of an unprofited life, this speech forlorn  
Had seem'd to ring the knell of her young hopes.

But when from rosy lips, and ardent youth,  
 It comes unlook'd for, as a wintry chill  
 Beneath a summer sun—This air blows keenly,  
 My locks fall with the dew—I think the night  
 Hath not its wonted soothness: thrice I shudder'd  
 As the cold breeze methought sigh'd on my bosom.  
 I must begone—Hermione, you go not,  
 'Tis the last moonlight you behold, mayhap,  
 In this brief stay; take a long parting, ere  
 Ye bid adieu—the Duke himself attends you:  
 With me, our brother his good presence grants,  
 Till your return.

RIDOLFI.

With such proud gallantry

I bow to your decree.

[*Exeunt* DUCHESS and RIDOLFI.]

DUKE.

Beneath the western turret  
 I love to walk—to watch the huge dim battlements  
 On the smooth river sleeping, when the moon,  
 Low in the brightening east, their shadow throws  
 Upon its calm, cold bosom.

HERMIONE.

Awhile I loiter with you there, my lord.

[*Exeunt.*  
1



## SCENE V.

*The Battlements.**Enter DUKE and HERMIONE.*

HERMIONE.

A pleasant tale, you say?

DUKE.

A story

At which the sad might laugh, the merry weep!

HERMIONE.

Strange modes of pleasantry—the sad might laugh?

DUKE.

That his own woes were lighter.

HERMIONE.

And yet, withal,

The merry weep?

DUKE.

So sad the tale—

HERMIONE.

In troth,

Most dolorously pleasant!

DUKE.

I've been in love.

HERMIONE.

A strange propensity—a punishment  
Man suffers for his sins. You've been in love?  
Most melancholy! How! I wot the Duchess  
Believed you not?

DUKE.

Beatrice yet—mark me—

Most tenderly I love. Her long affection  
Won my regard; but—late, another power—  
It is not love, 'tis witchery, false glamour  
Chaining the sense, unwilling to be held  
In such deep thrall—I've seen a basilisk,  
And it hath holden me within the circuit  
Of its charmed eye. How counsel you? how break  
From its bright glance?

HERMIONE.

I know not where, my lord,  
You're held, or how enchain'd. Knows she your love?

DUKE.

I sought her, and the truth unto her ear  
I utter'd. Was it well?



HERMIONE.

'Twere answer'd best  
 In the concealed purpose unto which  
 Truth's outward semblance serv'd. What meaning else  
 Behind it crouch'd?

DUKE.

That we might part for ever.

HERMIONE.

For ever!—Yes—'twas well—

What answer gave she?

DUKE.

Answer?—Oh—'twas well!

Then we must part, Hermione?

HERMIONE.

*We part!*

Wherefore for ever?

DUKE.

I would not again

Cringe in thy burning glance,—and yet—I might—  
 This foolish heart its vanish'd dream forgot—  
 Unmoved endure thy presence! Bitter the pang!  
 I could not say for ever! I should cling  
 As the doom'd wretch to life, loosing his hold  
 But with the heart's last throb!

HERMIONE.

I cannot counsel thus!

Alas! more need some power above our own  
To tear us hence—to sever. You will forget  
This idle thought—'tis but a vagrant breath,  
Stirring your past affections—they respond  
Untouch'd, when memory wakes the soft still voice  
Of other years. Their echoes o'er, again  
Peace, haply frighted thence, your bosom visits.  
I would not now for ever part!

DUKE.

Then for a time—when absence  
The torn heart heals, we meet again. Hermione,  
For thee, in this night's converse, have I risk'd  
My happiness, my hope, and every comfort  
Which most I prize—my peace, my honour—all  
Committed to thy trust—true confidence  
If not in mutual charge—nor interchange  
Of strict communion held. If one alone  
The precious load entrusts, it is o'erbalanced,  
Without due counterpoise, reciprocal faith,  
And it endures not. Tell me—nay, but listen—  
This heart unfetter'd, offer'd thee, unlighted,  
Would'st thou have ta'en?



HERMIONE.

Indeed, I cannot now  
Such wild words answer. Spare me but this trial—

DUKE.

Nay, answer me—what—silent?—why 'tis well.  
And so we part—but I repent me now  
Thou hast my trust. No answer?—then 'tis well!  
We part for ever! On that treacherous face  
I would not gaze again.

HERMIONE.

My lord, you must—  
If this suffice—I answer—*Yes!*

DUKE.

Angel

Of soul-visiting light! the storm hath still'd  
At thy omnipotent word! I would not—

*Enter ZORAYDA, hastily, before the DUKE; she points to the  
stream.*

What notest thou, dun sorceress?—speak!

ZORAYDA.

Yon shadow!

DUKE.

Yet two full hours unspent, ere on the stream  
Yon pennon flits: and now we part. But who  
Sent thee with such authority—with power  
To question, and to watch, with daring eye,  
Mine every movement? I have sought thee, fiend!  
If thine hell-vomited sire protect thee not,  
Again thou shalt not 'scape. I charge thee, witch!  
Confederate with foul treachery.

ZORAYDA.

There's treason i' the air!

Meet not the wind, it blows incontinently—  
The maid hath other lovers.

HERMIONE.

Hag! thy meaning?

We study not ambiguous phrase.

DUKE.

I'll crush thy treason,  
Ere it be ripe for hatching.

[As the Duke raises the silver call to his lips,

ZORAYDA seizes his arm.

ZORAYDA.

'Tis for thy rescue—stay! one moment stay  
Thy rash resolve. If I depart, undone,



Destroy'd this night!

*[The Duke makes the signal.]*

Rash prince! it shriek'd thy doom!

*Enter Guard.*

DUKE.

Seize that bold traitress!—stop her hated croak!  
Lest each ensnared accomplice, if such be  
Within her call, gain tidings of her seizure,  
To-morrow, and in private, mark me, Hugo,  
We hear her further.

ZORAYDA.

To-morrow!—nay, to-night, proud Duke,  
To-morrow is not thine. Beware!

*[They lead her away.]*

DUKE.

Of thee!

Thou fearful wonder. 'Tis not idle terror  
O'ermasters me, but yon foul-plotting witch  
Quails me unwarily. Our country's welfare,  
Perchance, brings o'erused caution; yet the wise  
No proffer'd warning slights. Within the palace  
We may defy an ambush'd foe.

HERMIONE.

To this,

Ere mischief burst abroad, I would entreat.  
Yon being hath intelligence not breathed  
From mortal lips!

DUKE.

I dare not say

The last farewell: the coming word, when summon'd,  
So galls my tongue, it hath no utterance  
When it might pass. The breath that from it issues  
Parches my palate; like the hot simoom,  
It scorches, though it sweep as stilly o'er  
Some blasted, bladeless desert!—

I dream!—or I am fool'd!—unbind me, demon!  
Unseal mine eye-balls!—they are possess'd!—again!  
Glazed with thy mockeries! I see not: hark!  
'Tis but the mental image to the brain  
Recoiling: yet as palpable it comes!  
What seest thou?—yon shadow?—where?

HERMIONE.

Yon shadow?

DUKE.

It cannot be: a brief told moment past,



I mark'd beyond the brink, on the dim wood,  
 The shadow waving. Now 'tis strange. There!—there!  
 How keen this air creeps curdling to my vitals!—  
 The shadow yet hangs dark and motionless  
 On shore and wave!

HERMIONE.

Whence comes this wondering terror?  
 The flag hath on its staff but newly dropp'd—  
 Look to the turret, why that spell-bound gaze  
 So wildly on the stream!

DUKE.

Fell hag! thy boding screech  
 Too surely sped. They come! Protect me, Heaven!

*Enter four Assassins, masked. Three of them attack the  
 DUKE, ere he can make signals for the Guard; whilst their  
 leader seizes on HERMIONE.*

HERMIONE.

Help!—murderers! Uphand me, wretch.

*[He stops her mouth.*

CARLOS.

Wretch! 'tis thy Carlos come to woo—not now

To kiss thy very footprints, and the earth  
 Whereon they fell! I'll bear thee hence, my mistress;  
 And thou shalt live my menial slave. Rage not—  
 I'll tame thy spirit, lady. Thou shalt crouch,  
 My gentle captive, as thy Carlos once,  
 To lick the dust, and I will spurn thee. Nay,  
 Content thee, dame, our friends will do thee service.

*[The Duke defends himself against his assailants. One of the Assassins falls.]*

DUKE.

There, villain! my good brand hath served thee.

*[HERMIONE, whilst struggling with CARLOS, frees herself by a sudden effort, and seizes the sword of the dying ruffian.]*

HERMIONE.

I'll bury this, deep, to thy heart, monster,  
 If thou approach. Help, guards!

CARLOS.

Thy tongue I fear

More than thy weapon.

*[Attempts to cover her mouth.]*

HERMIONE.

Then to thy doom, hell-destined spirit!

*[Stabs him.]*



CARLOS.

Oh—fly!—save ye, my friends—escape whilst yet—

The guards—this fiend hath summon'd— [Falls.

HERMIONE (*rushes towards the DUKE*).

Cowards! ye cannot escape. They come!

BERTRAND (*tearing off his mask*).

Then swifter come.

Insatiate vengeance. To thy place, proud Mantua!

(*Makes a desperate lunge at the DUKE, who falls.*)

DUKE.

A mortal thrust! Hermione, now—now—

Farewell—'tis past!

BERTRAND.

Thou leavest not thy paramour.

[Stabs HERMIONE.

Hence! to the pale ghosts howl in company.

HERMIONE.

I'd bless thee—for this—

[Dies.

*Enter Guard, Soldiers; they seize the Conspirators.*

DUKE.

Too late ye come—

Life ebbs fast from my veins—mine eyes are dim;  
But there's a voice—or death unreins my fancy—  
Comes o'er mine ear, I do remember, mingling  
Ere now 'mid mortal strife.

BERTRAND

'Tis I: mine hate is quench'd but with the blood  
That nourish'd thee! Now to your dungeons lead me:  
Your rarest tortures—haste. This blest revenge  
Will slake your hottest fires, heal the hurt flesh,  
Make the un pitying rack a gentle pillow,  
Softer than cygnet down, or thy death-couch,  
Unseptr'd Duke. Guards, do your office.

DUKE.

Unhappy man! thy fierce, untamed spirit,  
In its own fiery nature, hath t' endure  
What bodily tortures reach not. I forgive thee.  
But this good city, thy most unjust hate  
This night bereaves of her protector, seeks  
Her just atonement! Bear me hence—Beatrice,  
To thy loved arms. Would that I ne'er had left thee—  
A fearful meeting now—Hermione!  
What—dead! My cup is drain'd e'en to the dregs,  
The vessel shiver'd, dash'd ere while to earth!—



Just Heaven!

I bow to thee! Thou hast not sent my spirit  
Unshriven to thy bar—brief space on earth  
My span of time, but unto thee I turn;  
Abused mercy; grant with my last hour  
Repentance, and thy promised pardon!

*[Exeunt Attendants, with the Duke.]*

THE END.

