

# THE SECRET MARRIAGE

*Music by*  
Domenico Cimarosa

*English Version by*  
Donald Pippin  
(1991, 1992)

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# The Secret Marriage

*Domenico Cimarosa*

English Version by Donald Pippin

## ACT I

### Duet: Paolino and Carolina

PAOLINO            Darling! Darling!  
Dry those tears and doubt no more.  
Gone are the days of sorrow;  
No cloudy skies tomorrow;  
The storm is bound to clear.  
Darling! We leave the days of sorrow;  
No cloudy skies tomorrow;  
The storm is bound to clear.

CAROLINA        Darling! Darling!  
Courage and hope you restore.  
Bravely I'll wear a smile;  
My foolish tears I'll swallow,  
Though the secret path we follow  
Has filled my heart with fear.

PAOLINO            That step you've not regretted?

CAROLINA        How can you even say it?

PAOLINO            Be happy, and display it  
As on the day we wedded,  
And took the daring gamble.

CAROLINA        In mortal fear I tremble;  
Will father understand?  
My love, do not delay it;  
Our secret has to end.

PAOLINO            Today's the day I'll do it;  
Your wish is my command.

CAROLINA        Do hasten, do hurry;  
The secret has to end,  
It has to end.

PAOLINO            I'll hasten, I'll hurry;  
Your wish is my command.  
Is my command.

CAROLINA and PAOLINO

The world is wine and roses  
When love is in its glory;  
But what another story  
When lovers must pretend!

**Recitative**

CAROLINA            But time is running out!  
Our happy secret  
We cannot keep forever, no!  
It has to end.  
If word should get around  
And father finds it out,  
A holy war will follow,  
Not to mention the scandal.  
Oh, darling husband!  
Even love such as ours  
Will not excuse us.

PAOLINO            I agree. Absolutely.

CAROLINA            You know his nature.  
He is slow to unbend,  
But underneath,  
He's a man with a heart.  
There will be fireworks;  
In the heat of the moment  
He will bluster and thunder,  
But not for very long.  
After the storm  
Love will prevail,  
And he will grant us pardon.

PAOLINO            Yes, that has been our guiding hope from the start.  
Today's the day to do it!  
I've got the card we need  
To end this painful pretending.  
In my hand I've the ticket  
That will carry your father  
To the fulfillment of his fondest fantasy.  
He has long had the bee in his bonnet  
For close connections  
With the Lords and Ladies.

CAROLINA            Very true.

PAOLINO  
It will happen!  
My friend and benefactor is a Count.  
He agrees to wed your sister,  
Assuming a handsome dowry.  
I have arranged it.  
For bringing off this tactical maneuver,  
I hope and trust  
Your father will be grateful.

CAROLINA  
Perfect! The Count is coming here?

PAOLINO  
To get acquainted.  
He's due at any minute.  
I have his letter,  
The agreement in black and white  
To give Geronimo.  
It ought to clench the deal.  
Your father's voice!  
Now's the time to approach him.  
My love, it's now or never.

CAROLINA  
Then I must be leaving.  
Heaven help us if he should find us together!

**Duet: Carolina and Paolino**

CAROLINA  
Dear, farewell!  
If they find us here together,  
Heavy weather, heavy weather,  
Heavy weather's on the way.  
  
Though I brood, broken-hearted,  
Devastated when we're parted,  
There is danger in delay.  
  
Though each moment I shall miss you,  
Pending peril's now the issue —  
Heaven help us if we're caught,  
If we are caught!

PAOLINO  
Yes, my love!  
If discovered, all is over,  
And good-bye to all we cherish —  
Oh, I perish at the thought!

PAOLINO            Ah, though grieving  
                         At the agony of leaving,  
                         Suicidal here to idle  
                         In a tidal wave of tears.

                         Where to turn for consolation  
                         For the pain of separation?  
                         Where to turn, oh where to turn  
                         Till hope appears?

CAROLINA           I cannot leave you ...

PAOLINO            The pain of parting  
                         Will make us stronger.

CAROLINA and PAOLINO  
                         Hug me, hold me  
                         Just a tiny moment longer.  
                         No, no, no, I cannot leave you!  
                         No, not for a moment, no, no, no!  
                         Love in time will be rewarded,  
                         In time will be rewarded  
                         For these tears we undergo.

*(Exit Carolina)*

**Recitative**

PAOLINO            Now it's up to me!  
                         The crucial moment —  
                         My long-awaited chance to win him over.  
                         No, no! I mustn't blunder!  
                         Remember, raise your voice, be loud and clear.  
                         Although he claims to hear, sometimes I wonder ...

GERONIMO           *(to offstage servants)*  
                         I demand some respect!  
                         What are servants for?  
                         You have the gall to simper at Geronimo?  
                         Here in Italy, rich merchants are revered  
                         And treated like nobility.  
                         A little bowing and scraping  
                         Is all I'm asking for.  
                         Paolino, my good fellow!

PAOLINO            Here is a letter, sir,  
                         From Count Robinson for you.  
                         It is marked urgent.  
                         He'll soon be here in person;  
                         He's due this morning.

GERONIMO           Yes, yes, a beautiful morning.  
                         Is that a letter?  
                         Who's it for? And who sent it?

PAOLINO                   Count Robinson to you, sir.

GERONIMO                 Count Robinson himself!  
Well, well! Why not say so?  
I can hardly wait to read it.  
*(reads)* Ah, ah! A good beginning ...  
Oh, oh! Gets even better ...  
Ah, ih, ih! The ending's best of all!

PAOLINO                   Ah, ah! Oh, oh! Ih, ih! What is so pleasing?

GERONIMO                 Well done, Paolino!  
Come here, let me embrace you!  
Because of you and you alone, it's going to happen!  
I am deeply indebted,  
Now and always.

PAOLINO                   Then may I take this opportunity ...

GERONIMO                 A Count for a son-in-law!  
This minute on his way to sign the contract.  
Elisetta a Countess!  
Yes, my own daughter!  
And next to do as well for Carolina.  
A Duke at least! With luck, perhaps a Lord!  
We now have to live up to our rank —  
We nobles!

PAOLINO                   (That is not the way I planned it.)

GERONIMO                 Now what's the matter?  
Surely you're not displeased?

PAOLINO                   I? No, indeed!

GERONIMO                 What?

PAOLINO                   Delighted at your daughter's coming marriage.

GERONIMO                 Better. Now run along.  
And see that all is ready for the Count's reception,  
The refinements to which he is accustomed.

GERONIMO                 Well, well! Fortune is smiling.  
The family must hear the happy news.  
Elisetta! Fidalma! Carolina!

*(Exit Paolino)*

*(Enter Carolina, Elisetta and Fidalma.)*

CAROLINA            Coming, father!

ELISETTA            What now?

FIDALMA            My dearest brother!

CAROLINA            What's happened?

ELISETTA            What is wrong?

CAROLINA            Why the summons?

**Aria: Geronimo**

GERONIMO            Come, gather round and listen!  
The news today is vital,  
A fortune and a title!  
A call for celebration.

*(to Elisetta)*

You are to wed a nobleman,  
Blue-blooded through and through,  
All settled, ah, yes!  
A bona fide patrician,  
Today he comes to woo.  
A Countess in the making,  
A title for the taking,  
Acclaim and recognition  
My daughter will enjoy —  
An eminent position  
Above the hoi polloi.

We'll rise to the occasion  
With song and celebration  
To hail a new relation.  
We leave the middle classes,  
The donkeys and the asses,  
And join the higher rank.  
And as you romp and revel  
Upon a higher level,  
Guess who you have to thank.  
Your father! Your father!

GERONIMO

*(to Fidalma)*

Well, sister, what about it?

*(to Elisetta)*

And you, my dear Lisetta?

*(to Carolina)*

Aha! No need to tell us —  
Some rancor I detect.  
I'll warrant, you're jealous!  
You suffer from neglect.  
Out with it! Confess it!

Well, well! Your own ambitions  
Are not to be denied.  
I'll nab another noble  
To claim you for his bride.

I notice some vexation,  
A hint of reservation,  
A touch of irritation,  
Enough to drive me mad!  
You daughters I declare will be  
The death of your old Dad.

My daughter, Countess Robinson!  
A wedding!  
Champagne we'll have on board.  
Address the invitations  
Milady and Milord.  
A festive wedding supper  
For just the upper upper  
We now can well afford.

Soon little Counts and Countesses  
Bouncing upon my knee!  
A rising generation,  
The darlings of the nation,  
Of peerless pedigree.

So rise to the occasion  
With song and celebration  
To hail a new relation  
With money in the bank.  
We leave the middle classes,  
The donkeys and the asses,  
And join the higher rank.

A fortune! A title!  
My daughter a Countess,  
A Countess!

GERONIMO           And as you romp and revel  
On a more exalted level,  
Guess who you have to thank.

A bona fide patrician,  
Yes, a bona fide patrician  
Today will come to woo.

An eminent position,  
Plus acclaim and recognition —  
My dream is coming true!

Let's hear congratulations —  
A triumph for Papa!  
Proceed with preparations —  
(Hurrah, Hurrah, Hurrah)  
A triumph for Papa!

*(Exit Geronimo)*

**Recitative**

ELISETTA           Your envy's unbecoming.  
Remember if you will that I'm the elder,  
And watch your behavior, please, to a Countess.  
I want none of your impertinence and slyness.  
Your manners must be mended.

CAROLINA          Oh, pardon!  
Dear me, have I offended  
Your Royal Highness?

**Trio: Carolina, Elisetta, Fidalma**

CAROLINA          Allow me, Milady —  
I bow to my better.  
Though far, far below you,  
A curtsy I owe you.  
You'll pardon, however,  
A laugh on the side.  
He ha ha ha!  
A trace of amusement  
I hardly can hide.

CAROLINA          Oh, lady of leisure  
So high on the ladder,  
Allow me the pleasure ...  
Hi hi hi hi!  
You'll pardon, however,  
A laugh on the side.  
A trace of amusement  
I hardly can hide.

ELISETTA                    So peevish, so petty,  
Resentful already,  
How dare you disparage  
My motives for marriage?  
This banter and babble  
I cannot abide.  
No no no no no!  
Your laughter I label  
Sheer envy and pride.

FIDALMA                    The tension increases.  
Oh, sisters! Dear nieces!  
Come, come! Let's abandon  
The whims and caprices.  
Inflated or flippant,  
You both are at fault.

                                  Oh, sisters! Dear nieces!  
Unbend and abandon  
The whims and caprices.  
The ruckus and wrangle  
Must come to a halt.

CAROLINA                    The Countess, none other ...

ELISETTA                    It's time someone told her  
That I am the older.

CAROLINA                    We're somewhat related,  
One father, one mother.

ELISETTA                    So peevish, so petty.

CAROLINA                    So full of confetti.

FIDALMA                    Be quiet, for neither comes off with the cup.  
The quarrel is over, so kiss and make up.

*(Exit Carolina)*

**Recitative**

FIDALMA                    Control yourself. She is teasing you.  
Remember, you're the one getting married,  
Rising to splendor,  
So now you can afford to be indulgent.  
But listen ... I have a secret,  
Most confidential ... Don't breathe a word!

ELISETTA                    Depend on me, depend on me!  
I'm the soul of discretion.

FIDALMA            Your Auntie's on the verge of marriage also.

ELISETTA            Again?

FIDALMA            Why not? Some men might want a widow,  
Rich and independent,  
In her prime and still attractive ...

ELISETTA            Who is he?

FIDALMA            Young and handsome as Adonis!

ELISETTA            A nobleman?

FIDALMA            No matter. We cannot all be Countesses.

ELISETTA            And rich? You can tell me!

FIDALMA            Too many questions!  
(I'd better watch my step.  
In the springtime of love, I may reveal  
That the man of my heart  
Is Paolino.)

**Aria: Fidalma**

FIDALMA            As queen of the household,  
I rule with powers unbounded  
Two nieces and a brother;  
I'm manager, nanny and mother.  
With comfort surrounded,  
I'm proud, happy and free,  
Proud, happy and free.

Yet — having a husband  
Looks better to me,  
Far better, far better,  
Far better to me.

My freedom I treasure  
And guard well the keys;  
I leave at my leisure,  
Return when I please.  
My friends and my neighbors  
I greet with a kiss.

Yet — kissing a husband  
Is far better than this.

My dear, think it over:  
Now possibly headed  
For realms of delight,

FIDALM            You soon will discover  
Your Auntie was right.  
And after you're wedded,  
Her words you'll repeat:

Yes, home with a husband  
Nobody can beat;  
Nobody, nobody,  
Nobody can beat.

*(Exeunt)*

*(Enter Geronimo and Carolina)*

**Recitative**

GERONIMO        Before the Count's arrival,  
Do try to be more cheerful.  
Such a happy occasion!  
I want you all to share in my good fortune.  
Come now — a little spirit!

CAROLINA        Would you force me to smile  
If my heart isn't in it?  
I have a reason ...

GERONIMO        Of course, my dear, no reason.  
Your turn is coming next.  
Another noble! I've started looking.  
You will have your wedding  
As soon as we are done with your sister.  
Now then, let's have a smile.

CAROLINA        (Worse and worse!  
In secrecy and silence  
We are asking for trouble.)

GERONIMO        Not even one little smile?

CAROLINA        I've twisted my ankle.

GERONIMO        You insist on an uncle?  
Girls will be girls ...  
Very well, you shall have nieces and nephews.

CAROLINA        (Ah, Paolino, where are you  
When you are needed?)

*(Enter Paolino)*

PAOLINO         Oh, sir, the Count is arriving!

GERONIMO           Already! Oh, hurry, hurry!  
                          *(to Carolina)* We can talk later on.  
                          *(to Paolino)* Come along, my friend,  
                          We'll run downstairs to greet him.

PAOLINO            Borne on wings of love,  
                          He beats us to it.

*(Enter Elisetta and Fidalma, then the Count)*

**Aria: Count**

COUNT               I dispense with ceremony.  
                          Nothing fancy, nothing formal,  
                          I'm your normal simple noble.  
                          Just a normal simple noble.  
                          No pomposity, no pretension, no, no!  
                          Not a trace of condescension.

*(to Geronimo)* My new father I enfold.

COUNT               *(to Fidalma)* If a man may be so bold ... *(kissing her hand)*  
                          *(to Elisetta)* Both a pleasure and a duty  
                          To commend your modest beauty.

*(to Carolina)* Here a sweeter promise lies,  
                          Gazing into lovely eyes.

*(to Paolino)* Paolino, just between us,  
                          She's a Helen, she's a Venus!

*(to Geronimo)* Father, my congratulations!  
                          I discard all reservations;  
                          She surpasses expectations.  
                          So delightful! So delicious!  
                          So enchanting! Goodness gracious!  
                          Never one to be loquacious,  
                          I must stop and start again.

CAROLINA, ELISETTA and FIDALMA  
                          Pausing briefly we admit'll  
                          Let you catch your breath a little.  
                          Do continue when you can.

**Ensemble**

CAROLINA, ELISETTA and FIDALMA  
                          Rather foppish and affected,  
                          Not the paragon expected;  
                          What to make of such a man?

PAOLINO            All too foppish and affected,  
                          Not the paragon expected;  
                          Will they take to such a man?

GERONIMO         Neither foppish nor affected,  
                          Even finer than expected;  
                          What a perfect gentleman!

COUNT              Neither foppish nor affected,  
                          Just the person they expected,  
                          I'm the perfect gentleman!

                         Nothing fancy, nothing formal,  
                          I'm your normal, simple noble ...

CAROLINA, ELISETTA and FIDALMA  
                          Stop and catch your breath a little;  
                          Do continue when you can.

COUNT              So enchanting, so exquisite!  
                          I foresee a longer visit.  
                          So delightful, so delicious!  
                          Never dull or repetitious,  
                          I must stop and start again.

**Recitative**

COUNT              I'm champing at the bit!  
                          Impatient to pay respects to the lady  
                          So praised and so admired ...

GERONIMO         Yes, yes, of course you're tired  
                          After the journey.  
                          Get a chair for the Count.  
                          There! Do be seated.

COUNT              Me tired? Not in the least.  
                          A trip is nothing  
                          When at the end such happiness is waiting.

PAOLINO            (*softly*) It might be well to speak a little louder.

COUNT              Sir, with your kind permission —  
                          I do not want to rush you —  
                          If you would introduce me to my bride ...

GERONIMO            Yes, I can take a hint;  
 No sooner said than done.  
 I shall go outside. We understand;  
 On such occasions, a father  
 Is only in the way.  
 Come along, Paolino;  
 We'll stroll around the garden.  
 Her sister and her Aunt  
 Will do the honors.

*(Exeunt Geronimo and Paolino)*

COUNT                *(to Carolina)* Fairest, loveliest lady,  
 Soon to become my bride ...

CAROLINA            Sir! Wait a minute!  
 A slight misunderstanding.  
 I'm not the one so honored;  
 You mean my sister.

COUNT                Your sister?

FIDALMA              A tiny error.

CAROLINA            Not here, but there your gaze should be directed.

FIDALMA              Not there but here! *(indicating Elisetta)*

COUNT                *(to Fidalma)* You must excuse me. How stupid.  
 Allow me ...

FIDALMA              Try again. You'll get it right.

COUNT                Wrong again?

ELISETTA             Indeed, sir, what a rare sense of humor!  
 Of course you're joking.  
 Fate has decided that I'm the lucky lady.  
 I've accepted your proposal.

COUNT                *(That parakeet!)* You're my fiancée?

ELISETTA             Yes, yes, of course.  
 Delighted, and need I say, quite flattered ...

COUNT                But ... you are sure of it?  
 You're absolutely certain?

ELISETTA             Really!

FIDALMA              No question!

CAROLINA            No shadow of a doubt.

COUNT (Misled by wishful thinking,  
I have taken a tumble.  
I am crushed, I am shattered  
And slowly sinking.)

**Quartet: Count, Elisetta, Carolina, Fidalma**

COUNT What a flood of icy water,  
Putting out the leaping fire!  
'Tis the other, sweeter daughter  
Who awakens my (fierce) desire.

ELISETTA Backing off, he gives a shudder;  
What it says to me is clear.  
Painful doubts too deep to utter  
Choke my heart with nagging fear.

CAROLINA He appears to cringe and cower;  
Baffled, she can only glare.  
Topped from her lofty tower,  
Her disdain becomes despair.  
(Baffled, bewildered, her eyes can only glare.)

FIDALMA Each more silent than the other,  
And yet the meaning's plain as day.  
I foretell a change of weather,  
Storm and lightening on the way.

TUTTI All atingle, tossed and shaken,  
My poor heart beats like a drum.  
Either I am much mistaken  
Or the worst is yet to come.

*(Exeunt)*

PAOLINO *(alone)* A flash of inspiration!  
The Count will help me out.  
He's understanding and sympathetic,  
A man who's been around,  
The perfect person  
To reason with her father.  
Yes! And perfect timing, too!  
Here he comes, right on cue.

COUNT *(entering)* Friend, here you are!  
I've looked for you all over.  
I have need of your talents.

PAOLINO And I of yours.

COUNT                   Of course. Glad to be of service.  
 Ask any time.  
 But first, my own affair  
 Is rather pressing.

PAOLINO                By all means. Continue.

COUNT                   To the point! Not to beat about the bush,  
 The girl I've come to marry  
 I do not care for.

PAOLINO                But sir, you hardly know her ...

COUNT                   I have made up my mind;  
 I refuse to have her.

PAOLINO                But what about your promise?  
 How can you now go back on it?

COUNT                   Very smoothly and neatly,  
 By offering a simple substitution.  
 Take a look at her sister!  
 To marry such a jewel I am willing  
 To settle for a fraction of the dowry.  
 That should make everyone completely happy.  
 What a pearl, what a treasure!  
 All that a man could want!  
 You're close to her father.  
 Find him; address him;

                              Explain my proposition.  
 Urge him; persuade him;  
 Remind him of the money.

PAOLINO                (My undoing!)

COUNT                   Objections?

PAOLINO                Nothing, nothing at all

COUNT                   Then hurry! Go! Be forceful!

PAOLINO                (Over my head! The sword about to fall ... )

**Duet: Paolino and Count**

PAOLINO                Oh, sir! Entirely your own affair ...  
 Now please, sir, do not be offended ...  
 Of course, no harm intended,  
 But consider, think it over —  
 A maiden in despair!  
 Not so fast! Think it over!

COUNT                   What nonsense are you saying?  
I know what I am doing;  
My heart I am obeying.

PAOLINO                Weigh the consequences  
Before you lose your senses.  
Consider ... And ponder ...

                              Ah, you sow the seed of tragedy,  
Reap a harvest of dismay.  
A maiden's tears of agony  
Upon your heart must weigh.

                              The blow to youthful pride!  
Oh, spare her feelings,  
And cast her not aside.  
No, no, no, no!

COUNT                   No scruple can delay me;  
I'm firm in my decision.  
No argument can sway me;  
I'll change on no condition.

                              I saw the younger sister —  
What mortal could resist her?  
Her tiny hands intoxicate,  
Her face and features fascinate,  
Invigorate, at any rate  
They more than satisfy.

PAOLINO                Oh, sir! May I continue?  
Elisetta deserves to win you ...

COUNT                   Her charms on me are wasted;  
A finer wine I've tasted.

PAOLINO                Her virtues are so many!  
I could praise her to the skies.  
A girl as fair as any,  
An angel in disguise.

COUNT                   You go ahead and marry her;  
Myself I'd sooner die.

PAOLINO                Budding hopes now crushed and blighted  
You still could restore and renew.

COUNT                   My friend, I'd be delighted  
To give the girl to you.

PAOLINO            A lady broken-hearted,  
Discarded and rejected ...  
A blow so unexpected ...

COUNT                No matter, no matter!  
No, no, no, no!  
I'm firm in my decision.

PAOLINO            Think it over, consider ...

COUNT                No, no, no, no!  
I'll change on no condition.

PAOLINO            Budding hopes now crushed and blighted  
You still could restore and renew.

COUNT                The girl I gladly  
Bequeath to you.

PAOLINO            (A scene of mayhem now lies in wait;  
Appeals to reason pass him by.  
My forces fail to sway him  
However hard I try.)

COUNT                I saw the younger sister;  
What mortal could resist her?  
Her face and features fascinate;  
They more than satisfy.

                          No scruple can delay me;  
No argument can sway me.  
The other you can marry;  
Myself I'd sooner die.

(Exeunt)

**Recitative**

CAROLINA            (*entering*) Paolino is late bringing back an answer.  
I wait on pins and needles.  
Here comes the Count;  
Having talked with my husband,  
I hope and trust that he'll appease my father.

(Enter Count)

COUNT                (My golden opportunity!) Oh, Carolina!  
The time could not be better.  
A chance to speak alone with you in private.

CAROLINA            Ah, sir! You could not wish it  
Half so much as I!

COUNT                   To be with me?  
(Ah, sounds reassuring!)  
As we're speaking, Paolino  
Is talking with your father,  
Explaining and appealing for approval.  
Love so profound and tender  
Will win him over ...

CAROLINA               Truth and candor are bound to!  
Praise be to heaven  
We are out in the open!

COUNT                   (More than I even hoped!  
It's clear, she loves me!)  
Ah, My dear Carolina! You have made it so easy ...  
Though I came with plans to marry your sister,  
How can I say "I do"  
When I dislike her?  
And when from the moment I looked into your eyes,  
I knew it was love?

CAROLINA               Sir! What are you saying?

COUNT                   You knew before I spoke ...

CAROLINA               Is that the message  
You were so eager to give me?

COUNT                   This ... This only.  
Be gentle with a man  
That you have captivated,  
And offer in return some ray of hope ...

CAROLINA               So at the very moment  
You arrive to fulfill a sacred promise,  
You go back on your word?  
I can excuse a man  
Who is blinded, overcome by passion,  
But could never condone  
A breach of honor.

COUNT                   Come, come! You can't be serious.  
You will salvage my honor  
When you become my wife.

CAROLINA               Your wife?  
(Somewhere along the way  
I made a blunder!)

**Aria: Carolina**

CAROLINA

Pardon sir, you must excuse me;  
I confess the fault is mine.  
Overcome that you should choose me,  
With regret I must decline.

For this challenging position  
Little merit can I claim,  
And I've not the least ambition  
To acquire a noble name.

Find a better suited girl to marry,  
Someone not so plain and ordinary.  
Social grace and poise are needed  
For the role that she's to play.

I am neither pert nor pretty,  
Seldom clever, never witty;  
Still a silly ignoramus,  
Shy among the high and famous;  
Simple-minded, addle-pated,  
Barely, barely educated ...

Far above my social sphere,  
I will make you blush with shame.  
When the Lords and Ladies sneer,  
You I fear will bear the blame.

My scholastic skills are galling;  
You will find my French appalling;  
As a sample, for example,  
I can only say, "Merci beaucoup."

Even worse if you determine  
To converse with me in German.  
You can bet that you will get  
From me my one reply: "Ja, sehr gut."

Should you launch into discussion  
In Italian, Greek or Russian,  
On rebuttal do not bank;  
You will draw a total blank.

On the whole, I'm just a simple soul  
And not much more.  
Lovely eyes, but otherwise  
The lowly girl next door.

So wanting in means and manners, too,  
As quality I would hardly do.  
Oh, certainly not the wife for you!

*(Exeunt)*

## Finale Act I

*(Enter Geronimo, with Elisetta and Fidalma)*

GERONIMO            So you find the Count unfriendly  
                          And his manner ever colder?  
                          Well, well! But the world is on his shoulder,  
                          Oh, his head is in a cloud,  
                          Speculating, contemplating,  
                          Far above the common crowd.

ELISETTA            But a smile, at least a greeting —  
                          I'm not asking to be kissed.

FIDALMA            As a lover, he is frankly  
                          At the bottom of the list,  
                          The very last, the very last!

GERONIMO            You expect for men of title  
                          To behave as rabble do?  
                          For the noble, it is normal  
                          To be formal when they woo.

                          Shy caresses, billing, cooing —  
                          Out of season, nothing doing!  
                          Giggles we do not expect  
                          From the lofty and select.

PAOLINO            *(entering)* Come and see the banquet tables  
                          Decorated to perfection,  
                          Ready now for your inspection.  
                          Nothing, nothing but the best;  
                          You are bound to be impressed.

GERONIMO            What's he saying? A bank in Naples?

PAOLINO            Sir, the tables ... the decorations ...  
                          Silver goblets ... lighted candles.  
                          You are bound, sir, to be impressed.

GERONIMO            What the devil!  
                          Like a blasted bugle blaring!  
                          Do you think me hard of hearing?  
                          Lower, lower!  
                          You can give your tongue a rest.

ELISETTA and FIDALMA  
                          Come along, we're all invited  
                          To behold the festive table,  
                          Silver laden, candle lighted,  
                          Worthy of our noble guest.



ELISETTA                    (*coming forward*) Oh, deception and betrayal!  
Could perfidy be plainer?  
This blot upon my honor  
I'll not take lying down.

I'll play the tattletale!  
Oh, you false and fickle knave!  
Your contemptible behavior  
I'll spread all over town.

I'll scream and rant and rave!  
Your contemptible behavior,  
This scandalous behavior  
I'll spread all over town.

COUNT                      Scream all you like, no matter;  
I'll not like you any better.

CAROLINA                 Do listen. Don't be angry.

ELISETTA                 No, you hussy, no! You deceive me!

CAROLINA                 Sister, listen and believe me,  
I've never done you wrong.

COUNT                      No, no! She's been guiltless all along.

FIDALMA                    (*entering*) What's happened?  
And why this pandemonium?  
Why? Why?  
These screams would wake the dead.

ELISETTA                 The Count and my own sister!  
Not only has he kissed her,  
It's her he wants to wed!  
And I! Oh!  
With her, of course, it started,  
Slowly, slowly, slyly started —  
I heard it here myself.  
With a snicker I'm discarded  
And put upon the shelf.

FIDALMA                    Now let me get it straight:  
His passion newly stirred,  
As we felicitate,  
He's giving you the bird.

CAROLINA                 (*to Fidalma*) Do silence her a moment;  
The truth she then might see.

FIDALMA            My apprehensions heightened,  
I, too, might be enlightened  
If you provide the key.

COUNT              So let her whoop and holler,  
It's all the same to me.

**Quartet: Carolina, Elisetta, Fidalma, Count**

CAROLINA          Do silence her a moment;  
The truth she then might see.  
I've never done her wrong.

ELISETTA          Could perfidy be plainer?  
The truth is clear to see:  
She led the man along.

FIDALMA            I've not the slightest notion  
Who's right and who is wrong.

COUNT              Go on and whoop and holler,  
But I don't give a hang.

FIDALMA            Be silent! Be careful!  
Your father is coming.  
With echoes, as always  
The hallways are humming.  
A show of civility  
I would suggest,  
A delicate, delicate  
Matter at best.

GERONIMO          (*entering*) I heard a commotion,  
A clamor, a clatter,  
A volley of chatter,  
An army in battle.  
Is something the matter?  
Will no one speak out?  
Is everyone mute?  
You've nothing to tell?  
So what in the hell is the hubbub about?

PAOLINO            (*to himself*) My darling!  
Her tears she would bravely dissemble.  
To see her atremble  
Is breaking my heart.

TUTTI                The silence is heavy  
With fear and foreboding.  
So close to exploding,  
I {they} long for release.

GERONIMO            Speak up! What's going on?  
Speak out! Or let's have peace!

CAROLINA            A slight misunderstanding  
That got us in a dither.  
To learn the why and whither,  
I turn you to the Count.  
He is the person,  
The one person paramount;  
Let's hear it from the Count.

ELISETTA            She tries to falsify it!  
But I shall not be quiet.  
To enlighten you a little,  
I turn you to my Aunt.  
She is the judge  
And the jury par excellent:  
Let's hear it from my Aunt.

FIDALMA            Dear me, I too am baffled.  
I find it still a riddle  
That's yet to be unravelled —  
I'm hardly au courant.  
No, I am not,  
I am not what you seem to want:  
I'm hardly au courant.

GERONIMO            I know still less than when we started.

COUNT                *(taking Geronimo aside)*  
It touches on your daughters.  
I came to woo the elder  
Till the moment I beheld her;  
Then shifted to her sister,  
Unable to resist her.  
Quite unable, quite unable  
Quite unable to resist her.

                            To a lover, sir, be lenient.  
                            Not now, but when convenient,  
                            Together we can plan,  
                            Discuss it man to man.

GERONIMO            It's absolute insanity,  
This babble out of bedlam!

PAOLINO            Disaster in the making,  
But what's it all about?  
What? What?

GERONIMO            Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, who?  
                         Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, how?  
                         Wha, wha, wha, wha, wha, wha, what?  
                         This babble out of bedlam!  
                         I cannot figure out.

CAROLINA, ELISETTA, FIDALMA and COUNT  
                         Curb the shadows of suspicion;  
                         Postpone the agitation.  
                         For vital information  
                         You need but turn to me.

PAOLINO            This tangle of confusion  
                         Cries out for resolution  
                         Hemmed in by my position,  
                         I can but wait and see.

GERONIMO            This tangle of confusion  
                         Upsets my constitution.  
                         I'd stay in mint condition  
                         If they would just agree.

### **End of Act I**

## **ACT II**

### **Recitative**

GERONIMO            (*alone*) Like a scene from a madhouse!  
                         All jibber-jabber, mumbo-jumbo  
                         I can't make heads or tails of.  
                         But I intend to probe, get to the bottom.  
                         Ah, here you are!

(*Enter Count*)

                         Come in, come in, dear Count!  
                         Tell me once and for all,  
                         What's going on?

COUNT                My very reason for coming.  
                         To put the matter bluntly,  
                         In simple English:  
                         Elisetta I do not mean to marry.

GERONIMO            What! Turning down my daughter!

COUNT                The fact is that I find her  
                         So little to my liking,  
                         I'd never make her happy.

GERONIMO           But sir, have you gone mad?  
                          You do not like her?  
                          What has liking to do with it?  
                          These modern men!  
                          I protest!  
                          And Geronimo's a man and not a mouse.  
                          You have signed on the line;  
                          It has been settled.  
                          Need I repeat?  
                          You'll marry her and like it.

COUNT                And I repeat with a passion,  
                          I'm sticking to my guns.  
                          But I suggest we sit down and discuss it.  
                          I have in mind a fair and square agreement.

GERONIMO            You want to hear my verdict in a nutshell?  
                          I say to hell with you and your agreements!

**Duet: Geronimo and Count**

GERONIMO            While breath is in my body,  
                          In my body, body, body,  
                          A snub so gross and shoddy  
                          I shall not tolerate.  
                          My lovely daughter you will wed  
                          And that is that!

COUNT                Before we come to blows, sir  
                          Come to blows sir, blows sir, blows sir,  
                          Calm down and listen closer.  
                          But if you play the heavyweight,  
                          I'll answer tit for tat.

GERONIMO            My daughter you shall marry.

COUNT                I'm old enough to pick.

GERONIMO            I warn you, sir, be wary!

COUNT                I say again, no, no!

GERONIMO            Yes, yes, yes, yes!

COUNT                No, no, no, no!

GERONIMO and COUNT  
                          This overheated lunatic  
                          Refuses to let go.

GERONIMO           *(aside)* What a conniver, shifty and shady!  
Slick, sly, shifty and shady  
After deceiving, leaving a lady —  
High, dry, leaving a lady.  
Thoroughly rotten,  
Better forgotten,  
He is the man I want her to wed.

COUNT               *(also aside)* Hotter than hell, unwilling to mellow,  
Un, unwilling to mellow!  
How to appease the feisty old fellow?  
Feisty, feisty, feisty old fellow?  
Bursting asunder,  
Calling down thunder,  
How can he understand what is said?

GERONIMO           Now for the question, has he decided?

COUNT               Now for the question, has he subsided?

GERONIMO           Have you decided to wed my daughter?

COUNT               Suppose I provided a better offer?  
My new proposal  
May calm you down.

GERONIMO           At your disposal —  
Proceed, go on.

COUNT               Instead of Elisetta, Elisetta,  
I'll make you a proposal even better, even better:  
I'll take your younger daughter  
For fifty thousand less.

GERONIMO           The plan is quite enchanting, quite enchanting;  
A man of understanding, understanding.  
The plan has merit in it  
That argues for success.  
I'll need at least a minute  
Before I acquiesce.

COUNT               Yes, take at least a minute  
Before you acquiesce.

GERONIMO           *(aside)* Due to changing circumstances,  
With the focus on finances,  
His proposal heaven knows'll  
Bring us closer to a deal.  
Yes, indeed, his new proposal  
Has a practical appeal.

COUNT                    *(aside)* Mulling over, mulling over  
All the money he will save ...

GERONIMO                Fifty thousand to recover  
Is a tidy, tidy sum ...

COUNT                    His outspoken indignation  
He will learn to overcome.

GERONIMO                After deep consideration ...

COUNT                    Mulling over all the money ...

GERONIMO                We are seeing eye to eye.

COUNT                    After rapid calculation ...

GERONIMO                Yes, indeed! Yes, indeed!  
I am ready to reply.

COUNT                    He's mulling over, mulling over all the money ...

GERONIMO                Yes, indeed! Oh, Yes, indeed!  
The new arrangement I can buy.  
*(rising)* After brooding and debating ...

COUNT                    *(also rising)* Say it, say it! I am waiting!

GERONIMO                Having brooded, I've concluded ...

COUNT                    Let me hear it, let me share it!

GERONIMO                Your proposal has some merit;  
I accept your proposition.  
I agree, though, on condition  
Elisetta, too, complies.

COUNT                    Right away, to her direct me!  
I predict she will reject me  
With a speed that may surprise.

GERONIMO and COUNT  
With the deal all set for sealing,  
We're again the best of friends,  
On a wave of tender feeling  
As we count the dividends.

*(Exit Geronimo)*

**Recitative**

COUNT                    (*alone*) Persuading Elisetta to refuse me  
Should not be very difficult ...  
Oh, oh, Paolino, Paolino!

(*Enter Paolino*)

PAOLINO                (Not another commission!)

COUNT                    On my own, I have succeeded.  
Her father is amenable;  
He gives me Carolina.

PAOLINO                But ... instead of her sister?

COUNT                    Absolutely! ... Oh, lucky me!  
And it's you who must bring her the good news.  
Tell her nothing is standing in our way.  
We mustn't keep her guessing,  
For I have just obtained her father's blessing.

(*Exit Count*)

PAOLINO                (*alone*) Out of the frying pan into the fire!  
Before was bad enough,  
But now we're face to face  
With total disaster.  
But wait! ... There still remains one helping hand.  
There is dear old Fidalma.  
She seems to like me ...  
Almost a second mother.  
Our last ray of hope!  
We have no other.

FIDALMA                (*entering*) (Quiet and pensive,  
I find him here alone;  
The time and setting suitable  
For sharing tender secrets ... )

PAOLINO                (Something is on her mind;  
Perhaps I had best approach her later.)

FIDALMA                (I believe he is timid ...  
The bashful lover ... )

PAOLINO                (Come on, Paolino,  
Tempus fugit.  
You'd better bite the bullet.)  
Have you a moment?

FIDALMA            Of course, dear Paolino.  
                         So you were not entirely unaware of my presence?

PAOLINO            I didn't dare disturb you,  
                         As you seemed deep in thought.

FIDALMA            Full of thoughts unexpressed  
                         That long to come out.  
                         And I am certain  
                         We have much in common.

PAOLINO            How right you are!

FIDALMA            Paolino?

PAOLINO            Fidalma ...

FIDALMA            You have been silent,  
                         But your heart I can read —  
                         The secret passion  
                         That's gained the upper hand ...

PAOLINO            So irresistible!

FIDALMA            On me you pin your hopes ...

PAOLINO            There's no one else ...

FIDALMA            Your eyes have told me all.  
                         An experienced woman  
                         Doesn't need many clues.  
                         From just a tiny hint  
                         She gets the picture.

PAOLINO            (Uncanny intuition!)

FIDALMA            Come, come! Open up your heart.  
                         The secret it contains I know already.

PAOLINO            Though I tried to conceal it,  
                         Love! Yes, love!

FIDALMA            I knew all along ...  
                         A woman does.

PAOLINO            I should have trusted  
                         In your kindness and wisdom  
                         And spoken sooner.  
                         Do explain to your brother ...

FIDALMA            Leave him to me.  
 Besides, he's very fond of you;  
 He'll rejoice at the news.

PAOLINO            You're an angel!  
 Tell him! Tell him!

FIDALMA            Immediately!

PAOLINO            Let him know how we feel.

FIDALMA            But first, to leave no question,  
 And put your mind at rest,  
 I accept your proposal.

PAOLINO            Proposal?

FIDALMA            I shall be yours!

PAOLINO            Mine!

FIDALMA            Yes, my darling!  
 Such happiness demands a kiss.  
 But why do you turn pale?  
 Are you unwell?

PAOLINO            (Good Lord, what did I say  
 That got me into this?)

**Trio: Paolino, Fidalma, Carolina**

PAOLINO            Oh, my head! The room is turning ...  
 My eyes are swimming ...  
 Oh, my head! I'm getting dizzy ...  
 The light is dimming.  
 Near collapse, I start to stagger,  
 Start to stagger ...

FIDALMA            Just a trifle, just a trifle  
 That a wife'll put to right.  
 All my life'll be devoted  
 To your pleasure and delight.

PAOLINO            Holy saints! My head is burning ...  
 The light is dimming ...  
 I am coming to the end ...  
 Any minute to the end ...

FIDALMA                    Minor matter, secondary,  
When we marry you will mend.  
Mustn't worry, darling boy;  
Merely weak with sudden joy.  
My darling Paolino! Paolino! (*He faints*)  
Good heavens! He's fainted!  
Oh, dear me! Oh, dear me!  
Please, somebody hear me!  
Is nobody there?  
Is nobody there?

(*Enter Carolina*)

My promise of marriage has answered his prayer,  
But the pleasure was more than the darling could bear.  
Far more than the darling could bear.

CAROLINA                    What is wrong? What is the matter?  
Tell me all. I want the truth.  
Dear God! Say what has happened!  
Why don't you answer?

FIDALMA                    The dear boy, so sensitive!  
By rapture transported,  
His patience rewarded,  
He's flat on the floor.  
I'll go fetch a bottle I keep on the shelf;  
The lift that it gives I've discovered myself.  
My dear, you remain; I'll be back toute de suite.  
The bottle I have got'll  
Get him back on his feet.

(*Exit Fidalma*)

CAROLINA                    Unfaithful! The thought is breaking my heart!  
How it hurts!  
How I want to disbelieve it!  
Out of nowhere  
She has struck a mortal blow.  
Come, wake up! Speak out! Deny it!  
For my soul is torn apart.

PAOLINO                    (*coming to*) Carolina, Carolina!  
Hurry, hurry! Go at once!

CAROLINA                    With my Aunt infatuated,  
You have left me desolated,  
Overcome with grief and pain.

PAOLINO                    Quiet, quiet for the moment!  
Later, later I'll explain.

CAROLINA                    Torn asunder, now I wonder  
If I'll ever love again.

FIDALMA                   *(returning)* Back already with a bracer  
For the lad that I adore.  
But I find you bright as ever,  
Though I left you on the floor.  
In the bliss of expectation  
You may give my hand a kiss.  
Take it, kiss it, ah, mon cher!

PAOLINO                   Do I dare be so audacious?

CAROLINA                 Auntie, Auntie! Goodness gracious!

FIDALMA                   Don't be bashful, Paolino.  
*(to Carolina)* You can mind your own affair.

**Trio: Fidalma, Carolina, Paolino**

FIDALMA                   Having Carolina present  
Makes for tension not unpleasant;  
'Twould be good  
If she would  
Simply mind her own affair.  
Better, better  
Let her mind her own affair.

CAROLINA and PAOLINO

Having dear old Auntie present  
Makes for tension most unpleasant.  
Not too good,  
Not too good  
For a lover in despair.  
Bitter, bitter  
For a lover in despair.

*(Exit Fidalma)*

**Recitative**

CAROLINA                 Follow, follow! Go after her!  
No, wait a moment.  
Come on, tell. I'm curious.  
How many wives do you want?  
Truth comes to light!  
Yes, now I understand  
Your eagerness to keep our marriage secret.  
Perhaps it gives you pleasure  
To deceive two unsuspecting women —  
One as a wife,  
The other as a mistress.

PAOLINO                   Stop it, stop it! Do listen!  
I can explain.

CAROLINA I shall die of despair.

PAOLINO My word of honor!

CAROLINA *(weeping)* Then you'll be free to marry her;  
I wish you satisfaction.

PAOLINO Ah, no! I have a plan.  
My love! Please trust me.  
The time's ripe for action!

**Aria: Paolino**

PAOLINO Up before the dawn is breaking,  
While the world is soundly sleeping,  
While the world, released from care, is soundly sleeping,  
Down a ladder, softly creeping  
So that none can overhear,  
From the window, down a ladder,  
In the dark we'll disappear.

Groping, groping, cloaked in shadow,  
We'll unlatch the garden door,  
Where in readiness awaiting  
We will find a coach and four.

Goading onward the panting horses,  
We'll outpace pursuing forces.  
On the open road we'll gallop  
Toward a village near Marseilles.

PAOLINO There resides a dear relation,  
Old and ailing, yet devoted;  
When we reach our destination  
We will have a place to stay,  
And our trust she'll not betray.

By and by the dust will settle;  
Cooler heads will then prevail.  
Called upon to prove our mettle,  
Love is ours! We cannot fail.

*(Exeunt)*

*(Enter Count with Elisetta)*

**Recitative**

COUNT Dear, there are certain things  
I ought to tell you  
Before we march to the altar —  
Some imperfections you did not envision  
That possibly might change your decision ...

**Aria: The Count with Elisetta**

COUNT                   If you doubt me, stay and hear a word of warning:  
You compel me to be candid.  
I'm deceitful, dissolute and underhanded,  
And I babble in my sleep.  
Cross and cranky in the morning,  
For the record let me add  
I'm a blunderbuss, a bounder and a cad.

Would you wish to be deflowered  
By a bully and a coward?  
Mull it over, take a look before you leap.  
Who would want a ne'er-do-well  
Only good for raising hell?

ELISETTA               Full of vigor, full of spirit,  
Silly boy, think nothing of it.  
From my presence you will profit.  
Here's the rule that I go by:  
Every ointment has its fly.

COUNT                   No cold shivers rise within you?  
Pray allow me to continue.  
Plain and simply, I'm a boozier and a bastard,  
Seldom sober, often plastered,  
Hard to handle, hedonistic,  
Diabolic and sadistic.  
Such a monster would you wed?  
Do you want him in your bed?

ELISETTA               Cruel, selfish, loose and lawless:  
None are perfect, none are flawless.  
Much improvement lies ahead.

COUNT                   Wait a bit, I've barely started:  
Somber, silent, heavy-hearted,  
Overbearing, domineering —  
Crocodiles are more endearing.  
Plus a temper that displeases  
I've a dozen rare diseases.  
Out of shape and doing poorly,  
Fat and balding prematurely,  
Neither brainy nor overbright,  
Sullen, surly, day and night.  
Always itching for a fight ...

ELISETTA               Plain speaking I adore.

COUNT                   Not so hasty — there is more.

ELISETTA               Frankly, I expected worse.

COUNT

I have yet another verse.

Coarse and brutal,  
Mere reform I fear is futile.  
Feather-weighted, dissipated,  
Broken down, dilapidated,  
Foolish, self-infatuated —  
You begin to get the drift:  
I am not the perfect gift.

Drug addicted, and a smoker,  
Narrow-minded, mediocre;  
On the whole, I must confess  
I'm the quintessential mess,  
A total mess, a total mess.

ELISETTA

I've a feeling, a certain notion  
You're concealing your real devotion.  
You would put me to the test  
With a harmless little jest.  
It is clear from the above,  
You are hopelessly in love.  
Why so timid? Why so shy?

COUNT

Camouflage is unconvincing,  
So I'll say it without wincing:  
Though unkind, I seem to find you unappealing.  
For your lovely face  
I've not a trace of feeling.  
Let some other devil marry you, not I;  
Some poor simpleton, not I.

*(Exit Count)*

**Recitative**

ELISETTA

*(alone)* I'm holding on!  
A Countess can afford  
Some minor irritations.

FIDALMA

*(entering)* Elisetta, my dear,  
Is something on your mind?

ELISETTA

I would put nothing past her!  
We must pluck Carolina from the Count  
Or I foresee disaster.  
We must send her away.

FIDALMA

That is imperative!  
But you are much mistaken  
If you think that her eye lights on the Count.  
No, no! It's Paolino she is after.

ELISETTA                    That puppy she can have.

FIDALMA                    Not if I can prevent it!  
She has to go,  
But the question is where?

ELISETTA                    I would recommend  
A nice retirement in a convent,  
Far away, out of mischief.

FIDALMA                    Sooner the better!  
I am with you.  
The minx deserves no warning.  
Just let me handle this.  
The little hussy  
Will be on the road  
By early morning.

*(Enter Geronimo)*

GERONIMO                  *(to Elisetta)* Well, well! Were you persuaded  
To step aside  
And call off your engagement?

ELISETTA                    No, never! Why should I be made to suffer  
Because a scheming sister  
Wants what belongs to me?

FIDALMA                    Brother, we have to act right away.  
I blush for Carolina!  
She is out of control,  
Creating scandal and consternation!  
A convent is the answer.

ELISETTA                    The obvious solution.

GERONIMO                  Yes, yes. A grand old nation ...

FIDALMA                    It's either her or me.  
She goes to the convent,  
Or I shall not remain here one minute longer.  
Need I add  
That my widow's mite goes with me?

ELISETTA                    So why the hesitation?

GERONIMO                  Give me some time.  
A difficult decision ...

**Trio: Fidalma, Elisetta, Geronimo**

FIDALMA            We have the answer,  
                         The right solution!

ELISETTA           The perfect plan, sir:  
                         Complete seclusion.

BOTH                She must go right away  
                         Into a hideaway.  
                         I say in summary,  
                         A quiet nunnery  
                         Would be a most refining atmosphere.  
                         (At any rate, to me it's very clear,  
                         We have to get the hussy out of here.)

GERONIMO         Why are you screaming into my ear?  
                         A person would suppose I cannot hear.  
                         Now what was that about the atmosphere?  
                         A possibility!  
                         Though rather drastic,  
                         To go monastic  
                         Could be the key.

ELISETTA and FIDALMA

                         With holy sisters  
                         Give her asylum  
                         Where rude intruders  
                         Dare not defile 'em.

                         A place of piety,  
                         Of peace and purity,  
                         Select society,  
                         Complete security  
                         For Carolina,  
                         Dear Carolina —  
                         What do you say?

                         We simply foist her  
                         Into a cloister.  
                         There she can stay  
                         Out of harm's way.  
                         Have you decided?

GERONIMO         Have I divided?  
                         Divided what?

ELISETTA and FIDALMA

                         We are not yelling,  
                         But simply telling  
                         You how one can handle the situation.

GERONIMO Hell and damnation! You needn't shout.  
I know exactly what it's all about.  
You needn't shout.

ELISETTA A quiet convent for Carolina ...

GERONIMO We try and con gentle Carolina ...

FIDALMA She'll be so happy in quarantine ...

GERONIMO She was slap happy at seventeen ...

ELISETTA A life of simple dedication ...

GERONIMO A something symbol of the nation ...

FIDALMA Of pious deeds and meditation ...

ELISETTA Of pious deeds and meditation.

GERONIMO No need to bellow or throw a scene;  
One at a time, tell me what you mean.

ELISETTA and FIDALMA

A quiet convent for Carolina  
With no outsiders to intervene.  
In meditation  
And contemplation,  
She will be happy in quarantine.

GERONIMO No need to bellow or throw a scene;  
One at a time, tell me what you mean.

*(Exeunt Elisetta and Fidalma)*

**Recitative**

GERONIMO *(alone)* Why to a convent?  
If she is of a mind to wed the Count,  
Who am I to oppose it?  
A daughter could do worse!  
Not so hasty ...  
There is my sister  
I must not overlook.  
That flashing eye  
Should serve as a warning.

If she employs the power of the purse,  
I'll have to beg and borrow.  
No recourse but the convent!  
But how to break the news to Carolina?  
I want her out of the house  
First thing tomorrow!

*(Enter Carolina)*

CAROLINA (I have made up my mind!  
I must speak out and take the risk.  
But thinking and doing  
Are two quite different things.  
Oh, heaven! Please help me!)  
Dearest father!  
On my knees I beg you for mercy ...

GERONIMO What's the matter? What is wrong?  
Why are you kneeling?  
Fiddlesticks! Stand up and say it.

CAROLINA Even though guilty ...

GERONIMO Say no more! I know already  
Why you are pleading.  
Your sister and your Aunt  
Have told you my intention;  
Tomorrow you'll be taking  
A pleasant little journey  
To the convent —  
You need some peace and quiet,  
Time for reflection and meditations ...

CAROLINA Captive in a convent!  
No, father, no!

GERONIMO That is for me, not you, to decide.

CAROLINA Please, not so hasty!  
Give me time to prepare.

GERONIMO Come, come! It's settled.  
No reason to delay so.  
You will leave in the morning  
Because I say so.

*(Exit Geronimo)*

CAROLINA *(alone)* The signs are dark and ominous,  
Worse and worse by the minute.  
My father turned against me,  
Both my Aunt and my sister  
Up in arms, angry and jealous.  
Where can I find the courage  
To gather up my nerve  
And make my confession?

**Recitative**

CAROLINA            Can I maintain my silence  
                              If by tomorrow  
                              I am forced to a convent?  
                              Agony! A raging battle,  
                              With my soul in the middle —  
                              Only confusion!

                              Heaven! Look down and guide me;  
                              Show the way through the dark;  
                              Breathe hope and comfort  
                              Upon my heart,  
                              My troubled heart.

                              But — does heaven hear me?  
                              Does heaven hear me?  
                              Ah, my heart knows the answer:  
                              I call and plead for pity,  
                              But no one hears;  
                              And heaven with a shrug  
                              Leaves me to drown  
                              In tears.

COUNT                *(entering)* Dearest, why are you weeping?  
                              And why the agitation? Speak out!  
                              You already have my heart;  
                              My life I'd give to make you happy.  
                              Nothing else in the world is so important.

CAROLINA            Ah, if only I could!

COUNT                I love you,  
                              And if that love can be of service,  
                              I am at your command.  
                              You need but name it.

CAROLINA            Is that a solemn promise?

*(Elisetta, Fidalma and Geronimo enter quietly and listen)*

COUNT                My word of honor you can depend on.  
                              A pledge I place upon your hand with a kiss.  
                              Now say what weighs on your mind.

ELISETTA            Caught in the act!

FIDALMA             Now let the minx deny it!

ELISETTA            What further proof is needed?

FIDALMA           The cunning little vixen!  
Hell-bent on a husband,  
She allows any man to kiss her hand  
Without a trace of scruple.

GERONIMO         All you have said and more I see confirmed.

CAROLINA         Father dear ...

GERONIMO         Hold your tongue!

COUNT             Let me explain it ...

ELISETTA         You've said enough!

COUNT             But if ...

GERONIMO         Please, no excuses!

CAROLINA         But I ...

ELISETTA         You go to the convent!

FIDALMA           Tomorrow morning!

CAROLINA         (This is either a nightmare  
Or I am crazy!)

**Quintet: Carolina, Count, Geronimo, Elisetta, Fidalma**

CAROLINA         Grant a stay of execution!  
Spare me this humiliation.  
Let me wrestle with my sorrow;  
I'm not ready for tomorrow.

                      Would I rob from my own sister?  
Snatch away her rightful title?  
Never, no, no, no!  
Never, never would I stoop so low!

*(to Count)* On my head a surge of slander!  
You alone can be my savior;  
You can vouch for my behavior,  
Shield me from this heavy blow.  
You can shield me from this heavy blow.

COUNT             Three to one against a lady ...

ELISETTA and FIDALMA

She's a schemer! She's a plotter!  
Any knucklehead could spot her.  
To the convent she must go!

GERONIMO To the convent she must go!

CAROLINA Just a few days, for getting ready ...  
That is all that I implore!

ELISETTA, FIDALMA, GERONIMO  
No, no, no!

COUNT She is asking for so little ...

CAROLINA That is all I implore.  
You are tigers, out for blood,  
Brutal tigers out for blood,  
Cold and heartless to the core.

COUNT How can I contain my anger  
While her pleading they ignore?

ELISETTA, FIDALMA, GERONIMO  
She is leaving by tomorrow;  
Give her not a minute more.

CAROLINA Give me just a little longer,  
Time at least for getting ready.  
Three days only! Three days only!  
That is all that I implore;  
I am asking nothing more.

COUNT Three to one against a lady!  
She is asking for so little,  
And that little they ignore.

*(Exeunt all but Elisetta)*

**Aria: Elisetta**

ELISETTA

Watch out! For as sure as my name is Elisetta,  
I'll have my revenge; I will launch my vendetta,  
I'll launch my vendetta.

Her way she has wangled;  
The Count she's entangled.  
Deluded, and taken unaware,  
He fell into her snare.  
His blunder I'll pardon.  
On her, Elisetta  
Will launch a vendetta.  
The Count, too unguarded,  
Was taken unaware.  
The Count was taken unaware.

As soon as the dear is no longer distracted,  
He'll fall to his knees for the way he has acted.  
And then starting over,  
His love I'll recover,  
And after a penitent plea,  
His hand and his heart he will offer to me,  
Will offer to me.

*(Exit)*

*(Enter Geronimo and Paolino)*

GERONIMO

Some work for you, Paolino!  
Here's a brief but urgent note to be delivered  
To the Mother Superior at the convent.  
It requires special courier,  
For it must reach her  
Tomorrow without fail.  
Before you go to bed, oh, yes! —  
There is something else.  
Tell the coachman to have a carriage waiting  
At break of day tomorrow  
With my four finest horses. *(Paolino gasps)*  
Eh? You are saying ...

PAOLINO

Not a word, not a word!

GERONIMO

Well, then. To your duties!  
Me, I am off to bed.  
Come, come! You mustn't tarry.  
Why in the world  
Are daughters so contrary?

*(Exit Geronimo)*

PAOLINO                   *(alone)* I can waver no longer.  
He's gone beyond the limit.  
Incarcerating my wife inside a convent!  
But it fits to perfection!  
Oh, yes, indeed! I'll carry out his order —  
A coach and four will be ready.  
But they will take us  
In the opposite direction!

*(Exit)*

**Duet: Count and Elisetta**

COUNT                   *(alone)* I'm in love with Carolina,  
And desire enflames my breast.  
Ah! Till I know her feelings better  
I can have no peace or rest.

For a single look of favor  
There is nothing I'd not do;  
From the vultures I would save her:  
Sister, Aunt and Father, too.

ELISETTA               *(entering)* Though I thought he must be sleeping,  
Here I find him wide awake.  
I've a deep and dread suspicion  
That I cannot seem to shake.  
Deep suspicion,  
Dread suspicion  
That I cannot seem to shake.

COUNT                   I could pour it on with passion,  
But I fear a painful scene ...

ELISETTA               Sir, your pardon!  
Here I find you all alone,  
Open-eyed, and deep in thought.  
Up so late, up so late!  
What does this encounter mean?

COUNT                   Only this, only this:  
Seeking quiet, I've been caught.

ELISETTA               Silly man, in my opinion  
What you need is a companion.

COUNT                   Thank you kindly. Most obliging.  
Not to be too bluff and blatant,  
I'll consider what you said.  
But now it's late and  
Time at last to go to bed.

ELISETTA               Buona notte till tomorrow.

COUNT Pleasant dreams. Sleep well, my lady.

ELISETTA (Forced to wait until tomorrow,  
My suspicions I will keep.)

COUNT (Trouble I've no need to borrow;  
I had best pretend to sleep.)

*(Exeunt)*

## **Finale Act II**

*(Enter Paolino and Carolina surreptitiously. It is dark)*

PAOLINO Be of good cheer, my darling!  
Now is the time to do it.  
Quietly, stay beside me.  
Carefully, cautiously  
While the rest are sleeping.

CAROLINA Give me your hand to guide me,  
For I am faint with fear.  
Eager, though faint with fear,  
I tremble! I tremble!  
Even with freedom, with freedom so near.

CAROLINA and PAOLINO  
Living a lie no longer,  
Now is our courage tested.  
No matter the fear, the odds, the anger,  
Courage and love are bound to prevail.  
Flourish or fail, we must persevere.

Living a lie no longer,  
Now is our courage tested.  
No matter the odds, the anger, yes!  
Love and determination must prevail.

PAOLINO Listen! Quiet, I heard a noise ...  
Yes! Listen! A footstep down the hall ...

CAROLINA and PAOLINO  
Someone's already on the way.  
Our departure we'd best delay.  
Back to the room!  
Back to the room!  
Better delay than run the risk of losing all.

*(They retreat to Carolina's room)*

ELISETTA *(entering)*  
 Something stirring, someone speaking ...  
 Try as I would, I heard no more.  
 Soft in the dark, a floorboard squeaking ...  
 Then a rustle  
 And a murmur  
 And the creak of an opening door.  
 My suspicions I'll explore.

*(at Carolina's door)*  
 From inside ... soft, soft! ... a whisper!  
 Ah, ah! A whisper!  
 So the Count has joined my sister  
 For a midnight rendezvous.  
 A rustle, a murmur,  
 An amorous sigh ...  
 The Count pays a call upon my sister.  
 Oh, but I know what to do!

*(at Fidalma's door)*  
 Oh, Auntie! Come out here!  
 It's shocking! Appalling!  
 I quiver all over with shame.

FIDALMA *(from inside)* Who's knocking? Who's calling?

ELISETTA It's I ... me ... Elisetta!

*(at Geronimo's door)*  
 Oh, father, come out here!  
 A godawful scandal!

GERONIMO *(from inside)*  
 Who's screaming? Who's shouting? Who's raising the roof?  
 So why are you beating and pounding the door?  
 And what is the screaming and hollering for?  
 An angel of mercy would fly off the handle.

ELISETTA Wake up and come out here.  
 A scandal! A scandal!  
 A blot on the family name.

FIDALMA What tale are you telling?

GERONIMO What talk of misdoing?

FIDALMA What stark revelation?

GERONIMO What trouble is brewing?

FIDALMA What lurid sensation?

GERONIMO            This screaming and yelling,  
This frantic yoo-hooing  
Means trouble is brewing.

ELISETTA            The Count with my sister  
This minute pays a visit.  
I call it appalling,  
Unlawful and illicit.  
Illicit, unlawful,  
Too ghastly, too awful!

The door locked, the lights out,  
The two all alone —  
The scoundrel betrays me  
And he must atone.

ELISETTA, FIDALMA, GERONIMO  
Count, oh Count!  
We know that you're inside.  
Count, oh Count!  
A scandal and disgrace  
Impossible to hide.  
Come out and face the fact:  
We have caught you in the act.

COUNT                (*emerging from another door*)  
Ah, you called? The Count at your service.  
Here at your service!  
Such insulting allegations!  
The indignity!  
The insane insinuations!  
So the Count now comes to the call;  
Do explain this mad folderol.

ELISETTA, FIDALMA, GERONIMO  
What an error! What a blunder!  
Our blush you'll understand.  
Pardon, pardon! Oh, forgive us!  
We deserve the reprimand  
For this encounter so unplanned.

COUNT                You are all intoxicated.

GERONIMO            (*pointing to Elisetta*) She's the one that bears the blame.

ELISETTA            Think what nonsense you prefer,  
Someone is in there all the same.

FIDALMA and GERONIMO

There is clearly no foundation  
To her wild imagination.  
We can call her little bluff,  
Make her blush for shame.

ELISETTA, FIDALMA, GERONIMO

Carolina! Open, open!  
Open, open, Carolina!  
Kindly step outside a minute;  
We can settle this affair.  
You will see there's nothing {something} in it  
No {an} untimely caller there.

*(Carolina and Paolino emerge from the room)*

ELISETTA, FIDALMA, GERONIMO

What a shock! My eyes are deceiving me!  
This is the new morality!  
What a shock!  
The sheer audacity!  
Never, never has the trail  
Led to sin on such a scale.

CAROLINA and PAOLINO

Sir, we humbly kneel before you;  
For indulgence we implore you.

GERONIMO            Begging indulgence?

FIDALMA             What are you saying?

GERONIMO           What were you doing?

FIDALMA             What are you hiding?

CAROLINA and PAOLINO

We plead for mercy and understanding.  
Love made us do it!  
How, how to say it?  
Oh, sir, we were married  
Two months ago.

FIDALMA and GERONIMO

Secretly married!

CAROLINA and PAOLINO

Yes, now you know.

GERONIMO           What gross deception! A rank betrayal!  
No, no! Your pleading's of no avail,  
Of no avail.  
Father no longer, curses upon you!  
I disinherit and I disown you!  
Out of my house!  
And curses upon you!  
Ragged and hungry,  
Beg for your bread over land and sea.  
Get out, get out, get out, get out!  
Go, beg for your bread over land and sea,  
But never come begging to bother me.  
Never come begging to bother me.

CAROLINA and PAOLINO  
Father, forgive us!  
Love was the reason.  
Love made us do it!

FIDALMA            They have deceived you, now they shall rue it.  
We are betrayed — That's all there is to it.  
Show them no mercy,  
Oh, what a nerve!  
Give them their due,  
Yes, give them what they well deserve.

CAROLINA and PAOLINO  
Oh, reconsider!  
Say you forgive us,  
For we intended harm to none.  
And after all, sir, what's done is done.

COUNT              As a man of worldly wisdom,  
My advice can well be trusted.  
Why stay angry and disgusted  
When the case can be adjusted  
By adopting a different line?  
  
Sir, my love for Carolina  
Summons forth my finer nature.  
You will pardon her, I'll wager,  
If I make Elisetta mine.

ELISETTA           I, too, have a finer nature;  
There is sense in what he says.  
A wise proposal!  
I would gladly acquiesce.  
Father, dear, you must say yes.

GERONIMO           *(to Fidalma)* What to answer?

FIDALMA            *(to Geronimo)* You go first.

GERONIMO           After you.

FIDALMA            No, after you.

CAROLINA and PAOLINO  
                           Oh, forgive us!  
                           Pardon, pardon and forgive us!

GERONIMO           You had better start to pack;  
                           Leave my house and don't come back.

CAROLINA and PAOLINO  
                           Oh, forgive us!  
                           Pardon, pardon and forgive us!

GERONIMO           You implore and plead in vain;  
                           Never speak to me again.

COUNT               If the rift cannot be mended,  
                           If your mind is firmly set,  
                           That hand I extended  
                           I withdraw with deep regret.

GERONIMO           I'm outraged and dishonored,  
                           Violated and offended,  
                           Much offended! — Yet ...  
                           Let's forgive and let's forget.

TUTTI                Light of heart, rejuvenated,  
                           We proclaim a happy ending.  
                           Wedding bells, although belated,  
                           Soon will ring in celebration  
                           Of the love that found a way.

                          To all friends an invitation  
                           To the rites and revels pending,  
                           To the feasting,  
                           And the dancing  
                           And the singing  
                           That crown our play.

                          Bells will ring in celebration  
                           Of the love that found a way.  
                           To all friends an invitation  
                           To the revels of the day.  
                           Come, share the revels of the day!

**End of the Opera**