

# DONIZETTI

## BETLY

English Version by Donald Pippin

*Scene: an Alpine landscape. In the foreground, Betly's simple cottage.*

### CHORUS OF FARMERS AND SHEPHERDS

As we greet the rising sun,  
Daniel soon will claim his bride.  
Stay around to share the fun  
When the puzzled pair collide.  
Lie low! Lie low!

Betly gone? Where can she be?  
Not here, not there,  
No hide nor hair.  
Did she make a get-away  
Just as we begin the play?

Daniel also! Where can he be?  
Disappeared? Search left and right  
He's not in sight.  
Look high and low,  
It's still no-show.

Even though she treats him badly,  
Simple lad, he loves her madly.  
Simple lad, he loves her madly,  
Ever falling at her feet.

To badger Betly  
And to get him to forget her,  
We have sent a phony letter  
With a message short and sweet,  
A tender message short and sweet.

Here enters the lover  
While reading the letter.  
Let's go under cover,  
The sooner the better.

Re-reading the letter,

The bait he'll swallow.  
(He'll swallow the bait.)  
Stay quiet and follow.

**DANIEL** (*enters in great excitement, holding a letter, oblivious to all others, who have discreetly withdrawn*)

Do I dream? My darling, mine alone!  
Mine forever, a gift from heaven.



What a day of joy and won-der! Rays of sun-light af-ter rain.  
Till now I've never known  
The peace that follows pain.

Mine forever! A gift from heaven!

Scorned and taunted, clearly unwanted,  
Yet my tears were not in vain;  
Now undaunted,  
Yes, I'd go through it all again.

Soon to become my bride,  
Held close in a warm embrace,  
To you I can then confide  
All I've endured in the chase.

Those lonely nights I've prayed --  
The pain I cannot deny.  
Tit for tat, I'm now repaid.  
Yes, I'm in love, soon to hear  
You say "I do! I'll love you till I die."  
For me! For you!  
No more I'll pine and sigh

The happy home that lies ahead  
Abundantly repays  
The pain of former days  
For I'm in love, soon to wed.  
The joy of days to come I see instead,  
For I'm in love and soon to wed  
The darling of my heart.

*The chorus comes out of hiding.*



**BETLY, *entering***



My cab-in's all I've got, no state-ly man- sion.  
Quite happy with my lot,  
I'm free and single.

No man has ever made  
Me throb or tingle.  
For love I'd never trade  
My carefree days.

If some rude fellow.  
All high ad mighty,  
Orders fidelity  
Or even begs it,  
I merely say to him.  
Flippant and flighty,  
"Sir, it's been charming;  
There is the exit!"

Freedom! I dearly love it!  
No man I put above it.  
Choosing to live alone, yes!  
I am happy on my own.

No man has ever made  
Me throb or tingle.  
I shall stay single,  
But happy and free.  
Give me liberty!

**DANIEL (*entering*)**

I had no trouble eating!  
But for sleeping ...  
I'm far too excited.  
What a letter! An elixir of love....  
Bliss! There she is! My darling!

**BETLY**

Oh, only you. I'm busy.

**DANIEL**

Here on pins and needles,  
And not a moment wasted.  
Any wonder?  
Now where have you been off to?



**Brave or not, at least appear it.**

**DANIEL**

**From my heart the blood is draining;  
I am wounded to the core.  
You can banter, little knowing  
Death is knocking at my door.**

**BETLY**

**Brace up! Have courage,**

**DANIEL**

**I'm mortified. What now?  
The word has carried.  
I've shouted from the rooftop  
That we are getting married.**

**BETLY**

**Outrageous!**

**DANIEL**

**My goose and gander, both my turkeys, slaughtered!  
All plucked and feathered.**

**BETLY**

**Prematurely.**

**DANIEL**

**And the chickens!  
I've laid out the china  
And polished up the pewter,  
The silver platter!**

**BETLY**

**But all for naught!**

**DANIEL**

**To celebrate a glorious wedding!**

**BETLY**

**Ah! You are madder, madder, madder, madder,  
Madder than a hatter.**

**DANIEL**

**Besides ...**

**BETLY**

**What next?**

**DANIEL**

**I went ahead,  
Drew up the marriage contract.**

**BETLY**

**Golly!**

**DANIEL**

**Drawn up and notarized.**

**BETLY**

**You took a lot for granted.**

**DANIEL** I name you sole inheritor ...  
My house, my farm, my stable ...

**BETLY** Change it! Burn it!

**DANIEL** All for you! Oh, marry me!  
Oh, Betly, marry me!

**BETLY** Do stop it! I've heard enough.

**DANIEL** Please! Just marry me!

**BETLY** Sheer nonsense! Why should I marry?

**DANIEL** The goose & the gander ...

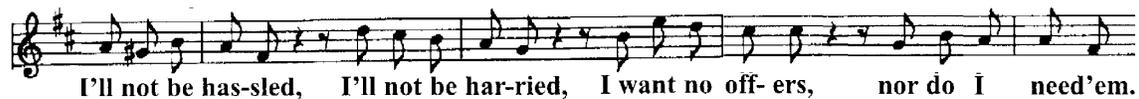
**BETLY** Why should I marry?

**DANIEL** I polished the pewter ...

**BETLY** Marry!

**DANIEL** Please!

**BETLY**



**I've no intention  
Of getting married,  
Of handing over  
My peace and freedom.**

**You drive me crazy  
With your persistence,  
It would be cruelty  
To tell you a lie.**

**Just go away, sir,  
And keep your distance,  
Or you will hear from me  
The reason why.**

**Why do I listen  
To ranting and raving,**

When I should be waving  
You off and away?

Take your old pewter  
Along with your letter.  
We both would do better  
To call it a day.

**DANIEL**

You've not a notion  
Of how I suffer.  
Their cruel laughter ---  
My heart is broken.

The true devotion  
I humbly offer  
Forever after  
Will stay unspoken.

Yes, I'll soon be ending  
My sad existence;  
In tender memory  
Of you I die.

I'll end tomorrow  
My sad existence;  
In loving sorrow  
For you I die.

Yes, I'll soon be ending my sad existence;  
In loving sorrow, I die for you.

Leaving forever  
In sorrow, in sorrow,  
For you I go in sorrow.

**BETLY**

Ah! A bitter ending.  
So keep your distance.  
I've nothing left to say  
As all is over.  
Better to call it a day.  
I've nothing left now to say. (*she flounces out*)

**DANIEL** (*alone*)

What's the use going on?  
Hard-hearted Betly!

With those departing words  
All now is over.

Yes, I shall die by drowning.  
No, too cold and wet,  
Take your pick, knife or noose?  
A shot from a pistol ...  
I'd probably miss.      *(noise from outside)*  
What is that noise?  
Are they from France or Russia?  
No ... Good heavens!  
They are from my own province.  
Here's my solution!  
To escape from my wretched situation  
I will join their brigade,  
Fight for our nation.

*(He leaves as a squadron of soldiers enters,  
headed by Max, their sergeant)*

**SOLDIERS**

Curse the life full of toil, short of money,  
That the soldier on foot has to bear,  
On the march, cold or hot, dark or sunny,  
Out with only a song and a prayer.

**MAX**

Here we can rest for a moment  
And watch the sunlight  
Darting about the meadow.  
What a joy, to behold these native mountains!  
After so many years,  
To see my homeland.

My village, my valley,  
My forest of pinetrees,  
The linden and laurel  
I greet with a tear.

The schoolyard, the churchbell;  
The scene of my childhood  
From shadow emerging,  
I can touch, see and hear;  
Though fondly remembered,  
Now even more dear.

Out of shadow emerging,

To touch see and hear;  
Oh, scene of childhood!  
So near! Ah, so dear!



**DANIEL**                    **A matter grave and urgent ---  
I would like to enlist,  
Join your battalion.  
I've got a rifle  
And a pack for the shoulders.  
Starting now, I'm yours to command.**

**MAX**                         **Man to man, tell me why.**

**DANIEL**                    **I am the most wretched man in the world.**

**MAX**                         **Have you met with disaster?**

**DANIEL**                    **I'm madly --- God help me! ---  
Yes, I have fallen hopelessly in love,  
Turned down by a cruel, heartless beauty.**

**MAX**                         **May one ask who she is?**

**DANIEL**                    **You wouldn't know her,  
But here's her cottage.  
And Betly is her name.**

**MAX**                         **Betly!**

**DANIEL**                    **She has a brother  
In the army same as you.  
His name is Max Starner, a sergeant.**

**MAX**                         **(Ah! My own sister!)  
I gather ... these are her living quarters.**

**DANIEL**                    **Right you are, sir.**

**MAX**                         **You've lots to live for! Be happy!  
You're in the army.**

**DANIEL**                    **Happy ... to die in battle.  
I'll go ... get ready.**

**MAX**                         **No time to lose! We leave at break of day.**

**DANIEL**                    **No turning back ...no, sir! *(exit)***

*(Max surveys the landscape)*



**One rabbit, hale and hearty.**

**BETLY** Oh, please go! Oh, please go! *(the other soldiers return)*

**SOLDIERS** A party! Tonight the wine will flow.

**OTHERS** A party! Tonight we'll have a party!  
But first we must compel her  
To open up the cellar. The cellar!

**MAX (to Betly)** The key then ... *(the soldiers leave with key in hand)*

**BETLY** Lord, oh spare me!

**MAX** Your cabin saves the day!  
Here I shall stay a week or two –  
So kind of you to lend it.  
I'll strongly recommend it  
To a squadron on the way.

**BETLY** Oh, mercy! To house an army!  
Oh, what am I to do?

**MAX** *(There's method in my madness;  
She'll thank me when I'm through.)*

**SOLDIERS** The butter, eggs and bacon  
Already we have taken.  
A partridge and a rabbit –  
We see it, like it, grab it.

**BETLY** I will have you all arrested.  
*(tries to leave, but they prevent it)*

**MAX** What a shame to spoil the party.

*(a soldier comes from the kitchen wearing a cook's apron)*

**SOLDIER** Supper's waiting on the table.

**MAX** Join the party! To supper! To supper!  
*(She will need a helping hand;  
It's going just the way I planned.)*

**BETLY**



My ter-ror I can-not con- ceal; be- yond con- trol I shake with fear.

Oh, how much better I would feel  
Were Daniel only here!)

**SOLDIERS**

Come on!

**BETLY**

My terror I cannot conceal, *etc.*

**MAX**

(On her behalf I persevere,  
To forge affection out of fear.)

**SOLDIERS**

Ra ta plan! Hurrah! Hurrah! The table spread.  
Hurrah! Hurrah! There's food ahead!

**BETLY**

Daniel, save me!  
Daniel! Daniel! If you were only here!

**MAX**

(My motive will be clear;  
I must now persevere  
To forge affection out of fear.)

**BETLY**

Shaking with fear!  
Oh, Daniel, If only you were here!  
Save me!

**MAX**

She is shaking with fear.  
My motive clear, I'll persevere.

*The soldiers march into the house, leaving Betly in despair. Daniel enters, carrying a sword and a pack of letters.*

**DANIEL**

With your permission ...  
A word or two, for shortly I'll be leaving,  
I hope without ill feelings.

**BETLY**

Now why should I be angry?

**DANIEL**

I may not be returning; I'm starting over.  
Someone outside with who I've been speaking.  
An army sergeant, very decent,  
And like his fellow soldiers  
So thoughtful, well-mannered.

I have enlisted and depart tomorrow.  
Yes, I have made my decision,  
And no one else gives a hang.  
But where's the sergeant?

**BETLY** I suppose, having torn apart my cabin,  
He's somewhere out carousing with his gang.

**DANIEL** As I head for a life so risky and uncertain,  
I've only these to give you:  
For what it's worth, my birth certificate ---  
Cruel record! Getting born was my first big mistake.  
And here's that fruitless marriage contract.  
This also ...

**BETLY** What is it?

**DANIEL** It is my last will and testament.  
As soon as I am dead  
I hope you'll open it.  
It may be very soon.

**BETLY** Don't say it! What nonsense!

**DANIEL** Perhaps ... let's change the subject.  
All the same, this could mean  
Goodbye forever.

**BETLY** (He's leaving!  
I'll be alone with that pack of wolves.)  
But wait ... do listen.

**DANIEL** Yes?

**BETLY** As friend to friend,  
Can't we talk for a while?

**DANIEL** No, no! I'm off!  
To linger would only make it harder.

**BETLY** Just half an hour! A quarter ...

**DANIEL** (She's pleading! Good heavens!  
Could she have changed her mind?)  
You know I want to ... but ...

**BETLY** But what?

**DANIEL** I'd be a bother ...

**BETLY** Bother? Not at all! I've lots of room.  
I can make you snug and cozy until morning.

**DANIEL** (She has turned round completely in an hour.)

**BETLY** Well, how about it?

**DANIEL** Seventh heaven!

**BETLY** If I run into danger  
You'll follow through.

**DANIEL** All I want out of life  
Is pleasing you. (*he goes inside*)

**BETLY** Just knowing that Daniel's near.  
Standing by, willing and ready,  
Gives a boost to my courage.  
(*shouts are heard from outside*)  
Oh, Daniel! I'm frightened! I need you!

**DANIEL** (*comes running*) And here I am!

**BETLY** What a dreadful commotion!  
I'm terrified alone.  
It's warm and snug,  
This chair I recommend.  
Sit close beside me,

**DANIEL** I'll stay alert ...

**BETLY** Here you can spend the night.

**DANIEL** How to express, even in part,  
The burst of joy that floods my heart!



(For this mo- ment how I've wait- ed! Does her heart now start to soft- en?  
From this dream desired so often  
May I never awaken again.)

**BETLY** (His true value I've underrated,  
So devoted, fond and tender.  
To his charm I could surrender,  
Cast aside my cold disdain.  
Now he's nearly won my heart,  
My unfeeling heart, my guarded heart.  
  
I'm afraid he's getting sleepy.)

**DANIEL** Being near you is joy sublime. (*he yawns*)

**BETLY** All is quiet, dark and creepy;  
We could talk to pass the time.

**DANIEL** A cozy little chat?

**BETLY** A bit of this and that  
To pass away the time ...

**DANIEL** From this dream desired so often  
May I never awaken again. No, no!

**BETLY** (Does my heart begin to soften?  
May at last I cry surrender?)

**DANIEL** Yes, keep talking. Go on, go on ...

**BETLY** Until morning ...

**DANIEL** I adore you ... and ... (*another yawn*)

**BETLY** Do keep talking!  
Oh, it's early yet for yawning.  
Dozing off will never do.  
No, no, no! Do not sleep, I beg of you!

**DANIEL** No, no, no, no! No, no, no, no!  
Oh, this moment long awaited!  
Now her heart appears to soften.  
From this dream, cherished so often.  
May I never waken again.  
Never waken again ... (*he yawns and falls asleep*)

**BETLY** To his charm I could surrender,  
Cast aside my cold disdain.

*MAX appears.*

**MAX** (Ha! She got him to stay.)  
Upward and onward!  
I'll be drunk in Italian.)  
*Viva le donne ... il vin ...*  
*Viva l'amore!*

**BETLY** God help me!

**MAX** Don't run away.

**DANIEL** (*waking up*) What's going on?  
You, sir! I warn you. Hands off her.

**MAX** You busy-body!  
Is she your wife? Or your sister?

**DANIEL** Does it matter?

**MAX** A second cousin?  
An in-law I have failed to mention?

**DANIEL** So? ...

**MAX** What the hell, then? Why get so involved?  
This affair is no concern of yours.  
Out of the house and stay away.  
I'm getting angry.

**DANIEL** Desert her? Like a rat?  
I'm staying, and that is that!

**MAX** Why are you shouting?  
You are hurting my ears.  
Who do you think you are?  
When I'm insulted  
I insist on satisfaction.  
*(to Betly)* You'd better leave until it's over.  
*(to Daniel)* This affair is private.

**DANIEL** Go, Betly. I can handle this.

**BETLY** I'm staying here, whatever you tell me.

**MAX** I dislike drawing blood,

**But you compel me.**

**Either give to me this beauty,  
Like a Christian to his neighbor,  
Like a Christian, like a Christian  
To his neighbor, to his neighbor, to his neighbor,  
Or I go about my duty  
And dispatch you, of course, with saber.  
And dispatch you, and dispatch you,  
With a saber, with a saber, with a saber.  
Either let me have the beauty  
Or I do my simple duty.  
So which is it?**

**DANIEL**                   **Fired by love, the flame increases,  
Even fiercer than before.  
Sooner tear my heart to pieces  
Than forsake the girl I adore.**

**MAX**                       **On behalf of manly honor,  
We are both of one accord,  
One accord, one accord,  
We must settle with the sword.  
Here's my hand.**

**DANIEL**                   **(No choice but onward,)**

**MAX**                       **Your hand, sir! Your hand, sir!**

**DANIEL**                   **Here is my hand.**

**MAX**                       **What? You tremble?**

**DANIEL**                   **Not a chance.**

**MAX**                       **Feeling shaky?**

**DANIEL**                   **Not in the least.**

**MAX** (*in somber tone*)   **That ... we shall see.  
In thick of forest,  
When the dogs of night are howling,  
Where the hungry wolf goes prowling,  
I shall wait with eagle eye.**

**Twelve o'clock will sound the signal.**

After sword and saber rattle,  
Stretched upon the field of battle,  
One of us is left to lie.  
In fog of battle,  
One of us is doomed to die.

DANIEL

(Not I!)

MAX

For honor! Come on!

DANIEL

For honor!

MAX

You're ready?

DANIEL

All set!

BOTH

So it's gung-ho for glory!  
We leap to the saddle  
And charge into battle  
When love lights the way.

DANIEL

(My eyes glaze in terror.  
Though bravely I struggle,  
My knees cave and buckle,  
The room starts to sway.)

MAX

(His eyes glazing over  
Betray a dismay.  
Though manly the struggle,  
He's starting to sway.)

BOTH

So gung-ho for glory, *etc.*  
When love lights the way. Yes! (*Max leaves*)

BETLY

(I thought him such a mouse!  
My doting Daniel  
Has turned into a tiger.  
A hero in the making,  
He scoffs at danger.)  
Oh, Daniel! Be careful!

DANIEL

No reason for alarm.  
Though the sergeant is said to be an expert,  
I wouldn't worry.  
We're drawing swords at midnight

But whether I survive or not,  
No matter what, you will manage.

**BETLY** You've made your mind up  
To fight this dreadful duel?

**DANIEL** It is settled.

**BETLY** (If I beg him to stay?)

**DANIEL** Too late ... I'm leaving ... Addio!  
Do not forget me.  
No man could love you more.  
A tender love so pure & sincere.  
As I depart, I take a lasting memory  
To keep close to my heart.  
Give me your hand, my dearest,  
Forgive my frank confession.  
This is forever, our final farewell.

**BETLY** (How much I'm going to miss him!  
If I detain him ... somehow ...  
And take his mind off that fatal fight,  
He'll not be killed.)

**MAX** (*returning*) (Ma bene, bene, bene!)  
My friend, you must be deaf  
Or hard of hearing.  
Midnight's already sounded.

**DANIEL** So I heard. I will go pack a knapsack  
With bare essentials.  
Then ready for my journey.  
(He is out for my blood,  
No getting round it.) (*exit*)

**BETLY** (*to Max*) Do stop and think it over.  
Sir, you must reconsider!  
That duel in the forest ---  
There still is time.

**MAX** And why are you so concerned?

**BETLY** Because you mean to murder him.  
I know ... I've a feeling.  
Please! Call it off. Have mercy.

He's very dear ... very special ...

**MAX** Very special?

**BETLY** People love him.

**MAX** Including you?

**BETLY** Yes, including me ... many others.

**MAX** I'm told he lives alone ...  
Perhaps if he were married ...  
A wife, or fiancée ...

**BETLY** You haven't heard?  
He just got married!

**MAX** Newly married?

**DANIEL** (*returning*) Here with my saber.

**MAX** Not quite so hasty.  
My friend, this little affair  
Takes on new dimensions.  
Sir, you neglected to tell me  
You are married.

**DANIEL** What! I am married?

**MAX** And father of a family.

**DANIEL** A father, too?

**BETLY** Of course! (Just give a nod, later I'll explain.)

**DANIEL** Ah, yes! Recently married.  
I forgot all about it.

**MAX** Who is this wife?

**BETLY** (*embarrassed*) Wife? Just a woman.

**MAX** For a slew of urgent reasons  
I must see her. Pronto! Who is she?

**BETLY** Myself, sir.

**MAX** You!

**DANIEL** (I am dreaming.)

**BETLY** (Quiet! Just play along.)  
You can tell him yourself, dear.  
He seems to doubt you.

**DANIEL** Yes, of course, newly married!

**MAX** What a relief! All is forgiven!  
Let us call a truce  
With a kiss for your wife.

**BETLY** (Mind you, only pretending.)

**DANIEL** (Must you remind me?)

**MAX** I wonder ... about that marriage ...  
Yes, I must see the contract.

**DANIEL** (Good Lord, the contract! It's illegal!  
I alone have signed it.)  
It's inside there.

**BETLY** I'll bring it out. (*exit*)

**MAX** Void! Void unless I find it lawful and legal.

**BETLY** (*returning*) The contract seems in order.

**DANIEL** (He's bound to find us out,  
And that means trouble.)

**MAX** Here we are. Signed by Daniel  
And of course, Betly too.

**DANIEL** Sir, are you sure?

**BETLY** (Nothing binding ... only joking ...  
It can't be valid till my brother signs it.  
And he is far away.)

**MAX** This should do it ki  
!

**Your brother Max, I see, has also signed.  
Not a miracle; he's standing here before you.**

**DANIEL**

**Max ...**

**BETLY**

**Max! Oh, can it be true? ....**

**MAX**

**You have guessed! Dear sister, forgive me,  
And welcome your loving brother.**

**DANIEL (*shouting*)**

**You soldiers! Friends and neighbors!  
Newcomers! Old timers!  
Come, gather round!  
A toast, after long labors,  
To my Betly!  
To the bride I shall marry!**

**BETLY**

**Ah! Transformed by joy,  
I'll be no longer contrary.**



How sweet at last to re- cog-nize the truth that lay be- fore my eyes.

**No need explain the mystery;  
I loved him all along.**

**You ladies who disparage  
The charms and delights of marriage,  
Do bear in mind that possibly.  
Like me, you may be wrong.  
I loved him all along, all along.**

**CHORUS**

**An unforeseen transformation!  
No more does she disparage  
The charming state of marriage.  
And sings a sweeter song.**

**THE END**

