

CAST

FERNANDO, a young novice at the Monastery of St. James, on the point of taking an irreversible vow.

BALTHAZAR, his mentor and spiritual father, who entertains high expectations for him.

LEONORA, a mysterious, unknown beauty, later revealed to be the king's mistress.

INES, her confidante.

KING ALFONSO X1, King of Castile.

DON GASPARO, his minister

Monks and courtiers.

DONIZETTI

THE FAVORITE

English Setting by Donald Pippin

Scene: the yard of a monastery. Early morning. Monks are heading into the chapel, followed by Balthazar, a superior, and Fernando, a young novice.

Fernando, a passionate, idealistic, highly gifted young man, presumably orphaned at an early age, has been given permanent shelter at the Monastery of St. James. There Balthazar, the father Superior, recognizing the boy's superior abilities, has taken him under his wing, training him with the expectation of becoming his eventual successor. And in fact, following a course that would seem almost predestined, the ardent novice is about to take an irreversible vow to renounce the world, become a monk, and devote himself exclusively to the service of God.

But all of this has suddenly changed. At mass, appropriately enough, he has seen a radiantly beautiful woman, and a new world has opened up to him. The monastery walls, heretofore a welcoming shelter, now enclose him like a prison. The call of freedom, with all of its excitement and peril, is irresistible. Inspired by his passion for the unknown woman, he reveals his intention to forsake the monastery and find a new life. Balthazar, his spiritual father, reacts with the anger and disappointment quickly recognizable to any frustrated parent. He warns his rebellious pupil that the world is a dangerous, treacherous place and that he will soon return to his safe haven, his true home, a sadder, wiser man. Fernando, of course, is undeterred.

CHORUS OF MONKS

As dawn slowly rises, new warmth in the air,
We head to the chapel for early morning prayer.
A God seeking novice, beyond worldly strife,
In vows austere and solemn will dedicate his life.
As dawn slowly rises, his sins of youth outgrown,
He starts a life of service to God and God alone.

BALTHAZAR

You do not join your brothers in prayer?

FERNANDO

Not today.

BALTHAZAR

You soon will take an oath to retreat from the world.

Are you having second thoughts?

FERNANDO

**I am obsessed! I struggle . . .
On the verge of a step
Where there's no turning back,
A vow to abstain from love and serve God alone,
I am lost in the dark,
Full of doubt and desire.**

BALTHAZAR

Go on ... Continue ...

FERNANDO

**Mid a crowd that had gathered for prayer,
I, too, was on my knees
Beseeching God for guidance.
As I prayed, I imagined angels bathed in light.
All at once I was sure
That my prayer had been heard.**

BALTHAZAR

Go on, my son ...

FERNANDO

**A woman in the guise of an angel
Also knelt, oh so close to me!
Though to God in His glory I bowed my head
And started to pray, but only to her prayed instead.
O my father, O father! Heavenly rapture! Beauty incarnate!
A revelation! Wonder of wonders!
How my heart went up in flame!
Heretofore I had prayed to God in heaven.
But my heaven I found on earth
In her angelic eyes.**

BALTHAZAR

Turn to God above! There life eternal lies.

FERNANDO

**The cloister has become a prison cell;
No escape, as days and years go by.
Yet I must! For beyond these massive walls
My love and my destiny lie.**

Beyond the walls confining me,
Visions of wonder, love and rapture, pain and strife
Have opened the door,
The door to the garden of life.
Though to God in His glory I prayed,
My thoughts were of her alone.

BALTHAZAR

You, my son! My chosen successor!
My bright, shining hope, my sole confidant ...
On you I'll bestow my hard won power;
Who else can I trust to take my place?
Who? Who?

FERNANDO

But father, I love her.

BALTHAZAR

Before the sacrosanct tiara
The high and mighty bow and tremble;
The pride of crown and scepter pales --
This heritage belongs to you ...

FERNANDO

But father, I love her.

BALTHAZAR

And who is this celestial angel
Whose chaste beauty swept you away?
Do you know?
This lady who subdued your reason ...
Her rank? Her name? Can you reply?

FERNANDO

No, but I love her!

BALTHAZAR

Away! Proceed on your path toward perdition;
Forsake this life of contemplation and repose.
May the Lord tame His wrath and fury
And redirect the lamb gone astray.
Be off! Be off! Be off!
Be off on roads untried.
On roads untried be off and on your way.
May the Lord bring home the lamb gone astray.

FERNANDO

Released from the walls of a cloister,
Inspired by the perils of freedom,
I follow my heavenly angel
Into the light of a new day ahead,
As I leave for parts unknown.
Full of life, full of love,
I leave for parts unknown. Stay strong!

BALTHAZAR

Remember my warning! However far away,
Do not forget the words I've said.
Be off, be off! I've had my say.
The thorny path that lies ahead
I foresee with fear and dread.
I call you no longer son of mine.
I wash my hands of you, be gone!
You're on your own.
You'll return, a sadder, wiser man. How long?

{You go to face a world corrupted;
Expect betrayal and rank deceit.
Swimming in a turbulent ocean,
So naïve, you will founder and sink.

Adrift on the wild stormy waters,
Tossed about, far from sight of land,
You may long for the orderly a haven
That today you leave behind.}

SCENE II

The scene changes to an idyllically beautiful island in the Mediterranean, where trees, flowers and birds abound. This is where the mysterious beauty lives, surrounded by luxury and ease. But for reasons we will go into later, like Fernando, she too feels trapped in what she calls this "gorgeous prison" where she is deprived of even the most basic liberty. It is this common bond, perhaps, that brings them together.

The course of their passionate romance has proceeded at a spectacular pace. Fernando has become an expected visitor, arriving each day by boat. But despite their intimacy, she remains a mystery woman, refusing to reveal even her name. And on this decisive day she breaks to him the devastating news that they must not meet again. No explanation. But in parting, she gives him a parchment that will

open the way for him to a promising career in the army, one of the few fields available to a young man without inherited wealth.

Fernando, baffled by this abrupt dismissal, is left in despair. But suddenly he sees the light: she is obviously a woman of extraordinary wealth and influence, closely allied even to the king. No wonder that it was inconceivable for her to even consider marrying a penniless nobody like himself, so far beneath her. Surely, she is starting him out on a career in which he can distinguish himself, in order to qualify him to ask for her hand. Inspired as only an ardent lover can be, he is determined to prove himself on the battlefield and earn his reward.

INES & CHORUS OF YOUNG GIRLS

A golden sun,
Warm tender breeze,
A flowered grove
Of almond trees,
Smooth tranquil sea,
Bluest skies above
And birds that warble
Of peace and love.
Love, sweet love!

INES

Charmed by the rustle of the waters
Caressing the sunlit sandy shore,
With open arms and a smile, here we are
To greet the awaited visitor.
With eyes upon the pale horizon
We wait to greet the visitor.

CHORUS

Ah, the approaching sail, seen from afar!
A golden sun, *etc.*

INES

Be patient ... I see it!
With sail full set to catch the wind,
Over the water, closer, closer,
Skimming the waves ... a boat!

INES & CHORUS

Faintly on the far horizon,
See the sail that rides the water,
Bearing hope of soft caresses
To the island of the blest.
Playful breeze, lightly blow ...

Friendly breezes, blow discreetly
When the vessel comes to rest.
Rippling waters, whisper sweetly,
Welcome once again our guest.

FERNANDO (*stepping out of a boat*)
My fair young attendant, you speechless ladies also.
Day after day, you are twice here on hand –
First when I arrive, then when I'm leaving.
Why do you leave me in the dark? (*the ladies turn away*)
Again silent, as always.
Simply answer my question:
Why is my lady so elusive?
So secretive, she even hides her name from me.
What goes on?

INES (*laughing*)
You may be better off not to know.

FERNANDO
Nonetheless, I'm a man, not a child.
Is the truth so dreadful?

INES
That depends on your point of view.
Your lady comes; you might try asking her.

LEONORA (*entering*)
My beloved, oh my darling!
My gift from heaven, here you are!
My love, my ray of light! My own, so dear!
From despair and desolation
With your love I live again. Ah!
When you're near me all is well.
I'm alive because you care.

FERNANDO
For you I've broken vows and forsaken a father.

LEONORA
While day by day, on alert, unobserved
I waited for the chance
Till safely and in secret
You could sail to my lovely isle.

FERNANDO

To an isle of bliss!

LEONORA

Or an isle of disillusion ...

FERNANDO

For love of God, I want the answer!
What dark shadow can come between us?
But a love sublime and sacred
Will prevail against the odds.

LEONORA

Over my destiny I've no control ...

FERNANDO

Tell me why not!

LEONORA

This you must never ask.

FERNANDO

Very well ... But let me be clear:
If you love me as I long to believe,
You'll share my meager lot
By accepting the hand
Offered with all my heart.

LEONORA

If only I could ... but I cannot!

FERNANDO

But why if ... you love me? Why?
(Mystified, I am prey to alarm and despair.
Unruly demons of fear and distrust tear me apart.)

LEONORA

(The heavy weight on my conscience
Becomes harder yet to bear.
Standing by as he suffers is breaking my heart.)
Concerned for you and not myself,
I came up with a way to the life you deserve,
But kept putting it off ...

FERNANDO

Why so?

LEONORA

Have you not said, speaking heart to heart
How much you value pride and honor?

FERNANDO

Above all!

LEONORA

(producing a folded piece of parchment)
These papers will start you out
And open the door.
But on one condition ...

FERNANDO

One condition?

LEONORA

You'll leave me for good!

FERNANDO

Oh, no! Do you know what you're asking?
You expect me to obey?
To pack up my passion
And scamper away?

Imagine discarding
All I hold most dear,
The woman I treasure
Who is standing right here!

I'd forego salvation
And go straight to hell
Before I could leave you
With a final, a final farewell.

LEONORA

I know well what I'm asking;
There is no other way.
You face greater sorrows
The longer you stay.

In torment, renouncing
All I hold most dear,

**For your sake and my sake
The message is clear.**

**Your only salvation,
Your one escape from hell
Is to leave me forever
With a final farewell.**

INES (*rushing in*)
Ah! Milady!

LEONORA
What brings you here?

INES
The king!

FERNANDO
(The king?)

LEONORA
**(Lord! If we are discovered,
I tremble for his life.)**
(to Ines) Just a moment ...
(to Fernando, handing him the document)
Take it ... read it.
You'll understand ... and obey. Leave now!

FERNANDO
No, no! Not I! Do you know what you're asking, etc.

LEONORA
Farewell! You must go! Run! Run!
Fernando, farewell! Your life just begun,
You'll find joy again.
Look ahead, your life has just begun.

FERNANDO
My God! My God! How can I go on living
When all, all is gone,
Even though just begun?
How can life go on
When I've lost the only love I've ever known?

(as Leonora leaves, he detains Ines)
The man who sent for her was indeed the king?

INES

Alfonso! Take warning!

FERNANDO

**Now I see! Her wealth ... her position ...
To the throne closely connected ...
And I! And I! Who am I? A nameless nobody!**

INES

Be careful ... (*she leaves*)

FERNANDO

**What on earth can I do to deserve her love?
Good Lord! I see the light!
Hoping to make me worthy,
She has offered me a chance
To rise to honor and glory!
Thanks to her, I'll be a captain in the army!
Such concern, all for me!**

(jubilantly)

**Fortune's fool no longer,
I go to fight and conquer;
For service to the nation
My star begins to shine.**

**This unforeseen promotion
I owe to her devotion;
Inspired to new ambition,
Someday I'll call her mine.**

**I'm fortune's fool no longer,
But go to fight and conquer;
My mettle I shall prove
And someday be worthy of her love.**

**For now goodbye, O blessed island,
So peaceful, serene and benign.
I'll soon return a hero,
For passion spurs me on
To claim my one beloved
Who will at last be mine, all mine!
My one, my true beloved,
Who will at last be mine!**

ACT II

The magnificent palace of Alcazar has only recently been occupied by King Alfonso XI. The Moors having been routed out, defeated in battle thanks largely to the inspiring leadership and extraordinary courage of Fernando, a newly promoted captain. We soon learn that Leonora's status in the palace is hardly what Fernando had presumed. Close to the king indeed, but more in the capacity of unwilling slave, having been sold to him by her mercenary father – a not uncommon practice in parts of the world even today. Furthermore, she had been deceived into believing that she was to be his bride, only to discover that he already had a wife – a wife, true enough, that he was trying to get rid of. But in this Catholic world, divorce, even for kings, is not easily come by. Ask Henry VIII. For the helpless, naïve girl there was no way out and no one to turn to. Disoriented and isolated in this intimidating, totally unfamiliar environment, no doubt awed by the august presence of the king, she was easily maneuvered. But she remains desperately unhappy, fully aware that she is generally regarded by those around her with contempt, fueled by envy. In her own mind, she is permanently dishonored and tarnished.

But something surprising has happened: the king has fallen in love with her. A romantic at heart, he declares his willingness to defy the church that is threatening to disown him and to forego even his kingdom in exchange for a love that is passionate and true, a claim that will soon be put to the test.

Scene an open galleria, with a view of gardens and the palace of Alcazar.

ALFONSO, king of Castile

The charms of Alcazar,
Lately enjoyed by Moorish royalty! --
This green and shady grove
Where I now stroll at leisure,
Absorbed in dreams,
In dreams that fuel the fire of love.

DON GASPARO, ever the sycophant

From the vanquished comes the prize
To the king who overcame!
The will of God has prevailed
As the Moors fled in terror.

ALFONSO

Ah! The king of Morocco,
The armies of Grenada
Have fallen in defeat, and the spoils are mine!

DON GASPARO

You well deserve the glory!

ALFONSO

**Not I! No! To Fernando, who has carried the day!
By the force of example
He energized the army,
Thus rescuing his ruler.**

**I await his arrival.
The elect of the court I want on hand
As I honor his courage.**

DON GASPARO

**You must first hear the pope
Who sends an urgent message.**

ALFONSO (*with impatience*)

**(The Almighty of Rome
Should leave us kings alone.)**

(Don Gasparo bows respectfully and leaves)

**So! My supposed friends,
All devoured by envy,
Heating up for a fight,
Turn to Rome out of spite.
In secret they conspire
To foil my divorce..
Trust in me, Leonora!
I am not without recourse.**

**Love of my life, hear!
For you I'm ready to give up my kingdom,
My church, and even my people.
Give me in exchange
Your heart, your true devotion.
For such a prize no price is out of range.
For love, no price is out of range.**

**Royal acclaim, my power,
My church, and even my people.
Yes, all the world entire for faithful love;
This I would proudly trade.
My acclaim and royal power.
For your love and true devotion
I would call a fair exchange
For your heart my royal power I would trade,
Happy, feeling well repaid.
(sweetly) Leonora mine! May I still hope?**

All I have I freely offer,
Risking life itself for you.
For you I'll remain a faithful lover
Provided that in turn you are also true.

In return for your devotion
On my word you can rely,
And a tender adoration
That will last till I die.
All I have I freely offer,
Risking life itself for you,
If in return you will be true.
My love, be mine and mine alone;
Share with me a royal throne,
Summon the court to enjoy, feast and celebrate!

(Leonora enters talking quietly to Ines. They do not see the king.)

LEONORA

Is it true what they're saying?

INES

He led the fight, and has come back a hero.

LEONORA *(joyfully)*

Fernando here! And crowned with glory!
(noticing the king) (And I ... despised and hated.)

(Alfonso signals for Ines to leave, then approaches Leonora)

ALFONSO

Ah, my love! But why so despondent and forlorn?

LEONORA

You wonder why I can't be happy? Far from home ...
Shy and naïve, an obedient daughter,
Sold for silver and deceived by my own father,
I came believing I was soon to be a bride,
Finding in you husband, protector and guide.

ALFONSO *(tenderly)*

Say no more ...

LEONORA

Alfonso! You know what happened ...

ALFONSO

The queen, my wife ...

LEONORA

Alfonso! You also lied!
Though I live in seclusion, I hear what people say.
No one bothers to hide
The contempt and disdain
I encounter each day.

ALFONSO

Leonora! Leonora! There there . . .
Pleasures galore, sheer luxury unbounded,
Here you enjoy the jewels worthy of a queen.
Pastimes that blend
Friendship and happy banter.
Love of my life, what do these tears of sorrow mean?

LEONORA

Envied by all, little knowing that I suffer,
Hiding my grief behind the jewels and the furs.
Under a veil of luxury and laughter,
There you may find
The source of my despair,
The many scalding tears.

ALFONSO

Could there be someone who has done you ill service?

LEONORA

You are the one who ought to know.
If only I could flee, run away.
And escape this gorgeous prison!
But where to go? I have no home ...

ALFONSO

No, no! Be patient for a while.
I have a plan that I trust will succeed.
For now I must stay mum,
Yes, my love! I think I've got the medicine you need.

LEONORA

The king can give me nothing for my need.
(Ah, my only love! You that I adore,
Constantly yearning ...
Love stained forever, yet still burning.)

ALFONSO

**(Ah, my only love! You that I adore,
Constantly yearning ...
Love spurned as ever, yet still burning.)**

LEONORA

**(Love I was never meant to have,
A love I'll carry to my grave.
Love I was never meant to have,
Not I, not I!
Love I'll carry to my grave.)**

ALFONSO

**(Love I was clearly meant to have,
A man still strong and much alive,
Love I was clearly meant to have,
A driving love ...**

LEONORA

(A tarnished love ...

ALFONSO

(As ever spurned ...

LEONORA

(Forever stained . . .

ALFONSO

(Yet I am still much alive ...

LEONORA

(That I shall carry to my grave.

ALFONSO

**Yet now is no time to grieve!)
Onward! No time to grieve.)**

LEONORA

**Ah! My love I'll carry to my grave.
Onward, to my grave.)**

ALFONSO

**A truce to grief and anger!
Burning tears are taboo!
A surprise celebration I've ordered just for you!**

DON GASPARO (*entering in great agitation*)
Ah, Your Highness!

ALFONSO (*impatiently*)
Later on!

DON GASPARO
This cannot be postponed.
You refused to believe a timely warning.
Just possibly a man you've showered with glory
Has betrayed and deceived you as we speak.

ALFONSO
You lie!

DON GASPARO
Here's a letter to prove it,
Extracted from a messenger on his way to the palace
To deliver to Ines.
Read it, then call me a liar.

ALFONSO
No! This I can't believe!
(*to Leonora*) You know who wrote this letter
And dares to speak of love?

LEONORA
I love him!

ALFONSO
A proven traitor! His name?

LEONORA
I'd sooner die than divulge my secret!

ALFONSO
The torture chamber might change your mind.

LEONORA
Your Highness!

Balthazar appears, bearing a message from the Pope. General consternation.

ALFONSO
Who dares disturb the pleasure of the king?

BALTHAZAR

Myself! I come to warn you, beware the wrath of God!

ALFONSO

Old man, let's have it out!

BALTHAZAR

**King of Castile, Your Highness!
I've received from Rome
An order from the pope,
A sanctified decree.
If you resist his holy word
You'll be cast from the church
And damned forevermore.**

ALFONSO

**The fathers of the church I am proud to honor;
Speaking though as a king, I expect from them no less.**

BALTHAZAR

**Giving way to the flesh,
So enslaved to a mistress,
You've cast aside your Queen
And broken with the church.**

ALFONSO

What if I did!

CHORUS

O Lord!

ALFONSO

**I accept the consequences.
On my brow I wear a crown;
And my own wish is law.
Here I do what I please, as the lord of the land.
One man alone will judge me: I, myself!**

BALTHAZAR

**Beware! Beware!
Hunted down by the god of wrath,
You'll find no shelter;
In the grip of despair,
You will plead all in vain.
As you weather the squall
And the hard pelting rain,**

**Above your head will hover
A sword about to fall,
Hanging over your head, a sword,
An implacable sword that soon will fall.**

LEONORA

**As the helpless target
Of his pointed arrows,
Now I need all my courage
To hold my head high.**

ALFONSO

**As the fearless target
Of his pointed arrows,
This buffoon I can manage;
His threats I shall defy.**

LEONORA

**Lashed by lightning and thunder,
I can find no safe abode.
All the while, lost, I wander
On a dark, downward road.**

ALFONSO

**Assailed by fire and thunder,
(Facing fire and thunder)
I abide by my own code.
All the while, I dream and ponder
On love freely bestowed.**

DON GASPARO & CHORUS

**Fear the wrath of the Lord!
He speaks with fire and thunder.
Yes, the king well may ponder
On matters soon to explode.**

BALTHAZAR

**Fear the wrath of the Lord!
I bring you fire and thunder.
Long and hard may you ponder
A crisis that soon will explode.
Heed the words of a messenger
Sent from God on high,
Heed words of warning sent down from on high.**

**Attend! I speak to all,
Cast out the scheming adulteress.
A curse upon the harlot,
Condemned by our Lord.**

LEONORA

What to do? What to say? Just let me die!

ALFONSO

**Leonora! Leonora!
(angrily, to Balthazar) You dare malign ...**

BALTHAZAR

Away with her!

CHORUS

And none too soon!

BALTHAZAR

**In the name of the holy fathers
We cast her out of the church
And from the mercy of God.
The curse will not be lifted
Until the two have sworn
Never to meet again.**

ALFONSO

**Alarming words full of hellfire and wrath,
Words full of hellfire and wrath!
Here I am king; none dare question my power.
I'm in command of a major domain.
Ah, but the sword you say is about to fall,
The fatal sword hanging over my head
Yet may fall on your own.
The sword that hovers is waiting to fall
Not on my head, but instead on your own**

DON GASPARO & CHORUS

**Uplifting words from a man of the faith!
Words from above,
Words that strengthen and inspire,
Excoriated, they both are to blame.
Excoriated! Yes, they're both to blame.
Both are to blame! Both, both to blame.
A holy man of God, man of faith,
Casting shame on them both.**

CHORUS

**A man of God, hurling forth fire and thunder!
A man of God, casting shame on them both.**

LEONORA

**Unbending words that will haunt me till death!
Words that make me cringe and cower.
I shy away from exposure and shame,
Awesome words that will haunt me till death!
Awesome words that chill me to the bone.
His love I find abhorrent, but I wish the king no harm.
Though abhorrent, I wish him no harm.**

INES

**Unbending words that will haunt her till death!
Words that make her cringe and cower.
He is to blame. Yes, he only is to blame.
From God above, awesome words that will haunt her ...
A man of God, yet I'm chilled to the bone.
His love, though most abhorrent, all the same,
She can wish the king no harm.**

BALTHAZAR

**Over your head now hovers
A sword that is waiting to fall, and soon.
As a man of the faith, I bring you the word of God,
Casting shame on you both.**

CHORUS

**Words from above,
Words that strengthen and inspire,
Excoriated! Both are to blame!
Excoriated! Yes, they both are much to blame.
A man of God, hurling forth fire and thunder!
A man of God, casting shame on them both.**

LEONORA

**Tormented, I can go on no longer.
Death, I am ready.
Mother, open your arms,
Receive your child.**

INES

**Tormented, can she go on much longer?
Death, soon be ready.
Heaven, open your arms,**

Receive your child.

DON GASPARO

**Cursed and hated, she can stay on no longer.
Ready or not, by tonight she is out.
God will not be beguiled.**

BALTHAZAR

**Cursed and hated, she can stay on no longer.
Whether ready or not,
Thus God has willed.**

ALFONSO

**Persecuted! How long can I control my anger?
My crown and my scepter I'll grind down to dust
Long before I surrender.
I never shall yield!**

FEMALE CHORUS

**Spokesman for God! Let curses fall on her defender.
Let them fall as God has willed.**

MALE CHORUS

**Spokesman for God, he has laid down the law
That cannot be abated.
A guilty sinner! Curses fall on her defender.
On her defender fall, for God thus has willed.**

BALTHAZAR

**Attend the ruling from St. Peter's:
Till you're prepared to repent and atone,
Returning your true, rightful queen to the throne.
Till you abandon your partner in shame,
And thereby removing the blight on your name,
Look not for mercy or hope from on high
While its decrees you disdain and defy.**

ALFONSO

You I defy!

BALTHAZAR

**Chastened, the harlot is destined to plod
Onward in darkness, forsaken by God.
Chastened though tarnished, oh long may she plod
Onward in darkness, forsaken by God.**

LEONOR

**Partner in shame! Called a harlot!
Cast out to wander!
Forced to endure accusation and shame,
Ordered to leave and in darkness to roam,
Lurking ordeals in the days yet to come
Merciful God on high!
Oh Lord, be kind and let me die!
Oh, let me die!**

INES

**Compelled to leave and in darkness to roam,
With lurking ordeals in the days yet to come
Merciful God on high!
Oh Lord, be kind and let her die!
Oh, let her die!**

DON GASPARO

**How justly condemned and cast out of your home,
Turned out to wander, by orders from Rome,
Sentenced by God on high,
Through wind and rain you'll live and die.**

ALFONSO

**Yielding to Rome, I foresee disarray,
Royal powers in decline and decay.
Ordered to leave and in darkness to roam,
With lurking ordeals in the days yet to come!
My royal power compromised and demoted ...
Never! I'd sooner die!
Before I blink I'd sooner die,
Disavowed from on high.**

BALTHAZAR

**Be off! Go unspared in the long days to come,
Wander in darkness as ordered from Rome,
Sentenced by God in shame to live and die!
Cast aside, left to die ...**

CHORUS

**As for the king, we foresee disarray,
Clout and prestige dipping down by the day.
Ordered by God on high,
Will he or will he not comply?**

ACT III

Into the tangled situation that ended Act 11, Fernando returns a triumphant hero. Under his courageous leadership, the Moors have been trounced, and the kingdom restored. In gratitude, Alfonso tells him to name his reward. It goes without saying that Fernando has but one wish – the hand of Leonora.

A thunderbolt for the king, taken utterly by surprise. Obviously he cannot go back on his word, even though his own hopes, not to mention his pride, are thereby shattered. A romantic, yes, but also one whom today we might term a pragmatist. More perturbed by the Pope's denunciation than he has acknowledged, and knowing that he will never have Leonora for himself, he looks on the brighter side: this might be the opportune moment to appease the church by casting her out. And so, controlling his anger, with apparent magnanimity, he approves the marriage, even insisting that it take place immediately. But beware! He has a secret poison pill. It is vital that Fernando not learn of Leonora's equivocal status, not till after the ceremony. Her brave attempt to convey the truth to her beloved must be thwarted.

Scene: the palace of Alcazar.

FERNANDO (*entering*)

To be at last so near her!
So lowly when I left, as hero I return,
An honored guest, invited by the king.
My heart is all athrob, though pulsing not from pride,
But for one reason only:
Within these palace walls my love is close at hand;
She may be waiting ... The king!

(Alfonso enters, in conversation with Don Gasparo)

DON GASPARO

Where and when is the lady to go?

ALFONSO

When do monks give the orders?
You say she has a lover ...

DON GASPARO

So I'm told by a trusted informer.

ALFONSO

Summon Leonora.
Place Ines, her accomplice, under arrest.

(Exit Don Gasparo. Alfonso notices Fernando.)

You're here! Bold defender of the crown!

Because of you, we survive!

FERNANDO

Your regard is my reward.

ALFONSO

Ah, far too modest. Name what you want!
Name it and you shall have it.
On the word of a king you can safely rely.

FERNANDO

Your Highness! Though I am lowly,
Only a soldier, I love a noble lady.
I fought the bitter fight inspired by my love.
I ask you for her hand.

ALFONSO

She is yours! What is her name?
(Leonora quietly enters)

FERNANDO

You would know if I said
That of all women she's the fairest.
(he sees and indicates Leonora)

ALFONSO *(shocked and astounded)*
Leonora!

LEONORA

Fernando!

LEONORA

(Yes, the one they called a harlot ...)

ALFONSO

Fernando has just revealed his passion,
A burning love for you alone,
Love he believes that you return.

LEONORA

(So warm without, so cold within.)

ALFONSO

The truth of his conviction
You confirm by your silence.
Another king, enraged, might stoop to seek vendetta.

Not I! This very day he's requested your hand.

LEONORA

And your reply? ...

ALFONSO

I gave him my consent. Congratulations!

LEONORA & FERNANDO

O king!

ALFONSO

Come, let's proceed. Why wait?

(with bitter melancholy that turns to irony)

**Love starry-eyed, the hurdles all surmounted,
Dreams of a future of skies serene and fair.**

(A future bright, serene and fair)

On candor, truth and trust the dream is founded;

How sweet the bliss the two of you will share!

The days and nights of married bliss

The two of you will share!

LEONORA & FERNANDO

Can this be real?

ALFONSO

Love starry-eyed, *etc.*

On truth and trust the dream is firmly grounded.

A happiness for me, for I foresee

The bliss you soon will share.

LEONORA

(I fear it's all illusion, a dream of bliss ...)

FERNANDO

(I would call it a vision, a dream of bliss ...)

BOTH

... and the life we soon may (will) share.)

ALFONSO (*with sinister intent*)

Within the hour, we'll see how the dream comes true.

FERNANDO

O my prince! On my knees

Let me pour out my heart!

I am yours to command,
Ever yours unto death.
O my hero! Ah, my king!

ALFONSO (*to Leonora*)

A tiny word of warning:
You betrayed the king who was your keeper.
But he has the final say.
)*to Fernando*) Come on! Just one hour!

Love starry eyed, *etc.*
(*to Leonora!* No, I fear it's not for you,
No dream of love come true.

Within one hour! Come along!
(*He leaves with Fernando in tow*)

LEONORA (*alone*)

Then it's not just a dream? No ... no ...
Fernando to marry Leonora! Yet ...
I dare not believe that it can really happen
To one so unworthy of a husband.
(*sardonically*) His chosen bride!
So compromised and cheapened!
Scorned by so many, greeted with contempt ...
No, no! Although he may hate me when he hears,
He must be told my ugly, shameful secret ...
He will know and then decide.

(*writing*) My own Fernando,
Love is all I can offer.
Love just for you,
For the hero I adore.

Love clear and pure
As dew when dawn is breaking,
Love that, alas, may lead to scorn
And then despair.

When you know all
You may despise and loathe me.
And I shall suffer
Pain no mortal should bear. Ah!

I crave your pardon,
Begging not for justice, but mercy –

A gift so undeserved, but if denied,
I only want to die.
With nothing left that can be lost,
I pray to God to let me die. (*she stops writing*)

Too hard to bear, the pangs of conscience.
No sword could be so sharp.

Hoping, fearing, count the hours
And prepare!
Upon the altar, scatter flowers,
Toss bouquets.
Over there, a grave lies open;
On it place a veil of black
For the bride whose heart is broken,
Vilified and then forsaken,
Dead before the day grows dark.

Prepare! Prepare the altar or my grave!
Prepare the altar
Or place a veil of black upon my grave. (*Ines enters*)

Ines!

INES

Is it true? Fernando will be your husband?

LEONORA

I can but hope,
But the past is relentless, no release, no escape.
And I fear the worst.
Go find Fernando
Give him this letter– tell him the truth.
When he learns who I am,
He may leave disillusioned.
I can well understand.
But if, moved by my remorse,
He can forgive and rise above it,
I shall fall at his feet, and love him like a god.
And even more, for him I would lay down my life.
Say that I wanted the truth, however shameful,
To come from me.

INES (*as Leonora leaves*)

Yes, milady. You can count on me.
I'll go right away ...

DON GASPARO (*entering with guards*)
Not so fast! The king issued the order.
You are under arrest,
On your way to the palace dungeon
Awaiting trial.

INES
Oh, Lord! What have I done? (*they force her away*)

COURTIERS
(*entering in great excitement*)
Within the private chapel
We nobles will assemble,
With royals, not with rabble,
To grace the wedding day.

The bride and groom then enter
On edge and all atremble,
Regaled with pomp and splendor
To start them on their way.

(*Splendidly attired, Fernando enters, overwhelmed by his good fortune.*)

FERNANDO
Such a shower of joy I still cannot believe!
At last to wed the woman of my dreams.
I now can walk side by side
With the highest in the land!

ALFONSO
Those at court understand
The debt we owe our hero
Who not only saved our lives
But overcame the Moors,
Now Count of Zamora
And Marquis of Montreal –
Your newest titles.
Reward for skill and valor. (*with this he exits*)

DON GASPARO (*aside to courtiers*)
What say you men to this?

COURTIERS
The king is kind to a fault.

DON GASPARO

**High reward, yes indeed,
For shame and dishonor!**

COURTIERS

Will the wedding go on?

DON GASPARO

**The king today consented – of course, we know why.
A contemptible pact
That will appease the thunder from the Pope.**

A COURTIER

The bride, here's Leonora!

(In white, Leonora slowly enters in a state of utmost apprehension)

DON GASPARO *(with irony)*

Ah, the latest Marquise!

LEONORA

(Now comes the fatal moment ...)

(Fernando's adoration is unmistakable)

(He knows! He knows and forgives!

No tiny trace of anger ...)

FERNANDO

The altar waits ... My dearest!

LEONORA

(What relief!)

FERNANDO

You tremble ...

LEONORA

Yes, from joy!

COURTIERS

(Shameless hussy!)

FERNANDO

We march up to the altar

And return man and wife. (*he leads Leonora out*)

COURTIERS (*with spiteful glee*)
Within the private chapel, *etc.*

DON GASPARO
A disgrace and a scandal!

COURTIERS
An abominable thing!

DON GASPARO
He has married the mistress ...

COURTIERS
Who is kept by the king.

DON GASPARO
The cad is clearly after ...

COURTIERS
The rewards it will bring.

DON GASPARO
So he married the mistress ...

COURTIERS
Who is kept by the king.

DON GASPARO
Marquis, so named already.

COURTIERS
And that's the mere beginning.

DON GASPARO
Not only name of rank and title, BUT –
There's more to come.

COURTIERS
In wealth he'll soon be swimming.

DON GASPARO & COURTIERS
Of lowly birth and lusting after power,
Quite ignoring the cost
Or the lines he has crossed.

**A ruthless cad, a would-be royal,
He's a man on the make.
A buffoon and a fake.**

**We'll bring him down
Before we are through.
When we are done,
He'll know a thing or two.**

**He'll tumble down before we are through with him –
A ruthless cad, but we know what to do with him.
No friend of mine who weds a concubine.
A man who weds a concubine
I'm loath to call a friend of mine.
A known concubine! The royal concubine! No! No!**

**He won the bride
But now may well recall:
Prestige and pride
Are headed for a fall.**

**FERNANDO (*blissfully returning*)
Oh, lucky me! I have found seventh heaven!
Ah, what a day! My friends, I extend a hand
Inviting you to share my joy.
She is my own, my all! My beloved Leonora!
Could any prize be sweeter? Come, tell me ...**

COURTIERS

Yes ... your good name!

FERNANDO

**My good name? You speak of honor.
The word to me is sacred,
A value I was taught from the cradle.
It's about self-respect.
I can part with possessions
But honor let me keep.**

COURTIERS

Easy enough to say, and easy to forget!

FERNANDO

**Do you suggest? Do you imply? ...
When I'm insulted, I must respond.
But no ... maybe I misunderstood.**

To make amends, give me your hand;
Let me still call you friend.

COURTIERS

Never! To bring you down to size,
Your fabricated title we refuse to recognize.

FERNANDO

For this you'll answer! No time for talk,
It's time for action!

COURTIERS

Very well! That you will have.

FERNANDO

Come on!

COURTIERS

Come on!

BALTHAZAR (*suddenly appearing*)

Stop where you are!
You fools behave like children!
Simmer down, calm yourselves. Grow up!

FERNANDO

Ah, Balthazar!

BALTHAZAR

My son!

DON GASPARO (*with irony*)

Now wed to Leonora ...

BALTHAZAR

My God!

FERNANDO

What if I am?

BALTHAZAR

Disgrace, shame and dishonor!

FERNANDO

Explain the meaning of such a charge!
I've got to know!

COURTIERS

You have just married the king's concubine.

FERNANDO (*dumbfounded*)
My Leonora, the king's concubine?
(bursting out) Not Leonora!
My head's a blazing inferno!

BALTHAZAR
Did you not know?

FERNANDO
She, the king's concubine ...

BALTHAZAR
Oh, my son!

FERNANDO
I'm deceived and betrayed!

BALTHAZAR
Be careful, people are coming ...

FERNANDO
I'm ready, let them come.

BALTHAZAR
Flee!

FERNANDO
Oh, no! Not till I get revenge!

BALTHAZAR
Fernando! What are you planning?

FERNANDO (*in despair*)
God only knows ... Oh, father!

COURTIERS
(Murder in his eyes ...) Here's the king!

FERNANDO
Your Highness, to you I owe
My good fortune, my acclaim,

The title of Marquis, my costly attire,
Privilege, and gold –
All that most men desire.
But these rewards I now despise.
Too dearly they were bought.
The price was my good name.
(The king enters with Leonora, in her bridal dress)

ALFONSO

The calm and composure
I saw in his eyes
Have turned into furies
That glare and chastise.
The axe having fallen
And my love betrayed,
No time to surrender
Till wrongs are repaid.

DON GASPARO

The axe having fallen,
The king is repaid.
I trust he'll remember
The role that I played.

LEONORA

And so the axe has fallen,
But why is he dismayed?
Forewarned and enlightened,
He freely went ahead,
Went freely ahead unafraid.
My plight and misfortune
My letter made clear.
The tears and the candor
Were straight from the heart.
My loathsome position I told him
Full knowing the painful confession
Could tear us apart.

FERNANDO

The axe having fallen,
In torment I flounder,
So grossly misled.
My plight and misfortune are now all too clear;
With cold-blooded mockery she's broken my heart.
My loathsome position I owe her, full knowing
That lies and corruption have torn me apart.

BALTHAZAR

**Blows having fallen,
The whore looks dismayed.
Her cunning maneuvers waylaid.
The axe having fallen,
The hero betrayed.
No time to surrender
Till wrongs are repaid.**

COURTIERS

**Exactly what happened so far is unclear.
A bombshell! Stay on the alert!**

ALFONSO

Listen to me, Fernando ...

FERNANDO

I've heard enough already.

LEONORA

(He never got my letter.)

FERNANDO

Why was I singled out to wear a cloak of shame?

ALFONSO

Marquis!

FERNANDO

**That name is none of mine!
The medals I received
I gladly now return.**

ALFONSO (*now angry*)

Marquis! Marquis!

FERNANDO

The name I do not need ... no, no!

LEONORA

(The message telling all ... he never got.)

ALFONSO

I warn you!

FERNANDO

**In turn, give me back my reputation.
No more shall I be the target of some royal prank.
The only name I choose to keep
I received from my father.**

LEONORA

(Ines ... where are you?)

DON GASPARO (*sotto voce*)

Go look inside the dungeon.

FERNANDO

**I'm on my way.
Take these medals that you have degraded;
I give them back.
And the sword that fought your battles
And routed out the foe,
Take the sword I now abhor
Because it came from you!**

LEONORA

**Wrathful king, restrain your power;
Turn on me your indignation.
On me alone let curses shower –
Castigate, accuse, chastise.
Lost in sorrow, by guilt devoured,
I care not where my future lies.**

FERNANDO

**How I curse the day and hour
Of my shame and degradation!
I return the gold you showered
With the title I despise.
Though by anger and grief devoured,
Scorn and disdain, there my honor lies.
Though by rage and grief devoured,
In scorn and disdain my honor lies.**

DON GASPARO

**I've a grudging admiration
For a man none dare call coward,
Stirred by noble indignation,
Made a pawn, misled by lies.**

Trampled on, misled by lies.

ALFONSO

**How he scorns my royal power
With a show of indignation.
Disappointed, he's devoured
By a pain I recognize.**

BALTHAZAR

**Looking on, I'm overpowered
By a surge of warm compassion.
Though by grief and rage devoured,
In the church his (your) future lies.**

COURTIERS

**One scornful, both angry, pride and pain competing,
Storm warnings that neither can disguise.
A contest of wills that neither can disguise.**

**Both tormented, both competing
In a clash of pride and pain
That neither can disguise.**

ACT 1V

As Balthazar predicted in Act I, Fernando has returned to the monastery, heartbroken and bitterly disillusioned, believing that he has been misled, tricked into a dishonorable marriage by the woman he adored and idolized. He is now ready to take the vow he formerly rejected, a vow to renounce this vile, treacherous world, devote his life to the service of God, and wait patiently, but longingly, for death.

Back in the monastery, as in Act I. Night has fallen.

MONKS & PILGRIMS

**Brothers! Count the days until the toils conclude,
When the grave becomes your friend,
Where strife dares not intrude,
And sorrows end.**

**Brothers! Sisters!
Find here a lasting friend
When sorrows end
In peace.**

BALTHAZAR & CHORUS

Stars shine as solemn bells are tolling,
Eyes sparkling with the light of love.
Here faithful penitents are kneeling
Beside the shadow of the grave.

BALTHAZAR

Dearly beloved son,
Within the hour you will take a vow
To leave the world behind
And dedicate your life to God.

FERNANDO

When I left this quiet haven
To brave the worldly tempest,
You very wisely said,
“My son, you’ll soon return.”
Here I am, home again,
To seek forgetfulness
And the blessed release
Only death can provide.

BALTHAZAR

Be brave, my son, gaze within
On the road toward wisdom,
Serving the will of God,
Fortified by your faith.
On the world you have left,
On the world you have left
The curtain now descends. *(he starts to leave)*

FERNANDO

Why do you leave?

BALTHAZAR

I’m needed at the chapel.
A frail-looking novice
Is inside, near collapse,
Exhausted, much in need of repose and support.

FERNANDO

He is young?

BALTHAZAR

Still a youth, but consumed by a sorrow
Profound and corrosive.

I fear his days are numbered.

FERNANDO

**I know ... Grief can be deadly. (*exit Balthazar*)
(*obsessively brooding*) She was kept by the king!
Went to bed with the king!
I am tortured by fire
Like a lost soul in hell ...
The hero's hour of glory –
Brief as a falling star,
Love and hope dead and buried.**

**Pure as the dew of early morning,
Or so I thought,
Yet just a dream.**

**No longer blind,
Shorn of illusion,
Mocked and reviled,
But no, not resigned!**

**My faith and my calling forsaken,
Misled by love, I lost my way
Along the murky road I'd taken,
A fool, adrift and far astray.
Oh, God! Oh, God!**

**Pure as the dew, *etc.*
Dear Lord, relieve the despair of a soul at war;
Blot from my mind all remnants of love,
Clearing the way for peace evermore.**

BALTHAZAR

Are you prepared?

FERNANDO

I'm ready to take the stern, unyielding vow.

BALTHAZAR

Then follow, and shortly may God's will be done.

(They leave; Leonora enters falteringly, hooded, like a novice)

LEONORA

Fernando! Fernando!

**My search goes on and on ...
To seek asylum, it may be here that you return to ...
By cloak and hood concealed,
With the help of the Almighty,
I must find you before it's too late.
Worn out by grief,
I've no reserve to draw on,
And little time left before I die.
A blessed release from a pitiless conscience!
But if you can forgive,
I'll leave to die in peace.
That is all that I need to die in peace.**

CHORUS (*within*)

**From mountain tops hear the voices of angels
Herald the life dedicated to God.**

LEONORA

**In chorus they acclaim
An initiate taking holy orders ...**

CHORUS

**Blessed be the cloistered seeker of salvation
Who shuns the perils and snares of the world ...**

LEONORA

**Enclosed behind these walls ...
A man who shuns the snares of the world ...**

CHORUS

Free of distraction, pursue your lofty goal ...

FERNANDO (*from within*)

**Henceforth to God's holy work I consecrate my life,
Turning from the long dark of night ...**

LEONORA

Here at last! ... It is he! It is he!

FERNANDO

Ever sworn to forgo and to serve.

CHORUS

Angels on high hail the God-driven soul.

LEONORA

Renouncing the world, now a servant of God!
And I can intrude no longer.

(She starts to flee but soon collapses)

Ah! I give out ... and death turns me to ice.
(she falls to the ground)

FERNANDO

(leaving the chapel in a state of agitation)

Vows made, no starting over!
Despite myself, I felt more and more uneasy,
A silent, foreboding terror.
Ashamed, I hurried out ...

LEONORA *(coming to after fainting)*

What happened? Where am I? So weak, so cold ...

FERNANDO

A stranger! Some weary soul must have fainted ...
Here take my hand, poor fellow ...

LEONORA

Fernando!

FERNANDO *(recognizing her)*

Dear God!

LEONORA

The way you look at me!
The hatred in your eyes!

FERNANDO

Oh, go away! This ground is sacred.
You stain and dishonor a holy place.
Leave me in peace, cloistered and undisturbed
While waiting longingly to die.
Leave me alone while waiting to die.
Be off! Go away!
Back in the palace, the king is impatient;
Lustfully waiting, he holds out his arms,
Eager to please you with robes of velvet
He gives you also scandal and shame.
Ah, with pearls and sparkling diamonds
He blackens your name, and you go along,
You agree to play his tawdry game.

LEONORA

So many miles I've pressed on
To find your monastery,
Exhausted yet persistent,
Falling down, up again ...

FERNANDO

You led me along with lies.
So now what do you want?

LEONORA

To correct a mistake ... about my ugly secret.
I sent Ines and thought that she had told you all,
That you knew and you forgave.
This I swear! You must believe!
So close to death, one does not lie,
Not with death closing in ...
Arrested before she could give you the message ...
Fernando, please! I thought you knew ... Believe me!
There will for me be no tomorrow;
So little time to say goodbye.
May shame and endless tears of sorrow
Restore your trust before I die.

I grieve because I made you suffer;
Remorse and pity take their toll.
Though now my life is nearly over,
You still can heal a tortured soul.

Be guided by the God of mercy.
Like Him, forgive as He forgave,
Forgive as He forgave.
I acted only out of love.

FERNANDO

(The tears of one I loved so dearly
Too heavily weigh upon my heart,
The troubled heart that she has broken.
Now guided by the God of justice:
Oh, let me not succumb or weaken!
Oh, let me not surrender!
Her pain and sorrow stir my heart
But I must not relent; I'm lost if I relent.)

LEONORA

I'm still the person that you once adored.

**Do my tears leave your troubled heart unstirred?
I plead with you to grant
The one kind word I want.**

FERNANDO
Goodby! I must be gone.

LEONORA
You leave without forgiving? Without a word of pardon?

FERNANDO
Goodby!

LEONORA
**You leave me here to die
Distrusted and despised! I plead! I plead!
Let my tears reach and touch you,
Just a small simple word ...**

FERNANDO
No! No!

LEONORA
**By the hand of our maker, by my life soon to end,
By our savior's example, by the love you once felt ...**

FERNANDO
**(Ah! How can I hear and not weep for her?
When she implores my resolve starts to melt.)**

LEONORA
**Oh, heaven hear me! At the door of life eternal,
Ah, Fernando! I plead for mercy!
Here at your feet I bare my soul.**

FERNANDO
Ah, Leonora! Leonora!

LEONORA
Hear me! Hear me!

FERNANDO
I must believe... God will forgive you.

LEONORA
But you?

FERNANDO (*suddenly melting*)
I love you! Like a child on a pony, I'm wild
With the joy of living, and the joy of loving!
Free at last from the shadow of doubt,
We shall live in the open, happy, grateful and proud,
As we leave for that welcoming land
Where love and delight are allowed
Free from the chains of the past,
Free from the darkness of night.

LEONORA
If a dream, a miraculous dream,
May I never awaken, For me they seem
The most wonderful words
That have ever been spoken. Oh, the power of love!
Free at last from the shadow of guilt,
With love, broken trust can be rebuilt.
But no! Too late, too late to discover
That welcoming land where love and dreams are fulfilled.

CHORUS (*within*)
Blessed be the life dedicated
To selfless selfless service to God.

FERNANDO
My love! We'll flee together!

LEONORA
Your vow ... Have you forgot?
Can you hear what they're chanting?

FERNANDO
No, no!

LEONORA
God through them is speaking ...

FERNANDO
I hear the pure voice of love, stronger yet.
Come! Come!

LEONORA
Too late ... what of your vow?

FERNANDO

**My life belongs now to you!
Come! You and you alone are my claim to salvation.
Love will make you strong again.**

LEONORA

**No! And God be thanked!
My death will save you from destruction.**

FERNANDO

Oh, Leonora!

LEONORA

**For me, you will return to your calling and vocation.
I accept what's to come ...
At peace ... I yield to heaven,
And shall die willingly, blissfully knowing
That your life will go on.**

FERNANDO

Be brave, and live!

LEONORA

Ah, so weak ... But serene ...

FERNANDO

In my arms come away!

LEONORA

No ... My transgressions ... my torments ... are nearly over.

FERNANDO

Stay with me! Stay with me!

LEONORA

**I shall die happy knowing
That we shall meet again ...
Beyond the grave I shall wait for you ...
Goodnight! Goodnight ... (*she dies*)**

FERNANDO

I've lost her!

THE END

