

COSI FAN TUTTE
(The Way of Women)

INTRODUCTION

In a famous scene from Act I of *The Marriage of Figaro*, Count Almaviva, whose amorous designs on his servant Susanna provide one of the mainsprings of the plot, enters her chamber, enticed there by the snide, scandal mongering Don Basilio. There, concealed in a chair, he discovers Cherubino, the handsome young page whom he has exposed the previous day in an equally compromising situation. The Count leaps to the obvious conclusion, as he is wont to do. With scorn and indignation he taunts Susanna, who has resisted his own advances: “Ah, my cold and modest beauty, I begin to understand.” Susanna is horrified, aghast: “Things were bad enough already, now completely out of hand.” The slimy Basilio is ecstatic: “Ah! *Cosi, cosi fan tutte!* Here’s a theme we might expand.”

As he says this, a sly musical figure darts around in the orchestra. Sure enough, where should it crop up again but in the overture to *Cosi fan Tutte*? I wonder, have we discovered the germ of this extraordinary opera? And what do the words mean? It’s a hard phrase to put into natural sounding English -- a good example of the problems that beset a translator at almost every turn. Literally, *Thus do All*. But that’s not quite the whole story. The final “e” let’s half of us off the hook. The correct rendition would have to be *Thus do All Women*. Not very felicitous. I prefer *The Way of Women*, or even the more colloquial *That’s Women!*

In this enlightened age that we are fortunate to live in, one may detect a slight chill in the air, a murmur of protest, even a howl of indignation. Women? The weaker sex, the fickle gender? Forsooth! Is Mozart -- perish the thought-- a male chauvinist? Before heaping abuse on the composer or his librettist, it is only fair to bear in mind that they had done ample justice to the masculine side of the equation in their previous collaboration, *Don Giovanni*.

Indeed, in all of Mozart’s major operas, woman’s constancy has been a major theme. Advocates of feminism could hardly find a stronger spokesman. Why the switch? The question could lead to speculation about his personal life. After all, by this time he had been married for seven years. Perhaps his own youthful idealism has received a few jolts. Who knows? What one does know is that this abrupt change of viewpoint upset the world for a good long time.

The premiere of *Cosi* was a modest success, but the opera’s lease on life was almost immediately cut short by the death of the Emperor. Performances were suspended, and the opera was shelved until several years after Mozart’s death. By the time it was pulled out again for inspection, Mozart’s greatness as a composer has been universally though still only partially recognized. The few that perused the opera were bewildered and appalled. What monstrosity had they uncovered?

It was not fit for human consumption -- infamous, outrageous, indecent, an assault on womanhood. Even so, amid the battle-smoke, the loveliness and strength of the music were unmistakably apparent. And so various script doctors and librettists got to work to see if something could be salvaged from the squalor. As a result of their efforts, the opera was performed from time to time throughout the 19th century, but always in some altered shape that made hash of what it was all about. In some cases, the libretto was scrapped altogether, and a new story was grafted onto the music. *Così* was not performed in a manner that even remotely resembled the opera that Mozart and Da Ponte wrote until 1896, over a hundred years after its premiere. London got it in 1910. It was not produced in America until 1922. And it did not reach San Francisco -- that most cosmopolitan of cities -- until the late 1950's. Even then, the opera management was so skeptical of its potential for audience acceptance that it was scheduled for only two special performances. Since then, of course, the about-face in public and critical approval has been complete. The verdict is in. *Così fan Tutte* has made it.

Ironically, this libretto that critics have found so puzzling, so unsatisfactory, so artificial, is one of the best. Why was it so difficult to understand? For one thing, the psychological climate of the times has indeed changed. The 19th century liked to put women and Mozart both on a pedestal. He was the disembodied angel. They were -- well, pretty much what Mozart wanted to point out that they were not. In the opera, the two young couples receive an education about love and come to maturity in twenty-four hours. It took the world considerably longer.

Aside from unwillingness to face up to the truths that the opera discloses, the 19th century seems to have been hung up on certain conventions of realism -- again, conventions that this opera deliberately defies. Critics have been divided between those that called it wicked and those that called it silly, failing to recognize that it tells about as serious a story as can be told, as lovers who have grown apart when separated can ruefully testify. But in true Mozartean style, the story is translated into comic terms, a transparently theatrical fable, featuring two symmetrical pairs of lovers, with a wise but disenchanted older man master-minding the men, and a down-to-earth, no-nonsense maid servant stage-managing the ladies.

The story starts with a wager: Don Alfonso, the older man, bets that the girls can be knocked off the pedestal that their sweethearts have placed them on, provided that the young men will follow his instructions implicitly. And, as mentioned, this is to be accomplished in twenty-four hours -- an obvious gesture of defiance to the laws of realism that reinforces the rule of comedy. They eagerly take on the challenge.

It should be said that a passionate clash of beliefs on such a personal issue could hardly be expressed with less hostility. Still, the stern moralist might have a thing or two to say. What sort of young man would participate in a plot deliberately to deceive his sweetheart and put her virtue to the test? Before judging these lovers harshly, bear in mind that they are completely confident that the girls

will rise above the pitfalls set for them. They are not testing their virtue; they are showing it off. The further they can go to put it in peril, the greater glory to all when they emerge triumphant.

The first chapter ends in the highest good humor, with no hint that friendship or love is in jeopardy. The boys go along with the scheme, motivated by the desire that has always governed youth: to expose the older man as a dithering idiot. And win some easy prize money in the process. Already they are planning a victory celebration.

The scene changes to a garden, with a view of the sea in the distance, where we meet the two sisters, lovely as the landscape they adorn. Their names are Fiordiligi and Dorabella, which, I mention reluctantly, could be translated Lily Flower and Golden Beauty. Southern belles, indeed, brought up in a rarified atmosphere where their innocence and purity have never been ruffled by the slightest cold gust of wind, where their fair complexions have never been exposed to the glare of the sun. Like the men, they too are engaged in an argument, albeit one far less raucous in tone. They are comparing portraits of their sweethearts: which is the handsomer, the braver, the more completely perfect in every conceivable way? They reach perfect accord, however, in the second half of their duet, when their euphonious harmony expresses a single thought: from love so perfect, never could they be tempted to stray.

Their pretty reverie is interrupted by Don Alfonso, who enters in breathless agitation and manages to choke out the bad news: their sweethearts have been summoned to the battlefield and must depart that very morning, with barely time to say farewell. This leads to a quintet that begins almost like a parody, when the young men in halting, laggard fashion, barely able to pull themselves together, do indeed come to say goodbye. And the girls are not to be outdone in their outburst of grief.

From offstage, a military chorus urges the men away -- a chorus that extols the positive side of military life, the delights of adventure, travel, excitement -- an image portrayed on many a recruiting poster. This masculine life from which the girls, of course, are completely excluded can hardly fail to evoke a twinge of curiosity or envy: "Oh, the soldier's life for me!"

This chorus will gain significance when it reappears near the end of the opera, to announce the premature return of the all-too-trusting lovers. But at this point Don Alfonso joins the stricken sisters in a sublimely beautiful trio, a prayer for the departing soldiers, a benediction. The orchestra sets the atmosphere, with a gentle, murmuring figure that suggests the motion of a quiet sea.

But the opera has become almost too serious! Don Alfonso, alone after the sisters have staggered off, punctures the solemnity with a brief arietta that concludes the scene with a lively premonition of what is to come.

The next scene moves us indoors to the province of Despina, the servant. She is preparing the chocolate, and as servants are wont to do, grumbling. Bear in mind that these are days when a servant's complaints can sound ominous. Revolution is in the air. The Bastille is on the brink of demolition. From abroad, colonies have recently struggled out from under the yoke of foreign oppression. Even in the sheltered drawing room that we now enter, one can hear a faint echo of the subversive rumble that sounded far more distinctly in *The Marriage of Figaro*. Clearly, here is a girl who would not turn down the chance to put her superiors in their place by pricking the bubble of illusion that they live in.

Their servant, but also their confidant, it is to her that Dorabella first pours out her grief in the first full-blown aria of the opera. Surely, no classical tragedienne has uttered more appropriate sentiments. Yet a rule of thumb in Mozart, as perhaps in life, is that when people speak in an exaggerated way, they are probably not quite telling the truth. Nonetheless, the aria does express a psychological truth that belies the bombastic language -- a truth that again is contained in the accompaniment which sets the tone: a restless, agitated undercurrent of uncertainty and disorientation. This is the sort of truth that cannot be disguised by convictions of how one ought to feel.

Despina is not impressed. So their lovers are gone? What's the complaint? Instead of wasting precious time in moping, they should take advantage of the opportunity, go out and find amusement. After all, this is no doubt what their men are doing already. Dorabella is aghast at the very idea: "How low can you sink? Our faithful lovers would never think of looking at another!" This brings a withering reply: "No ifs, no buts, no maybes. You can go tell that fairy tale to babies."

Don Alfonso will have little difficulty in persuading this girl to become his accomplice, especially with the help of a modest bribe. But he does not let her into the entire secret. She is merely to help him introduce two friends from a neighboring country, who will provide a bit of diversion for the two heart-broken sisters. And so, under his auspices, the two soldiers return, now in disguise, as Albanians. Each is prepared to woo the other's sweetheart and attempt to break down the bastions of her defense. With the sturdy militaristic flavor that characterizes the men through most of this act, it has all the earmarks of an Act Finale. The singers divide into three teams. The pseudo-Albanians declare their motive in coming, the sudden passion that has swept them off their feet. The girls erupt with a virtual orgy of outrage, while Despina and Don Alfonso quietly comment: So much thunder makes me wonder, is there less here than meets the eye?

It's a grand ensemble, but almost immediately Fiordiligi takes the opportunity to reject their amorous presumption in even grander style, one of the great bravura arias in all of opera: "Come scoglio . . . Like a rock." In three

sections, it begins with a solemn introduction, followed by a briskly resolute allegro that leads to a triumphant finale, with trumpets and kettledrums. The men are not the only ones that can be militant when the occasion demands. A virtuoso exhibition of vocalism, no rejection could be more conclusive.

One can sympathize with the hapless suitor, at a loss for words after such an onslaught. Guglielmo replies with a gentle, persuasive, coaxing melody that seeks to lower the emotional tone by suggesting that love need not be so formidable. The ladies, far from mollified, withdraw with their dignity intact, leaving the three men to a trio in which two of them, at any rate, can no longer contain their laughter. They have won the first round.

Till now, we have not gotten much sense of the separate identities of the two men, beyond observing that one is a tenor and the other a bass-baritone. But now the character of Ferrando takes on new dimensions. Alone on stage, he gives expression to a radiant, sweet, expansive romantic love which may leave us wondering with some regret: is it truly inevitable that such idealism be brought down to earth? It reminds us again that the two young men are not for a moment trying to cast doubts on their sweethearts. Both of them are entirely confident that true love will reign supreme over any temptation.

This moment of repose leads to the Act One Finale, in which round two of the campaign will be waged. The scene has moved to the garden -- an ordered, elegant, formal glimpse of nature at its most decorous, brought under civilized, human control. A place of balance and design. Nonetheless, a place where seeds do sprout, where leaves turn green, where buds become blossoms. A garden, we might recall, seems to be the designated spot where innocence is invited to eat of the forbidden fruit -- a tradition that goes back a long way indeed.

The Mozart finale was one of his great operatic inventions, almost an opera within an opera, consisting of many connected and contrasting movements. Perhaps the most famous example is the second act final of *The Marriage of Figaro*, which starts with just two people, the Count and the Countess, then becomes a trio, then a quartet, and so on and on, accumulating till everybody is going full blast and the curtain falls. Similarly, here the first act finale, consisting of five movements, begins with a duet between the sisters. They are singing about their grief, about their loss, but we have to acknowledge that it is a very pleasant kind of grief. They are enjoying themselves, luxuriating in the novelty of the sensation. The arrival of the passionate Albanians has perhaps reminded them that the world has not necessarily come to an end.

The second movement is melodrama. The enamored Albanians, driven to desperation by unrequited passion, have taken poison. Seeing them on the verge of death, shattered by a love too irresistible to withstand, what susceptible young lady would not be moved?

The third movement is farce. The doctor arrives, whom everybody but the girls recognizes as Despina, masquerading. She takes the case in hand, waves a marvelous magnet over the two prostrate bodies, and lo! They are restored to life.

The fourth movement is magic. Rescued from the other world, the young men awaken in a daze: “Where am I? What land of beauty? What celestial hand restores me?”

The fifth movement is pure buffo. The recovered boys ask for a kiss, which snaps the girls back to reality and the proper outrage they had almost forgotten. And the act ends with all six giving vent to their emotions, full speed ahead, no holds barred.

In Act Two, the girls take their first tentative steps into unknown territory, where unsuspectingly they stumble into the realm of deep emotion. Just as they must fend for themselves, without support, without guidance, perhaps this is the appropriate spot for the commentator to leave the reader to do the same.

ACT ONE

Scene: a tavern where three soldiers are in heated conversation.

1. TRIO

FERRANDO:



As true as she's lovely, as faithful as fair.

GUGLIELMO: Distrust Fiordiligi?

You're out of your mind!

A model of virtue and beauty combined.

DON ALFONSO: Though balding and graying,

I know what I'm saying;

So take my suggestion

And end this debate

Before it's a question

Of caution too late.

**FER. & GUGL. I'll stand it no longer!
The insult is double.
So grossly you wrong her,
Confirm it or fight.**

DON ALFONSO: You're asking for trouble.

**FER. & GUGL. (*reading for their swords*)
No, no! You began it.
Your sword or your reasons!
We'll have satisfaction!
Our hearts are as granite
Defending the right.**

**DON ALFONSO: Insane to pursue it!
For only a duffer
Determined to suffer
Goes charging to certain defeat.**

**FER. & GUGL. A challenge to honor!
You force us to action
Demanding retraction:
Those words you must eat.**

**GUGLIELMO: Name your weapon!
We'll fight it out, and now's the ideal time.**

**DON ALFONSO: Good sense is my weapon,
And I avoid using knives except at mealtime.**

**FERRANDO: Explain yourself! Why so cynical?
How dare you cast aspersions on our sweethearts?
The very thought is unworthy.**

DON ALFONSO: O ruddy cheeks of youth! Springtime in flower!

FERRANDO: Stop! This is not a joke. I swear by heaven . . .

**DON ALFONSO: And I by things more earthy.
My friends, I speak in earnest.
But let me put the issue:
What special species are they,
These idols you so worship?
Like everybody else,
Made of flesh, bone and tissue,
With appetite and thirst,**

Or frozen statues?
Celestial marble, or flesh and blood?

FER. & GUGL. Real women, but from heaven, from heaven . . .

DON ALFONSO: And you expect a woman to remain ever true?
My simple-minded friends, I've news for you!

2. TRIO.

Like the phoenix of Arabia,
Woman's faith is but a fable,
Idle gossip for the table.
Although all lovers
Claim they've found it,
Where it hovers . . .
That none can tell.

FERRANDO: That rare bird is Dorabella!

GUGLIELMO: That rare bird is Fiordiligi!

DON ALFONSO: Neither yours not any other's.
While you plead to stop its flight,
The bird's already out of sight.

FERRANDO: Supercilious drivel!

GUGLIELMO: Old age has turned him sour.

DON ALFONSO: You flatter. But tell me –
And please, without the swordplay –
What makes you so convinced
Your two beloveds are fashioned out of granite?
Have you some guarantee
That their vows are immune to erosion?

FERRANDO: No proof is needed.

GUGLIELMO: Her eyes speak volumes.

FERRANDO: The depth of feeling.

GUGLIELMO: Wise, yet so innocent.

FERRANDO: Her simple candor.

GUGLIELMO: So concerned and considerate.

FERRANDO: She promised . . .

GUGLIELMO: Protested . . .

FERRANDO: Took the Bible . . .

DON ALFONSO: Yes, yes . . . with sighs, caresses, fits of swooning.
I can't believe you're serious!

FERRANDO: The devil! I'm fed up with your sarcasm.

DON ALFONSO: No wonder. But what if I give you proof
Beyond any doubt they're made like other women?

GUGLIELMO: That is absurd!

FERRANDO: A lie!

DON ALFONSO: Let's bet!

FERRANDO: A wager!

DON ALFONSO: One hundred ducats.

GUGLIELMO: I'll raise you to a thousand!

DON ALFONSO: You mean it?

FERRANDO: Here's my hand on it.

DON ALFONSO: I warn you: no signals, no cheating!
The girls are not to guess what we are up to.
You are both sworn to secrecy.

FERRANDO: We swear it.

DON ALFONSO: As a soldier of honor?

BOTH: As a soldier of honor.

DON ALFONSO: Until tomorrow evening, you'll do as I command?

FERRANDO: Fully.

GUGLIELMO: Unswervingly.

DON ALFONSO: The game is on!

BOTH: The game is on! Extravagant Alfonso!

**FERRANDO: We're bound to beat you.
Then see who finds it funny.**

GUGLIELMO: Tell me, what shall we do with all that money?

2. TRIO

**FERRANDO: First a serenade I'll offer
That will honor and exalt her.
To my goddess
Every song shall be an altar.**

**GUGLIELMO: As we share the prize between us,
Having won your scornful jest,
I shall celebrate my Venus
With a feast. Come, you may be my guest.**

DON ALFONSO: So I'm not to be excluded?

**FER, & GUGL. You can come and drink your fill;
You're the one that pays the bill.**

**ALL: There in triumph undisputed
We shall revel out the night.
Lovers all shall be saluted
In a feast of sheer delight. (Exeunt)**

Scene: a garden overlooking the sea. Two sisters are comparing lockets.

3. DUET

**FIORDILIGI: A dazzling portrayal!
I gaze on, enraptured.
Notice! Notice! The smile so well captured,
The manly authority
That glows from inside.**

**DORABELLA: And yet mine surpasses!
O sister! The eyes sending flashes
So torrid they blister!**

Such power and pride.

**FIORDILIGI: So bold in his bearing,
A soldier and a lover!**

**DORABELLA: And mine I discover
So modest, yet so daring!**

**BOTH: O rapture unbounded!
If even a moment I waver or wander,
If tempted for even a moment –
O darling! O darling! May ever I languish forlorn.
If true love I'm tempted to tarnish or squander
May Cupid in anger cast arrows of scorn.**

**FIORDILIGI: See what a lovely morning!
I awake in a mood of mirth and mischief.
A touch of fever, a quiver in the veins
Whispers a warning:
O darling, sweet Guglielmo!
There's no telling –
I'm apt to lose my head.**

**DORABELLA: I notice also sweet mysterious vibrations
That from my heart keep spreading
With such impatience,
I'm convinced all the signs foretell a wedding.
What delays them? O why in the name of heaven
Do our lovers come so late? It's past eleven!**

FIORDILIGI: There they are!

**DORABELLA: Wishful thinking . . . Only Alfonso, their dear old
friend.**

FIORDILIGI: Do enter, my dear Don Alfonso.

**DON ALFONSO: (*entering, apparently overcome with shock and grief*)
G-g-greetings.**

**DORABELLA: Alone? Why so intense?
Are you weeping? Don't keep us in suspense.
Has something happened? My jewel!**

FIORDILIGI: And my precious!

DON ALFONSO: Fate harsh and cruel!

5. *ARIETTA.*

**How to break the awful news?
Stammer, stutter . . . it is no use.
Woe is me, my tongue is tied
And the words are stuck inside.
What solution? What to do?
Such a sudden thunderbolt!
Though I'd speak, my lips revolt.
How my heart goes out to you,
Hopes and dreams all gone askew!**

**FIORDILIGI: Hurry! Tell us at once, don't keep us waiting!
I shall die of suspense!**

**DON ALFONSO: Pluck up your courage;
Very soon you will need it.**

**DORABELLA: God help us! What is it you are holding back?
Something too dreadful! Is he dead?
Oh, my darling!**

FIORDILIGI: No, not Guglielmo!

**DON ALFONSO: Dead? No, not that.
Alas, though, not far from it.**

DORABELLA: They're wounded?

DON ALFONSO: No.

FIORDILIGI: Taken sick?

DON ALFONSO: Nor that.

FIORDILIGI: Why keep us guessing?

**DON ALFONSO: The trumpet's sounded;
Duty calls them to battle.**

**FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
Ay, me! How awful!**

**FIORDILIGI:
When do they leave?**

DON ALFONSO: This morning.

DORABELLA: And is there no way to prevent it?

DON ALFONSO: Too late.

FIORDILIGI: No farewell kiss?

DON ALFONSO: So dejected, they can't bear to bring you news so grating. But if you reassure them, then maybe . . .

DORABELLA: They are *here*?

DON ALFONSO: Friends, enter . . . We're waiting!

(Guglielmo and Ferrando enter, barely able to drag their feet.)

6. Quintet.

GUGLIELMO: Heaven hear me!
With dragging footstep
Must I turn away and leave her?

FERRANDO: I am haggard, down with fever,
Staggered with the weight of woe.

DON ALFONSO: Now's the time to show true bravery
And reveal a hero's merit.

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
Say no more, I cannot bear it;
But with hand and purpose steady,
Gather a courage, grant a favor:
My bosom's ready –
Plunge a sword into my heart.

GUGLIELMO & FERRANDO:
Dearest angel, although I waver,
Fate decrees I must depart.

DORABELLA: Ah, no, no! Go not away!

FIORDILIGI: O my cruel! Stay, but stay!

DORABELLA: Sack and ashes I shall borrow.

FIORDILIGI: Unto death I yield my spirit!

FERRANDO: (Any comment?)

GUGLIELMO: (Do you hear it?)

DON ALFONSO: (Save the boasting till tomorrow.)

ALL: **Why, O why? Life becomes a vale of sorrow,
Youthful hope betrayed and banished.
Ah! What fool, when dreams have vanished,
Would prolong a barren life?
Who, who would prolong a barren life?**

**DON ALFONSO: Make haste, for time is flying!
Come, brave companions, stern duty summons.
Glory and fame await you!**

FIORDILIGI: My love.

DORABELLA: My precious angel.

FERRANDO: My life!

GUGLIELMO: My being!

FIORDILIGI: Hold me but one more minute.

**DON ALFONSO: The ship with your division has already departed.
You still can reach it, but you must get started.
A canoe will convey you,
But do hurry, I pray you!**

**FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO
Another kiss, my darling!**

**FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
Ah, broken-hearted!**

1. Quintet

**FIORDILIGI: You won't forget to write me?
Promise, O my beloved!
Ah, remain only mine! . . .**

DORABELLA: Twice daily you must write.

Two letters, you promise.
Love me forever.

FERRANDO: Of course, dear! Of course, dear! I promise.

GUGLIELMO: Without a doubt. without a doubt, O my darling!

DON ALFONSO: (They put me into stitches.)

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO: Farewell, love.

FIORDILIGI & DORBELLA: Farewell, love.

ALL FOUR: Farewell, love.
What anguish tears my heart
No tongue can tell.

8. Chorus (offstage)

Ah, the soldier's life for me!
Daily off to unknown splendor
With a purse now fat, now slender,
Over land and over sea.

Loud the blast of fife and trumpet call
Mid the blast of gun and cannon.
Hear the beat of drum that ignites us all
As we charge to victory.
Ah, the soldier's life for me!

10. Trio. (Joined by Don Alfonso, the two sisters wave their lovers goodbye.)

Soft breezes, be gentle;
Smooth waters, transport them;
O powers elemental,
Benignly escort them
Home safely to shore.

(The two sisters make a mournful exit.)

DON ALFONSO (alone) I have a gift for theatre. So onward!
At the agreed on rendezvous my friends are waiting,
These disciples of Venus who demand satisfaction.
I'd better join them to tune hem up for action . . .
O those ladies! Tears that would fill three buckets!
And the groans and the sighs –
They'll tumble all the sooner.

It's the sentimental type that turns the quickest.
First to switch is the swooner.
Poor lovesick fellows!
Imagine putting out one thousand ducats!

He sows the desert,
Ploughs in the furrows of the sea,
Draws nets to capture,
Tame the wand'rings of the wind,
Who looks for love unchanging
From birds so light winged. *(exit)*

Scene: an elegant chamber, where the ladies maid Despina holds sway.

DESPINA: Can life get any lower than serving pampered ladies?
Morn till midnight they rush us,
This way . . no, that way . . . so we scamper,
New duties daily, all for naught.
Not for yours truly!
Half an hour I've whipped the chocolate till light and luscious,
And for my labor
My only compensation is the vapor.
On my own palate would you think it wasted?
Ladies, come! Pause and ponder:
Why should *you* get the flavor and I the odor?
For once, I'm going to taste it. How delicious!
They're coming! Close call, so much for dreaming.
(Fiordiligi and Dorabella stagger in, overcome with grief)
My dears, your breakfast, the chocolate freshly steaming.
Look at you! What's the matter?

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA: *(incapable of speech)* Ah! Ah!

DESPINA: Whatever's happened?

FIORDILIGI: Have you no dagger?

DORABELLA: No lethal draft of cyanide?

DESPINA: Dear ladies, tell me . .

DORABELLA: Stand farther off! My grief may be contagious!
Deadly the ill-fated passion!
Bar and lock all the windows;
Blot out the sunlight.

How I loathe the very air,
Hate my own being.
What reprieve from despair?
What consolation?
Go! Leave me here alone,
Leave me, leave me here to groan
In lamentation.

11. ARIA.



O mortal agony
Of love denied me:
Prolong thy fury and let me die.
O let me die!

Bereft and desolate,
In fire and thunder
I'll storm the universe
And tear asunder
The oak from mountain top
In haunting, piercing cry.

DESPINA: Dear Mistress Dorabella! Dear Mistress Fiordiligi!
Out with it! What's the disaster?

DORABELLA: Cruel blow past endurance!

DESPINA: Confide and you'll feel better.

FIORDILIGI: Our lovers both have left us.
Gone! Taken ship from Naples.

DESPINA: And is *that* all? They will come back.

DORABELLA: Who knows?

DESPINA: No need to fret. Where are they going?

DORABELLA: They're sailing off to battle.

DESPINA: You're in luck! Count your blessings.
They will come back as heroes crowned with laurel.
So in the meantime,
Do not waste precious time in moping.

Come, take advantage!
Go out and find amusement.

FIORDILIGI { *outraged* } Find amusement?

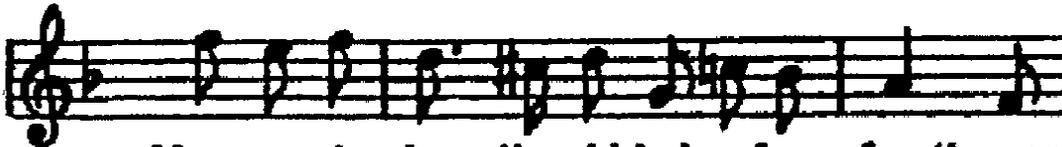
DESPINA: Exactly! No better cure.
Wake up, get yourself a brand new lover!
There's one thing I know for sure:
Your men have done so already.

DORABELLA: How low can you sink!
Our faithful lovers would never think
Of looking at another.

DESPINA: No ifs, no buts, no maybes:
You can go tell that fairy tale to babies.

12. *Aria.*

Believe a man? Trust a soldier?
Expect for love to last?
Heaven help us, you're living in the past!



Men are i - den - ti - cal, birds of a feath - er.

Ever in motion,
April leaves fluttering,
Waves of the ocean,
Even the weather
Turns less than a man.

Vows of fidelity,
Rapturous gazes,
Flowers and flattery,
Warmed over phrases:
These are their calling card
Since time began.

All they see in us
Is their own reflection;
Soon as they win us
They turn their affection.
Kindness and pity

Are strictly taboo.
Sooner is sympathy
Found in a zoo.

Men are no good, but come, ladies, repay it!
Master the rules of the game as they play it.
Shame on the girl who is simple and true:
Do unto them as they do unto you.
Love is a holiday, over by dark;
Follow the leader and love is a lark!
(Exeunt. Don Alfonso enters)

DON ALFONSO: Utter silence! The girls must be in mourning;
Still as a country graveyard.
Poor young ladies, so doleful and dejected –
They little know what's coming!
Our gallant friends this minute are rehearsing,
Trying out their disguises
As I directed.
Watch out, though, for surprises,
And beware of Despina.
She is foxy, and may not fall for counterfeits.
In seconds, careful plans can be blown to bits.
I wonder . . . There's no solution safer
Than good old-fashioned bribery,
And on occasion,
The sound of silver's powerful persuasion.
To insure no refusal,
I could clue her in, go so far as make her my assistant.
Her support may be crucial,
And her door is not distant!
(knocks)
Despinetta!

DESPINA: I!

DESPINA: You!

DON ALFONSO: I come to make an offer.

DESPINA: I am not in the market.

DON ALFONSO: It will be for your good.

DESPINA: *(eyeing his elderly countenance with some disdain)*
I am not blindfolded;

The goods you offer seem a trifle . . . molded

DON ALFONSO: Maybe this will entice you.

DESPINA: Gold and silver?

DON ALFONSO: Yes, for services rendered.

DESPINA: Then I'm to earn it?
I dearly love the colors.

DON ALFONSO: The earning's easy, but requires zest and zeal.

DESPINA: Let us call it . . . a deal.

DON ALFONSO: Now then: pay attention.
Friends I need hardly mention
Have of late lost their lovers.

DESPINA: Do tell.

DON ALFONSO: It breaks my heart to see them so off balance.
We've got to get them through this time of crisis.
If you'll exert your talents,
I think I've got the answer:
Two robust, handsome fellows
Who are much in the mood . . .
Need I go further?
Lend a hand; introduce them to the ladies;
Twenty odd, if you're shrewd.

DESPINA: That's worth a look.

(The would-be lovers enter disguised as Albanians with bushy beards.)

13. Sextet.

DON ALFONSO: Charming, lovely Despinetta –
Friends, allow me to present you.
Go ahead, say what has sent you.
She can help you get a start.

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO:
By that hand, that lip so pretty,
By those eyes so full of feeling,
To your pity I am appealing:

Help me gain my lady's heart.

DESPINA: (Strolling players! What a costume!
Beard and whiskers thick as fungus.
From a cave they come among us,
Possibly the county fair.
The county? Cavern?
Cavern? Or county?)

DON ALFONSO: Do you find my friends attractive?

DESPINA: My reply is plain and simple:
If it's laughter
You are after,
You have found the perfect pair.

FERRANDO, GUGLIELMO & DON ALFONSO:
(We are safe from recognition;
Even she has no suspicion.
No one else we need beware.)

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA: (*from offstage*)
Ah, Despina! Ola, Despina!

DESPINA: Here they come now.

DON ALFONSO :(*to Despina*)
I'd better go now.
Curtain rises; it's all your show now. (*he conceals himself*)

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
Hussy, fie! Admitting strangers! (*as they enter*)
Must your tongue be ever clacking?
Clear the house and send them packing.
What a fine way to behave!

DESPINA, FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO:
Pardon, ladies! Racked in anguish,
At your feet {they/I} pine and languish.
Feel for one whose adoration
Makes him evermore your slave.

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
What presumption! How offensive!
You will pay the consequence if
You continue this charade.

DESPINA, FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO:
Do but listen. Truce to anger.

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
I'll endure this farce no longer!
With contempt and indignation
Brazen boors should be repaid.

DESPINA & DON ALFONSO:
(So much thunder makes me wonder:
Is there less here than meets the eye?)

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO{
(So much thunder removes all wonder:
Proof so solid, none can deny.)

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
(All for you, my love! Remember,
I shall love you till I die.)

DON ALFONSO{ (*reappearing*)
What a racket! Pre-Beethoven!
Unabashed pandemonium!
Gentle ladies, pray, have you come unwoven?
This din is loud enough to scare the neighbors.
Why go on so? What's happened?

DORABELLA: Oh, look! Alfonso!
Men in our house of mourning!

DON ALFONSO: So what's the harm?

FIORDILIGI: What harm? On a day so tragic?
They intrude on our sorrow.

DON ALFONSO: Heavens! Pinch me! Am I dreaming?
My eyes deceive me!
Two old friends from the East.
And both! Magic! What joy!
Truly, I am ecstatic! The surprise of a lifetime!
(Back me up, stupid!)

FERRANDO: Of course! Dear Don Alfonso!

GUGLIELMO: Likewise delighted.

DON ALFONSO: How very small the world is!

DESPINA: These bearded folk are friends?

DON ALFONSO: Call them my brothers –Oh, well, nephews.
And of all people my favorite in the world.
To know them is to love them.

FIORDILIGI: Why here, when uninvited?

GUGLIELMO: To kneel and worship, we come –
Two helpless victims, wounded, dear ladies, by love . . .

DORABELLA: Stranger than fiction!

FERRANDO: A love so lethal,
Only your healing smile could revive us . . .

GUGLIELMO: From the moment so fleeting
When first the fatal fire was ignited . . .

FERRANDO: There could be no retreating . . .

GUGLIELMO: We became winged moths drawn to the candle . . .

FERRANDO: Forced to hover around you . . .

GUGLIELMO: In the light, here suspended . . .

BOTH: To plead, implore for mercy
With voices blended.

FIORDILIGI: You've got a nerve!

DORABELLA: O sister! Answer for us!

14. Recitative and Aria.

FIORDILIGI

Rude and reckless!
Depart at once, leave our house this minute!
Insult no longer
With vile entreaty in profaning chorus
Our hearts, our ears,
The truth we cherish.

In vain, you soil a sacred trust
And futile is the false bait of tears.

A pledge of honor
We have sworn that shall bind us
To our loves now distant
Till our hearts turn to dust
And death takes over.
Let the world scorn and mock us;
We shall not waver.

Even stronger
Than stone and mortar,
Vainly pounded
By wind and water,
Thus my heart,
Secure mid tempest,
Firmly is grounded
On faithful love.

In my soul a torch is lighted,
Source of strength and consolation.
Only death, not separation,
Shall subdue that sacred flame.

Go! Break off this audacious intrusion;
Recognize true love requited;
Taunt me not with vain delusion
That could render only shame.

FERRANDO: Two little words yet!

GUGLIELMO: Don't leave in such a fury.
(to Don Alfonso) Are you watching?

DON ALFONSO: (Yes, and waiting.)
Be civilized, dear ladies.
I am put in a most awkward position.

DORABELLA: And what are you proposing?

DON ALFONSO: Oh, nothing. Merely suggesting . . .
Try a teaspoon of sugar . . .
No harm in being kind to them . . .
Remember, they're my friends.

FIORDILIGI: Really! You expect us to listen?

GUGLIELMO: Angel of mercy, sympathize with our pain!
And smile on two ever faithful lovers
Who sigh for love in vain.

15. Aria.

To mellowing glances, cold beauty, succumb!
Or turn winter to summer
With a warm, melting sigh.

For love is our happiness;
The moment grows riper,
And music is inviting us
To dance to the piper.

We beg you, dear creatures,
Examine our features:
The leg warrants praises –
We freely declare it.
And as for our faces,
The profile has merit,
The torso still more so.

Observe now, sweet lasses,
How the eyebrow surpasses.
The profile . . . the eyebrow . . .
But more so the torso.

Our glorious mustaches
In all probability
Are proof of virility,
Inviting to love.

(the sisters leave in a huff)

Eyelashes! . . . mustaches! . . . the torso! . . . Ha ha ha!

15. Trio.

DON ALFONSO: Friends, why so merry?

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO: Most entertaining.

DON ALFONSO: Wait and be wary.

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO: We're not complaining.

DON ALFONSO: Then laugh in whispers.

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO: Hooray for sisters!

DON ALFONSO: Then laugh in tiny, tiny, tiny whispers.
If you so rant and rave;
If you cannot behave,
They'll get the message loud and clear.

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO: But I shall have a fit
Unless I laugh at it.
High on hilarity,
Give them a cheer!

DON ALFONSO: (They know but half of it;
Though now they laugh at it,
After the comedy
Then falls the tear.)

I simply can't imagine what you find so amusing.

GUGLIELMO: Oh, what a bluffer!
Aged friend, may I make it clear and simple?
It appears you are losing.

FERRANDO: What would you pay us to let you off the hook?

DON ALFONSO: Still early. So play by the book.
Obey till tomorrow morning.

GUGLIELMO: Men of the army, we're trained at blind obedience.

DON ALFONSO: Then listen: you two comedians, go and wander
In the garden while I ponder. And there I'll send you plans of our
next maneuver.

GUGLIELMO: No time tonight for dinner?

FERRANDO: Doesn't matter. When the battle is finished,
It will taste all the better to the winner.

17. Aria



My love breathes a fra-grance from some far o- a- sis,

A balm that erases
The doubts of despair.

The heart that is nourished
On love's winged potion
Sips nectar ambrosian
That's borne on the air,
A nectar ambrosian
That's borne on the air.

(exeunt)

ACT ONE FINALE, in the garden.

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:

How the turning of a moment
Has destroyed my peace forever,
Left my heart a sea of torment,
Full of sorrow past belief.

Never once did I pine or suffer
Till the stars in a jealous envy
Stole away my precious lover,
Leaving naught but pain and grief.

(Ferrando and Guglielmo, still in disguise, rush in followed by Don Alfonso.)

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO:

To die in desperation!
That is the one solution.

DON ALFONSO: Be guided by persuasion;
Oh, not this dire conclusion!

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:

Awful! These cries of agony

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO: Away from me!

DON ALFONSO: Think it over!

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO: (*as they enter, each carrying a small bottle*)

My only choice was arsenic;
I could not find a rope.

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
Poison! They drank the poison?

DON ALFONSO: 'Twas love that drove the boys on.
The end is fast approaching;
I fear there's little hope.

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
Appalled by such a tragedy,
My blood congeals to ice.

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO: (*sinking to the ground*)
Ladies of boundless cruelty,
See and enjoy your legacy:
Two wretched lovers blighted
By passion unrequited
Who pay the final price.

ALL: Slowly the light is failing;
Dark is the night descending.
Trembling their/my spirit, their/my energy
Fade into sleep unending.
The/my throat, the/my forehead are burning;
They/I breathe their/my last goodbye.

DON ALFONSO: Death will have soon undone them;
Dust unto dust returning.
No reason now to shun them;
Be kind until they die.

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
Hurry, hurry! Oh, someone help us!
O God! Does no one listen? Despina! Despina!

DESPINA: (*entering*) Is someone calling?

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
Despina! Despina!

DESPINA: Saints preserve us!

**I have a strong suspicion
These two are nearly dead.**

**DON ALFONSO: My very own conclusion.
In anguish and confusion
They downed a deadly dosage.
We die for love, they said.**

**DESPINA: None but a brute with heart of stone
Would leave them here untended,
In pain and unbefriended.**

**FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
Can anything be done?**

**DESPINA: Still breathing, after a fashion.
But you could help them rally
By showing more compassion.
(to Don Alfonso) We mustn't dilly dally.
A doctor for the nose and throat
In time may do the trick.
He might provide an antidote,
But only if we're quick.
(Despina rushes out, accompanied by Don Alfonso.)**

**FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
For us their lives are ending!
A gesture so heart-rending –
It stirs me to the core.**

**FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO:
A jest so entertaining –
I enjoy it more and more.**

**FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
Poor lads, their breath is sinking.**

FIORDILIGI: What an impasse!

DORABELLA: Are you thinking?

**FIORDILIGI: Death so near them,
No need fear them.
We cannot forsake them now.**

DORABELLA: (coming closer) In repose they're fascinating.

FIORDILIGI: *(also coming closer)*
Closer, we could watch while waiting.

DORABELLA: Cold as ice! His cheek is ashen.

FIORDILIGI: Soon to pay the price of passion.

DORABELLA: Heart still beating . . .

FIORDILIGI: I barely hear it.

DORABELLA: From his eyes there's scarce a glimmer.

BOTH: Death will soon release their spirit;
Hope for help grows ever dimmer.

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO:
(Now they both show signs of softening
And their anger's much abated.
Time will tell to what concessions
Their compassion yet may grow.

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
Two so shattered! Love ill-fated!
Passion driven, they compel my tears to flow.

(Don Alfonso returns with Despina, disguised as a doctor.)

DON ALFONSO: Ladies, we come with aid!
Meet the physician!

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO:
(Despina in masquerade!
Lie low and listen.)

DESPINA: Salvete amabiles bonae puellae.

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
Such learned language completely baffles.

DESPINA: A gift that I acquired on yearly travels.
The tongue of Greek or Turk,
Lapland or Portuguese –
Add many more to these –
I speak them all.

DON ALFONSO: Let's stick to English and keep it basic.
These poor young Romeos do not just play sick;
They took a deadly dose we must forestall.

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
O man of science! What have you got?

DESPINA: I need a full account:
What drove them to it?
State the exact amount
Of lethal fluid.
The dosage, if cold or hot?
A spoonful or bottle?
A single swallow, perhaps a lot?

DON ALFONSO, FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
They swallowed arsenic, wise Aristotle.
And on this very spot,
In bold defiance,
They drained the bottle
Down like a shot.

DESPINA: No need to worry
If we but hurry.
With modern science
I'll cure the clients.
Trust in this magnet
And in my art.

DON ALFONSO, FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
O mighty magnet, reveal your power.

DESPINA: *(holding the magnet over the stricken men)*
I hold the ancient
Marvel of metal,
Useful in therapies,
Greatest of rarities,
Brought from the islands
Of the Hesperides
To Timbuktu.

DON ALFONSO, FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
The cure is touch and go,
Yes and no;

To and for
They stir and stagger
With a touch of vertigo.

DESPINA: Arm must be lifted;
Stroke it like so.

DON ALFONSO, FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
You give the order; we shall obey it.

DESPINA: Stay calm and steady
And slowly sway it.
Closer, closer!
Eureka! They're good as new!
Death yields to science!

DON ALFONSO, FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
Their eyes are now aglow;
Fresh blood begins to flow.
Ah, what a medico!~
Worth all Peru!
Worth all the fabulous
Gold of Peru.

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO: (*appearing to revive*)
Where am I? What land of beauty?
What celestial hands restore me?
Is it Jove, so fierce and mighty?
Proud Athena? Aphrodite?

No, an angel peers before me,
Soul of beauty, soul of kindness,
From whose hand the sweet aroma
Takes me up to a higher sphere.

DESPINA & DON ALFONSO:
Still beclouded by the coma;
Pay no mind and have no fear.

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
True enough, but in such raving
Barbs of insolence appear.

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO:
(Overpowered by hilarity,

I shall crow like Chanticleer.)

(Ferrando to Fiordiligi, Guglielmo to Dorabella)

Evermore my light, my beacon,
Turn thy shining rays upon me.

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
My defenses start to weaken . . .

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO:
Darling, grant the kiss I'm craving,
Else my life were not worth saving.

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
Horrors! How dare you!

DESPINA & DON ALFONSO:
Gratify them; 'Twould be callous to deny them.

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
Stop! 'Tis far too much you call for.
Sacrifice of truth and honor!
Shallow vows I do not fall for;
You have cut me to the core.

DESPINA, DON ALFONSO, FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO:
Rage and righteous indignation
Make a comic collaboration.

DESPINA & DON ALFONSO:
Outrage lacks conviction overdone,
Though I enjoy it more and more.

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
I am sick and tired of playing.
To the devil, go to blazes!
There repent those amorous phrases,
Wanton ravings I abhor!

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO:
Be their fury fact or fiction,
I'm determined to know the score.

DESPINA & DON ALFONSO:
Never mind the rant and raving;

Truth will speak above the roar.

**FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO:
True or false, this rant and raving
Cynics only can ignore.**

ACT TWO

SCENE: inside the house.

DESPINA: Oh, I give up! You're acting like naive little schoolgirls.

FIORDILIGI: Answer the question: what would you have us doing?

DESPINA: For me, nothing.

DORABELLA: For someone else then?

DESPINA: For yourselves!

DORABELLA: Ourselves?

DESPINA: Yourselves! Granted you're women, no?

FIORDILIGI: And it follows? . . .

DESPINA: Very simply. You should behave like grownups.

DORABELLA: How so?

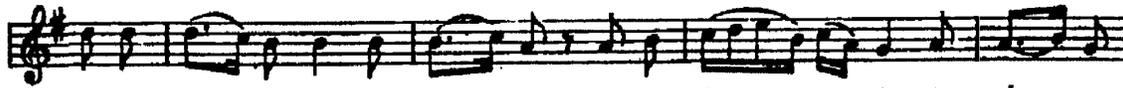
**DESPINA: Learn first of all that love's a pastime.
Play the game in season;
Pick the fruit when it's ripe;
Change with the climate;
Be kitten, minx or tiger.**

Perfect the art of flirting,
And avoid the mistake of putting
Your eggs into one basket.
Give up the cloister
And make the world your oyster!

FIORDILIGI: (What sacrilege!)
All very well for *some* – I have scruples!

DESPINA: Learn to ignore them!
Follow me, and become an honor to the fair sex:
My two prize-winning pupils!

14. ARIA.



By fif - teen a girl is mas - ter of a doz - en sly de - vi - ces,

And the sorcery that entices
With the power cast by the eyes.

She's accomplished at maneuvers
That enflame the bashful wooer,
And familiar with no fewer
Than a thousand alibis.

No one knows better
When time to flutter,
When to be boss
And when to be butter;
When with a glance
To enkindle romance,
And then shut a lover up
With a smooth cover-up.

Ever surprising,
Ever disguising,
This Queen of Sheba
Travels in splendor;
Legions attend her,
Bursting with pride.
Her rule is granted,
And all enchanted
Flock to her side.

(Now the seed's planted,
Watch them come flying,

Gratefully crying:
Bravo, Despina! O what a guide!
Brilliant Despina!
O what a guide!) (exit)

FIORDILIGI: What's your reaction, sister?

DORABELLA: Dismay and horror!
She has shown that her mind is in the gutter.

FIORDILIGI: How true. I agree entirely.
You don't think for a moment
We could stoop to that level.

DORABELLA: Still -- let's not leap to judgment.
One should weigh, turn things over . . .

FIORDILIGI: Why turn them over when I see right side up
There's no excuse, no reason
For two girls on the verge of getting married
To indulge in such adventure.

DORABELLA: It's now or never;
A girl is young only once.

FIORDILIGI: But what of gossip?
How people love to talk!

DORABELLA: Our answer's ready: they come to court Despina.

FIORDILIGI: Dear, my O my! You *have* become broad-minded.
And have you thought what to tell our fiancés?

DORABELLA: Nothing. They'll never be the wiser.
And by then it's all forgotten.
If they hear idle rumors, I see no problem:
The whole thing we deny.

FIORDILIGI: And our engagements?

DORABELLA: Totally unaffected.
Some innocent amusement
To ward off death from boredom and melancholy
Doesn't violate our vows and obligations.

FIORDILIGI: I suppose . . .

DORABELLA: Well, then?

FIORDILIGI: You are on your own,
But I feel most uneasy.
Unforeseen complications . . .

DORABELLA: Our past is our protection.
Come, come! It's all in fun.
So down to basics:
Let us speak matter of factly –
Of the two charmers, which is your selection?

FIORDILIGI: First you decide and tell me.

DORABELLA: I know exactly!

20, DUET.

The brunet, no need to ponder,
With his warm and friendly smile.

FIORDILIGI: To the blonde my eye could wander,
Seeking solace for a while.

DORABELLA: Playful banter and gentle frolic –
These are sweets that seldom cloy.

FIORDILIGI: Sighs so sad, so melancholic –
The tantalizing games that lovers all enjoy.

DORABELLA: With a tearful plea he'll press me.

FIORDILIGI: Fairest queen! he will address me,

BOTH: What a charming, harmless pastime
For the last time to enjoy!
Delight so rare . . .
What a charming, harmless pastime
For the last time to enjoy!

SCENE: a pleasant spot on the edge of the garden along the seashore.

21. DUET. FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO

(still disguised as Albanians)



At her pillow tell my yearning;
Round her slumbers, languidly turning,
Murmur into her drowsy ear.

Bear the message of my longing;
Serve as soft and soothing chorus.
Tell of buds that blossom for us;
Whisper dreams of rapture near.

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA: *(entering)*
What is this melting music?

DESPINA: *(to the men)*
Come, courage up! They're waiting.
You know your lines, so why the attack of stage fright?

FERRANDO: I'm trembling and quivering from my head to my toes.

GUGLIELMO: True love is paralyzing, as every lover knows.

DON ALFONSO: *(to the ladies)*
Help out. They need encouragement.

FIORDILIGI: We're listening . . .

DORABELLA: Don't be afraid to speak. We're sympathetic . . .

FERRANDO: Dear lady . . .

GUGLIELMO: No, dearest ladies . .

FERRANDO: You go ahead . . .

GUGLIELMO: No, no! Please, after you...

DON ALFONSO: Stop!
These old fashioned gallantries will last till after midnight.
Let's drop the affectation.
Come, Despina – you and I'd better clinch it.

You for the girls, I for the men, will pinch hit.

(to the sisters)

**22. Your hand kindly give me,
No need to turn red.**

(to the men)

**The cat's got your tongue
So I'll speak in your stead.**

(to the sisters)

**Ashamed and repentant,
We plead for your pardon.
Though gravely offended
Let not your heart harden.
In silence we'll suffer
The pangs of a lover.
Forgive, and hereafter
We'll bow and obey.**

**Go on! You must answer.
It's your turn . . . We are waiting.
You're smiling? . . . A trace of laughter? . .**

**DESPINA: For them shall I answer
And tell you the truth;
These blunders you mention
Were errors of youth.**

**You are of course forgiven!
The past is best forgotten.
We've found the light of freedom!
Farewell to days gone by!**

**Your arm to me now offer;
No need to droop and sigh.**

**DESPINA & DON ALFONSO:
(Let's go and leave them to it;
Unseen, we best can view it.
Until we hear the end of it,
We'll listen on the sly.
If they do not unbend a bit
I'll swallow humble pie.**

(Despina and Don Alfonso exit)

FIORDILIGI: What delectable weather!

FERRANDO: Nice day! No cloud in the sky.

DORABELLA: Scented groves! So exquisite.

GUGLIELMO: Absolutely! Exquisite – Just the word that I wanted.

FIORDILIGI: Shaded pathways, ah, so cool and enticing!
Perhaps you'd care to stroll.

FERRANDO: I gladly follow wherever you would lead me.

FIORDILIGI: How you flatter!

FERRANDO: (*aside to Guglielmo*)
(Now for the fateful gamble!)

FIORDILIGI: What did you say? I missed it.

FERRANDO: I merely recommended they follow our example.

(Fiordiligi and Ferrando disappear among the trees.)

DORABELLA: Here's a lane that invites.

GUGLIELMO: Yours is my pleasure. Ay, me!

DORABELLA: Are you in pain?

GUGLIELMO: I'm possessed with a fever,
So raging, so all-consuming
Early death soon must follow.

DORABELLA: (He can't believe I'll fall for it.)
Reaction from the poison –
You must watch what you swallow.

GUGLIELMO: Ah! There's a poison far more potent
That lingers in your sultry and volcanic eyes,
Sweet queen, fairest ruler!

DORABELLA: The poison sounds too hot for you;
Try maybe something cooler.

GUGLIELMO: You taunt me! And you scoff, too!
Never mind that I'm delirious!
(They have vanished; where in hell are they off to?)

DORABELLA: Let's change the subject.

GUGLIELMO: You might be at least more serious
While I'm dying.

DORABELLA: More worried? I'm trying.

GUGLIELMO: All I ask is one indication, even a hint,
That my tears aren't in vain.

DORABELLA: Two if you'd rather. I am not inhumane.
I may consider.

GUGLIELMO: (Joking? Good God, does she mean it?)
Then accept this small present;
Only you have the right to it.

DORABELLA: A heart?

GUGLIELMO: A symbol -- receive it as my own,
That glows like a candle and burns for you alone.

DORABELLA: (Far more than a token.)

GUGLIELMO: Will you wear it?

DORABELLA: You're cruel! Go away, let my vows remain
unbroken.

GUGLIELMO: (So Gibraltar is crumbling.
A pity, but I'm bound to my pledge as a soldier.)
I adore you!

DORABELLA: Tempt me not!

GUGLIELMO: I love you madly!

DORABELLA: Be careful . . .

GUGLIELMO: Give in, surrender!

DORABELLA: If I do, I shall die!

**GUGLIELMO: We'll die together.
Sweetest hope, dearest treasure!
Will you wear it?**

DORABELLA: I'll wear it . . .

**GUGLIELMO: (Looking bad for Ferrando!)
Unbounded pleasure!**

23. Duet.

**My heart I now offer
My heavenly goddess;
In turn, from your bodice
Come, draw out your own.**

**DORABELLA: Your gift I shall cherish;
But though I'd not slight you,
I cannot requite you –
My own heart is gone.**

**GUGLIELMO: Your heart has been taken?
What do I hear thump?**

**DORABELLA: You gave yours as token?
What's going bump, bump?**

GUGLIELMO: What is thumping, thumping, thumping here?

DORABELLA: What is bumping, bumping, bumping there?

**BOTH: My own heart is pounding
Within me no longer.
In you now it's sounding –
The two are but one.
Our two hearts are one.**

**GUGLIELMO: (*placing the locket*)
This place is most pleasing.**

DORABELLA: That spot someone took.

GUGLIELMO: Of course, dear, you're teasing . . .

DORABELLA: You force me?

GUGLIELMO: Do not look.

DORABELLA: (Inside, I'm Vesuvius exploding with fire!)

GUGLIELMO: (Ferrando, poor fellow, the joke's gone too far.)

Your eyes you can turn now.

DORABELLA: Your locket?

**GUGLIELMO: A well-earned replacement,
A loving exchange.**

**BOTH: O rapture unbounded!
My heart cannot measure
Such unforeseen pleasure,
So real yet so strange.**

(They stroll away as Ferrando and Fiordiligi reappear.)

FERRANDO: Hear me out! Why no mercy?

FIORDILIGI: I flee the black spider, the serpent, the scaly dragon!

**FERRANDO: Say no more, I beseech you!
Black spider, serpent, and scaly dragon!
Repellant and repulsive monsters roaming the desert.
You do not stoop to flatter!**

**FIORDILIGI: You force me to hurt you.
You would rob my sweet comfort.**

FERRANDO: Giving joy back compounded

FIORDILIGI: Cease this unyielding torment.

FERRANDO: But I ask for so little.

FIORDILIGI: Go from me!

**FERRANDO: I came hoping
For some ray of light or sign of favor,
A smile! If so deluded, I leave forever. *(he leaves)***

FIORDILIGI: He's going . . . Hear me . . . Ah, no!

O let him leave me,
 The fair but fatal partner in my own frailty.
 Nevermore let me see him.
 The heartless hunter
 Guns down the wounded quarry . . .
 I well deserved it, a reward for my folly . . .
 At such a moment, to listen to his pleading,
 To invite sighs of love, and seek distraction
 In the pain of another . . .
 Stern god of love!
 You have reason to punish my guilty heart.
 I'm yearning, and my desire no longer issues
 From a love whole and sacred:
 Sheer madness, seduction, misgiving and repentance!
 Cruel falsehood, betrayal, total destruction!

25, *ARIA*.



Oh, my love! Be kind, pray par-don and for-give an err-ing lov-er;
 Somber shadow, forever cover,
 Hide my secret in dead of night.

For my guilt I'll make atonement
 With a zeal that burns forever;
 With remorse, I shall endeavor
 To absolve this odious blight,
 Shame and horror now brought to light.

Have I known myself so little?
 Is my heart so false and frail?
 Darling, I shall earn acquittal
 With a fire that shall not fail. *(she rushes off)*

(Ferrando and Guglielmo return)

FERRANDO: A triumph! We've won the wager!

GUGLIELMO: Oh, have we? I wonder.

FERRANDO: Victory five times over!
 Fiordiligi came through with flying colors!

GUGLIELMO: Never wavered?

FERRANDO: Inflexible! Now about Dorabella . . .
Speechless with indignation!
Frankly I never doubted –
Always my angel, true as the stars above us.

GUGLIELMO: To doubt a little – mind you, I'm just suggesting –
Might not be bad, if you could manage..

FERRAND: Watch it!

GUGLIELMO: Speaking in a general sense . . .
(The pill is bitter, and no way I can sweeten it.)

FERRANDO: Damn it! Could she have yielded to your indecent
fawning? No, no, of course not! I am gross to suspect it.

GUGLIELMO: A little grossness
Perhaps would not be entirely out of order.

FERRANDO: Ye gods, the torture! Say clearly . . .
You've got me roasting in a fire worse than hell.
But no, you're joking –
This is what you call humor!
She loves and adores me!
She will soon be my wife . . .

GUGLIELMO: Granted. And to demonstrate her steadfast devotion,
She with a blush gave *me* this small memento.

FERRANDO: Gave you my locket? Ah, Jezebel!

GUGLIELMO: Where are you going?

FERRANDO: To wring her neck!
Then tell her all is over.
I want revenge! I'll teach the tramp a lesson!

GUGLIELMO: Calm yourself.

FERRANDO: Try and stop me!

GUGLIELMO: Don't go crazy! Why should you rant and rave
For a foolish girl not worth your little finger?
(God forbid that he go berserk
And do something stupid.)

FERRANDO: Vampire! Tears by the gallon,
The promises, and the swooning, the vows eternal,
Every sigh of devotion
In a flash waved goodbye.

GUGLIELMO: My friend, don't ask me why.

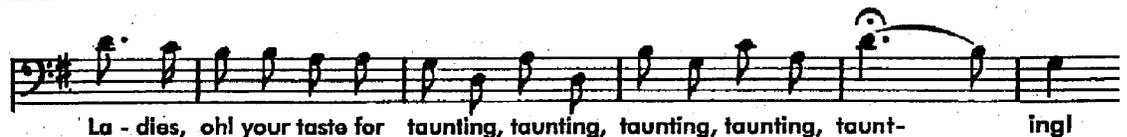
FERRANDO: What can I do now? My life is ruined.
Friend, I am much in need:
Comfort, advise me.

GUGLIELMO: Advice I'd offer freely,
But I have none to give.

FERRANDO: Cheats on me! Discards me!
In a day, in an hour . . .

GUGLIELMO: Making sense out of that
Is way beyond my power. *(Fernando rushes off)*

26. ARIA.



Ladies, O your taste for taunting
And taunting and taunting!
Do allow me to be frank:
If your lovers find you wanting
You have no one else to thank.

Of the sexes you're the foremost;
I declare it to one and all.
You're the gender I adore most,
Summer, winter, spring and fall.
But -- your taste for taunting
And taunting and taunting
Nearly drives me up the wall.

O the times I've raise the banner,
Led the charge to your defense,
And in no uncertain manner
Sallied forth with evidence!
But -- your taste for taunting
And taunting and taunting
Puts the laugh at my expense.

You're enchanting, you're adorable,
You have got me in a bind.
You're delicious, sweet and lovable;
Never say that I am blind.
But . . . but . . . but . . .
Your taste for taunting and taunting
Leaves me lagging far behind.

You're the gender I adore most.
Ever friendly, I have put you first and foremost.
I've defended, sung your praises to the sky.
But . . . but . . . but . . .
Your taste for taunting and taunting!
If your lovers find you wanting
I can think of no reply.

You're my favorite of the sexes
But the problem that perplexes
Is to find the reason why,
O why? O why?
Where to find the reason why? *(exit)*

Ferrando enters alone, followed later by Don Alfonso and Guglielmo, who eavesdrop on his brooding.

FERRANDO: In a fog of confusion,
My life in shambles, reduced to rubble,
I blindly plough through the wreckage,
After blindly believing.

How could it happen?
No solution, no answer.
Where is the light when needed?

Alfonso, Alfonso, you were right
When you laughed at my naïve illusions.
But revenge will be mine! I *will* get even,
And I'll start by forgetting she ever existed.
Though all is over,
From a stab to the heart . . . how to recover?

27. CAVATINA.

Forsaken! Discarded!
Deceived and betrayed as no man before!
Yet hard though I try to deny or explain it,

The more I'm tormented, the more I adore.
Deceived, I love all the more!
Discarded, I love all the more!

DON ALFONSO: *(stepping forward)*
Bravo! It goes to show you . . .

FERRANDO: You needn't boast of it;
All my misery I owe you.

DON ALFONSO: Please, no grim conclusions,
For better days may yet surprise you.
The score then: far ahead, Fiordiligi,
Who has stuck to her vow.
And Dorabella, running last as of now.

FERRANDO: I blush to hear it.

GUGLIELMO: Old acquaintance,
Come, fair is fair, think it over,
Weigh the facts impartially.
Could any normal woman turn false to her Guglielmo?
Just between you and me, I wouldn't judge too harshly
Though it grieves me to say, the reason's obvious:
I *am* a bit superior.

DON ALFONSO: Unbiased candor.

GUGLIELMO: So meanwhile,
Why not pay me my fifty hard-earned ducats?

DON ALFONSO: Yes, with pleasure. But before you collect,
May I remind you the game is in the middle?

GUGLIELMO: More yet?

DON ALFONSO: We play till tomorrow.
Until the finish, you are bound to my orders.
You both have given your promise as a soldier:
I command, you obey.
So onward! You'll find to your own dismay
That foolish is the buyer
Putting gold on the bird still in the briar.
(The men leave; Dorabella and Despina enter.)

DESPINA: So at last you're maturing!

You've arrived! You're a woman!

DORABELLA: No use, Despina! How I tried to resist!
That wicked man has some magic secret,
A certain something, hypnotic –
He would melt any girl not made of marble.

DESPINA: Tush! No excuses needed.
You've met a man with looks, charm and persuasion –
We all should be so lucky! –
A poor girl starved for pleasure
Is insane not to rise to the occasion.
Good gracious! Here is your sister.
Have you a toothache?

FIORDILIGI: (*entering*) A plague upon you!
You are the tempting serpent that has brought me to ruin.

DESPINA: What has happened? Why are you looking daggers?

DORABELLA: Have you a chill, or fever?

FIORDILIGI: I'm furious with all: myself, you, you too!
Don Alfonso, those horrid strangers,
And any fool I've forgotten!

DORABELLA: Are you out of your senses?

FIORDILIGI: Worse than madness! Dare I confess it?
I love him! And here's the horror:
I do not mean Guglielmo.

DESPINA: How exciting!

DORABELLA: Can I guess? O so beautifully romantic!
It's the blond in the garden!

FIORDILIGI: Ah! Alas, O so true!

DESPINA: My pupils!

DORABELLA: Darling! A thousand, thousand kisses!
You get one, I the other –
Perfect for a double wedding!

FIORDILIGI: You don't mean it!

Can feelings change like weather?

DORABELLA: But the answer is obvious:
We're women! We are birds of a feather!

FIORDILIGI: I'll not concede to it.

DESPINA: Fighting a losing battle!

FIORDILIGI: I'll win, despite my gender.

DORABELLA: Sister, believe me: it's wiser to surrender!

ARIA

For love's a roguish fellow,
A sly and slippery eel,
An angel with a halo,
Ready to stab or steal.

Through dazzled eyes he enters
To weave a silent spell;
The astounded heart surrenders,
Confounded all too well.

Yes, love's a roguish fellow,
A sly and slippery eel,
An angel with a halo,
Ready to stab or steal.

Laden with candies, a burst of flowers,
He smiles when asked to stay.
But long and hard he glowers
When barred the right of way.

Novice at entertaining,
What is a girl to do?
Say, say, say!
Except apply the training
So lately learned from you?

How to attack it. attack it. attack it.
Without the basic training
So lately learned from you?

(Dorabella and Despina leave)

FIORDILIGI: One and all, they're conspiring
To induce me to fall.

**But no! Death sooner than degradation!
What made me tell my sister and Despina?
They love to weave romances.
If they talk, he will take it as invitation
For still bolder advances.
O may I never set eyes upon that tempter!
To any servant, immediate dismissal
If he walks through the door!
Both guile and pleading I shall ignore.**

**GUGLIELMO: (*observing from the sidelines, with Don Alfonso*)
(Hats off to her! Pure and chaste as a lily! Do you need more?)**

**FIORDILIGI: Can I trust Dorabella? She can be so impulsive.
Wait! An idea! And it might be the answer!
Inside my closet are uniforms belonging
To Guglielmo and Ferrando . . . I shall! Despina! Despina!**

DESPINA: (*entering*) Did you call?

**FIORDILIGI: Here's the key to my closet –
I want no argument,
And do not raise your eyebrows.
Look in the little wardrobe.
You'll find two rapiers –
I'll need them in a hurry!
And uniforms, both with helmets matching.**

DESPINA: What plot is this you're hatching?

FIORDILIGI: Hurry! No explanations!

DESPINA: (It's going to her head. Hallucinations!) (*she leaves*)

**FIORDILIGI: I've no choice.
All the better if Dorabella listens
And will do as I'm doing.
To find them! To find them!
It's our only salvation,
To escape these magicians.**

**DON ALFONSO: (Now I see what is brewing.
Never fear, all's in hand.)**

**DESPINA: (*returning with military clothing*)
There you are!**

FIORDILIGI: Now then: get the horses in harness;
Have them stand at the gate.
Tell Dorabella I would speak with her straight.

DESPINA: Just as you order.
(I would say she is well beyond the border.)

FIORDILIGI: This jacket of Ferrando was designed just for me.
For Dorabella, here's a cloak most inviting.
In these disguises,
And by the time the sun next rises,
We'll be with them, at their side, and fighting
To the death, if so fated.
Trinkets and baubles – vain adornments outdated –
Off! I detest you!

GUGLIELMO: (I give up, if her love's not yet impressed you.)

FIORDILIGI: Nevermore will these pearls illumine my forehead
Till I return, safe with my dear.
And to replace them,
This helmet's not too horrid!
O marvelous transformation
That so alters my features
I myself would require identification!

28. DUET

Brief the moments until I hold him.
Soon to reach my faithful lover!
Mid the dangers, a manly cover
Will conceal me in my flight.
What a joy once again to see him!
What surprise for him is waiting.

FERRANDO: (*entering*) While in grief I'm suffocating!
Let me perish in your sight.

FIORDILIGI: (Ah! He heard me! All is over.)
Go! Pray, leave me!

FERRANDO: Ah, no, my darling!
Take this sword, be bold, employ it –
Put an end to my travail.
If your power and courage fail,

My own hand will end my plight.

**FIORDILIGI: Spare me! No more! In such confusion,
Tossed and torn, my heart is bleeding.
Ah, too frail, my resolution
To his sobbing, to his pleading
Falls apart, begins to fade.
Leave me, leave me!**

FERRANDO: Those words are wasted!

FIORDILIGI: Oh, relent! What would you from me?

FERRANDO: Either love, or my final curtain.

**FIORDILIGI: I grow weak, confused, uncertain . . .
God, befriend me!**

**FERRANDO: Love, surrender!
Turn unto me those eyes so tender,
And in mine alone discover
Husband, and ever adoring lover.
Yield, my darling, I implore!**

**FIORDILIGI: God forgive! God forgive! Undone!
You've conquered. I can fight my heart no more.**

**BOTH: Come, enfold me, my dearest darling!
Present joy past grief erases.**

**Here I'll dwell in sweet embraces,
After storm, a sheltered shore. *(they drift out)***

**GUGLIELMO: *(an observer throughout the scene)*
Can I believe my eyes? The girl I trusted!
Was ever man more wretched?**

DON ALFONSO: Don't make a scene, I beg you!

**GUGLIELMO: Ye gods, the pain and torture!
Each word is forty lashes.**

FERRANDO: *(returning in triumph)* How now?

GUGLIELMO: Where is she?

FERRANDO: Who? Your bride ever faithful?

GUGLIELMO: The devil! Bride of Lucifer!
She's his if he'll have her.
She's not for me!

FERRANDO: May I remind you?
Come, fair is fair, consider it impartially:
You *are* a bit superior . . .

GUGLIELMO: Do shut up! We're in the boat together.
Let's concentrate on finding the way to punish them
So they won't forget it.

DON ALFONSO: May I suggest? . . . Wed them!

GUGLIELMO: I wouldn't wed that wanton were she the last survivor.

FERRANDO: I'd sooner wed a serpent.

GUGLIELMO: And I the devil's grandam.

DON ALFONSO: Then you intend to live and die as bachelors?

FERRANDO: Is the world short of women
That we need to go begging?

DON ALFONSO: There are women in abundance,
But why do you suppose they're any different?
You may as well admit it:
You still adore your chicks,
Despite the tarnished feathers.

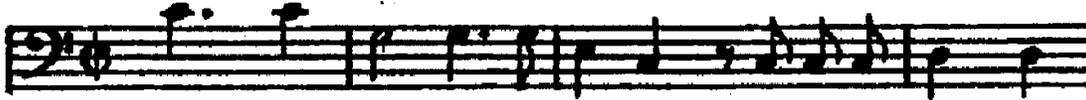
GUGLIELMO: Ah, despite all!

FERRANDO: Despite all!

DON ALFONSO: Then you must take them just as they are.
Do you expect for nature to do you special favors,
To make exceptions, and create women of a different pattern
Just to suit your convenience?
Be philosophic. Observe,
But judge with lenience.

Instead of moping, let's make a happy ending
With our efforts now tending
That tonight, brought together,
You will both wind up marrying.
And meanwhile, I've a stanza to sing you.
Better learn it by heart;
All joy may it bring you.

30. *ANDANTE*



All are down on the wo - man; but I for-give her.

Caprice or vice, it's all in how you take it.

You chastise them for changing . . .

I beg to differ.

It's the law of life and they can't break it.

The lover who withdraws in disillusion

Has but one thing to blame:

His own confusion.

Young and elderly,

Both the beldam, the beauty,

In their hearts are the same:

COSI FAN TUTTE!

(exeunt)

31. *FINALE.* *A festive brilliantly illuminated banquet room, where Despina, soon joined by Don Alfonso, is ordering servants around in preparation for a lavish feast.*

DESPINA: Hasten, muster up your forces!

Light the candles, set the table

For a feast of seven courses

Done with taste, elegance and cheer.

Wedding bells are in the offing!

And we'll please our ladies best if

All is shiny, bright and festive

When the pair of grooms appear.

DON ALFONSO: Bravo, bravo! Could not be better.

Drink in plenty, food for twenty;

Orders followed to the letter.

For you each a round of beer.

When the couples enter at the door

Raise your voice and loudly hail them;
Let the sound of joy regale them.
Raise a song to stir the heart.

BOTH: For the scene of fun and folly
Every actor to his part!
Ready for the grand finale,
Curtain up, and the play can start! (*exeunt*)

SERVANTS: (*as the couples enter*)
Here's to fortune and prosperity
As you enter life together.
Both for you and your posterity
May you ever know fair weather,
Perfect peace and lasting harmony,
Hand in hand and side by side,

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO:
Ardent longings, O my treasure,
Burst into flame from embers glowing.

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
In my heart a flood of pleasure
Runs from full to overflowing.

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO: You so lovely . . .

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA: You so handsome . . .

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO: Eyes of sapphire . . .

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA: And lip of ruby . . .

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO: Drink to rapture!

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA: Ever to be!

QUARTET: Rapture ever, ever rapture!

FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA & FERRANDO:
Lift the glass, let none remind us
Of the past forevermore buried.
All remembrance leave behind us;
Let no shadow disturb our hearts.

GUGLIELMO: (Ah, I would change the wine to arsenic

For these fair but fickle, false, unfaithful tarts!)

DON ALFONSO: (*bursting in*) Friends, good news!
We've drawn the contract;
Terms, provisions, all are in it,
And the not'ry any minute
Will attend the big event.

QUARTET: Bravo! Bravo! Presto subito!

DON ALFONSO: I shall call him.
Ah, he's coming! May I present? . . .

DESPINA: (*entering disguised as notary*)
Greetings, friendly salutations
From the not'ry Beccavivi,
Man of letters, by your leave he
Comes to represent the law.
Forms and documents are ready
And the papers necessary
For the couples I'm to marry.
After solemn preparations.
I shall blow my nose, then read.

OTHERS: Bravo! Let the law proceed!

DESPINA: So according to the contract,
Fiordiligi to Sempronio
Shall be joined in matrimonio;
Tizzio marries Dorabella,
Sister of former mademoisella.
Ladies both are from Ferrara,
Gentlemen from far Albania.
As for dowry and miscellanea . . .

QUARTET: Never mind it! Never mind it!
When we've signed it we can read it.
Ready now with pen in hand.
(*They all sign the contract*)

DESPINA & DON ALFONSO:
(All is going as we planned.)

CHORUS: (*offstage*) Ah, the soldier's life for me!
Daily off to unknown splendor
With a purse now fat, now slender,

Over land and over sea.

ALL: It's a song that sounds familiar.

**DON ALFONSO: Quiet, while I take a look
Utter calamity!
Hand me a dagger!
Ruin and catastrophe!
I stumble, I stagger . . .
Your former fiancés . . .**

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA: Can they be here now?

**DON ALFONSO: Down at the pier now
The ship is docking
That brings the two in.
Unhappy day!**

**QUARTET: O wrack and ruin!
Tidings so shocking!
Total disaster!
What can we say?**

**FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
Go, go this minute! O faster, faster!**

**FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO:
A futile stratagem, we'll run right into them.**

**FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
Quick, quick! A place to hide!
They mustn't guess! (*Ferrando and Guglielmo leave rapidly; Despina
hides.*)
Heaven, show mercy! O heaven, hear us!
Can no one steer us out of this mess? None?**

**DON ALFONSO: Ladies, slow down a bit;
No need to throw a fit.
We'll make a go of it:
I'm on your side.**

**FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
Oh, a thousand painful torments
In a moment I have suffered!
If the two are here discovered,
Can my guilt be then denied.**

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO: *(returning as themselves)*
Safe and sound, to our sweethearts so faithful,
We return with a thousand embraces,
And our hearts overflowing with praises
For their constancy while we were gone.

DON ALFONSO: Prayers answered! Guglielmo! Ferrando!
Oh, how wonderful! Home! Safely! Already!

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO:
Counter orders decreed by his majesty
Bring us home to our own rightful places,
To our brides who have waited so patiently,
And to you, true and time-honored friend.

GUGLIELMO: *(to Fiordiligi)*
But my darling, you're pale. Why so silent?

FERRANDO: *(to Dorabella)*
You look sad, dear; I don't comprehend.

DON ALFONSO: Too much joy, overcome by felicity!
Not a word since you came through the door.

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
(Ah, my breath, tongue and voice all are failing me;
If I only could sink through the floor!)

GUGLIELMO: Darling, help us by providing
For a while some space for luggage.
Ah, good heavens! A man in hiding?
And a lawyer! Something's up!

DESPINA: No, sir, not a man of, learning;
I'm Despina, not a lawyer,
From a party just returning
Where my costume won the cup.

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO:
(She's a fox without an equal;
Better than if all were planned.)

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
(How Despina? How Despina?
This I do not understand.)

DON ALFONSO: *(aside to Ferrando, pointing to contract)*
There's the evidence you're needing;
Gather up, and happy reading!

FERRANDO: Are these papers of importance?

GUGLIELMO: Legal contract for a wedding!

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO:
Hell and death! And you have signed it!
It's for real, so don't deny it.
You've betrayed me! You've betrayed me!
No excuse, I will not buy it!
When I find out the rogue behind it,
O the scoundrel's blood will spew.
(As they head for the door, the sisters stop them.)

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
Ah, to die is all I ask for!
I have erred past all repairing.
Far too late to plead for pardon.
Be unsparing.
The knife is sharpened;
I deserve no more from you.

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO: How, O how?

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
They best can tell you,
He so hard and she so vicious.

DON ALFONSO: Right you are to be suspicious!
See the proof beyond a doubt.
(He leads Ferrando and Guglielmo offstage.)

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:
(With alarm I tremble hot and cold;
Why'd he let the secret out?)
(Don Alfonso returns with Ferrando and Guglielmo in their
Albanian disguises.)

FERRANDO: Lady, allow me;
Plans have miscarried.
Meet the Albanian
You almost married.

GUGLIELMO: *(to Dorabella)*

This pretty locket
Drawn from, your bodice,
Heavenly goddess –
Perhaps you'd like it!

(to Despina)

Hail to the marvelous
Doctor of science!
Two grateful clients
Applaud his name.

FIORDILIGI, DORABELLA & DESPINA:

Ghastly! Appalling!

DON ALFONSO, FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO:

Slight case of blunder!

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:

Catch me, I'm falling!

DON ALFONSO, FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO:

Wild looks of wonder!

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA: *(pointing to Don Alfonso)*

There's the mad maniac
Who bears the blame.

DON ALFONSO: I deceived, but my deception

Was to undeceive your lovers,
Show them life is not perfection,
Common sense can serve us best.

Hands together, be united!

Hug and hold your tongues – be forgiving.
Laugh at flaws and go on living;
Join Alfonso in the jest.

FIORDILIGI & DORABELLA:

Darling, can we start all over?
Now I promise that truth prevailing
Shall atone for former failing;
All my love henceforth for you.

FERRANDO & GUGLIELMO:

Though I trust you, O my darling,

Words alone will hardly do.

DESPINA:

(Am I waking? Am I dreaming?

Things are not what they were seeming.

All the while that I was scheming,

I myself was in the stew.)

ALL: Wise the man whose understanding

Turns all to the best advantage;

His the vessel that finds safe landing;

Reason serves always his guide.

Even torn by tears and tragedy,

Wisdom binds the wound with laughter.

Though the storm blows wild and turbulent,

He will float on a quiet tide,

On a calm and quiet tide.

THE END