

VERDI

LUISA MILLER

English Version by Donald Pippin

ACT I

The scene is an Alpine village in the Tyrol -- on one side, the modest house where Miller, a retired soldier, lives with his daughter Luisa; on the other side, a rustic church; in the distance, a glimpse of the castle where the powerful Count Walter has come to reside.

Dawn is rising on an auspicious day -- Luisa's eighteenth birthday -- and for her an occasion of special turmoil mingled with joy. She is in love for the first time in her life, and her love is requited. Her friends gather to do the honors. But her father worries. Little is known about the young man, named Carlo, who has arrived on the scene only recently -- at the same time, in fact, that Count Walter did. Luisa has no doubts whatever of his honor nor of his intentions, and when we meet Carlo he indeed seems the epitome of a fine young man, ardent, idealistic, and wholeheartedly in love with Luisa.

VILLAGERS

Awaken, Luisa! The queen of our hearts!
With dawn gold and amber the mountains are lighted.
In sunrise and birdsong the day freshly starts;
To show our affection your friends come united.

The dawn, clear as crystal,
Ever delights and pleases,
But with your clear complexion
April cannot compare.

Serene, soft and tender
Are these playful breezes
But your fair perfection
Is sweeter yet than air.

MILLER

Come out, my daughter.

LUISA

Dear friends, how lovely.

CHORUS

May God reward and guard you!

LAURA

We head for church to pray

That all your days stay happy.

MILLER, *embracing her*

**Such warm affection
Lavished on my daughter
Draws tears sincere and grateful ...
This day that dawns is sacred to a father,
For it gave to me Luisa.**

LUISA (*uneasily*)

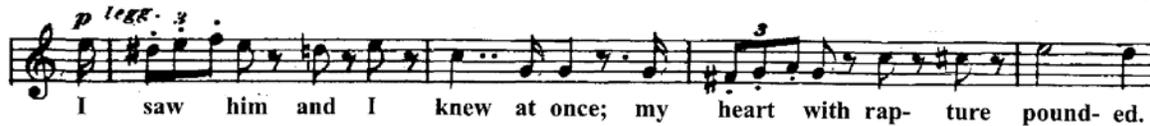
**He's not yet come.
I feel no joy
If he is not here to share.**

MILLER

**Daughter, love so recent
And I believe your first,
Could lead to grave disappointment.
I pray to heaven
Your heart be not misguided.
He's a man known to none ...
Connected with the new Lord ...
Aside from that, who is this Carlo?
I worry.**

LUISA

**Have no fear.
For none so noble, sincere and honest,
None with finer values
Has ever walked upon the earth.
He loves ... and I love!**



I saw him and I knew at once; my heart with rap- ture pound- ed.

**In turn his heart responded
To soar where mine had flown.**

**I never thought on earth to find
The love I long had wanted;
But there the seed was planted
To ripen, caressed by the sun.**

VILLAGERS, *presenting flowers*

**Luisa, a gift for you alone,
A simple token
Of our sincere devotion.**

LUISA

**Friends from childhood,
Dear to me as ever.**

VILLAGERS

Two hearts that beat as one
Two happy souls united;
A love so well requited
Ignites a flame that never dies.

The church bell!
The chimes are calling us!
The church, the chimes invite. Calling ... (*exeunt*)

But Miller's misgivings are soon confirmed. Wurm, ruthless, unscrupulous, passionate in his own way, a retainer of the new Count Walter, has also had his eye on Luisa. Jealous and resentful, angry at Miller for not coercing his daughter into marrying him, he retaliates by revealing the truth about Carlo: he is an imposter, concealing his background, masquerading under a false name. None other, in fact, than Rodolfo, son of Count Walter. Miller is horrified. Clearly aware that such an unequal marriage is out of the question, he foresees the collapse of his daughter's hopes. She will be victimized, doomed certainly to disappointment and despair, possibly to dishonor and disgrace.

WURM Stay! Not so hasty!

MILLER Wurm!

WURM So that's the story.
I heard it all, and burn
With rage and vexation.
I want your daughter.
A year ago precisely
I sought her hand in marriage.

You left me hoping,
And now that I have prospered
I can make her an offer –
For our new Lord, more than the old,
God rest his soul –
Has lent me a helping hand.
You dare go back on your promise,
Reject me!

MILLER Enough, sir!
I offered my consent as a father,
Only provided the choice was hers.

WURM But is she not your daughter?
And can you not demand obedience?
As a father, is it not your right?

WALTER

Very awkward, now that the duchess ...
Tell my son that I must see him. (*Exit Wurm*)

My plan was succeeding.
My son, my only, you alone were stubborn.
You little know the price I've paid
That you might prosper. (*suddenly afraid*)
You must never know, never ...

I would offer my blood, my life,
To assure him of name and prosperity.
But my efforts have proven a mockery
For my ungrateful son turns defiant.
All my efforts are wasted.
For he has defied me.

My devotion and love as a father
Have become but a source of despair,
Bitter despair.
Only pain and a burden of sorrow
A God of wrath has decreed I must bear.
Torment and a burden of sorrow
God decrees that I must bear.
God in anger decrees I must bear,
Alone, must bear.

RODOLFO (*enters*)

Father ...

WALTER

Embrace me ...
Son, congratulations! My news will please you.
Federica soon will be yours in marriage.

RODOLFO

(God help me!)

WALTER

Beneath one roof you were raised as children;
Who, if not yourself,
Could know her true worth and merit?
I sent to offer her
Your hand and heart to tie the knot.
Bursting with joy, she shyly confessed.
How with concealed desire
She has loved you since childhood,
Though forced by a stern tyrant father
To wed against her wishes.

RODOLFO (My rack and ruin ...)

WALTER The old Duke, her husband,
Lately slain in battle,
Has left his wealth and title
To her, his widow.
What's more, our royal lady,
Queen of the German people,
Extends to her the hand of friendship –
An entrée to the court for the asking!

RODOLFO My goal is not so lofty;
With little I'm content. You know me ...

WALTER You have a darker reason!
Dread be the day it comes to light.

RODOLFO I'd freely tell my story.
(joyful sounds from outside)

WALTER Quiet! Here comes the Duchess.

RODOLFO Oh, father!

WALTER We'll go and bring her in here;
Then I shall leave you
To ask her hand in marriage.

RODOLFO You really expect me? ...

WALTER I have spoken! A son obeys his father.
(The Duchess Federica enters, with entourage)

CHORUS Welcome, fair lady
In all excelling;
Star of good fortune
Unto this dwelling.

Peerless in beauty,
Golden, not gaudy;
Simple, yet noble.
Proud but not haughty.

Star bright but single,
Crown of the heavens,
Jewel that sparkles.

Sending forth light.

FEDERICA (*deeply moved*) **Dear cousin! You've not forgotten ...**

WALTER
My noble lady! Niece, ever welcome.
Rodolfo is impatient to speak with you in private.
But I am off and running;
The hunter hears the horn.
(to Rodolfo) **You heard me.**

(At a sign from Walter, all depart, leaving Rodolfo and Federica alone)

RODOLFO
(So be it! In her wise understanding
I place my trust.) Milady!

FEDERICA
Have you become so formal?
I am still Federica.
For you I'll ever remain
Just as you knew me.
Though my station has altered, no!
I've not changed, nor shall I.



From hall-ways of splen-dor mid glit-ter & gold, to my na-tive dwell-ing I longed to re-tire.

I fondly remembered
The sweet days of old,
When hope first was born
And I first knew desire.

RODOLFO
The innocent pleasures
Of years green and tender;
Together we'd share
Never pining for more.

But weighted with burdens
That manhood engenders,
I now beg for mercy –
To you I implore.

FEDERICA
For mercy? Rodolfo,
You seem sorely troubled.

RODOLFO
I cannot deceive you --
For your sake I suffer.

FEDERICA
For my sake?

RODOLFO Because of an unbending father,
 Though guiltless myself,
 I must plead for your pardon.

FEDERICA My pardon?

RODOLFO The love of a brother I offer,
 Brotherly love and eternal regard ...

FEDERICA What are you saying?

RODOLFO Another, not you, I shall marry.

FEDERICA Another!

RODOLFO Forgive ...
 Words hard and bitter to swallow,
 Yet I pray they'll be forgiven;
 Better now than the that will follow
 From a lie, from a lie unto God and heaven.

 Sooner I'd venture to offer
 A heart I've bestowed to another
 With my own right hand
 I would tear it open
 For crows to feed upon.

FEDERICA Turn upon me your dagger;
 Your heart into stone let harden.
 You fiend, with the claw of a tiger,
 Only in death will be granted pardon.

 Seek from an envious lover
 Neither compassion nor favor.
 Scorned love is a furious fever
 That I'll never, I'll never condone.
 (They part in opposite ways)

Inside the house, Luisa anxiously waits for her lover, who has promised to leave the hunt and meet her. Instead, her father returns, overwhelmed by the dreadful information revealed by Wurm: that she is being deceived. Not only is marriage between herself and the son of a count out of the question, but still worse: while leading her on with promises and lies, he cynically plans to marry the distinguished Duchess Federica.

Luisa barely has time to react, with shock and incredulity, when Carlo (now Rodolfo) bursts in to reassure her that despite all, he will remain true to his word, that he is already her husband before God. Despite his evident sincerity, Luisa and Miller both have a dread sense of the danger involved. The Count is not a man to be thwarted.

Rodolfo is unafraid. He, too, has a power over the Count, his father, albeit one that he would use only as a last resort -- a secret that, if revealed, would bring the Count to his knees. His bravado will soon be put to the test.

Scene: inside the Miller house.

CHORUS OF HUNTERS *from offstage.*

So bracing and bright the morn,
We follow the hunting horn,
And ready with horse and hound
We're off and away!

With quickening pace
We're on to the chase.
Already we're off and away!

With barely the day begun,
The quarry is on the run.
The thicket we'll soon surround
And bring it to bay.

Through thicket and thorn
We follow the horn.
Surrounded, we've got it at bay.

LUISA, *going to the window* Where is he? ...
He gave his word, a lover's promise,
To leave the hunt and meet me.
My dearest father! What's wrong?
You look so troubled.

MILLER The fears I harbored were not unfounded.
He deceives you!

LUISA Deceives me? How so? Tell me ...

MILLER He lies! Concealing his name and rank.

LUISA Carlo? Deceives?

Would bring the Count down on his knees before me.
I hear somebody ... Good Lord! My father!

LUISA How can I face him?

MILLER So, here in person!

RODOLFO, *to Walter as he enters*

You, you, my Lord, in this lowly dwelling!
Why the visit?

WALTER You ask?
Does not the guilt that weighs upon your conscience
Tell you plainly why I have hurried?
Duty bound, I come as a father
Here to expose your clever maneuvers.

LUISA & MILLER What!

RODOLFO, *taking out his sword*

No more that evil tongue of yours
Will spread that flagrant slander.
I've heard enough!
Love profound, secure and sacred --
Watch your step if you malign it.

WALTER Sacred love! The love you purchase
From a crafty, scheming harlot!

RODOLFO My life and breath I owe you.
Now we're even –
(sheathing his sword) I've repaid the debt, with interest.

MILLER To hear malignant accusations ...
And I a soldier!

LUISA God help us!

MILLER Tremble! My pride yet lives,
The blood still boiling in my veins.

WALTER Dare you threaten?

MILLER More than words
A proud, insulted father dares.

WALTER Madman, beware!
You'll soon repent your presumption.
Ola! (*Archers and villagers rush in*)

CHORUS You called us?

LUISA Mighty God!

CHORUS We come when called!

RODOLFO Such a threat from my own father.

CHORUS His own father!

WALTER Away, you fool!

RODOLFO First you'll hear me ...

WALTER You order me? Have them handcuffed!

MILLER Heartless monster!

LUISA Sir, at your feet ...

MILLER So craven? No!

QUARTET:

MILLER Though oppressed, not yet defeated.
Innocence shall not surrender,
Nor shall bow, subdued and servile
To a tyrant of rank and splendor.

Kneel to God; to Him be humble,
Mighty scourge of mortal pride,
Not to a man, human only on the surface,
But a wild, savage beast inside.

RODOLFO (*to Walter*) Fire of wrath, in anger spoken,
Yield to love and all's forgiven.
(Relent and all's forgiven.)
May our bond remain unbroken,
Bond between us formed in heaven.

In my heart is hell and torment,

**Misty shadows impede my eyes.
Father-son but one more (fleeting) moment;
Then I cut all parental ties.**

WALTER

**You, not I, should kneel and grovel
Wretched son, ungrateful ever.
Stone will dissolve and mountains crumble
(Long) before I bend or waver.**

**Blinded love has wrought this evil,
Youth disdainful of sober age.
Know that neither God nor devil
Will release you two from my rage.
(from my lasting rage)**

LUISA

**In thine image, too, created,
I beseech Thee, God of mercy.
Why am I reviled, berated?
Why insulted? Why abhorred?
Oh, why? Oh, why?**

**Heaven hear me, heaven save me!
Turn away thy dreadful sword.
Rather take that life Thou gave me –
To Thee I render it, O Lord.**

WALTER

Proceed! Arrest the two of them.

RODOLFO

**The man who stakes no value on his life,
Let him proceed. My sword is ready.
*(Standing in front of Luisa with sword drawn)***

WALTER

**Raving madman! Cut out the bluffing.
*(Takes Luisa and hurls her among the police)***

RODOLFO

**Atrocious! If you arrest and bind the hands
Of my bride here blameless,
I'll join them both in prison.**

WALTER

Then do so, your choice.

RODOLFO

**Before I'd see he fall prey to hired scoundrels,
Her heart I'll pierce with my own sword.**

WALTER

**Go right ahead. Why wait? Why linger?
Kill her yourself.**

RODOLFO

**You go too far.
Forced to the wall,
I still have got one last resort,
So help me!
Sir, if you remain so hard of heart,
I shall reveal your secret.
I warn you, with my own tongue
I swear to announce to all the world
By what foul means you became Count Walter!**
(He leaves hurriedly)

WALTER, *running after Rodolfo*

**No more! Rodolfo!
Hear me! I yield to you.
Remove the chain, release the girl.**

TUTTI

**Released! Released!
O God be praised!**

ACT II

Although Count Walter apparently retreated when Rodolfo threatened to reveal the guilty secret behind his rise to eminence, he is far from abandoning his efforts to coerce his son into an advantageous marriage. And Wurm is equally far from abandoning his designs on Luisa.

The Count has little to fear if he chooses to throw his weight around, provided that his son is kept in the dark. It is a simple matter to have Miller surreptitiously dragged off to a prison cell. Equally simple to invoke the death penalty on a trumped up charge of subversion -- that vaguest and deadliest of all crimes -- unless Luisa decides to save her father. Wurm spells out the price that she must pay.

SCENE: inside the Miller house. Friends of Luisa come to pay respects.

FRIENDS

O Luisa, Luisa, where are you?

LUISA (*entering*)

**Who is calling?
You bring me back news grim and bitter ...**

LAURA

Heart-rending!

FRIENDS You will need all your courage.

LUISA Do not keep me waiting.

FRIENDS On the mountain path, rugged and barren,
After dusk we were homeward retuning,
When a threatening sound without warning
Echoed into the darkening valley.

Martial footsteps, with curses and swearing,
Then the cry of a mortal in anguish;
Peering down, we could barely distinguish –
Oh, a scene of despair past enduring.
A raw scene of despair past enduring.

An old man bound in chains and mishandled,
Tortured! Beaten! Be brave!

LUISA Oh, my father!

FRIENDS There's a power above, ever watchful,
Looking down on both tyrant and slave.

LUISA Oh, father, I must hasten.

FRIENDS Where?

LUISA To the castle. (*Wurm appears*)

FRIENDS Wurm!

WURM (*to Luisa*) Now you'll have to listen!
(*to friends*) Go, leave us.

LUISA (I shudder ...)

FRIENDS (*as they leave*) There's a power just and loving,
Ever watchful, gazing downward
On both the tyrant and slave.

WURM I left your father ...

LUISA Where is he?

WURM In a dank prison cell.

LUISA For what crime committed?

WURM He, a poor, lowly vassal
Threatened his Lordship,
Dared to insult him, dared to offend.
His fault is heavy;
Heavy will be the forfeit.

LUISA Even to ask, I tremble.

WURM I tell you frankly:
On his grey, wrinkled head
Soon falls the axe.

LUISA Ah! Go no further!

WURM However, you can save him.

LUISA How so? Tell me.

WURM The Count, though offended,
Has made an offer:
If you merely write a letter.
In turn, he will promise
The freedom of your father.

LUISA A letter?

WURM Just that. *(dictating)*
“Wurm ... God forbid!
Rodolfo I never loved.
(Luisa looks at Wurm briefly, then lowers her eyes, as one resigned to sacrifice)
His rank and fortune I soon discovered,
And by deceiving him tried to catch him.”

LUISA How monstrous!

WURM Don't forget your father ...
“Blinded by ambition, I lost my head.
Forgive me. My love for you has conquered.
Help me escape the fury of Rodolfo.
Sharp on the stroke of midnight,
Come, and together we shall flee.”

LUISA No!

WURM

Write it.

LUISA

Can you think for a moment
I'd sign these lies so abhorrent?
Little you know me!



Just-ly pun-ish me, O Al-might-y, if I of-fend thee, & I'll not mur-mur

But I pray, do not abandon,
Do not leave me
At the mercy of these monsters.
O Almighty, do not leave me at their mercy.
O God, don't abandon,
Do not leave me unprotected and forsaken. No, no!
O Almighty, justly punish my offenses,
But do not leave me unprotected and forsaken.
I can save a guiltless father
From a cruel, dreadful end.
But the price, ah!
So hard to say it, ah!
My dishonor is the ransom they demand.
Heaven hear me!
Do not leave me here alone.)

WURM

Of course, none can force you,
So take it or leave it.
It's all up to you. Till later. (*starts to leave*)

LUISA (*holding him back*)

Remorseless! And my poor old father?

WURM (*coldly*)

It follows: you have killed him.

LUISA

And this you call unforced!

(*wringing her hands convulsively, she goes to the table and writes, then gives the paper to Wurm*)

The letter's completed.

WURM

You solemnly swear on the head of your father
To claim that the letter was all your own doing?

LUISA

I swear it.

WURM

One further gesture from you we require.

LUISA

Command me.

WURM **You must come with me now to the castle,
And there in the sight of the noble lady
You'll show you're in love with Wurm.**

LUISA **With you?**

WURM **The test turns distasteful.**

LUISA **No ...**

WURM **Sorry!**

LUISA **If I do so?**

WURM **Quite simply ...**

LUISA **My father? ...**

WURM **Goes safely.**

LUISA **Thank God! (*Wurm gives a diabolical smile*)**

**My life you have shattered, O wretched man!
My heart you've drawn and quartered.
Hasten at least and restore to me
My father so dearly bartered.**

**I feel the icy hand of death.
Horror invades my soul.
Before my painful, final breath,
Oh, let me see him well and whole.
Before my final breath,
Restore him well and whole.**

WURM **Brace up, for time's a medicine,
Healer of human sorrow.
If not today, tomorrow,
Your heart I shall yet console.
Your wounded heart I shall console.**

Scene: inside the castle. Walter is alone.

WALTER **Fooled by delusions!
Youth misled by beauty,
Ruled by desire and passion,
Not by the mind.**

WALTER It called for action.
You then suggested a grim solution.

WURM The Count had to cross
Through a thick, lonely forest;
Night lay upon us ...
We watched, and waited, then ...

WALTER Say no more!
Every hair on my head rises up in horror;
Each drop of blood congeals to ice;
Each drop of blood runs icy cold.

WURM Control yourself, hold off the morbid brooding.
The past is buried, shrouded deep in shadow.
The dark of night hides well our secret.

WALTER Or does it?

WURM We ran to spread the rumor
That he was murdered by a gang of bandits,
And all the world believed it.

WALTER Not quite all! On hearing the sound of struggle,
My son came running ...
The victim's tongue was not yet silenced.

WURM Still breathing? Still breathing? Continue.

WALTER Before he died, near the final moment,
He clearly named ...

WURM Who?

WALTER His assassins!

WURM Then I am lost!

WALTER Just you?
Are not you and I together bound by Satan?
Together locked in hell?

WURM All, all is over!

WALTER We either together go safely out of danger,

Or strung up by the neck, we both will die.

WURM Ripe for the hangman, safe and solid no longer,
Around my neck the knotted noose they yet may tie.

WALTER But here comes the Duchess.

FEDERICA (*entering*) Jilted!

WALTER I say again, twice over, that Rodolfo was ill.
No mood for love, but delirious
And now has come back to his senses.

FEDERICA Recovered?

WALTER Quite recovered!

FEDERICA You mean it? ...

WALTER Entirely.
And Luisa never cared about your Rodolfo.
She loved another.

FEDERICA Another? How can I know it for certain?

WALTER She will tell you.

FEDERICA Will she? ...

WALTER To calm your fears I've sent to get her.

FEDERICA Now?

WALTER No need to worry.
(*Luisa enters by a secret door, accompanied by Wurm*)

WALTER Come, present yourself, Luisa.
Greet the Duchess, as fitting.

FEDERICA (*stiffly*) Come closer.

WURM (*softly to Luisa*) (Just remember that your father's at our mercy.)

LUISA (The slimy snake!)

FEDERICA (Gentle features...her face and manner seem reassuring.

Yes, I can trust her.

LUISA (All his love to her he'll offer,
Love that once to me he promised.)

FEDERICA (She appears sincere and candid.)
Don't be shy, my dear;
It's quite correct to look at me directly.

WALTER You'll forgive her country manners.

WURM Overawed before her betters ...

LUISA (Serpents all,
The three of them now waiting to bite.)

FEDERICA Luisa, hear me.
With a single word, believe me.
You can save me or destroy.
If you lie ... But no ... I trust you.
I am sure you'd not deceive me.

LUISA (Who could bear this brand of torture?)

FEDERICA, *taking her hand and looking avidly into her eyes*
Are you in love?

LUISA (How dare she ask it?)

FEDERICA Are you in love?

LUISA Deeply.

FEDERICA But who? Who?

LUISA (*pointing*) Wurm! (The jailer!) (*he bows modestly*)

FEDERICA Not Rodolfo?

LUISA His name and rank he kept a secret,
With what in mind I've no idea.

FEDERICA And did he never offer you
A sigh or sign of love, Luisa?

LUISA (How to answer?)

FEDERICA **Yes?**

LUISA **No! Never!**

FEDERICA **(Within my heart new hope awakens.)**

LUISA, *with a sharp twinge of jealousy* **(She's gloating!)**

FEDERICA **Pardon, but ... you blush and look embarrassed.
Now be careful ... Do not deceive me.
Do not wrong yourself.**

LUISA **(God help me!)**

WALTER **(Dare she weaken?)**

FEDERICA **Answer.**

WURM **(I'm shaking!)**

FEDERICA **If your heart conceals a secret,
Tear aside the veil and tell me.**

LUISA, *about to betray her secret* **Yes, I ...**

FEDERICA **Be candid.**

WALTER (*pointedly*) **By the love you bear your father ...**

LUISA, *pulling herself together* **(My father! The gallows!)**
(Wurm and Walter stare fixedly at Luisa)

WURM **Stop the stalling.**

FEDERICA **Go on ...**

LUISA **I answer just the way I did before,
That for him alone
I feel a deep, profound and burning love.**

QUARTET

LUISA **(Can I conceal my loathing,
Control the fire that rages?
My heart that she has broken**

At last can bear no more.)

FEDERICA

(Her heavenly confession!
The sweetest words yet uttered.
A huge relief unbounded
I feel as never before.)

WALTER & WURM

(She glows with reborn ecstasy,
Her eyes no longer somber.
On hope not yet well-founded
Her lifted spirits rise and soar.)

LUISA

(How long can I undergo
This painful test of hell and fire.
How long can I endure this test of fire?)

FEDERICA

(Slow down, my heart!
Slow down, do not anticipate
That joy so great I may expire.
From joy I may expire.)

WALTER & WURM

(Fate is a whore,
A sly whore bred on treachery,
But I can bend it, I can mould it
To my own desire.
She'll bend to my desire.)

Scene: a garden of the castle. Rodolfo enters, holding a letter, followed by a peasant.

RODOLFO

You brought this letter? ...

PEASANT

I told you all I remember.

RODOLFO

I need to hear again.

PEASANT

I clearly saw her sign it,
Then gave it to me to deliver.
“Take it,” she said, “to Wurm.”

RODOLFO

Above all, do not let me see you...

PEASANT

And that she kept repeating.
I thought it queer, but maybe *you* should read it..
So here I am, sir,
Waiting for remuneration.

RODOLFO, *throwing him a purse* **Take it!** (*peasant does so*)

Ola! (*servant appears*)

Wurm! (*exit servant*)

**Oh, could I deny my senses,
Disbelieve my own eyes!
Could earth and heaven,
All the host of angels,
Plead her cause, reassure me,
Swear that she is guiltless ...
They are lying!
Here's the proof in writing.
All of them liars!
In her own writing ...**

**Flagrant betrayal!
A soul as black as Hades!
Shrewd and scheming!
How well my father knew her ...**

**The vows of devotion!
Looking forward,
Our joys and agonies!
What of them?
All lies and pretense!
She betrays me, deceives me!**

**Calm, tranquil, after set of sun,
Pale stars were barely lighted.
We gazed into eternity,
Together in love united.**

**Her tender hand I held in mine,
Her touch so warm, and yet naïve,
Her words of love so passionate,
I thought her mine forever, ah!
All lies and make-believe,
No more than make-believe.**

**Spellbound, in silent ecstasy,
I hung upon her every breath,
While, like an angel, she would sigh,
"Be mine, as I am yours, beloved."**

**Then were my senses overcome;
There opened up Elysium.**

**An angel, she would sigh,
“Be ever mine, as I am yours.”**

**Ah! My dream now is over,
For it was all a lie.
All now is over, all is over.
An angel, she would sigh,
“I’m yours forever.”
But it was all, it was all a lie.**

WURM *(entering)*

You sent for me, sir?

RODOLFO

Come, take a look. Read it.
(hands Wurm the letter, which he reads, then gives back)
**You and I have reached our fatal hour.
Choose your lethal weapon.**
(presenting two pistols)

WURM

But sir! *(tries to get away)*

RODOLFO

**You’re staying!
Here on a tiny spot of earth
One or the other now meets his maker.**

WURM, *firing into the air*

To hell and Lucifer! *(runs off)*

CHORUS, *rushing in*

What happened? Who shot?

RODOLFO

A coward! Fear runs for cover!

CHORUS

Your eyes blaze with fire, contempt and fury.

WALTER, *entering*

Rodolfo! Now steady. Calm yourself ...

RODOLFO

Father! Oh, father, father!

WALTER

**Rodolfo, listen!
My harshness I repent; you’ve won me over.
Love is the all that matters.
Take her! Wed the girl you have chosen,
Poor though she be.**

RODOLFO

You urge me to marry?

WALTER

My blessings!

WALTER (*with Chorus*) **Forget the girl and concentrate
On all that lies before you.
A wife who will adore you.
Your father advises well.
Rely on me! An unfailing father
You always, always can trust.
Trust me, trust and all will go well.**

CHORUS **Be guided by your father.
Forget the pain and sorrow;
Look forward to tomorrow.
Despair is a passing spell,
At worst a brief spell.**

ACT III

Luisa is crushed by a double sorrow: forced into betraying her lover, she believes that he has also betrayed her. Although her sacrifice has saved her father's life, what reason does she herself have to go on living?

SCENE: the Miller household. Friends are gathered.

LAURA, *with chorus of friends*
 **A single day of sorrow
Whose glare provides no haven,
Has left upon her forehead
Its heavy print engraven.**

**Wan, like a wasted lily,
Cut by the cruel blade,
Angel at home in heaven
That to the earth has strayed.** (*Luisa enters*)

LAURA **Try just a little.
A simple cup of porridge.
You look so tired,
Food will do you wonders.**

LUISA **No ...**

CHORUS **She begs you as a friend.
Yield, dear Luisa.**

LUISA

**I loathe the thought of eating.
Do not urge me, I implore you.
(Unto these lips no earthly food
Again shall be lifted.
I taste already
Delicate, celestial ambrosia.)**

(She looks involuntarily toward the church)

**But tell me, my friends,
Why the church glows so bright?**

(The girls look at each other in confusion)

You're silent?

CHORUS

We know not why.

LAURA

**We are told, the Count would open his new assembly
With due pomp and splendor.**

(Luisa turns to write)

LAURA, quietly to her companions

**(Oh, may she not discover
Whose wedding is in the offing.
Tell her not who the groom will be,
For such a cruel blow
Would surely kill her.)**

CHORUS

**Wan, like a wasted lily,
Cut by the cruel blade,
Angel at home in heaven
That to the earth has strayed.**

Miller returns, pale and haggard; Luisa throws herself into his arms.)

MILLER

Luisa! Daughter! Daughter!

LAURA

**Their chaste embrace let no one disturb;
For God alone should witness
Their sacred, sad reunion.**

(Laura withdraws; the other girls follow)

MILLER

Pale and sad ... you are grieving.

LUISA

No, no! Not grieving, I am at peace.

MILLER

**My life was costly.
Dearly you paid for the freedom of your father.**

Yes, Wurm told me all that happened.

LUISA Told you? ...

MILLER To save my life,
Your own love you surrendered.

LUISA (On earth ... here only.)

MILLER (She is too calm and quiet.
I feel uneasy,
A vague but dire foreboding.)
You wrote a letter?

LUISA (*dreamily*) I meant it for Rodolfo.
If you love me, oh father,
Promise me he'll get it.

Miller looks fixedly at Luisa, then opens the letter and reads.

MILLER “My father held as hostage.
I was forced, dear Rodolfo.
But sworn to silence,
I could say nothing.
But there's a realm
Where neither solemn vows nor worldly threats
Maintain their power. There I'll be waiting ...
After you hear the final stroke of midnight,
Come then.”

This solid floor sways and collapses.
That higher realm? ... I feel unsteady ...
That place you speak of ... where is it?

LUISA The graveyard.
Does the chill of death make you tremble?

MILLER On my head fall, you bolts of lightning!

LUISA



**There I'll sleep soundly,
No more to suffer.**

**None but the hard of heart,
None but the coward
Quiver in terror
When death rides over.**

**Tried and true lovers
Faithful forever,
Find in that shadow
No trace of fear.**

**For like an angel
It beckons to heaven
Where love eternal
Waits radiant and clear,
Where love eternal
Waits calm and clear.**

MILLER

**Daughter, I shudder, reeling in horror.
Daughter ... to smother, blot out your being ...
For suicide, God offers no pardon.**

LUISA

**Is love so evil?
Is love so wrong?**

MILLER

Turn back! Don't do it! Don't do it!

**I'm wrinkled and furrowed,
Blown out the candle.
My hair turns silver;
My days are borrowed.**

**That love a father
Saw in April planted,
By mellow autumn
He reaches to gather.**

**Am I to go
Instead empty handed,
Only to reap
A harvest of tears?**

**Ah, may the grave
Prepared for my daughter,**

**First take the father
She suffered to save.
First take the father
She tried to save,
The man she tried to save.**

LUISA
**Heedless and desperate,
I was impatient.
No, no! Despair not!
Father, I promise ...
Even though desperate
I must be patient.**

MILLER
Luisa ...

LUISA
**That letter for you
I'll tear to shreds and live ...**

MILLER
You'll live for me?

LUISA
**For you I'll live,
For you, my father.
Despair no more, to you alone
My life I offer,
And at your knees with tears I kneel
And plead for pardon.
Father! Father! Hereafter we shall never part.**

MILLER
**No, no, my daughter! Rise up!
Rise up, already you have won my heart.**

BOTH
**Ah, your embrace, my heart and yours unite.
May former sorrows
Evermore be all forgot!**

LUISA
**We must escape ...
Here danger is lurking in every corner.**

MILLER
Shrewd words of wisdom.

LUISA
**But you are weary, your eyes are heavy.
Lie down and sleep till break of day.
At six o'clock by the light of dawn,
We'll leave here together.**

MILLER
Yes, far away!

(then Luisa)

**From door to door in foreign lands,
Blown by the winds of fortune,
We'll beg for bread with pleading hands
And cry to all for mercy.**

MILLER

**We must prepare to suffer
Days of regret and sorrow,
But leaning on one another,
We'll venture side by side.
A father and a daughter
God will bless and He'll provide,**

LUISA

**But close to one another,
We'll venture side by side,
And God will then provide.
At dawn together we'll go away.**

MILLER

**At dawn together we'll go away.
Together, daughter, far away.**

LUISA

From door to door in foreign lands, etc.

BOTH

**By early morning we leave together.
We'll go away.
Together, soon we shall be far away,
Far away.**

(Miller goes to his room; Luisa kneels to pray.)

LUISA

**Is this to be my final prayer
In my beloved homeland,
Where from my childhood
I've been so happy,
Here where he told me, "I love you!"
Tomorrow who knows where I shall pray?**

Rodolfo enters, followed by a servant.

RODOLFO *(to servant)*

**Go to the castle and there inform my father
That when the rites are ready, here he'll find me.**
(exit servant)

Praying ... Time now indeed for prayer.
(Removes a phial from his pocket and pours the contents into a cup)
Are you the writer of this letter?

Well, answer! Is this your writing?

LUISA *(faintly)*

Yes ...

RODOLFO

**I feel on fire ... a fever ... my throat is burning ...
Give me some water.**

(Luisa hands him the cup and Rodolfo drinks)

The taste is briny and bitter.

LUISA

The water?

RODOLFO

Drink it.

(As Luisa drinks, Rodolfo turns pale and looks away.)

(in horror)

(My work is ended.)

LUISA

No ...

RODOLFO

**You flee in secret ...
Another man for you is waiting.
Another woman waits for me also ...
At the altar.**

LUISA

The altar? The altar?

RODOLFO

**They both shall wait forever!
Farewell, my weapon!
This trusty sword
Whereon I swore to defend the oppressed.**

LUISA

Almighty God! What is it?

RODOLFO

I can no longer breathe.

LUISA

**Then try some water ...
Drink all that 's left.
May it restore you.**

RODOLFO

**Ah, cunning harlot!
Do you know what you offer?**

LUISA

**Rodolfo, can you abuse with words so cruel
Your once beloved Luisa?**

RODOLFO

**Why do you tempt me?
Oh, turn away your eyes,
So clear, so candid, that glow like stars eternal.**

RODOLFO **Tell the truth, or fire and damnation
Upon your soul! Did you love Wurm?**

LUISA **You frighten me ...**

RODOLFO **Cursed if you answer falsely.
Know that tonight before this lamp has lowered,
You will stand before your maker.**

LUISA **Ah! Say it all ... Tell me!**

RODOLFO **With me, you drank deadly poison.
So turn your eyes to God, Luisa ...**

LUISA, rises, as if animated by an idea
**Death is that close upon us?
Ah! Death releases me, cancels my oath of silence!
I can speak freely, so hear me out.
Know that I die faithful!**

RODOLFO **Almighty!**

LUISA **My father in captivity,
Tormented by those savages ... And I!**

RODOLFO **Continue.**

LUISA **Ah, wretched me!
No one but I could rescue him ...
Forced by that monster ... you understand ...
Wurm set the final price ...
I wrote the letter.**

RODOLFO **Ah, break, my heart!
For I have slain you!**

LUISA **Ah, me!**

RODOLFO **God of wrath, O God of anger, God of evil!
Curse the day of my creation.
Under Saturn, a freak of fortune,
I was born a child of malice.
A creature of thy hate. Born of hate,
Loathed creature of thy hate.**

