

THE MARAUDERS
(I Masnadieri)

Music by
Giuseppe Verdi

English Version by
Donald Pippin
(1997)

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Carlo	Count Moor's elder son
Rolla	Companion of Carlo
Francesco	Count Moor's younger son
Arminio	the Count's steward
Amalia	an orphan and the Count's niece
Massimiliano	Reigning Count of Moor
Moser	a priest

Chorus of youths, bandits, women, children and servants

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ACT I

The scene is a tavern. Carlo, our hero, is seated alone, incongruously poring over a book and brooding about the lamentable contrast between the glorious heroes of antiquity and the paltry leaders of today. A troubled young man -- stirred by the revolutionary forces of the time, rebellious, restless, born into high privilege, now alienated from his rich and powerful family. In fact, he has been kicked out of the house -- out of the castle, that is to say -- by his angry, bewildered and disappointed father, Count Moor, who had such high hopes for him. Since then, he has drifted into bad company -- a gang of dissolute fellows who, unlike himself, seem interested only in living it up and having fun, to hell with the consequences. For Carlo, this life has worn thin. Ready and eager to return home, to straighten things out with his father, above all to get married to Amalia, the girl whom perforce he had to leave behind, he has already sent an impassioned letter to his father expressing remorse for his past behavior, pleading for forgiveness and vowing to make a fresh start. The answer, on which everything depends, should be arriving any day . . .

Scene: a tavern on the borders of Saxony at the beginning of the eighteenth century

CARLO *(book in hand)*
Oh, for past days of glory!
Heroes and giants.
How are the mighty fallen!
Now only pimps and parasites.
Where's the spark that spurred our fathers
Into battle for freedom and for justice?
A rising generation
Can light the fire again,
Put down the tyrant
That lives on the sweat of slaves.
Cry revolution!

CHORUS *(offstage)* Rough and rowdy,
Brother brother,
The highway heroes!
Lift the glass and flash the knife.
Hail the manly bandit life!

CARLO
The binge goes on as ever
With my raucous companions.
Oh, my father, I'm waiting!

How I long for your letter
That extends to the prodigal
Your hand of welcome.

Born to a bed of roses,
Prince in a kingly castle,
Comforts of home I cast aside
To enter a land of no return.

CARLO Amalia, fair and faithful,
Open your arms to embrace me.
Ah! Lead me, oh love, to find again
The hidden garden of rapture reborn,
Garden of hope and rapture reborn.
Lead me, oh love, to find again
Rapture and hope reborn.

CHORUS *(entering, to Carlo)* Here's your long-awaited letter.
Why so pale?

CARLO *(snatches the letter)*
My prayer is answered!
From my father, peace and pardon.
(he opens the letter and reads it)

CHORUS *(to each other)* As he reads, he changes color.

CARLO Not from him, but from my brother.
(he throws the letter to the ground, and dashes out in despair)

ROLLA *(picks up the letter and peruses it)*
Plainly put and clearly stated:
(reading)
"I speak for our father:
His mind is unchanged.
Dismiss the thought of returning home
Unless you choose to live on bread and water,
Confined in a solitary dungeon cell."

MEN Bread and water! So rich a diet!

Enraged and embittered, Carlo is pushed over the edge by his father's intransigence. Defiant, ready to take it out on the entire loathsome human race, he agrees to lead the gang as they embark more ambitiously on a career of crime.

CARLO *(returning, fiercely agitated)*
Ruthless tiger of the jungle!
Can his heart be made of granite?
Thus he answers my plea for mercy.
Can a father be so uncaring?

Ah! I call on Mother Nature

With a cry of naked fury:
 Wage with me against mankind
 Eternal warfare.

MEN Forge ahead!

CARLO Where is the sword
 To rid the world of deadly serpents?

MAN Talk is cheap; It's time for action!
 Form with us a gang of bandits.

CARLO Form a gang? Forget my father?
 Live to burn, destroy and plunder?

MEN You we choose to be the leader.

CARLO You have chosen, and I am ready.

MEN Swear it!

CARLO Witness! My word of honor.

MEN Viva, viva! Hail the captain!

CARLO On to vengeance! In defiance,
 Tear asunder the bonds of nature.
 Drawn to carnage, to spoils of plunder,
 Leave behind a trail of blood.

Seize the moment for vendetta
 Unimpeded by compassion.
 Fellow soldiers, we stand together;
 Swear allegiance, and follow my lead.

MEN Fellow bandits, we swear allegiance,
 And will follow wherever you lead.

CARLO To follow and obey.

MEN To follow and obey.

CARLO You swear to follow and obey.

MEN We swear to follow and obey
 Man to man, we swear to follow and obey. Lead on!

ALL Word of honor, to follow and obey.
 Sworn to obey. Sworn to obey. *(they exit noisily)*

But you may have noted that the response to his plea for pardon came not directly from his father but from his brother -- his younger brother Francesco,

who has everything to gain by widening the rift between Carlo and his father. Among the highborn, a younger son's lot is not enviable, and in Francesco the wounds have long festered. Shoved into the background, since childhood he has looked on resentfully while his preferred older brother enjoyed all the advantages, everything that Francesco has wanted for himself, including the girl, who has made her own preference abundantly clear.

But with Carlo out of the picture, a new day would surely dawn. Francesco would be in line for inheriting both wealth and title, and there is reason to hope that this could happen sooner rather than later. Obsessed, consumed by grief and guilt for the rupture with his elder son, the old Count is frail, feeble, probably near the end of his painful journey. But why sit back and let nature take its leisurely course? Why not give a helping hand? A sudden shock, a devastating blow might do the trick . . .

Scene: a room in the castle of Count Moor

FRANCESCO

(alone)

Old man, you've seen the last of your first-born,
My preferred elder brother.
That whining letter,
Crawling to you for pardon,
I tore to pieces.
In its place, you found another
Less to your liking,
Of my own devising.
At last, with nature
I'm getting even
For the gross unfairness
Of my tardy arrival.
Dear, grieving father,
I'll see you suffer!

Compunction, pangs of conscience —
Goblins, ghouls and ogres!
Fairly tales told to children.
Courage, Francesco!
Why not dispatch the old man?
A worn out skeleton,
And the fire down to ashes.
A flicker ... it's over.

Though the lamp is slowly waning,
As I watch I grow impatient.
Lives that linger past the hour
May require a helping hand.

Where to find the way to hasten
His departure without revealing
Who inserts the fatal dagger
As it pierces to the heart.

Eureka, eureka! I've found my solution.
Arminio, a moment.

ARMINIO (*entering*) And how can I serve you?

FRANCESCO Are you true and loyal?

ARMINIO Have you cause to question?

FRANCESCO Then prove it by accepting a modest assignment.
Appear in disguise that defies recognition.
Approaching my father,
Inform him that Carlo was slain on the field,
Where his body was left
For the vultures and maggots.

ARMINIO I might so inform him,
But will he believe me?

FRANCESCO The bait he will nibble, then swallow.

Support I shall offer
With proof so persuasive
That born disbelievers
Will take it for gospel. (*Arminio leaves*)

Be patient, Francesco.
You soon will be master!

Oh tremble, you underlings!
Your easy life is over
As my stealthy shadow
Emerges from cover.

The feeble hand of tired age
Will govern no longer;
Like the roaring lion,
I shall reign supreme.

FRANCESCO From laughter and festivity,
A reign of fear will follow;
And watered by teardrops,
My tyranny will flourish.

Oppression, imprisonment,
Austerity, starvation
Are but the chronicle
Of days to come,
Darker days to come,
Darker, darker days soon to come.

The old Count's grief over Carlo is shared by Amalia, his fiancée. An orphaned cousin, she has grown up in the family and in recent years has willingly assumed the role of nurse and caretaker to the ailing old man whom she has come to look

upon as a father, and who now sits dozing in an armchair, quietly, but not peacefully.

Scene: a bedroom in the castle

AMALIA (*approaching old Massimiliano, who lies sleeping in an armchair*)

As you sleep, old and weary,
Your soft expression
Is serene, like an angel.
Father, continue
To dream of heaven,
Transported from the pain of the present
On tranquil waters.
Though you banished my Carlo,
Ever removing my only joy and comfort,
I forgive you, and try to mask my sorrow.

He had a look that melted me,
A smile like a sunlit morning.
The kiss from oh so long ago
Was passageway to heaven.

Held in his arms, I floated
Over mountain, sea and meadow.
Our voices spoke in unison
As breath and heartbeat blended.

Soul and body, soul and body disappeared
In fire that burned and bonded;
We saw around us earth and sky
Exalted by our embraces.

But after the wine of ecstasy
And love's intoxication,
I was alone
And gone was the dream
That never can return.
Never again, never again,
Never again, no, no!
Gone the dream that never can return,
Never return again!

MASSIMILIANO (*half-asleep*) My Carlo! ...

AMALIA Still dreaming ...

MASSIMILIANO Why did I force you to leave me?

AMALIA Wake up, beloved father,
And see the phantoms disappear.

MASSIMILIANO Francesco! You again stand between us.

AMALIA In me, he's present.
Someday I'll be your daughter.

MASSIMILIANO *(opening his eyes)*
My dear! You catch me dozing,
Dreaming of Carlo.
My child, your life I've torn apart;
Your April days of budding youth I've blighted.
Dear, do not curse me.

AMALIA Curse my father? No, never!

MASSIMILIANO Nearly over, my days are numbered.
At the end of my road, I call for Carlo.
Cold and callous,
His younger brother,
All too eager, will place me in the grave.

 Tears of mourning console and comfort.
Ah! What son of mine will weep,
What son is left to weep?
What son of mine is left to weep?

AMALIA I would leave this barren desert.
Day by day, can life continue
After losing all that matters?
All that grew inside is dead.
Reunited with my Carlo,
I would share eternal love,
Eternal peace, eternal sleep.

MASSIMILIANO Mournful tears console and comfort
Sad tears of mourning console and comfort,
But for me what son will weep?

AMALIA Reunited with my Carlo,
With my own Carlo,
I would share eternal sleep,
Eternal love, eternal love,
I would share eternal love, eternal sleep.

FRANCESCO *(entering with Arminio, who is in disguise)*
Sir, meet a stranger
With news sad and sudden.
It calls for courage.

MASSIMILIANO A message from Carlo?

ARMINIO Some tragic news of your son, my companion.

AMALIA From where?

MASSIMILIANO What happened?

ARMINIO I shared his battalion;
Soldiers of fortune,
We ventured together —

Carlo, the former
Outsider and drifter.

AMALIA Brought to that!

ARMINIO At Cracow he fell like a hero.
Gasping and bleeding,
The struggle was over.

FRANCESCO Spare us the ending!

ARMINIO These final words he whispered:
“Bring to my father
This sword steeped in blood,
Along with a message:
The son you rejected
Has died in despair
On a field strewn with corpses”.

MASSIMILIANO And I am the father
That made him a beggar.

ARMINIO His course nearly run,
His concern was Amalia.

AMALIA Am I to continue
A lifetime without him?

FRANCESCO Read it. With the blood from his wound it was written:
“When I am gone, you must live for the future.
Turn to my brother; accept the hand he offers.”

AMALIA Carlo! You never loved me! You never loved me!

ARMINIO His final message he sends to Amalia.

FRANCESCO Amalia mine in marriage! Amalia mine in marriage!

MASSIMILIANO Slain by his father
Who made him a beggar!

AMALIA Carlo, Carlo! You never loved me! Never! Never!

MASSIMILIANO Almighty God, vent your wrath on me.
Punish a blind, foolish father.
(to Francesco)
All too naive and gullible,
Your smooth persuasion drove me.
Bring back my son!
The son I’ve lost.
Oh, God of mercy, restore my son,
The loving son I’ve lost.

MASSIMILIANO Unworthy though I am,
 God of mercy, oh restore my son
 Though undeserving,
 Restore the loving son I lost.

AMALIA Father, he died as heroes should,
 Too good for the world he departed.
 Were he allowed this life below,
 What more could heaven offer?
 God has for him a higher place
 Among the blazing starry host.

 Father, he dies, yes!
 He died as heroes should,
 Exalted in his departure,
 For God has chosen for him a place,
 A higher place among the starry host.
 For him has God chosen a higher destiny,
 Lifted to heaven, among the starry host.
 Be comforted.
 He's found a place, a higher place
 Among the starry host.

FRANCESCO (Just as I planned! The pangs of guilt
 And grief upon his heart are gnawing.
 Remorse and guilt without remission
 Upon his heart are gnawing.
 Exactly as I planned
 The pangs of guilt and grief
 Upon his heart are gnawing.)

(To Massimiliano)
 Some time ago, you murdered him
 By closing the doors of reconciliation.
 Old man, your death is overdue.
 And I've not long now to wait,
 Not long to wait.
 I have not long now to wait.

ARMINIO (Now all too clearly
 I see the price to pay:
 A father struck down by sorrow,
 Destroyed by guilt and sorrow,
 Mised by a lie,
 A lie deliberate.
 Bad dreams will follow
 And haunt me forever.
 The biting arrows of remorse
 Already pierce my heart.)

MASSIMILIANO Though undeserving,
 Restore my son,
 Restore the loving son I lost.
 Oh, restore! Oh, restore
 My loving son, the son I've lost. *(he faints)*

AMALIA He's fainted ... Unconscious ... He's dying!

FRANCESCO Finished! I claim his title.

End of Act I

Act II

Francesco's plan has succeeded. His servant Arminio has delivered the fabricated news that Carlo was slain on the battlefield. The apparently tragic, senseless slaughter of his beloved son, for which the old Count blames himself entirely, has the intended effect. The Count succumbs to the sudden blow.

The present scene is the sepulcher bearing his newly carved name. It is here that Amalia seeks refuge from the boisterous celebration taking place inside the castle, and here that she receives startling and overwhelmingly joyful news from a penitent though terrified servant.

Scene: Sepulchers, one of which bears the recently engraved name: Massimiliano Moor

AMALIA (*alone*) Unobserved,
I left the loathsome banquet.
Father, by this lonely chapel
Where you lie buried,
I find a haven,
A place where tears
Can offer my only consolation.

CHORUS (*offstage*) Enjoy and be merry,
For life swiftly passes;
So lift up your glasses
And live for today.

The cross and the casket
Are gruesome reminders;
Behind silken blinders
Ignore while you may.

AMALIA Feasting!

CHORUS To hell with the candles
And long drooping faces;
A new life replaces
The one passed away.

AMALIA Laughing!

WOMEN No sackcloth and ashes,
 For mirth is in season;
 The wise see no reason
 To weep for the dead.

MEN Discard the black sackcloth and ashes,
 For mirth is now in season,
 And the wise see no good reason,
 No good reason
 To weep for the dead.

AMALIA With laughter
 You dance on the grave of your father.

WOMEN In fear of the future
 The craven will cower;
 The persons of power
 Proceed straight ahead

MEN In fear of the future, the future.
 The craven will cower;
 How the craven will cower!
 But persons born to power, to power
 Go onward straight ahead.

CHORUS Enjoy and be merry,
 For life swiftly passes;
 So lift up your glasses
 And live for today.

AMALIA This noble spirit
 Who for misjudgment paid so dearly,
 Lies safely in the ground,
 Out of danger.
 No grasping scoundrel can disturb or invade
 His present slumber.

(turning toward the grave)
 So deep your love for Carlo,
 You followed to join him on his journey.
 After mistake and failure,
 All is forgiven at last.

 What reason to live, with both departed?
 I wander alone and desolated,
 And long for peaceful surrender
 When fever and frenzy are over.
 I long for the sweet surrender
 When fever and frenzy are past,
 To share with my beloved
 The peace beyond the grave.
 Share with my beloved forever
 The peace beyond the grave.

ARMINIO *(entering in great agitation)*
Please, a moment ...

AMALIA What is it?

ARMINIO A crime on my conscience;
I have to speak.

AMALIA Oh, spare me.

ARMINIO I beg of you.

AMALIA Why to me, though?

ARMINIO Concerning Carlo. Hear me!

AMALIA Oh, tell me!

ARMINIO He's living. Also his father.
Both, both are living!

(he flees)

AMALIA Oh, tell me more! My Carlo!

Carlo living! Oh, day of wonder!
Music sweeter than song of paradise.
Angry heaven is looking kinder,
Taking pity on bitter pain.

He's alive! And the long night is over.
See the field and meadow sparkle.
Proudly emerging from under cover,
Love triumphant will reign again.
Love triumphant reigns again.

FRANCESCO *(entering)*
You left the festive party
Where my friends joined in chorus?

AMALIA Another voice
Gave a sweeter command.
I followed the summons
That drew me to the grave
Of your father who died broken-hearted.

FRANCESCO You mean to mourn forever?
You're not his widow.
This grim attire I find offensive,
Disguising and concealing
Your tantalizing beauty.
My love for you is overwhelming,
A fire that burns ever brighter.
Marry me, and reclaim your castle.
All that I have,
My hand and heart I offer,

No tyrant, no master lording over you,
Only your slave falling, falling at your feet.
No lord and master,
Instead a slave, who is falling,
Is falling at your feet.

AMALIA Through calculation and cunning
You plotted the death of my beloved.
So now in repayment for murder,
Kindly you offer marriage.
Sooner than share your loathsome bed,
Proudly I would share his fate.
You are no man for me.
No, no, no, no! You are loathsome to me.
Never shall I consent to share your bed.
Better to die and share my dear beloved's fate.
Seek not to threaten or force me into your net.
Sooner than share your bed
In death I would share his fate.
Better to die,
To die and share his fate.

FRANCESCO Though your pride appears unbounded,
I shall see it bruised and broken
In a convent ...

AMALIA Oh, name the place!
The farther off from you the better.

FRANCESCO Not the convent! Ah, no! Too easy.
Here you'll stay.
Here you'll stay, my whore and servant,
Whore and servant!
No longer your worshipper,
I'll drag you to the gutter
For the world to snub and sneer at.

AMALIA Sir, forgive me if I've offended.
Pardon, pardon!

*(Pretending to embrace him, she snatches his knife, and holds
it over him)*

Away! Come no closer,
Or face up to danger.
You've taught me to murder
And sharp is the blade.

Your brother, your father
Inspire me with courage;
Their spirit and valor
I call to my aid.

FRANCESCO Now bolder and braver,
You trifle with anger
And waken the monster

That hungers for blood.

Your pride I shall punish
With slow, drawn-out torture,
And long may you linger
Tormented, tormented and pursued.

(she rushes out)

Scene: the forest, a city in ruin in the distance, partially hidden by trees.

Trouble is looming for the bandits. Inevitably, the life of reckless violence has got them into deep water. Rolla, one of their members, has been arrested. In order to snatch him from the gallows, a spectacular diversion is required. Carlo leads the rescue, demonstrating his capacity, however misdirected, for daring and leadership, and leaving in his wake a burning village and an angry mob.

BANDIT I One more day wasted.

BANDIT II *(entering)*
Day of disaster!

BANDIT I What is so awful?

BANDIT II Rolla arrested!

BANDIT I Our man in prison?

BANDIT II Noon and no later
Bound for the scaffold.

BANDIT I What says our leader?

BANDIT II True to his men,
Vowing revenge:
That village will burn.

BANDIT I Action will follow
When he has sworn.
Pity the village.

BANDIT II When will they learn?

BANDIT I Pity poor Rolla
Punished for pillage.

BANDIT II Look over yonder!
Sky like a furnace.

BANDIT I Total destruction!
Ashes and rubble,
Thanks to our leader,
True to his promise.

BOTH A day of judgment!

A scene from hell.

SOPRANOS *(from within)*
The world goes up in flame.

BANDIT I and II
The worst is yet to come.

SOPRANOS
And night turns to day.
The town destroyed
And devastated.
A gaping void
All that's remaining.

BANDIT I and II
A sight to see!
From night to day.
End of the world,
Total destruction,
The town in ruin,
Ashes and rubble.
The town in ruin,
Total ruin and destruction.

SOPRANOS
Our houses in ruin
And nothing to salvage.

BANDITS
Demon or devil!
Someone approaching.
Grim ghost of Rolla.
My God! The very fellow!
Toward us he staggers,
Worn out and haggard.

ROLLA *(entering)*
Winded,
From the gruesome climb to the gallows.
Brandy, and hurry! I'm nearly dead.

CHORUS
Drink, then your story.

ROLLA *(to companion)* Speak, go ahead.

A BANDIT
People from all over town started to gather.
Brandishing torches, the gang, sticking together,
Hollered out fire, fire! And oh, what a commotion!
Hither and yonder, was chaos, confusion.
Louder than thunder, some powder exploded,
Leaving the captive a moment unguarded.
Carlo, the hero, flew down like an eagle,
Lifted the noose and left the scene with nary a struggle.

BANDITS
Viva! A victory for brawn and for brain.
Hand it to the bandit
Who pulls it off again.
Count on the bandit to come through again.
Count on one bandit to pull it off again.
Count on the bandit once again.

With brawn and brain
He wins again.

ROLLA Saved from the gallows, hope down to zero.

BANDITS *(Carlo enters)*
Pensive and moody, enter the hero.
What to do after looting and burning?

CARLO We depart first thing in the morning.

CHORUS Viva, viva, viva!
We are on the march again.
We march again.
Viva viva viva!

(all exit, except Carlo)

Though Carlo seems to have embraced the lawless life wholeheartedly, ashes of his early moral fervor persistently smolder, his anger at the world fuelled by self-loathing. Alone, gazing at the sunset over the valley, he reflects on the cruel gap between the sublime beauty of nature and the degraded squalor of the wasted life he is leading -- a life which propels him daily further away from everything that he once held dear, most especially from his adored Amalia, for whom he is now so unworthy.

CARLO *(alone)* Golden sunset from mountain peak to valley
Spreads a halo of glory.
Thus we imagine
The fall of a hero.
Oh, nature! Sublime in beauty!
Full of wonder beyond conceiving.
And I deface it!
Contemptible and vile!
Joy so abundant,
But I find only hell
Within this fruitful paradise.

Here surrounded
By thieves and fugitives,
Slave to crime and a life degraded,
From the bounty
Of earth and heaven
I'm rejected,
And claim no share.
From the bounty of earth and heaven
I deserve no share.

Dear heart, so far away,
My Amalia, when I ponder
The gulf that lies between us
And the pain I alone have created,
I'm overpowered
By sheer despair,
Overpowered by despair,

I'm overpowered by despair. *(the bandits rush in)*

BANDITS By a blood-thirsty mob we're surrounded.

CARLO How large in number?

CHORUS It looks like a thousand.

CARLO Onward, brothers!
We've only each other.
Onward, brothers!
We fight this together.

CARLO, ROLLA and BANDITS

Onward, brother! We fight this together,
Ruled by only the law of the jungle
Blood, not booty! Beware if you bungle.
{Yours/ours} to follow, {yours/ours} to command.

Men of valor, we bow to no ruler.
Short on virtue, but true to our members,
One of us standing tall still outnumbered
Mounted armies that clutter the land.
One of us alone still outnumbered
Mounted armies that clutter the land.
One man outnumbered
Mounted armies that clutter the land
Just one of us, just one of us
Can win without a helping hand.

(they exit hurriedly)

End of Act II

Act III

The scene is a clearing near the castle, close to an old family vault, surrounded by forest. Amalia, in desperation, is attempting to flee from the predatory Francesco, only to encounter a band of marauders. Although she has been told that Carlo is alive somewhere, the last place on earth she would expect to find him would be among these thugs . . .

Scene: a deserted place near the forest, close to the castle.

AMALIA *(rushing in)*
Freedom from that monster!
This place of solitude and shadow
Will offer safety
From the claws of the tiger.
Where have I ventured?
Neither fertile nor friendly,
All thorns and thistles,
And the path seems to stop ...
Leading to nowhere ...

Worn out and weary,
I can wander no further.

BANDITS (*offstage*) Our pleasure is plunder, disorder, upheaval,
The work of the devil, all manner of evil.

AMALIA Marauders ... a gang ...
Who are they?
Among thieves have I fallen?
Oh, heaven, save me!
(*Carlo enters*) Approaching me ...

CARLO A woman!

AMALIA (*not looking at him*)
Oh, sir, be kind! Show a spark of pity!

CARLO Amalia!

AMALIA How do you know me?

CARLO Look at me.

AMALIA Who are you?

CARLO Oh, have I changed so much
From life in the open?

AMALIA No, no, I'm dreaming ...

CARLO Carlo!

AMALIA Praise be to God! At last I find you!

BOTH Embrace me, Oh {Carlo/Amalia}, mine again,
Close to my heart forever.
The bond of love that's made us one
No man nor God can sever.
This time forever,
This time forever, as I know my heart.
The bond of love cannot be torn apart.

AMALIA Carlo, Carlo! I'm frightened.
I heard with horror
A band of ruthless men.

CARLO While I am with you
No man nor beast can harm you.
(Oh, may she never discover
The hell that I inhabit!)

AMALIA By what land or sea have our lives been divided?

CARLO A parting so painful, but question no more.

AMALIA We heard cruel rumor —
You died serving your country.

CARLO (Oh, would I had fallen a hero of war!)

AMALIA Rejected and lonely,
How much you have suffered!

CARLO (My trail of dishonor will not disappear.)

AMALIA In tears I have waited,
Tormented with worry.

CARLO The guardian angel
I love and revere!

BOTH We read in the rainbow
A promise from heaven:
The tempest is over;
The horizon is clear.

 In one sacred moment
Of love strong as ever,
Erased and forgotten
Are years of despair.

CARLO Near the forest, unsheltered, you wander.
Why, my love, have you fled from the castle?

AMALIA From the day that your father was buried ...

CARLO (Spared at least from his son's degradation.)

AMALIA When Francesco became lord and master,
He's pursued me with threat and coercion.

CARLO What a brother!

AMALIA But God sent salvation.

CARLO Close to Carlo, be ever and ever
Safe from danger!

AMALIA For life and thereafter, I am yours!

CARLO (Of love so unworthy!)

AMALIA then CARLO Above, beyond the dark of night,
A star ever bright sparkles on and on,
A friend of love that watches tenderly
Over us alone.

 Above, upon a higher plane,
We taste the wine of paradise

That cancels out all traces
Of earthly sorrow and mortal pain.

All trace of sorrow, all trace of pain,
Mortal pain.

From the bandits we get a vivid reminder of the life to which Carlo is irrevocably bound: our pleasure is plunder, disorder, upheaval . . .

Scene: evening in a clearing in the forest, with the ruins of a castle keep in the center.

BANDITS

Our pleasure is plunder, disorder, upheaval,
The work of the devil, all manner of evil.
We brothers have no time for boredom or sorrow;
The banquet today and the hangman tomorrow.
No time left to squander on boredom or sorrow;
Today fun and feasting; the hangman tomorrow.

Here the free and easy life we lead,
Hand to mouth and day to day;
In a cave we find the house we need,
In the forest room to play.

Passing strangers provide when we're on the run;
Angry farmers fill up the plate.
Out of doors beneath the moon and sun
We carouse and celebrate.

A father gives a final croak;
A widowed mother starts to sob.
But what the hell? It's all a joke.
Then off we go to another job.

Laugh while abandoning
The pain that cries for healing;
Murder means not a thing
To men devoid of feeling.

But sooner or later the gallows are mounted,
The hangman is waiting to tighten the necklace.
The score sheet is tallied, the silver is counted.
We finish the journey still rowdy and reckless
With gallant embraces and festive apparel,
Departing while still there is wine in the barrel.
La ra la ra la ra! La la ra la la ...
We leap from the world with a final hurrah.
La ra la ra la ra! La la ra la la ...

Despite the rapture of seeing Amalia again, Carlo has to face the bitter fact that they must remain divided. He is no longer the person that she loved and revered. Nor can he bear letting her know the person he has become. Tempted by suicide, he rejects this cowardly exit, little suspecting that he is on the brink of a truly mind-boggling discovery.

(Carlo enters)

BANDITS Salute the bandit captain!

CARLO Is the watch nearly over?

BANDITS But half completed.

CARLO You started, I'll finish.

BANDITS La ra la la la! La la ra la la?
We leap from the world with a final hurrah.
(the bandits one by one lie down and fall asleep)

CARLO I've deceived you, Amalia.
No, I am not yours forever.
We stay divided,
More apart than before ...

Even for the wicked
Sleep draws a curtain.
My eyes stay open ...
How long I've lived in darkness and shadow!
But after death, what is beyond the door?
This darker secret
Is revealed to none.

With loaded pistol
I can break and enter
The awesome chamber ...
Smash the door!
There find release from daily torment
That I myself created ...
No, no! The coward's exit!
Pride, pure and simple,
Must prevail over sorrow.

ARMINIO *(entering)*
All is dark and deserted ...
Come to the grating,
You that reside in this abode of marble.
I bring you food and water.

CARLO A prison!

MASSIMILIANO *(from within)*
Arminio, you've come?

ARMINIO Your servant, with supper.

MASSIMILIANO At last, relief from slow starvation.

ARMINIO Be careful.
Stay well-concealed and silent.

I mustn't linger;
It's death if I'm discovered.
A son so fiendish!

CARLO *(seizing Arminio)*
Who are you?

ARMINIO I'm caught! Arrested!

CARLO Speak up!

ARMINIO I beg for mercy!
Though guilty,
My heart compelled me ...

MASSIMILIANO A second voice, from somewhere.

CARLO Who's there inside the dungeon?

ARMINIO Oh, sir!

CARLO Start running! I warn you! *(Arminio flees)*

(he forces open the dungeon door, revealing his father now wasted as a skeleton)

MASSIMILIANO Who comes to help the helpless?

CARLO My father! A wasted shadow!
Ghost, not a man.
Recalled from the grave,
You return to suffer?

MASSIMILIANO No ghost am I,
Although nearly drained of life.

CARLO Alive, but housed in a vault!

MASSIMILIANO There ... my stately mansion.

CARLO By earth and heaven!
What fiend of hell
Has left you waiting to die?

MASSIMILIANO My own son, Francesco.

CARLO Beyond comprehension!

MASSIMILIANO Listen, and hear of horror.

CARLO Beyond comprehension!

MASSIMILIANO There came a stranger
With terrible tidings
That my Carlo was dead, slain in battle.
Broken-hearted,

I staggered and fainted,
And my swoon was mistaken for death.
I awakened enclosed in a coffin.
Nearly stifled, I struggled, I shouted.
The lid was lifted;
Francesco leaned over.
“Damn you!” he muttered. “Are you still alive?”
Cursing nature, he slammed shut the casket.
I was carried to this narrow dungeon.
“Into darkness below throw the body.
He has lived long enough,” cried my son.
Neither pleading nor prayer could move him,
I was tossed down to die of starvation.
At the entrance,
The fiend without mercy,
But the child of my loins,
Was the jailer who turned the key.
The fiend shorn of mercy.
But the child I fathered, was the jailer who turned the key.
(he faints)

CARLO You sleepers, awaken! *(he fires his pistol into the air)*

CHORUS A shot! (A shout!) Who’s attacking?

CARLO This old man, so gentle,
But grieved and tormented,
Was broken, then buried
By a son less than human.
The man is my father!

CHORUS So frail! So defenseless!

CARLO Vendetta! Vendetta!
Oh, heavenly powers
That punish the wicked,
Unleash fire and thunder.

May darkness eternal
Engulf me in shadow
Unless by tomorrow
His blood fills the gutter.

And you, fellow bandits,
Are newly anointed
As agents of justice
To wage holy warfare.

So fall to your knees
And swear dedication
Before God and heaven
To wrath and to vengeance.

And rise elevated by rage realigned
On the side of the angels.

CHORUS Command! Give the order. *(they kneel)*

CARLO Here you swear to band together
To avenge an aged man.

CHORUS Here we swear to band together
To avenge an aged man.

CARLO Whether banquet hall or chapel,
You will hunt the killer down.

BANDITS Whether banquet hall or chapel,
We will hunt the killer down.

CARLO Bring the monster alive and breathing
Here to face me.

BANDITS We are sworn.
By the sword of God in his anger
Let him rue the day he was born.
By the sword of God in his anger
On together, to vengeance by morn.

CARLO You men are sworn to hunt him down.
You are solemnly sworn.

CHORUS We go to hunt him down.
(the bandits leave as Carlo falls on his knees before his father)

End of Act III

Act IV

Monster though he is, Francesco is not entirely without conscience, which asserts itself most unwelcomely in the shape of bad dreams. Waking up in terror, he describes to his servant Arminio an apocalyptic vision of fire, corpses, Mt. Sinai, the balancing scales of justice, the wrath of God. He is so disturbed that he takes the unusual step of sending for his pastor, who has little of comfort to offer as the world starts to close in upon him.

Scene: in the castle

FRANCESCO *(in terror)* They accuse me!
From sleep the dead are rising.
“You murderer! You assassin!” they cry.

ARMINIO *(entering)* You called, sir?

FRANCESCO Did you not hear a noise?

ARMINIO Sir, I heard nothing.

FRANCESCO No? ... Run, go to my pastor,
 And say I need him.
 (as Arminio starts to leave)
 No, stay here! I'll send another.

ARMINIO Sir ... you ... are shaking.

FRANCESCO Shaking? No. Why should I?
 Arminio ... do ... the dead rise to haunt us?
 Are dreams not merely blood in the brain?
 My dream, though, was strangely disturbing.

ARMINIO How pale your face is! Ghostly and ashen.

FRANCESCO This dream I had ...

ARMINIO I'm listening ...

FRANCESCO I saw myself leaving a well-lighted banquet,
 Then falling asleep in the shade of a garden,
 When startled and roused by a roar as of thunder,
 I wakened, and beheld all the world in flame.
 The fire was ferocious.
 Intent on destruction of all habitation.

 A voice was wailing:
 "O earth, fill the fields with the dead you have buried!
 You oceans, surrender your dead from below."
 The valleys and plains then were covered with corpses.
 From there I was carried
 To the mountain of Sinai,
 My eyes nearly blinded
 By three dazzling figures.

ARMINIO The last day of judgment, as sure as I'm born!

FRANCESCO The first one approached with a scroll,
 Old and yellowed.
 He glowered. "Oh beware, you that fear not your maker!"
 The second appeared; in his hand was a mirror.
 He thundered: "Oh beware, you that lie and deceive!"
 The third carried scales finely poised in the balance.
 He ordered: "Oh, come and be judged, you sons of Adam!"
 My name then resounded
 Through rumble of thunder,
 As Sinai lay ominous
 Beneath veils of cloud.

FRANCESCO To weigh down the scales
 One by one then were added
 A crime I've committed,
 A sin or transgression;
 But blood of our savior
 Preserved equilibrium;
 The balance for the moment remained as before.

I saw then a figure
I knew all too clearly:
An old man, so withered,
And wasted with hunger.
To my pile of offenses he added
The weight of one lock of his gray hair.
It needed no more.

The balance so shifted,
My fortune went plunging;
The other side lifted
And soared up to heaven.
A voice thundered out like the wrath of Jehovah:
“You alone, wretched man, you alone
The son of God does not redeem.
You alone, you alone
Go unredeemed.”

(Arminio leaves in horror)

MOSER *(entering)*
At this hour am I summoned
To hear you mock the word of God,
True to custom?
Or do your thoughts go beyond the grave?

FRANCESCO You're joking!

MOSER Your face reveals the clutch of fear.
You tremble.

FRANCESCO At what?

MOSER The God you scoff at,
Who now is speaking
Inside your dark confusion.

FRANCESCO Ah!

MOSER Yes, the God that calls you to account
In final judgment.

FRANCESCO What can He do?
If souls are indeed immortal,
I'll provoke my own annihilation
Through defiance.
So what transgression
Does your God most abhor?

MOSER But two I'll mention:
Murder of a father,
Murder of a brother.

FRANCESCO *(angrily)*
Quiet! Spare me superstitions.

MOSER These are crimes far beyond imagination.

(Arminio enters hastily and in terror)

ARMINIO Approaching from the mountain,
A troop of raging horsemen
Descend upon us.

FRANCESCO *(suddenly terrified)*
 Inside the chapel! Come along! Pray for me.

BANDITS *(from outside)*
 Tear down the castle, turn rock to rubble.

FRANCESCO Absolve me!

MOSER Now only God, not man, can save you.

BANDITS From rock to rubble!

MOSER God in anger hurls the thunder.

FRANCESCO *(kneeling)*
 God of mercy! I now come kneeling!
For the first and final time
I turn to prayer.

BANDITS From rock to rubble!

MOSER God denies your plea for pardon;
Deep abyss awaits you now.

FRANCESCO God, have mercy on my soul!
I now come kneeling.
For the first and final time I turn to prayer.

MOSER Standing open, waits the abyss.
Time to tremble.

FRANCESCO *(rising in fury)*
 No, no! Too late!
Is hell to make a fool of me?

MOSER Tremble, tremble
As God in anger hurls the dreaded thunder.
Tremble, tremble on the brink of the abyss.

BANDITS From rock to rubble!

Left alone with his traumatized, half-demented father who recognizes him only fitfully, Carlo longs for his father's blessing, which the old man graciously bestows, with a gentle reminder that he will receive mercy only to the extent that he shows it.

Scene: the forest with the ruins of the castle keep, as before; dawn is breaking.

MASSIMILIANO *(resting on a stone)*
Francesco! My youngest!

CARLO Tears ... for that reptile?

MASSIMILIANO Fair enough that a son of mine should wrong me;
I wronged my other.
Ah, Carlo! If you hear me,
Pity me and pardon.

CARLO *(moved)* Father, he hears you.

MASSIMILIANO Turned away, now lost forever.

CARLO Forever distant.

MASSIMILIANO Yet I must go on living.

CARLO *(Adrift, he wanders,*
Yet can give what I long for.)
I heard your groaning;
Your dungeon door I opened.
Give me your blessing
And I am well repaid. *(he kneels)*

MASSIMILIANO May God in His goodness
Bestow on you the mercy
That you in turn bestow.

CARLO Embrace me, as you would Carlo.

MASSIMILIANO Though a stranger, as if from a father
Take the kiss of a man near the end.
After painful and long separation,
I'll imagine the son I rejected and lost.

CARLO How I treasure the kiss of a father
And the sweetness that flows from your lips to my heart.

MASSIMILIANO My unfortunate son ...

CARLO Plunging downward to total destruction,
I depart with a reminder
Of promise now long past.
Plunging downward to total destruction,
I receive a reminder
Of promise now long past.
To the end, a reminder
Of promise long past.
Now long past.

MASSIMILIANO After long separation
From the son I adored,

In you I embrace and remember
The dear son I lost.
Him I remember,
My son I remember,
In you I embrace and remember
The darling son I lost.
I embrace and recall,
Dear as ever, the darling son I lost.
I remember the son
Now long lost.

(some bandits enter)

The bandits return, bringing in tow not Francesco, who has escaped, but Amalia. The confrontation is unavoidable. Carlo can no longer conceal the direction his life has taken or who he is: the leader of a criminal gang, even now hunted down by the law.

CARLO Where is my brother?
BANDITS We return from the hunt.
CARLO You caught the prey?
BANDITS Got away! He left no traces.
CARLO Ah! Heaven, not I, must render judgment.

(other bandits return, with Amalia in tow)

BANDITS We bring back the booty,
A prize worth the taking.
AMALIA Oh, Carlo, where are you?
Oh, would you were here!
MASSIMILIANO Amalia!
AMALIA Oh, father!
CARLO (A vision, or nightmare?)
AMALIA My Carlo! I've found you!
CARLO (My torture continues.)
AMALIA My dearest, so troubled?
MASSIMILIANO Your dearest?
CARLO *(to bandits)* Remove her!
And don't let her near me.
Proceed with the slaughter,
The old man, the lady,
Your captain included,
Till all creatures living

Are wiped from the planet.

BANDITS

He's raving.

CARLO

The son you cursed and rejected,
The dreamer and drifter,
Is crushed and defeated.
And these are the devils
That pulled me from heaven,
My partners in evil, these partners in evil
That trade in corruption.
Amalia, it's over.
And you, father, hear me
And die in despair.
The men that surround you
Are thieves and assassins,
And I am their leader.

MASSIMILIANO and AMALIA

Their leader!

CHORUS

The leader! Our leader!
But why must they know it? Why tell?

CARLO

Beyond recovery
The bond is broken.
Goodbye forever
To youthful illusion.
Arrest, imprisonment
And then the scaffold —
I offer only a journey to hell.

Amalia is unswayed. For better or for worse, her life is with him. Together they can create a new life. But this is precisely what the bandits cannot allow. Bonds that are forged in blood cannot be broken. For Carlo, there is no way out, no release. Amalia will be dragged down to his own depths of degradation, unless he grants her own request, an ultimate pledge of love that will unite them in the only way now possible . . .

AMALIA

Angel or demon from hell,
You have I chosen.
Joy and adversity
We shall face together,
Sharing devotedly
Sunlight and shadow.
Whatever God decrees
Upon us both shall fall.

CARLO

Held by an angel,
The door yet may open.

MASSIMILIANO (I bear the blame for my son's degradation.
 In pride and anger I drove him away
 Into the deepest abyss of the inferno
 I've fallen.
 Blows so implacable
 Who can foresee?)

AMALIA and CARLO
 My {Carlo!/Amalia!} My own forever!
 The passage of centuries
 Will topple the mountains,
 Yet my love will last
 Through all eternity.

BANDITS
 What of your promises?
 Have you forgotten
 Vows irrevocable,
 Ties ever-binding?

CARLO
 Ah, no escape!

BANDITS
 Drawn by our enemies,
 Blood made us brothers.
 Gaze on the injuries
 Suffered for you.

CARLO
 The veil is torn away
 That shielded me from daylight;
 Wakened from fantasy,
 I leave my illusion of heaven.
 I leave my dream of salvage and reprieve.
 Only illusion!
 Ever a slave to them!
 Bound to these wretches,
 I am caught in a blind machine
 That crumbles my life.

AMALIA
 If chains of loyalty
 That bind cannot be broken,
 Go to your destiny,
 But please! Take my life before leaving.
 Nothing but emptiness
 Stretches before me.
 Grant me this final ultimate pledge of love.

MASSIMILIANO
 Alone am I responsible,
 Closing the door,
 Driving him from my heart,
 I turned my back upon the son I love.
 Blinded by anger, closing the door in pride and anger,
 I drove away the son I love.
 Closing the door,
 Closing the door in pride and anger,
 I drove away the son I love.

BANDITS Our blood we shed because of you.
Blood by the gallon, we've shed for you.
The blood we've shed for you, for you.
Here you belong,
Here you will stay.

CARLO You men of villainy,
Relentless creditors,
To pay my debt to you
A blessed angel
I send to paradise.
(he stabs Amalia)
The gallows wait for me. *(he is taken away)*

MASSIMILIANO Daughter! Why, oh why?

BANDITS Upon the gallows
He goes to die.

End of the Opera