

Bob's Opera World

Opera Libretti

Lucrezia Borgia

Melodramma in a prologue & 2 acts

Libretto by Felice Romani

Based on Hugo's play "Lucrèce Borgia"

Music by Gaetano Donizetti

First performance : December 26, 1833, Teatro alla Scala, Milan.

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Roles

Gennaro, sone of Lucrezia	Tenor
Gazella	
Petrucci	
Gubetta.....	
Vitellozzo.....	
Rustighello.....	
Maffeo Orsini, a friend of Genarro	Mezzo-soprano
Liverotto, a friend of Genarro	Tenor
Vitellozzo, a friend of Genarro	Bass
Lucrezia Borgia.....	Soprano
Duke Alfonso.....	Bass-baritone

Scene :

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Prologue

SCENE 1.

Terrace in the Grimani Palace, Venice.—Festival by night—Several Masks traverse the Stage from time to time.—From the two sides of the Terrace is seen the Palace, illuminated. At the back, the Carat of the Giudecca, on which Gondolas are dimly seen passing at intervals. In the distance, Venice by moonlight.

Enter gaily, Gubetta, Gazella, Orsini, Petrucci, Vitellozzo, Liverotto afterwards, Gennaro, apparently weary: he rests himself on a seat apart from the rest.

Gazella.

Hail, lovely Venice!

Petrucci.

Fair Queen of earth!

Orsini.

Birthplace and home of pleasure!
Sunlight in less favor'd clime were sham'd

All.

By thy *sweet* night's poetic azure.
We follow brave Grimani,
A charge preferr'd to any;
Think on the glories waiting our progress
Down fertile Po.

Gubetta.

Well said, Alfonso's splendid court
Far will surpass all splendor.

(Advancing.)

Lucretia Borgia—

Orsini.

(Interrupting him.)

Forbear to name
Sin's vary worst offender!

Vitellozzo.

Italy's cank'ring faster.

Liverotto.

The Borgia, gods! I detest her!

All.

Tier lightest crime where breath'd alone
The deepest hate doth sow.



Orsini.

Chiefest in my breast Astolfo. I pray ye list.

(They all gather about his.)

An old man, a sage magician—

Gennaro.

(Interrupting him.)

To spin that same perpetual yarn
Seems your delight, Orsini.
Leave Borgia unmolested;
Why have my patience tested?

All.

Pray not to interrupt the tale;
Haply 'tis brief enough.

Gennaro.

So for a nap; awake me then
When he has finish'd off.

(Wrapping his mantle round him, turns on his side and falls asleep.)

Orsini.

There, where the field of Rimini
Swam with the blood of legions,
My prostrate and well-nigh breathless form
Spoke out how true mine allegiance.
Gennaro, till then a stranger,
Bore me from out the danger,
And in a convent lonely
Assuaged the galling wound.

All.

In him not virtue only,
But charity is found.

Orsini.

There, in the solemn hush of night,
Friendship bade fresh hopes gather,
Vowing to pass life side by side,
We swore to end it together.
'Fate shall fulfil your forestalling,'
Thunder'd a voice appalling.
Shrouded in black a phantom
Gigantic met our eyes.

All.

Heavens! What was the import
Foretold by aught so wise?



Orsini.

Avoid the Borgia, ye gallant youths,
(These were his words ensuing)
'Wherever dwells Lucrezia
Dwelleth destruction and ruin.'
This said, he vanish'd, and zephyr
Did waft anon and ever
The name that palsied our hearing
Thrice echoed sad and slow.

All.

Weighing its every bearing
Can we believe this? No.

Orsini.

Ne'er to fallacious horoscope
Gave I the faintest credence;
But willing or not, a presentiment
This time asserts precedence,
That fatal spell enchants me,
That awful spectre haunts me;
Still his ill omen'd terrific threat
Night after night do I hear.
Ah! happy is Gennaro,
Quite free from boding fear.

All.

Listen! Music inviteth us.
Banish doleful imaginings,
And drown night deep in all pleasure.
Long too, Lucrezia, that woman fiend,
Hath giv'n us trouble's full measure;
Our winged lion's assistance
Was e'er Venetia's existence.
Were there ten thousand more Borgias,
While he reigns who could fear?

(All go out, taking Orsini with them.)

SCENE 2

A Gondola passes—a masked Lady issues from it: it is Lucretia Borgia. She advances cautiously; she sees Gennaro asleep, and approaching him, remains gazing upon him with pleasure and interest.—Gubetta returns.

Lucrezia.

How calm a slumber ! Ever be his reposing
Light as gentlest music, his visions unmolested
By such appalling shapes as haunt me forever !

(Perceiving Gubetta.)

Is 't thou?



Gubetta.

Yea, madam, much dreading
Some here should know ye; for tho' assassination
Spare your days in Venice, not her mighty power
Can shield you from the keener stab of insult.

Lucrezia.

Let them slay with their insults! all earth abhor us !
Why to a fate so hideous
Were we ever nurtured? Why were the feelings all torn out
And eras'd from our bosom, alone that render
A woman's breast the throne of virtue and of mercy,
For them we'd barter our Universe of Grandeur.
You see that young man?

Gubetta.

I see him!
Long have my steps pursued him with bootless effort
To filch the secret at whose back my lynx-eye
From Ferrara to Venice, track'd and espied him.

Lucrezia.

Learn our secret !—That thou canst not.
Leave me with him.

(Exit Gubetta.)

SCENE 3

Lucretia, and Gunnaro asleep. While Lucretia draws near Gennaro, she does not perceive two Men in masks, who come from the back, and stand apart.)

Lucrezia

Holy beauty, child of nature,
Firstborn of the one great parent,
Graces gem thine ev'ry feature.
To thine only self inherent.
Thy charms to these traits are given,
Gently blessing, while they win...
Emblems of that purest Heaven,
Heart of man untouch'd by sin,
Should I awake him? dare I venture?

(Weeping.)

This disguise albeit still keeping,
Its removal counts not censure,
But to dry up this bitter weeping.

(She removes the mask from her face and applies her kerchief to wipe her eyes.)

Duke.

(Aside.)

Look you: it is she—



Rustighello.

(Aside.)

You hit on the truth, sir!

Duke.

(Aside.)

Who's the stranger?

Rustighello.

(Aside.)

A soldier youth, sir.

Duke.

(Aside.)

With no country?

Rustighello.

(Aside.)

Nor relations.
Brave men find them in all nations !

Duke.

(Aside.)

Then neglect no art, and lure him
Tow'rd Ferrara in my leash.

Rustighello.

(Aside.)

Service duty must ensure him
To fulfil thy very wish.

Lucrezia.

Would that ever I thus could linger,
Granting fond, tho' poor protection,
While young Slumber's dainty finger
Gives that perfect more perfection!
With my dream joys never blending
Touch'd their darkness once with light;
Soon this too bright vision ending
Shrouds me back in dawuless night.
To cull hut a kiss the daintiest,
Laden with holy affection,
Yielding him more protection.
Reposing on my heart
One world of bliss, one extasy
Pervades me in his presence.
A mother's love ! love's essence
The magic doth impart.

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(She rises; the two Masks retire.—Lucretia goes back again, and kisses the hand of Gennaro: he awakes, and detains her by the arm.)

Lucrezia.

Heavens!

(Endeavoring to break from him.)

Gennaro.

Whom perceive I?

Lucrezia.

Oh ! leave me, sir !

Gennaro.

No, no, my gentle lady;
No, on my honor.
I long to learn ev'ry feature,

(Holding her.)

To beauty ne'er I blind me,
So do not think to find me
Ungrateful or insensible
Where so much grace would charm.

Lucrezia.

Gennaro, can this be possible,
Your breast for me doth warm?

Gennaro.

And wherefore doubt it?

Lucrezia.

Speak candidly.

Gennaro.

Then, by my knighthood, I love you

Lucrezia.

(Aside.)

Too joyous!

Gennaro.

I love, hut my sincerity
Faithfully will I prove thee;
There is a prior selection
To whom I owe more affection.

Lucrezia.

E'en more than that you swore me?
To whom then?



Gennaro.

To my mother!

Lucrezia.

Thy mother?—O! dearest Gennaro,
Thou- lov'st her?

Gennaro.

Far more than self.

Lucrezia.

And she?

Gennaro.

Alas! that mother's face
Never have I beholden.

Lucrezia.

And why so?

Gennaro.

'Tis a mournful story,
From ev'ry ear withholden;
Some strange resistless feeling
Now prompts the quick revealing:
Angel of light and beauty!
Hear what I yearn to relate.

Lucrezia.

(Aside.)

Keep still, my heart!

(Aloud.)

Proceed:
All then you may narrate!

Gennaro.

Deem'd of a fisher's lowly race,
Where the wide beach, and wildwood
Echoing smiles from Naples' sun
Witness'd my humble childhood:
One day there sought me an unknown knight,
Breaking the spell that charm'd me,
Who having hors'd and well arm'd me,
A writing then bade me scan—
Penn'd by a mother, ah misery
Each work the scroll was bearing,
Told how a wretch seduced a breast
For me, its child sore fearing,
Hush'd in my heart, I guard her will,
Tho' look nor deed betray it,
Honor and faith obey it,
O as a son's only care!





Honor and faith obey it,
O as a son's only care.

Lucrezia.

But then her letter?

Gennaro.

Here, look on it,
Safe near my heart long hidden.

Lucrezia.

How many bitter, bitter tears
Moisten'd these pages when written!

Gennaro.

Mine, lady, without measure
Have bathed the priceless treasure!
You weep, so purely tender!

Lucrezia.

Ah yes! for her sake and thine.

Gennaro.

Angel too kind, you render
No heart as blest as mine.

Lucrezia.

O, with this fervent soul of youth,
Ever adore thy mother,
Pray that good heav'n avert her fate,
And change it for another.
Pray for the day her longing kiss
Welcomes thee on her breast,
Pray for the day her longing kiss
Welcomes thee on her breast,
Pray for the day her longing kiss
Welcomes thee on her breast,

Gennaro.

Fancy, induc'd by purest love,
Pictures her ev'ry feature;
Magical, bright Imaginings
Depict her gentlest nature.
'Till I can share that longing kiss,
Ne'er will my step have rest.

SCENE 4.

Orisini, Vietlozzo, Petrucci, Gazella, Ladies and Cavaliers, in masks, approach from Different parts of the Stage.

Lucrezia.

People approach us—I must leave thee !





Gennaro.

(Detaining her.)

Prithce, tarry!

Orsini.

Whom perceive!

(He recognizes Lucretia, points her out to his companions, and speaks with them.)

Lucrezia.

To fly doth behove me.

Gennaro.

Of thy right name be not then thus chary!

(Still detaining her.)

Lucrezia.

One who loves thee, whose only duty is to love me.

Orsini.

(Advancing.)

I will tell thee.

Lucrezia.

Great heavens!

(Covers her face with her mask, and attempts to go out.)

Orsini.

(Stopping her.)

You shall not go!

You mast hear me!

(Bringing her back)

Lucrezia.

Gennaro !

Gennaro.

How dare ye?

Whomsoever presumes to offend her

Boasts Gennaro no more for his friend.

Orsini.

Our intent here we merely would tender,

Then her ways she may wend

Lucrezia.

(Aside.)

Dark misfortune!



Gennaro.

State your purpose!

Orsini.

Madame, I am Orsini, whose brother you did poison the while he was sleeping,

Vitellozzo.

One Vittelli, the twin of my mother you have stabb'd, and his birthright is keeping.

Liverotto.

Know Appiano's young nephew! You drew him
To the infamous banquet that slew him!

Gennaro.

God, what hear I?

Lucrezia.

Bitter curse on their onslaught!

Gennaro.

Oh heaven! Ah heaven! What hear I?

Gazella.

I am kin to the Spaniard, that consort,—

Lucrezia.

Heav'n... strength would fail me, both power and breath.

Lucrezia.

Deep curse on their onslaught!

Chorus.

Monstrous woman!

Orsini.

Since our names now are too well apparent,
Learn her own, then.

Gennaro., Chorus.

Say it!

Lucrezia.

Ah, hare pity!

All.

For her infamous crimes duly warrant
The approbrium and horror of ages.
She is a wanton! a faithless betrayer,
An incestuous night-loving slayer!
Nature, owning abortion so hideous,
Stands appall'd at the awful offence.



Gennaro.

But who is she? Ah! declare it!

Lucrezia.

Do not hear them, Gennaro!

(At his feet, imploring him.)

All.

'Tis the Borgia! Aye, look on her!

(Tearing off her mask.)

(With a cry of horror.)

Ah !

(Lucretia faints.)

The Curtain Falls.

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Act I

SCENE 1.

A Public Place in Ferrara.—On one side, a Palace with a Gallery, under which is an Escutcheon Marble, on which is written, in visible Characters of metal, gilded, Borgia. On the other side, a small house, the windows of which are illuminated from within.—Night.

Duke Alphonso and Rustighello, covered with long mantles.

Duke.

With Lord Grimani's escort
Hast thou observ'd him

Rustighello.

You could have made his shadow
Forget its substance easier than divorce me
From scent of his track.—Yonder, sire, he dwelleth.

(Points to Gennaro's House, still lighted up.)

Duke.

Yonder
Near to our Ducal Palace
Lucretia bade him!

Rustighello.

Men thus would read the purpose,
If I mistake not, of that vile Gubetta,
Since he so oft visiteth him in secret.

Duke.

And he shall enter, quitting but for burial.
Hear you

(Voices and sounds are heard from Genraro's House.)

Rustighello.

Himself and comrades
Night after night, sir, in too numerous wine-cups
Temper their youthful folly.
When the dawn is breaking
Break they up also.

Duke.

And this shalt prove the last one
That o'er his rash bead breaketh;
Final yon parting, which with his friends he taketh!

Haste then to glut a vengeance
Fraught with the fell rage of demons:
Malice prepareth her engines,



Walk blindly toward thy doom!
Ah! Haste thee! to glut a vengeance
Fraught with the fell rage of demons:
Malice prepareth her engines,
With blindly, walk toward thy doom,
Walk blindly, blindly, walk blindly toward thy doom.

Rustighello.

But should the proud Grimani
Some purpos'd wrong here dream?

Duke.

Too slight the cause if any
Ne'er would lie so presume.

My fame at stake lies in it,
A heart that never winces,
Would brave Venetia's senate
Not fear one poor puny lord?
Unbounded pow'r, unswerving will, e'er appertains to Princes,
and woe betide the daring worm who dares oppose their word the,
and woe betide the reckless worm who dares oppose their word,
and woe betide the reckless worm who dare oppose their word.

(The voices sound nearer; the lights are extinguished.! Duke and Rug, retire.)

SCENE 2.

Gennaro, Orsini, Liverotto, Petrucci, Gazella, Vitellozzo. They all enter gaily from Gennaro's House, the latter alone pensive. Gubetta perceived apart from the others.

All.

Farewell, Gennarol

Gennaro.

Farewell!

(in a serious tone.)

My noble friends!

Orsini.

And why thus bears thy spirit
The tint of grief !

Gennaro.

Sad am I not.

(Aside.)

To see thee,
Alas, forbidden, would I could help thee, mother!

Orsini.

Beauties of fairest deeming
To-night assemble, and give a festal banquet,



Unto which we're bidden
By the princess Negroni.
Be there forgotten
Any qualified Signor, she hath appointed
Straight to repair such error my happy office.

Chorus.

All of us are invited.

Gubetta.

(Advancing.)

And I, Sirs, amongst ye.

All.

O! 'Tis the Count Beverano!

(All saluting him, except Gennaro and Orsini.)

Gennaro.

(Aside to Orsini.)

This man doggeth our footsteps.
Long have I held
Suspicion toward him.

Orsini.

(Aside.)

Cast it aside: consider him
As all do, that is, a boon companion.

Vitellozzo.

It grieves me to thus observe thee
So very sad, Gennaro.

Liverotto.

He is haply
In love, Sir, and 'with the Borgia.

Gennaro.

Signors, I bid a
Forebear that mention, else must the dawnlight
Reflect itself in our sword blades. No man on earth
Abhors the she fiend more than I do.

Petrucci.

Be silent,
For yonder stands her palace!

Gennaro.

Then if so, would I could thus
Write disgrace upon it as with ready dagger
I blot you scutcheon where is written Borgia.

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(He ascends a flight of stairs leading to the Escutcheon. and with his dagger strikes out the first letter of the name "Borgia": while he is doing it, two men, habited in black, come from the back of the Stage.)

All.

Your purpose?

Gennaro.

Now read th' inscription!

All.

By Jove, Sirs! Orgia!

Gubetta.

That letter off the name there
Will one day prove your shoulders
Minus the head, friend.

Gennaro.

Should they demand th' offender,
My presence at the call I gladly render!

Orsini.

Some one observes us—let us part here.

All.

Adieu then!

(Gennaro retires to his dwelling; the ethers disperse.)

SCENE 3.

Astolfo, and Rustighello walking about, afterwards Braces.

Rustighello.

What your purpose?

Astolfo.

To see you vanish,
And the coast clear.
Why here dost thou tarry?

Rustighello.

Loit'ners such as thee to banish
Is now my duty.

Astolfo.

Whom your quarry?

Rustighello.

Yonder young Venitian stranger
Who resides there.—Your business here?



Astolfo.

Just to save a youth from danger,
One who lodges somewhere near.

Rustighello.

Where would'st thou guide him?

Astolfo.

Unto the duchess.
Where would you, friend?

Rustighello.

The duke's my preference.

Astolfo.

'Twixt our roads the contrast such is—

Rustighello.

That their ends have mighty diff'rence.

Astolfo.

One means pleasure—

Rustighello.

Death the other!
What result our game then takes—

Astolfo.

Most depends how best I smother
Points that my opponent makes.

(Rustighello turns deftly aside and makes a signal: a troop of Sbirri enters and surrounds Astolfo.)

Rustighello. & Chorus.

Not a word, a thought, a motion:
Learn the force of 'whelming numbers.
Woe to thee, had thy devotion
Broke his unsuspecting slumbers!
Our dread monarch has here created
His mere wishes supremest law.

Astolfo.

But the anger of the Duchess?

Rustighello.

Silence; her mandate must how in awe.

Chorus.

On her name and reputation
He has thrown the greatest slighting:
Not a man tho' king in station
Dare neglect the duke's inditing.



If thy wisdom thy valor equal
Take its presence hence at once.

Astolfo.

I depart! The coming sequel
Falls to your not my expense.

(Astolfo retires.—Rustighello and the Gennaro's dwelling.)

SCENE 4.

Duke, Rustighello, afterwards an Usher.

Saloon in the Thwal Palace.—At the back grand central entrance, to the right a small door, to the left another small door, partly hidden from observation. Behind this door, a recess is seen, in which a descending spiral staircase commences.

Duke.

All has been followed?

Rustighello.

All, Sire. For here the prisoner
Awaits your pleasure.

Duke.

Then mark me: You stair conducteth
To "Numa's chamber," 'neath the panel painted
By Ludovico, a secret niche is hidden;
This key unlocks it; seek for a vase of silver
And one of gold there: In the adjoining lobby
Have them both ready; and beware ye taste not
Of the golden: 'Tis the wine of the Borgia!
One moment.—Take stand behind us
Arm'd with thy ready weapon.
So he't I call thee
Bring in the vases; but should I touch this signal
Come sword in hand then.

Usher.

Sire, the Duchess.

(Announcing from the central door.)

Alf.

Admit her.

(Rustighello enters the staircase.)

SCENE 5.

Lucrezia and Duke Alfonso;
afterwards Gennaro and Soldiers.

Alfonso.

In trouble, Madam?



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Lucrezia.

To you I look for vengeance !
Since there is lately committed
Crime of the blackest nature!
One in Ferrara
Holdeth your spouse so lightly: in actual daylight
He doth insult her, and mutilate her 'scutcheon.

Duke.

I know it.

Lucrezia.

If you have known it
Why then have you not punish'd?

Duke.

He here is captive,
And waits our pleasure.

Lucrezia.

Let me urge then,
Whatever his guilty reason, be who he may be,
I ask of you, Don Alfonso, that he quit not this room living.

Duke.

I give my promise. Admit the man.

(To the Usher.— Gennaro appears immediately, disarmed, among guards.)

Lucrezia.

(Aside.)

Whom see I?

Duke.

(Smiling.)

Know you the prisoner?

Lucrezia.

(Aside.)

Ye gods! Gennaro! Oh fatal, Fatal day!

Gennaro.

Your gracious Highness, my Lord Duke,
Hath been pleas'd to drag me from my home
By armed men. Let me ask then, I pray you,
What great transgression calls for such rigorous treatment ?

Duke.

Captain, pray approach us!



Lucrezia.

(Aside.)

I shudder! I tremble!

Duke.

Some idle varlet hath boldly,
By day, in public, on our Ducal Palace,
In profanation travestied the mighty title
Of Borgia! We seek the culprit!

Lucrezia.

No culprit
Have we here!

Duke.

How do you know that?

Lucrezia.

He passed
The morning elsewhere!
Some one of his companions
Has wrought this insult

Gennaro.

Nay, in truth.

Duke.

You hear him?
Pray, Sir, be candid, say truly
Are you the culprit?

Gennaro.

To tell but the truth's a maxim
Which tho' our life it peril,
Can never risk our honor.
Duke Alfonso, I confess it, I only am guilty.

Lucrezia.

(Aside.)

Unhappy me!

Duke.

(In an undertone.)

Remember
I gave my Ducal promise.

Lucrezia.

Let us a moment
Give this matter together more close discussion.
(Be my helper, oh heaven!)

(At a sign of the Duke, Gennaro is taken away)

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SCENE 6.

Lucretia; the Duke.

Duke.

We are private;
Moot your suggestions.

Lucrezia.

I ask you, best beloved,
But to spare that gentle youth his existence.

Duke.

How now?
So lately his death did you covet !
Hath your anger taken wings such a distance?

Lucrezia.

'Twas a mere whim! I to pardon am ready.
Would his death now to us aught avail!

Duke.

But we gave you our promise, fair lady.
When we promise we never do fail.

Lucrezia.

Don Alfonso; how trifling a favor
Do you deny to Lucretia, your consort!

Duke.

He hath crimes even deeper and graver.
You did ask me, and I vow'd you his life.

Lucrezia.

Is not mercy the brightest jewel
That should gleam from a great prince's brow?

Duke.

Nay, I cannot.

Lucrezia.

What bath made thee so cruel
Tow'rd Gennaro, my dear Alfonso?

Duke.

What !—Thou !

Lucrezia.

I have your meaning

Duke.

Thou lov'st him!

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Lucrezia.

What say'st thou?

Duke.

Aye, thou lov'st him!
Straight to Yenice you pursued him.

Lucrezia.

(Aside.)

Ha! gracious heaven!

Duke.

Guilty looks that betray you
Speak the passion that bade ye delude him.

Lucrezia.

Don Alfonso!

Duke.

Pray calm thee!

Lucrezia.

I implore you I

Duke.

From additional falsehood forbear now.

Lucrezia.

Don Alfonso!

Duke.

Now 'tis my time for action,
Mine to gain for my wrongs satisfaction,
That tremendous revenge now I cherish
On thy hated accomplice shall fall!

Lucrezia.

(Clinging to him.)

Mercy, Alfonso!

Duke.

No, the traitor must perish!

Lucrezia.

Oh, have mercy!

Duke.

I am deaf to thy call!

Lucrezia.

Aye, tho' the fourth of my husbands, ye lord, it,
Don Alfonso, too sternly, I assure ye!



They who have wrong'd me have ever deplored it!
they sho slight me cannot shun my fury.
All thy malice I scorn with derision,
Know thou hast with the Borgia to deal,
Wary, wary Alfonso, wary,
Know thou hast with the Borgia to deal,
Wary, wary Alfonso,
Wary, know that thou hast with the Borgia to deal.

Duke.

Well I know thee! thy deeds have no cov'ring,
Thou thyself to the world duly tallest;
Yet dethink thee once that I here am sov'reign
In Ferrara in my power thou dwellest.
I hut leave thee to fix the decision,
That he die by either poison or steel.
Choose then!

Lucrezia.

(Wildly.)

Oh, heaven! oh. mighty heaven!

Duke.

'Twere shorter

(As if going out.)

By the sword—

Lucrezia.

Stay one moment!

Duke.

The word, then!

Lucrezia.

Oh, refrain from this horrible murder.

Duke.

Choose ye the manner—

Lucrezia.

Let it not be the sword, then!

Duke.

Now be cautious, and do not deceive thee,
Not one glimmer of hope I reveal.

Lucrezia.

Wretched boy! to thy fate I must leave thee!
Cruel monster! how vain all appeal!

(She sinks on a seat.—The Duke makes a sign to the guards.)

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SCENE 7.

Gennaro returns amidst his warders; after wards Rustighello.

Duke.

Her grace's intercession, Anger at insult ceasing,
Commands our quick concession,
And grants thee thy releasing.

Lucrezia.

(Aside.)

O, how he feigneth!

Duke.

In sequel
Few lands show equal valor;
Shall ours appear deficient
Tow'rds one so brave as thou?

Lucrezia.

(Aside.)

Perfidy!

Gennaro.

All sufficient
Thanks, I, my lord, allow.
Sire; if you will haply hear it,
And I may speak unhamper'd,
For one of some slight merit
Blame should with grace he temper'd.
Once, when around thy father
Adverse the foe did gather,
His death was sure, till assistance
Was render'd by one poor youth.

Duke.

You then are he, Sir?

Lucrezia.

(Rising.)

Existence
You thus restor'd him?

Gennaro.

In truth.

Lucrezia.

(Aside.)

Hear ye!

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Duke.

(Aside.)

False hope doth fan her !

Lucrezia.

(Aside.)

Can this not change him?

(Offering a purse.)

Duke.

(Aside.)

How vainly!

(Aloud.)

Wilt serve beneath our banner, Sir Captain?
I ask it plainly.

Gennaro.

Venitia's lovely regions
Own my entire allegiance;
I've sworn and vow'd my faith to them;
And snared shall my oath be.

Duke.

(Turning significantly to Lucrezia.)

Just so!
This gold at least may—

Gennaro.

Ample doth allow.

Duke.

Since then our every offer
Meets with a like rejection,
A parting cup I proffer.
To that show no objection!

Gennaro.

Such were a regal favor
Touch'd with the finest flavor.

Duke.

At thy hands, gentle wife, here
The gen'rous wine shall flow.

Lucrezia.

(Aside.)

Air with worst death is rife here.

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Duke.

Hear me, O Duchess I—What ho!

(Enter Rustighello with a sopper, on which are two flagons, one of silver, the other of gold, and two cups; he places them on the table and withdraws.)

Duke.

(Keeping Lucrezia. by the hand, aside.)

Guard thee from all emotion,
Thought lull to subtlest essence;
This man, here, in our presence
Ceaseth to live this day.
Oft as ye pour that potion
Other than fear hath sway!

Lucrezia.

(Aside.)

O, could ye know the sequel
From such a deed atrocious,
E'en would *thy* hate ferocious
Bid me in horror stay.
Monster without an equal,
And canst thou nought but slay !

Gennaro.

(Aside.)

Grace or benignant favor
Scarce had I hoped as my guerdon,
But here to find a pardon
Must seem a dream away;
Mother, thou art my saviour,
For thy son's weal ye pray!

Duke.

Now, Madam! to help him!

(Helps himself out of the silver flagon.)

Gennaro.

Excuse the blush Such regal kindness causes.

Duke.

We wait you, Duchess.

Lucrezia.

(Aside.)

Barbarian!

Duke.

(Aside.)

The vase of gold!



Lucrezia.

(Aside.)

Great heaven!

(Pours out for Gennaro from the golden flagon.

Duke.

Young man, long life attend ye!

Gennaro.

Fortune the same befriend thee!

(They drink.)

Duke.

(Aside.)

Tremble thyself, vile creature,
He falls, tho' first, not I Astolfo.

Lucrezia.

(Aside.)

Can there be in nature
Monster of crime so vast?

Gennaro.

(Aside.)

Life wears another feature,
This hour of peril past!

Duke.

(Aside to Lucrezia.)

Up, fond Duchess, for your paramour needeth
All your love, his few moments remaining.

(Retires with Rustichello.)

Lucrezia.

(Aside, reflecting.)

What thus inspires me!

Gennaro.

(Bowing.)

Your goodness so o'erpowers me,
Such impression can scarce be forgotten.

Lucrezia.

Hapless victim from the poison he gave thee,
This one antidote only can save ye,
Take it! drink it! but a drop from the phial,
Precious life is thine!
Then again,



Drink! and fly hence!
I break no denial,
O'er thee angels forevermore reign...
O'er thee angels forevermore reign, for ever and evermore reign,
for ever and evermore reign.

Gennaro.

Deep designing could I else have expected?
They that near thee for death are selected,
False the genius who o'er me now bending
Whispers hope where all hope is in vain.
Haply still more horrible ending,
Thrice accurs'd one, thy hand doth contain!

Lucrezia.

Do but trust me!

Gennaro.

Trust thee, vile fiend!

Lucrezia.

I pray thee! Thy death, *as* a rival's, the Duke willeth.

Gennaro.

Fearful trial!

Lucrezia.

Comes he back, he will slay thee!
Drink and fly hence!

Gennaro.

Oh, this doubting is madness !

Lucrezia.

Dear Gennaro, I beg, I implore thee
By that mother who lives to adore thee!

Gennaro.

May the gods with their utter resentment
Curse thee ever if this be pretence!

(drinks.)

Lucrezia.

Thou art saved! O supremest contentment;
Like the lightning fly this moment from hence!

(Lucrezia makes him escape by a secret door. The Duke and Rustighello appear at the lack of the stage. She gives a shriek and sinks on a seat.)

END of ACT I.

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Act II

SCENE 1.

A small court adjoining the house of Gennaro.

One window is lighted. Night.

Rustighello enters with a band of Bravos, all disguised.

Rustighello. & Cho.

Yonder light is the guiding beacon
In Ferrara our man remaining,
Proves the Duke's only chance doth not weaken;
He will he reveng'd at lAstolfo.
Let us on th' advantage now gaining,
Slumber and darkness o'er all seem cAstolfo.

(Advancing towards the house of Gennaro, they hear voices and stop.)

Yet, he silent! a sound encroacheth
Like a breeze in leafy summer;
Softly, gently it approacheth,
Clear, distinct, increasing fAstolfo.
Let us in ambush, noting the comer,
Well explore him till he bath pass'd.

(Retire.)

SCENE 2

Enter Orsini and raps at the door of Gennaro's dwelling.

Gennaro.

Is't thou!

Orsini.

None else, friend.
Wilt come with me and grace Negroni's supper?
There I can take no pleasure
So you do share it not.

Gennaro.

Causes compel me now to refuse thee,
Since I depart for Venice one hour from this time.

Orsini.

And wilt thou leave me?
In life and death is our friendship
Sworn to share together
Equally cloud or sunshine?

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Gennaro.

'Tis true.

Orsini.

And think you I so could treat you
With like unkindness?

Gennaro.

Come thou with me then.

Orsini.

Wait but the dawnlight, I'm with thee.
Courtesy will not suffer
To slight Negroni.

Gennaro.

This, her aforesaid banquet,
Rouses my worst suspicions.

(NOTE: Instead of this Scene, Mario, in his part of Gennaro, introduces a Recitative and Air, composed by Lilla, given below, which change, at the present day, is almost generally adopted.

Gennaro.

Oh, how delightful this pleasing hour of silence
Comes o'er this lonely heart! No voice of discord
Can here assail me. In tranquil slumber
Enwrapt, nature seems reposing.
Ah! quiet comes not to the fearful tempest
In this bosom still raging. Where have ye hasted
Bright days of rapture, like a vision faded,
When my young heart had not one thought remorseful.
Oh, I have felt the rapture,
The joy of love's pure devotion,
Have known the burning eagerness
For fame and glorious promotion,
Yet peace within my bosom
Ever smiling so mild and fair!
Ne'er will depart the memory
Till death relieves from care!
Now my soul's torn with agony,
Calmness and hope have departed,
Tremblings have seized and shaken me,
Borne me to earth faint-hearted.
Thousands of dark imaginings
My senses overpower—
Enough at least to wither me
The sorrows of this hour!

Orsini.

The rather mine, friend, thy going hence alone,
Unarm'd, by night, too—through brigand-haunted regions.
Stay now, stay, dear Gennaro.



Gennaro.

Well then, since you urge it
So be it I—
O'er my life there hangs a menace.
Death impends with fatal power.

Orsini.

Who asserts so?
Whence comes the menace?
Show me the man.

Gennaro.

Speak lower.

Chorus of Sbirri.

Now's the moment.

Rustighello.

No, have patience
Till you meddling fool depart.

Orsini.

Ah!

Gennaro.

Silence! you madcap!

Orsini.

These, your fears, are sad vexations;
Oh, how credulous your heart!
Look ye, how the woman serv'd ye:

Duet
Orsini & Gennaro

Orsini.

Thinking love must pay such kindness,
She pretendeth, she pretends to have preserv'd thee:
As to poison, as to poison that lay only in your fear,
your foolish fear and nothing more!
O a dove is the fair Negroni,
As for the Duke, the Duke I know true to the core!

Gennaro.

None but thee are so empower'd
To declare me ne'er a coward!
But the snare of an assassin calls for energy yet more stern,
Common valor e'en surpassing
That pure courage men adore
That pure courage men adore,
That pure courage men adore, we men adore,
we men adore, adore.

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Orsini.

O a dove is fair Negroni, and the Duke true to the core,
and the Duke true to the core, and the Duke true to the core,
true to the core, true to the core.

Orsini.

I take the broad path,
You choose the narrow,
I must work out mine adventure.

Gennaro.

Adieu then, comrade.

Orsini.

Adieu, Gennaro.

Gennaro.

Fare thee well!

Orsini.

Luck bless thy venture.

Gennaro.

(Rushing back.)

Thus abandon thee ah never!

Orsini.

Thinkest I could leave thee so?

Gennaro.

Since to-night we do not sever—

Orsini.

I at dawn with thee will go.

Both.

O thy fortune, whatever it may be,
Shall be mine, again I swear it,
Life or death, together we share it.
Twin-horn flowers, in union growing,
Twin-born leaflets upon a branch,
We show one smile, if summer be glowing,
'Neath the tempest we equally blanch.

(Exit.)

Rustighello.

(to the Sbirri.)

Do not follow!

Chorus.

But they escape us!

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Rustighello.

Madmen !
They seek Negroni's palace.

Chorus.

That is sufficient.
They rush into danger;
Then how useless such puny malice,
One with passion newly burning
Drags his friend where pitfalls lurk.
Let's for other game be turning,
Neater hands will do that work.

(Exeunt.)

SCENE 3.

**Saloon in the Negroni Palace;
brilliantly illuminated and decorated.**

On a table, covered with luxuries and rare flowers, the Princess Negroai is seated, with her ladies of honor. Orsini, Liverotto, Vitellozzo, Gazella, Petrucci, each with a lady seated at his side. At the end of the table Gubetta, opposite to him Gennaro.

Liverotto.

Long live Madeira!

All.

Evviva!

Vitellozzo.

Yet give us your Rhine-wine forever I

Gaz

Cyprus the grape for me I

Petrucci.

God Bacchus bids agree
Foeman and croney.

Orsini.

I praise the cup whose flowing
With golden, glorious glowing,
Wakes Cupid from his trance
In thy seducing glance,
Fairest Negroni!

All.

Let us drink and sing her praises;
We sing the thousand graces
Love form'd with so much art,
That Venus could impart
Such beauty only!

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(All touch their glasses and drink.)

Gubetta.

(Aside.)

Half in their cups of those fair dames
I must bereave them.

Gennaro.

(Aside.)

I am weary.

(Rising, as if about to go.)

Orsini.

Such women,
Gennaro, can you leave them?
Hear but my last effusion
Compos'd the other morning.

Gubetta.

(Laughing rudely.)

Ha, ha!

Orsini.

Who laughs there?

Gubetta.

All present, Such absurd efforts scorning.

Orsini.

How so?

Gubetta.

Ha, ha! a new Anacreon!

Orsini.

Would you insult me?

Gubetta.

If laughing be insulting thee,
More could I not, Sir dolt!

Orsini.

(Rising.)

You beggarly Castilian!

Gubetta.

You gross Italian bully!

(Orsini seizes a knife.)



Ladies.

Heavens, these men will come to swords!

All.

What would you do? Be calm, Orsini.

Orsini.

This small account I'll settle,

(Drawing his back. Gab.)

With such a taste of metal,
As cannot fail to sober thee
Forever and a day.

All.

These ill-timed, ugly measures,
Have scar'd our fairest treasures;
The total town will be arous'd,
Inquiring of the fray.

(The Ladies retire.)

SCENE 4

Gubitta, Orsini, Liversotto, Vitellozzo,
Gazella, Petrucci, and Gennaro.

Liverotto.

Peace, peace, I implore ye!

Vitellozzo.

The time is ample
To battle it to-morrow at the sword's point,
Not here with knives, like your cut-throat butchers!

All.

Well said.

Gennaro.

Apropos of our swords:
Where have we left them?

Orsini.

Outside in yonder chamber.

All.

Here let this matter end.

Gubetta.

Now drink, my masters!

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Gazella.

Our harsh ill-manner'd rudeness
Hath dispers'd all our ladies.

Gubetta.

Each will come back
And smile on whom for humblest pardon woos her.

(A cupbearer, clad in black, carries round a/ask of wine.)

Cupbearer.

Wine of Syracuse.

All.

Best of the best—by Jove.

(All drink, except Gabetta, who empties his goblet over his shoulder.)

Gennaro.

(Aside.)

Maffio, didst see that?
Yonder Spaniard, he drank not.

Orsini.

(Aside.)

What matter? 'tis passing likely; why, he is reeling!

Gubetta.

Now, if it please him, my comrades,
Bid the great bard Orsini verse us a strophe.
Gods, what a poet such wine as this should make him!

Orsini.

Aye, without your help, friend!

All.

Tune us a stanza, Orsini!

Orsini.

O the secret of bliss in perfection,
Is to never raise objection
Whether winter hang tears on the bushes
Or the summer-kiss deck them in blushes,
drink and pity the fool who on sorrow
Ever wastes the pale shade of a thought:
Drink and pity the feel who on sorrow
Ever wastes the pale shade of a thought.
Never have for one jot from the morrow,
Save a new day of joy by it brought.

(They are interrupted by the distant sound of a funeral bell, and voices chanting in a dismal tone, part of the Catholic funeral service.)

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Chorus.

(Within.)

Et plusquam non videbunt Si habent oculos.

Chorus.

(Within, in response.)

Et nares habent omnes Sed non odorabunt.

Gennaro.

What means that?

Orsini.

While we pipe chansons Echo sings vespers.

All.

But yet, what is't?

Orsini.

Some dead monk;
With doleful chanting now to his grave they post him.

All.

Let's drink to him, Orsini!

Orsini.

In *this* verse, I'll toast him.
On the springtide of life fully flowing,
On the ripe sun of youth gaily glowing,
Death may gloat with his blear eye so yellow;
Here's a health for the jolly old follow!
With a fig for the fool who on sorrow
Ever wastes the pale shade of a thought!

All.

Life or death then must wait till to-morrow,
And not spoil this delight we have sought.

Chorus of Penitents.

(Entering and ranging themselves on each side of the banquet chamber.)

Quitium sapicutiao
Est timor Domini.

(One by one the lights go out.)

Orsini.

Gennaro!

Gennaro.

Maffio! look round!
The lamps are expiring.



Orsini.

This wears an aspect Surpassing e'en strangeness.

All.

Let's fly! Our swords!
All exit is prevented!
Have we a demon 'mongst us?

SCENE 5

The central door opens and Lucretzia appears, attended by armed men.)

Lucrezia.

No! but Lucrezia Borgia!

All.

(With a cry of horror.)

Ah! we are lost then!

Lucrezia.

See, 'tis the Borgia! how lately a sorry ball
All here did give me in Venice:
I now in turn bid you sup in Ferrara.

All.

Hope! he thou hanish'd!

Lucrezia.

Ye thought to pass unpunish'd;
Yet thought so vainly.
Great as was your insult
My vengeance is as great: five narrow coffins
Now are in waiting to receive your bodies;
For one and all have taken poison!

Gennaro.

(Advancing.)

Five will suffice not—still you need a sixth one!

Lucrezia.

Gennaro! *Thou* here?

Gennaro.

Aye, Madam;
Here, to die with my comrades.

Lucrezia.

Hasten, and fast close
Every barrier; no matter, should ye hear aught:
Within this present chamber let none else enter.

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All.

Gennaro!

Gennaro.

Farewell then—forever—

(Being led away.)

Lucrezia.

Remove them!

All.

Heav'n be our refuge.

(Exeunt, among the armed men, and the great door closes.)

SCENE 6.
LUCREZIA, GENNARO.

Lucrezia.

Thou art here, as if't were seeming
Fate must shadow thy young horizon.

Gennaro.

I foresaw this in vision'd dreaming.

Lucrezia.

Thou hast newly partaken the poison.

Gennaro.

Here's the cure, still!

(Shows the phial)

Lucrezia.

Ah! I remember!
I will thank for this with my latest breath!

Gennaro.

Till my comrades all have drank
I will risk their chance of death.

Lucrezia.

Scarce that drop of life's restorer
Saves thyself, much less a friend.

Gennaro.

Hast no more? If so, Signora,
All must perish.

Lucrezia.

How will this end, then?

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Genaro.

First, thy course of more than badness
Ends beneath my vengeful steel.

Lucrezia.

I? I? Gennaro.—
Withhold, oh, insensate—

Gennaro.

Nought can shake me.

(Takes a knife from the table)

Lucrezia.

(Terrified, aside.)

Must I reveal?

Gennaro.

(Seizing her.)

Quick, prepare yourself!

Lucrezia.

Unkind one!
By *thy* hand, too, shall I perish?

Gennaro.

See, how despair and grief can blind one.
Where are the comrades I did cherish?
No more parley!

Lucrezia.

(Resolutely.)

Ah! stay thy purpose!

Gennaro.

(Lifting the knife)

Prepare to die!

Lucrezia.

(With a shriek.)

Thou'rt a Borgia;
Mine own fathers thine thou may'st call.
From an awful crime I stay you!
Do not spill thy race's blood!

Gennaro.

I a Borgia! Oh God, how say you!

Lucrezia.

Ask no more, for thine own good.

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Lucrezia.

Spurn, aye, spurn me, I do implore thee not to spurn my life's blighted blossom!
Night and day too, in mourning o'er thee
Thousand deaths, a thousand deaths do rack this bosom!
thy existence a worthier jewel,
Ah! must surmount this dark event,
Drink, oh! drink then! That poison cruel,
Haste thee, haste thee to present, aye, to present.
Ah, death will win thee,
O yield, I pray ye,
Haste then, haste then, cruel poison,
To thus prevent,
O yield, I pray thee,
Ere death shall win thee, ah, haste thee, haste, the cruel poison,
To prevent.
Drink it, yield thee! yield thee!
Haste, ah, haste, the cruel poison
To prevent,
Aye, Gennaro! Drink it! yield thee! ah!
Haste thee, haste, the cruel poison to prevent.

Orsini.

(Expiring within.)

Gennaro!

Gennaro.

Maffio dieth !

Lucrezia.

Save thee, for thy mother!

Gennaro.

Hence! For in thee
All her cause of sorrow lieth.

Lucrezia.

Nay, nay Gennaro.

Gennaro.

Didst molest her?

Lucrezia.

Never think it.

Gennaro.

What fate oppos'd her

Lucrezia.

Living she tells thee, aye, thee, none other,
All her woe, her love, tier faith.



Gennaro.

Heav'n, you haply?

Lucrezia.

I am that mother!

Gennaro.

(Covering his face with his hands.)

Thou! such tiding is worse than death.
Mother, is this thy welcome?
This thy maternal blessing?
And must my daydream, my idol
Thus perish in this the possessing?
Mother, I've oft prayed, upon thy breast
To pour out life's last breath.

(Dies.)

Lucrezia.

Child of sorrow! Help! succor! assistance!
Ah—'tis ended

(Throwing herself upon the prostrate Gennaro.)

LAST SCENE.

The central door opens and admits Duke Alfonso and Rustighelli, followed by guards.)

Duke.

Where then is he?

Lucrezia.

Look you: at your feet.

(Feebly raising her head and pointing to the body.)

To my heart this hope was given:
His affection my soul redeeming,
Still might win me back to heaven,
With me share its holy shore.
Crush'd in darkness, destroy'd, extinguish'd,
Fate bath broken the magic dreaming;
O'er this head too surely vanquish'd
See her wrathful vial pour now!

(Sinks lifeless on Gennaro's body.)

Chorus.

Wretched offspring, more wretched mother—

Duke.

Vain were succor !

Chorus.

Vain were succor; all is o'er.



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The End