

La Traviata

by Giuseppe Verdi

Cast

VIOLETTA VALÉRY, a courtesan (soprano)
ALFREDO GERMONT, a young bourgeois from a provincial family (tenor)
GIORGIO GERMONT, Alfredo's father (baritone)
FLORA BERVOIX, Violetta's friend (mezzo-soprano)
ANNINA, Violetta's maid (soprano)
GASTONE, Alfredo's friend (tenor)
BARONE DOUPHOL, Violetta's lover, a rival of Alfredo (baritone)
MARCHESE D'OBIGNY (bass)
DOTTORE GRENVIL (bass)
GIUSEPPE, Violetta's servant (tenor)
FLORA'S SERVANT (bass)
COMMISSIONER (bass)

Prelude

ACT ONE

A drawing room in Violetta's home. In the background a door, opening to another room. There are two other lateral doors; to the left, a fireplace with a mirror over the mantel. In the center of the room, a huge table richly laden.

(Violetta is seated on a sofa, talking with Dr. Grenvil and other friends. Some of her friends go to greet various guests as they arrive. Among them, the Baron and Flora, escorted by the Marquis.)

CHORUS I

You were invited for an earlier hour.
You have come late.

CHORUS II

We were playing cards at Flora's,
and the time passed quickly.

VIOLETTA (*going to greet them*)
Flora, my friends, the rest of the evening
will be gay because you are here.

Surely the evening is livelier with good food
and drink?

FLORA, MARQUIS
And can you be lively?

VIOLETTA
I must be.
I give myself to pleasure, since pleasure
is the best medicine for my ills.

ALL
Indeed, life is doubly heightened by
pleasure.
*(The Viscount Gastone de Letorières enters
with Alfredo Germont. Servants are busily
engaged at the table.)*

GASTONE
My dear Madam, in Alfredo Germont
I present a man who greatly admires you;
few friends are so fine as he.

VIOLETTA
*(She offers her hand to Alfredo, who kisses
it.)*
My dear Viscount, thank you for this gift.

MARQUIS
My dear Alfredo —

ALFREDO
Marquis —
(They shake hands.)

GASTONE *(to Alfredo)*
As I told you,
here friendship joins with pleasure.
*(Meanwhile the servants have finished
setting the table.)*

VIOLETTA
Is everything ready?
(A servant nods in affirmation.)

Please be seated:
it is at table that the heart is gayest.

ALL
Well spoken —secret cares
fly before that great friend, wine.
*(They take their places at the table. Violetta
is seated between Alfredo and Gastone.
Facing her Flora takes her place between
the Marquis and the Baron. The remaining
guests take their various places around the
table. A moment of silence as the food is
served. Violetta and Gastone are whispering
to each other.)*
It is at table that the heart is gayest.

GASTONE
Alfredo thinks of you always.

VIOLETTA
You are joking?

GASTONE
While you were ill, every day he called
to ask about you.

VIOLETTA
Don't talk like that. I am nothing to him.

GASTONE
I do not deceive you.

VIOLETTA
It is true then? But why?
I don't understand.

ALFREDO
Yes, it is true.

VIOLETTA
I thank you.
You, Baron, were less attentive.

BARON
I have only known you for a year.

VIOLETTA
And he for just a few minutes.

FLORA *(in a low voice, to the Baron)*
It would have been better to say nothing.

BARON *(softly, to Flora)*
I don't like this young man.

FLORA
Why not? I think he's very pleasant.

GASTONE *(to Alfredo)*
And you have nothing more to say?

MARQUIS *(to Violetta)*
It's up to you to make him talk.

VIOLETTA
I shall be Hebe, the cup-bearer.

ALFREDO
And, like her, immortal, I hope.

ALL
Let us drink.

GASTONE
Baron —can't you find a toast
for this happy occasion?
(The Baron shakes his head.)
Then it's up to you —
(nodding to Alfredo)

ALL
Yes, yes, a toast.

ALFREDO
Inspiration fails me.

GASTONE
But aren't you a master?

ALFREDO (*to Violetta*)
Would it please you?

VIOLETTA
Yes.

ALFREDO (*rising*)
Yes? I have it already in my heart.

MARQUIS
Then —attention!

ALL
Yes, to the poet.

ALFREDO
Drink from the joyful glass,
resplendent with beauty,
drink to the spirit of pleasure
which enchants the fleeting moment.
Drink to the thrilling sweetness
brought to us by love,
for these fair eyes, irresistibly,
(*indicating Violetta*)
pierce us to the heart.
Drink —for wine
will warm the kisses of love.

ALL
Drink —for wine
will warm the kisses of love.

VIOLETTA (*rising*)
I shall divide my gaiety
among you all;
Everything in life is folly,
except for pleasure.
Let us be joyful, for love
is a fleeting and short-lived joy.
A flower which blossoms and fades,

whose beauty is soon lost forever.
Be joyful —a caressing voice
invites us warmly to joy.

ALL
Ah! Be carefree —for wine and song
with laughter, embellish the night.
The new day breaking will find us still
in this happy paradise.

VIOLETTA (*to Alfredo*)
Life is only pleasure.

ALFREDO (*to Violetta*)
For those who don't know love.

VIOLETTA
Speak not of love to one who knows not
what it is.

ALFREDO
Such is my destiny.

ALL
Be carefree —for wine and song
with laughter, embellish the night.
The next day breaking will find us still
in this happy paradise.
(*The sound of music is heard, coming from
an adjoining room.*)
What is that?

VIOLETTA
Wouldn't you like to dance now?

ALL
How kind of you! We accept with pleasure.

VIOLETTA
Let us go, then.
(*As they are going out through the center
door, Violetta suddenly turns pale.*)
Oh!

ALL
What is the matter?

VIOLETTA
Nothing, it is nothing.

ALL

Why have you stopped here?

VIOLETTA

Let us go out.

(She takes a few steps, but then is forced to stop again and to sit down.)

Oh God!

ALL

Again!

ALFREDO

Are you ill?

ALL

Heavens, what can it be?

VIOLETTA

It's just a chill.

Go on —please —there.

(She points towards the other room.)

In just a few minutes I shall come —

ALL

As you wish.

(All except Alfredo go into the other room.)

VIOLETTA *(looking into a mirror)*

How pale I am!

(turning she sees Alfredo)

You are here!

ALFREDO

Are you feeling better now?

VIOLETTA

Yes, better, thank you.

ALFREDO

Ah, this way

you will kill yourself —you must take care of yourself —

VIOLETTA

But can I?

ALFREDO

If you were mine,

I should watch over you.

VIOLETTA

What are you saying? Is there anyone to care for me?

ALFREDO *(passionately)*

That's because no one in the world loves you —

VIOLETTA

No one?

ALFREDO

Except me.

VIOLETTA

It's true! I had forgotten this great love.

ALFREDO

You laugh? Have you no heart?

VIOLETTA

A heart? Yes, perhaps — but why do you ask?

ALFREDO

Ah, if that were so, then you couldn't laugh at me.

VIOLETTA

Are you serious?

ALFREDO

I do not deceive you.

VIOLETTA

Have you been in love with me for long?

ALFREDO

Yes, for a year.

One day you passed before me,

happy and light as air,

and ever since that day,

even without knowing it, I loved you —

with that love which is the very breath

of the universe itself —

mysterious and noble,
both cross and ecstasy of the heart.

VIOLETTA

Ah, if this is true, then leave me —
I offer you only friendship:
I cannot love, nor can I accept
so heroic a love from you.
I am simple and frank.
You must find another.
It won't be hard, then,
for you to forget me.

ALFREDO

Love mysterious and noble,
both cross and ecstasy of the heart.

VIOLETTA

It won't be hard, then, for you to forget me.

GASTONE (*in the doorway*)

Well, now? What the devil are you doing?

VIOLETTA

We were joking.

GASTONE

Aha! Good! Please stay.
(*He withdraws.*)

VIOLETTA

Then — no more love.
Do you accept the pact?

ALFREDO

I obey. I shall leave you.

VIOLETTA (*taking a flower from her
bosom*)

It's like that, then?
Take this flower.

ALFREDO

Why?

VIOLETTA

You shall bring it back —

ALFREDO

When?

VIOLETTA

When it has withered.

ALFREDO

Oh Heavens! Tomorrow.

VIOLETTA

Good, tomorrow.

ALFREDO (*joyously accepting the flower*)

I am happy!

VIOLETTA

Do you still think you love me?

ALFREDO (*about to leave*)

Oh, how much I love you!

VIOLETTA

You are leaving?

ALFREDO (*coming near her, kissing her
hand*)

I am leaving.

VIOLETTA

Goodbye.

ALFREDO

I desire nothing more.

ALFREDO, VIOLETTA

Goodbye. Goodbye.

(*Alfredo goes out as the other guests return
to the drawing room, flushed from dancing.*)

ALL

Dawn is breaking in the sky
and we must leave.

Thank you, gentle lady,

for this delightful evening.

The city is filled with parties,

the season of pleasure is at its height.

We shall sleep now, to regain our strength
for another night of joy.

(*They go out.*)

VIOLETTA (*alone*)
 How strange! How strange!
 His words are burned upon my heart!
 Would a real love be a tragedy for me?
 What decision are you taking, oh my soul?
 No man has ever made me fall in love.
 What joy, such as I have never known —
 loving, being loved!
 And can I scorn it
 for the arid nonsense of my present life?

Ah, perhaps he is the one
 whom my soul,
 lonely in the tumult, loved
 to imagine in secrecy!
 Watchful though I never knew it,
 he came here while I lay sick,
 awakening a new fever,
 the fever of love,
 of love which is the very breath
 of the universe itself —
 Mysterious and noble,
 both cross and ecstasy of the heart.
 Folly! All is folly! This is mad delirium!
 A poor woman, alone,
 lost in this crowded desert
 which is known to men as Paris.
 What can I hope for?
 What should I do? Revel
 in the whirlpool of earthly pleasures.
 Revel in joy! Ah!
 Forever free, I must pass
 madly from joy to joy.
 My life's course shall be
 forever in the paths of pleasure.
 Whether it be dawn or dusk,
 I must always live. Ah!
 Gaily in the world's gay places,
 ever seeking newer joys.

ALFREDO (*outdoors, under the balcony*)
 Love is the very breath...

VIOLETTA
 Oh!

ALFREDO
 ...of the universe itself —

VIOLETTA
 Love.

ALFREDO
 Mysterious and noble,
 both cross and ecstasy,
 cross and ecstasy of the heart.

VIOLETTA
 Folly! Folly! Ah yes! From joy to joy,
 forever free, I must pass
 madly from joy to joy.
 My life's course shall be
 forever in the paths of pleasure.
 Whether it be dawn or dusk,
 I must always live. Ah!
 Gaily in the world's gay places,
 ever seeking newer joys, *etc.*

ALFREDO
 Love is the very breath
 of the universe itself.

VIOLETTA
 Oh! My thoughts have to seek new joys.
 Oh! My thoughts. My thoughts.

ACT TWO

Scene One

A country house near Paris. A drawing room on the ground floor. In the background, facing the audience, there is a fireplace; on the mantelpiece, a clock and above it a mirror. On either side of the fireplace, French doors open on a garden. On the floor above, two other doors, facing each other. Chairs, tables, books, writing materials.

(Alfredo enters in hunting clothes.)

ALFREDO (*putting down his shotgun*)
 I have no joy in life when she is far away!
 Three months have passed
 since Violetta gave up for me
 a life of ease, luxury, love affairs

and the pomp of society,
 where, surrounded by adoration,
 she enslaved all with her beauty.
 Now, happy in this quiet country home,
 she has forgotten everything for me.
 And here, near her,
 I feel like a man reborn;
 invigorated by the pulse of love,
 I have forgotten the past
 in the joy of being with her.
 The violent fire
 of my youthful spirits
 was tempered by the quiet smile of her love!
 Ever since the day when she said:
 "I want to live only for you"
 I seem to live in heaven,
 unmindful of the world.
(Annina enters, dressed for travelling.)

ALFREDO
 Annina, where have you come from?

ANNINA
 From Paris.

ALFREDO
 Who sent you?

ANNINA
 My mistress.

ALFREDO
 Why?

ANNINA
 To take the horses, the carriages,
 and whatever else is hers.

ALFREDO
 What is this!

ANNINA
 It is very expensive, living here all alone.

ALFREDO
 What are you hiding from me?

ANNINA
 I was sworn to silence.

ALFREDO
 Sworn! Tell me, how much is needed?

ANNINA
 A thousand louis.

ALFREDO
 Go now — I shall go to Paris.
 Madam must know nothing of our talk.
 I can still take care of everything.
*(He leaves. Soon Violetta enters with
 various papers in her hand. She speaks with
 Annina.)*

VIOLETTA
 Alfredo?

ANNINA
 He has just left for Paris.

VIOLETTA
 When will he come back?

ANNINA
 Before evening.
 He asked me to tell you.

VIOLETTA
 How strange!

GIUSEPPE *(handing her a letter)*
 For you.

VIOLETTA *(taking it)*
 Good. In a few minutes a man is coming
 on business.
 Show him in immediately.

(Violetta, reading the letter)
 Aha! Flora has found my hideaway!
 She has invited me to a dance this evening!
 She'll wait for me in vain.

GIUSEPPE
 A gentleman to see you.

VIOLETTA
 It must be the man I'm expecting.

*(She gestures for Annina to admit him.
Giorgio Germont enters.)*

GERMONT
Mademoiselle Valéry?

VIOLETTA
Yes.

GERMONT
I am Alfredo's father!

VIOLETTA
(Surprised, she offers him a chair.)
You!

GERMONT
Yes, father of this reckless lad, who is
rushing to his ruin because of you.

VIOLETTA *(rising, with resentment)*
I, sir, am a woman and in my own home.
Now please excuse me,
more for your sake than for mine.
(She is on the point of going out.)

GERMONT
(What spirit!) And yet —

VIOLETTA
You have been badly advised.

GERMONT
He wants to give you all his possessions.

VIOLETTA
So far, he hasn't dared — I should refuse.

GERMONT *(looking about him)*
Such luxury —

VIOLETTA
This paper is a secret from everyone.
But it shall not be from you.
(She gives him the paper.)

GERMONT *(after looking at them briefly)*
Heavens! What is this!
You wish to sell

everything you own?
Ah, why does your past accuse you so?

VIOLETTA
The past does not exist —
I love Alfredo now;
God wiped out my past with my repentance.

GERMONT
These are truly noble sentiments!

VIOLETTA
Ah, how good to hear these words from you!

GERMONT
And in the name
of these sentiments, I ask a sacrifice —

VIOLETTA *(arising)*
Ah, no, do not say it.
Certainly you would ask some frightening
thing.
I knew it — I expected you —
I was too happy.

GERMONT
Alfredo's father
asks you to decide the fate
of his two children.

VIOLETTA
His two children!

GERMONT
Yes.
God blessed me with a daughter,
like an angel in her purity;
if Alfredo refuses to return
to the bosom of his family,
the young man in love and beloved in turn,
who was soon to marry my daughter,
would reject this bond
on which our happiness depends.
Ah, do not be the cause of love's roses
changing into thorns.
Do not let your heart refuse
what I so fervently ask of you. No! No!

VIOLETTA

Ah, I understand —
I must leave Alfredo for a time.
It will be painful for me — yet —

GERMONT

That is not what I ask.

VIOLETTA

Heaven, what more can you ask!
I offered much!

GERMONT

But not enough.

VIOLETTA

You want me to give him up forever?

GERMONT

You must!

VIOLETTA

No — never! No, no!
Can you not see what tremendous,
burning love I feel for him,
I, who have no friends or family
among the living?
Don't you know that Alfredo swore
that I should find everything in him?
Don't you know that my life
is endangered by a terrible disease,
that I have but a short time to live?
To leave Alfredo forever?

Ah, the anguish would be so cruel
that I should prefer to die.

GERMONT

The sacrifice is great,
but hear me out patiently.
You are still young and beautiful —
in time —

VIOLETTA

Ah, say nothing more.
I understand — I cannot —
I shall never love anyone but him.

GERMONT

That may well be —
but men are often fickle.

VIOLETTA

Oh God!

GERMONT

Once time has staled
the delights of love,
tedium will follow quickly.
Then what? Think —
Even the deepest feelings
can bring you no balm,
since this bond was never
blessed by heaven.

VIOLETTA

It's true! It's true!

GERMONT

Ah, then lay aside this beguiling dream.

VIOLETTA

It's true! It's true!

GERMONT

Be rather the consoling angel
of my family.
Violetta. Think —
You still have time.
Young lady, it is God who inspires
these words on a father's lips.

VIOLETTA

All hope of rising again is forever gone.
For the wretched woman who erred one day!
Even if God grants her mercy charitably
Man will always be implacable.

GERMONT

Be rather the consoling angel of my family.

VIOLETTA (*then, to Germont as she weeps*)

Oh, tell your daughter, so lovely and pure,
that a poor and wretched woman,
who has but one precious thing in life —
will sacrifice it for her — and then will die!

GERMONT

Weep, weep, poor girl.

I see now

that the sacrifice I asked

could not be greater.

Within my heart I feel what you must suffer;

be brave, your noble heart will conquer all.

VIOLETTA

Tell your daughter, so lovely and pure,

that a poor and wretched woman,

who has but one precious thing in life —

will sacrifice it for her — and then will die!

GERMONT

I see now that the sacrifice

I asked could not be greater,

within my heart I feel what you must suffer,

be brave, your noble heart will conquer all.

Weep, poor girl.

VIOLETTA

Tell me what I must do.

GERMONT

Tell him you don't love him.

VIOLETTA

He won't believe me.

GERMONT

Go away, then.

VIOLETTA

He will follow me.

GERMONT

Then —

VIOLETTA

Embrace me as if I were your daughter —
it will give me strength.

(They embrace.)

Soon he will be yours

again, but desperately sad.

(pointing to the garden)

Out there you will hurry

to comfort him.

(Violetta sits down to write.)

GERMONT

What is it?

VIOLETTA

If I told you, you would oppose my wish.

GERMONT

Generous woman! What can I do for you?

Generous woman!

VIOLETTA *(returning near him)*

I shall die! Let him not

curse my memory;

when I am dead, let someone

tell him of my suffering.

GERMONT

No, generous woman, you must live,

and live in happiness.

Heaven one day

will recompense these tears.

VIOLETTA

Let him know the sacrifice

which I made for love —

for the very last breath of life

will be for him alone.

GERMONT

And your heart's sacrifice

will be rewarded.

Then your heart will be proud

of so noble an act. Yes, yes, yes —

VIOLETTA

Let him know the sacrifice

which I made for love —

For the very last breath of life

will be for him alone.

GERMONT

Of so noble an act

then your heart will be proud

of so noble an act.

And your heart's sacrifice

will be rewarded.

Then your heart will be proud
of so noble an act.

VIOLETTA
Someone is coming...you must leave.

GERMONT
Oh, how grateful I am to you!

VIOLETTA
Leave me.
We may never see each other again.
(They embrace.)

VIOLETTA, GERMONT
May you be happy.

VIOLETTA
Goodbye!

GERMONT
Goodbye!

VIOLETTA
Let him know the sacrifice...

GERMONT
Yes.

VIOLETTA
...which I made for love...
...for the very last breath of life.
Goodbye!

GERMONT
Goodbye!

VIOLETTA
...for the very last breath of life.
Goodbye!

VIOLETTA, GERMONT
May you be happy...goodbye!
(Germont goes out through the garden door.)

VIOLETTA
Give me strength, oh Heaven!

(She sits down and writes, then rings for the servant. Annina enters.)

ANNINA
You rang for me?

VIOLETTA
Yes, please deliver this letter yourself.
(Annina reads the address, then looks up in surprise.)

Silence — go immediately.
(Annina goes out.)
And now to write to him.
What can I say? Who will give me courage?
(She writes, then seals the letter.)

ALFREDO *(entering)*
What are you doing?

VIOLETTA *(concealing the letter)*
Nothing.

ALFREDO
You were writing?

VIOLETTA
Yes — no —

ALFREDO
But what confusion! To whom were you writing?

VIOLETTA
To you —

ALFREDO
Give me the letter.

VIOLETTA
No, not now.

ALFREDO
Forgive me — I am concerned about —

VIOLETTA
What has happened?

ALFREDO
My father was here.

VIOLETTA
Did you see him?

ALFREDO
Ah, no. He left a stern letter for me.
But I'm expecting him. He'll love you at
first sight.

VIOLETTA
He must not find me here.
Let me go away — you calm him —
I'll throw myself at his feet — then
he'll not want to separate us.
We shall be happy —
because you love me, you love me
Alfredo, you love me, don't you?

ALFREDO
So much! Why are you weeping?

VIOLETTA
I needed tears —
now I feel better —
See? I am smiling at you — see?
I shall always be here, near you,
among the flowers.
Love me, Alfredo,
love me as much as I love you.
Goodbye!
(She runs out into the garden.)

ALFREDO
Ah, this dear one lives only for my love!

*(He sits down, reads a book for a moment.
Then he stands up and goes to look at the
clock on the mantel.)*
It is late: perhaps today
my father will not come.

GIUSEPPE *(entering in haste)*
Madam has left.
A carriage was waiting for her;
they are on their way to Paris already.
Annina left too, before Madam.

ALFREDO
I know it — be calm.

GIUSEPPE
(What does that mean?)

ALFREDO
Perhaps she has gone
to hasten the loss of all she owns.
But Annina will prevent that.

MESSENGER
Signor Germont?

ALFREDO
I am he.

MESSENGER
A lady in a carriage,
not far down the road,
gave me this letter.
*(He gives the letter to Alfredo, who tips
him.)*

ALFREDO
From Violetta! Why am I so upset?
Perhaps she wants me to join her —
I am trembling. Oh, Heaven! Courage!
(He opens the letter and reads:)
“Alfredo, by the time you receive this letter
—”
(thunderstruck, he cries out:)
Ah!
*(Turning, he sees his father, and throws
himself into his arms.)*
Father!

GERMONT
My son!
Oh, how you are suffering!
Ah, dry your tears —
be once again your father's pride.
*(In despair, Alfredo sits down at the table,
his head in his hands.)*
The sea, the hills of Provence,
who effaced them from your heart?
What destiny took you away
from the sunny land of your birth?
Oh, remember in your sorrow
what joy warmed you there;
and that only there

can your soul find peace again.
 God brought me here!
 Ah! You cannot know
 how your old father has suffered.
 With you away
 his house is clouded with sorrow.
 But at last I have found you,
 if my hope has not been in vain.
 If the voice of honor
 is not wholly stilled in you.
 But I have found you again.

God has answered my prayer!
 Don't you return your father's love?

ALFREDO
*(Suddenly he sees Flora's letter on the table
 and exclaims:)*
 Ah! She is at the party! Let me fly
 to take revenge for this offence.

GERMONT
 What are you saying? Stop!
*(Alfredo runs out of the house, followed by
 his father.)*

Scene Two

*A salon in Flora's home, richly furnished and
 brightly lighted. A door to the rear, others on
 either side. To the right, somewhat to the
 foreground, a gaming table with equipment
 for play; left, an elaborate table with flowers
 and refreshments; nearby, sofa and chairs.*

*(Flora, the Marquis and Dr. Grenvil enter
 with other guests — all chatting.)*

FLORA
 Later we shall be entertained by masks:
 the Viscount is in charge.
 I've invited Violetta and Alfredo.

MARQUIS
 Haven't you heard the news?
 Violetta and Germont have separated.

DOCTOR, FLORA
 Have they really?

MARQUIS
 She is coming with the Baron.

DOCTOR
 I saw them only yesterday — they looked
 happy.
(The sound of laughing voices is heard.)

FLORA
 Silence — do you hear?

FLORA, DOCTOR, MARQUIS
 Our friends are coming.
(Ladies disguised as gypsies enter.)

GYPSIES
 We are gypsies.
 come from afar;
 the fortunes of all
 we can read in their hands.
 When we call upon the stars,
 nothing is hidden from us,
 and we can tell you all
 what the future holds in store.
 Let us see —

CHORUS I *(examining Flora's palm)*
 You, Madam, have many rivals.

CHORUS II *(examining the Marquis's
 palm)*
 Marquis, you are scarcely a model of
 fidelity.

FLORA *(to the Marquis)*
 So you still play the gallant?
 Fine — I'll make you pay for this.

MARQUIS
 What the devil are you thinking?
 It's a bare-faced lie.

FLORA
 The fox may lose his brush,
 but never abandons his rascality.
 Take care, my dear Marquis,
 or you'll be sorry, I swear.

ALL

Come, come, whatever's happened
shall be veiled by the past;
what's been has been,
think only of what's to be.
*(Flora and the Marquis shake hands. Now
from the right, Gastone and other men,
dressed as Spanish matadors and picadors,
enter.)*

GASTONE, MATADORS

We're matadors, from Madrid,
the champions of the bullring.
We've just arrived to join in the fun
of carnival time in Paris;
if you'll hear our story to the end,
you'll know what great lovers we are.

THE OTHERS

Yes, yes, good! Tell us, tell us:
we'll hear your story with pleasure.

GASTONE, MATADORS

Listen, then.
Piquillo is a strapping young man.
A matador from Biscay:
strong of arm and fierce of eye,
he is the lord of the bullring.
He fell for an Andalusian lass,
madly in love fell he;
but the stubborn little miss
answered him this way:
"Five bulls in a single day —
I'll see you kill them all;
and if you win, when you return,
my heart and hand are yours."
"Yes, yes." said he, and off he went,
to the bullring straight away;
five bulls our conquering hero met,
and killed them all that day.

THE OTHERS

Bravo, bravo, this matador —
he showed himself such a champion,
and, in so doing,
he proved his love!

GASTONE *and* MATADORS

Then, amidst the applause,
he went back to his love,
and there received the longed-for prize,
wrapped in his sweetheart's arms.

THE OTHERS

It is with tests like this that matadors
sweep lovely women off their feet!

GASTONE *and* MATADORS

But here the thing is simpler;
it's enough for us if we can frolic.

ALL

Yes, with carefree gaiety. Now first
let's try the humor of Fortune;
we'll open the ring
to the dauntless gamblers.
*(The men unmask. Some of them walk about,
talking together, while the others prepare to
play. Alfredo enters.)*

ALL

Alfredo! You!

ALFREDO

Yes my friends —

FLORA

Violetta?

ALFREDO

I don't know where she is.

ALL

How nonchalant! Bravo!
Come, now we can play.
*(Gastone cuts the cards. Alfredo and others
place their bets. Violetta enters, escorted by
the Baron. Flora goes forward to meet her.)*

FLORA

I am so glad you have come.

VIOLETTA

I couldn't refuse your kind invitation.

FLORA

I am grateful to you, too, Baron, for coming.

BARON

Germont is here! Do you see him!

VIOLETTA

Heaven! It's true. I see him.

BARON

You will not say
one word to this Alfredo —
not one word, not one word!

VIOLETTA

(Ah, why was I so rash as to come!
Mercy, oh God!)

FLORA

*(to Violetta, as she invites her to sit next to
her on the sofa)*

Sit here with me, tell me —
what is this I see?

*(Dr. Grenvil approaches the two women,
who are talking together in a low voice. The
Marquis remains to one side with the Baron.
Gastone deals the cards while Alfredo and
various others bet. Still other guests are
talking slowly here and there about the
room.)*

ALFREDO

A four!

GASTONE

You win again!

ALFREDO

Unlucky in love means luck at cards.
(He places his bet and wins again.)

ALL

He wins every time!

ALFREDO

Oh, tonight I shall win.
And with the gold
I shall return happily
to the country.

FLORA

Alone?

ALFREDO

No, no, with one who was with me,
but ran away —

VIOLETTA

Oh, God!

GASTONE *(to Alfredo, indicating Violetta)*

Take pity on her!

BARON

*(to Alfredo, making a bad job of restraining
his anger)*

Sir!

VIOLETTA *(to the Baron)*

Restrain yourself, or I shall leave you.

ALFREDO

Baron, you called me?

BARON

Your luck is so good
I'm tempted to play.

ALFREDO *(ironically)*

Yes? I accept your challenge.

VIOLETTA

What will happen? I shall die!
Take pity, dear God, take pity on me!

BARON *(betting)*

A hundred louis on the right.

ALFREDO *(betting)*

On the left — a hundred.

GASTONE

Ace — jack — you win!

BARON

Double?

ALFREDO

Good — double.

GASTONE (*dealing*)

Four — seven.

ALL

Again!

ALFREDO

The victory is mine after all!

CHORUS

Bravo! Really,
luck is on Alfredo's side!

FLORA

The Baron has paid
for the holiday, I see.

ALFREDO

Continue if you wish.

A SERVANT

Dinner is served.

FLORA

Let us go.

CHORUS (*moving towards the table*)

Let us go.

VIOLETTA

(What will happen? I shall die?
Take pity, dear
God, take pity on me!)

ALFREDO (*aside, to the Baron*)

If you wish to continue —

BARON

We cannot, for the moment;
we'll play again, later.

ALFREDO

At any game you like.

BARON

Let us follow our friends; later —

ALFREDO

As you wish — let's go.

BARON

Let's go.

(*All go out through the center door; for a moment the scene is deserted. Then Violetta returns, distressed.*)

VIOLETTA

I invited him to follow me.
Will he come? Will he listen to me?
He will come, for his bitter hatred
will bring him, if not my voice.

ALFREDO

You called me? What do you want?

VIOLETTA

Please leave here at once.
You are in danger —

ALFREDO

Ah, I understand! Enough —
do you think I am such a coward?

VIOLETTA

Ah, no, no, never —

ALFREDO

What are you afraid of?

VIOLETTA

I am afraid of the Baron.

ALFREDO

There is bad blood between us —
if he falls into my hands,
a single blow will take away
your lover and your protector.
Would such a misfortune frighten you?

VIOLETTA

But if he should kill you?
That is the only misfortune
which I fear — for it would kill me too!

ALFREDO

My death! What do you care?

VIOLETTA

Ah, leave, leave this minute!

ALFREDO

I shall leave, but first swear
that you will follow me
wherever I go.

VIOLETTA

Ah, no, never.

ALFREDO

No! Never?

VIOLETTA

Go wretched man!
Forget a name which is dishonored.

Go — leave me this instant —
I took a sacred oath to leave you.

ALFREDO

But who — who could ask it of you?

VIOLETTA

Someone who had full right.

ALFREDO

Was it Douphol?

VIOLETTA

Yes.

ALFREDO

You love him, then?

VIOLETTA

Well — I love him, yes.

ALFREDO

(In a blind fury he runs to the door and calls out.)

Everyone — come here!

(All the guests, bewildered, return to the salon.)

ALL

You called us? What do you want?

ALFREDO

(pointing to Violetta, who is leaning against

the table in utter humiliation)

You know this woman?

ALL

Who? Violetta?

ALFREDO

You don't know what she has done?

VIOLETTA

Ah, be silent.

ALL

No.

ALFREDO

This woman was about to lose
all she owns for love of me;
while I, blinded, vile, wretched,
was capable of accepting everything.
But there is still time! I wish
to cleanse myself of such a stain.
I have called you here as witnesses
that I have paid her all I owe.
*(With furious contempt, he throws a purse
down at Violetta's feet. Violetta faints in the
arms of Flora. As Alfredo is speaking the
last few words, his father enters.)*

ALL

Oh, what a terrible thing you have done!
You have killed a sensitive heart!
Ignoble man, to insult a woman so,
leave this house at once,
you fill us with horror!
Go, go, you fill us with horror!
Ignoble man, to insult a woman, etc.

GERMONT

Whoever, even in anger, offends a woman
exposes himself to the contempt of all.

Where is my son? I cannot find him,
for in you I no longer see Alfredo.

ALFREDO

Ah, yes — what have I done? I am horrified.
Maddening jealousy, disillusioned love
torture my heart — I have lost my reason.

She can never forgive me now,
I tried to flee from her — I couldn't!
I came here, spurred on by anger!
Now that I have vented my fury,
I am sick with remorse — oh, wretched
man!

ALL (*to Violetta*)
Ah, how you suffer! But take heart,
here, each of us suffers for your sorrow;
you are here among dear friends;
dry the tears which bathe your face.

GERMONT (*to himself*)
I alone among these people know
what virtue there is
in this poor woman's heart.
I know she loves him, is faithful to him,
and yet I must keep a pitiless silence!

BARON (*in a low voice, to Alfredo*)
The atrocious insult to this woman
has shocked us all, but such an outrage
shall not go unavenged. I will show you
that I am well able to break your pride.

ALFREDO (*to himself*)
Alas, what have I done, *etc.*
I am horrified she can never forgive me
now.

VIOLETTA (*regaining consciousness*)
Alfredo, Alfredo you cannot understand
fully the love I have in my heart;
you do not know that even at the risk
of your disdain I have put it to the test!

ALL (*to Violetta*)
How you suffer! But take heart!

ALFREDO
Alas, what have I done? I am horrified!

VIOLETTA
But the day will come
when you will know —
You will admit how much I loved you.
May God save you, then, from remorse,
I shall be dead, but I shall love you still.

ALFREDO
Alas, what have I done? I am horrified!

BARON
I will show you that I am well able
to break your pride.

GERMONT
I know she loves him, is faithful to him,
and yet I must keep a pitiless silence!

ALL
How you suffer! Take heart! *etc.*
(*Germont leads his son away with him; the
Baron follows him. Flora and the Doctor
accompany Violetta to her room. The others
go out.*)

ACT THREE

Prelude

Violetta's bedroom. Upstage, a bed with half-drawn curtains; a window with inside shutters; next to the bed a low table with a water-bottle, a glass, various medicines. Downstage, a dressing-table; nearby a sofa; another table with a night-lamp; several chairs and other pieces. The door is to the left; opposite, a fireplace, with a low fire.

(*Violetta is in bed, asleep. Annina, sitting in a chair near the fireplace, has dozed off.*)

VIOLETTA
Annina?

ANNINA
Yes, madam?

VIOLETTA
Were you sleeping, poor child?

ANNINA
Yes. Forgive me.

VIOLETTA

Give me a sip of water.

(Annina does so.)

Look outside and tell me — is it still day?

ANNINA

It's seven o'clock.

VIOLETTA

Open the blinds a little.

(Annina opens the blinds and looks out into the street.)

ANNINA

Doctor Grenvil!

VIOLETTA

Oh, he's a true friend!

I want to get up. Help me.

(She gets up then falls back on the bed.

Finally, supported by Annina, she gets up and walks slowly to the sofa. The doctor enters in time to help her get comfortable.

Annina brings cushions and puts them behind her.)

VIOLETTA

How good you are!

You thought of me in time!

DOCTOR *(feeling her pulse)*

Yes. How do you feel?

VIOLETTA

My body suffers,

but my soul is in peace.

Last evening a priest came to comfort me.

Religion is a great consolation to the suffering.

DOCTOR

And during the night?

VIOLETTA

I slept quite peacefully.

DOCTOR

Courage, then. Your convalescence is not far off.

VIOLETTA

Oh, the little white lie

is permissible in a doctor.

DOCTOR *(pressing her hand)*

Goodbye — I'll come back later.

VIOLETTA

Don't forget me.

ANNINA

(in a low voice, as she shows the doctor out)

How is she, sir?

DOCTOR

She has only a few hours to live.

ANNINA

Take heart, now.

VIOLETTA

Today is a holiday?

ANNINA

Paris is going mad — it's carnival.

VIOLETTA

Oh, in all this merrymaking, heaven knows how many poor ones are suffering!

How much is there in that drawer?

(pointing)

ANNINA *(opening the drawer and counting the money)*

Twenty louis.

VIOLETTA

Take ten and give them to the poor.

ANNINA

There won't be much left -

VIOLETTA

Oh, for me it will be enough.

Then bring in my letters.

ANNINA

But you, madam?

VIOLETTA
Nothing will happen — go quickly, please
(*Annina goes out.*)

VIOLETTA
(*she takes a letter from her bosom and reads:*)
“You kept your promise.
The duel has taken place!
The Baron was wounded, but is recovering.
Alfredo has gone abroad;
I myself revealed your sacrifice to him;
he will return to ask your pardon;
I too shall come. Take care of yourself.
You deserve a happier future.
Giorgio Germont.”

It is late!
I wait, I wait — they never come to me!
(*She looks at herself in the mirror.*)
Ah, how I have changed!
But the doctor still gives me hope!
Ah, with this disease every hope is dead.
Adieu, sweet, happy dreams of the past,
the roses of my cheeks are already fading.
I miss so much Alfredo’s love,
which once solaced my weary soul —
Solaced and comforted —
Ah, smile upon the woman who has strayed;
forgive her, oh God,
grant she may come to thee!
Now all is finished, all is over.

CHORUS OF MASQUERADERS (*from the street*)
Make way for the quadruped King of the
festival,
Wearing his crown of flowers
and vine leaves.
Make way for the tamest of all
who wear horns,
greet him with music of horn and flute.
People of Paris,
open the path to the triumphant Fattened Ox.
Neither Asia nor Africa
has ever seen better,
this pride and joy of the butcher’s trade.
Light-hearted maidens, and frolicking lads,

pay him due honor
of music and song!
People of Paris, open the path
to the triumphant Fattened Ox.
Make way for the quadruped King
of the festival
wearing his crown of flowers
and vine leaves.

(*Annina returns, hastily.*)

ANNINA (*hesitating*)
Madam!

VIOLETTA
What has happened?

ANNINA
Today you feel better, don’t you?

VIOLETTA
Yes, why?

ANNINA
Do you promise not to get excited?

VIOLETTA
Yes. What do you want to tell me?

ANNINA
I wanted to prepare you —
A happy surprise!

VIOLETTA
Did you say — a surprise?

ANNINA
Oh yes, madam -

VIOLETTA
Alfredo! Ah, you saw him?
He is coming! Oh, quickly!
(*Annina nods her head, then goes to open the door.*)
Alfredo!

(*Alfredo enters, pale with emotion. They are in each other’s arms as they exclaim:*)
Beloved Alfredo! Oh joy!

ALFREDO
 My Violetta! Oh, joy!
 The fault is mine — I know everything now,
 dear.

VIOLETTA
 I know only that you have come back!

ALFREDO
 Let my emotion teach you how I love you.
 I cannot live without you.

VIOLETTA
 Ah, if you have found me still alive,
 it means grief has not the power to kill.

ALFREDO
 Forget your sorrow, my adored one,
 and forgive my father and me.

VIOLETTA
 What is there to forgive?
 The guilty one is me;
 but it was love alone which made me so.

ALFREDO, VIOLETTA
 Now neither man nor demon, my angel,
 will ever be able to take you away.

ALFREDO
 From Paris dear, we shall go away,
 to live our lives together.

We shall make up for all our heartache,
 your health will come back again.
 You will be the light of my life,
 the future will smile upon us.

VIOLETTA
(echoing him as in a dream)
 From Paris dear, we shall go away,
 to live our loves together...
 We shall make up for all our heartache.
 My health will come back again.
 You will be the light of my life, *etc.*

VIOLETTA
 No more now, Alfredo let us go to church
 to offer thanks

for your return.
(She sways, as if to fall.)

ALFREDO
 You are pale -

VIOLETTA
 It is nothing!
 Such sudden joy cannot come
 to a sorrowing heart without disturbing it.
*(She throws herself down, upon a chair; her
 head falls back.)*

ALFREDO *(holding her up, terrified)*
 Great God! Violetta!

VIOLETTA *(with great effort)*
 It's my illness —
 A moment of weakness! Now I am strong.
 See? I am smiling.

ALFREDO
 Ah, cruel destiny!

VIOLETTA
 It was nothing. Annina, bring me my dress.

ALFREDO
 Now? Wait.

VIOLETTA
 No. I want to go out.
*(Annina gives her a dress which she tries to
 put on. Too weak to succeed, she exclaims:)*
 Dear God! I cannot!

ALFREDO
 (Heaven! What is this!)
(to Annina)
 Go to call the doctor.

VIOLETTA
 Tell him that Alfredo
 has come back to his love.
 Tell him I want to live again.
(Annina goes out. Then, to Alfredo:)
 If in returning you have not saved my life,
 then nothing on earth can save me.

Ah! Dear God! To die so young
when I have sorrowed so long!

To die, when now, at last,
I might have ceased my weeping!
Ah, it was but a dream,
my credulous hope;
to sheathe my heart in constancy
was all in vain.

ALFREDO

My very breath of life, sweet
pulse of my heart!
My tears must flow
together with yours.
But more than ever, ah, believe me,
we have need of constancy.
Ah! Do not close
your heart to hope.
Ah, my Violetta, be calm,
you grief is killing me, be calm!

VIOLETTA

Oh, Alfredo, what a cruel end
for our love!
*(Violetta sinks down upon the sofa. Germont
enters, followed after a moment by Dr.
Grenvil.)*

GERMONT

Ah, Violetta!

VIOLETTA

You, sir!

ALFREDO

Father!

VIOLETTA

You had not forgotten me?

GERMONT

I am fulfilling my promise.
I have come to embrace you as a daughter.
O generous woman!

VIOLETTA

Alas, you have come too late!
(She embraces him.)

But I am grateful to you.
Grenvil, see? I am dying in the arms
of the only dear ones I have.

GERMONT

What are you saying!
(Oh, heaven, it is true!)

ALFREDO

Do you see her, father?

GERMONT

Don't torture me any longer.
My soul is already devoured by remorse.
Every word she speaks is a thunderbolt.
Oh, rash old man!
Only now do I see the harm I have done.

VIOLETTA

*(Meanwhile, with great difficulty, she has
opened a secret drawer of her dressing
table. She takes from it a medallion and
gives it to Alfredo.)*
Come nearer to me —
Listen, beloved Alfredo.

Take this, it is a portrait
painted some years ago.
It will help you to remember
the one who loved you so.

ALFREDO

Ah, you will not die, don't tell me so —
You must live, my darling.
God did not bring me back to you
to face such a tragedy.

GERMONT

Dear noble victim
of a hopeless love,
forgive me
for having made your heart suffer.

VIOLETTA

If some young girl
in the flower of life
should give her heart to you —
marry her — I wish it.
Then give her this portrait:

Tell her it is the gift
of one who, in heaven among the angels,
prays for her and for you.

GERMONT

As long as my eyes have tears,
so long shall I weep for you.
Fly to the realm of the blessed,
God calls you unto him.

ALFREDO

So soon, oh no, death
cannot take you from me.
Ah, live, or a single coffin
will receive me as well as you.

VIOLETTA (*getting up, as if reinvigorated*)

How strange!

The spasms of pain have ceased:

A strange vigor has brought me to life!

Ah! I shall live —

Oh, joy!

(*She falls down, senseless, upon the sofa.*)

Curtain