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*A. v. Ramberg gez.*

# Love and Intrigue

FRIEDRICH SCHILLER

TRANSLATED BY FLORA KIMMICH

INTRODUCTION BY ROGER PAULIN

# LOVE AND INTRIGUE



# Love and Intrigue

A Bourgeois Tragedy

*By Friedrich Schiller*

*Translation and Notes to the Text by Flora Kimmich*

*Introduction by Roger Paulin*



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# Translator's Note

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Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe*, a title usually rendered in English as *Love and Intrigue*, presents a text that is "low" style: in prose, highly colloquial, sometimes to the point of slang, and strongly marked by class distinction. Translation of such a text proceeds, necessarily, largely by ear and instinct. Spoken language, which is ephemeral, leaves a blank that must be filled by words in current usage, the old forms having vanished. I cannot claim to have escaped anachronism; my best hope is to have avoided jarring anachronism that injures the illusion of an action that took place more than two hundred years ago.

German texts set in previous centuries, especially comedy, enjoy the advantage of four forms of direct address: second- and third-person, singular and plural. These many forms create social distinctions, convey nuances of hierarchy, and color expressions of contempt and deference in ways that do not survive in English. Thus Wurm's abjectness and malice, read in the original, plumb new depths of squalor. And his retribution at the end of the play acquires new pungency and a satisfying ring of social justice when he turns on his ennobled master, who has always addressed him, with proper condescension, as "Er," and whom he has addressed, deferentially, as "Sie," and the two men square off on a common level of reciprocated contempt, addressing each other as "du." These small carriers of meaning are lost in translation.

Here again, as in translating *Don Carlos*,<sup>1</sup> I have pruned certain exuberances of the original—restatements that do no work, flights of

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1 *Don Carlos Infante of Spain: A Dramatic Poem* by Friedrich Schiller. Translated by Flora Kimmich (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0134>; <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/product/711>

fancy that know no end, interjections that break an effective flow of expression—in the interest of good rhetoric and good argument. My object here again is to gain felicity and persuasion at no expense of meaning.

This translation, like the others in the series of Schiller's major plays, which Open Book Publishers makes freely available to a wide readership,<sup>2</sup> is intended for young people in college-level instruction and for the general reader. The endnotes undertake to ease the reader's way through an old text by situating the play in its period and remarking on its structure.

I gratefully acknowledge my debt to Gerhard Kluge, editor of the edition *Deutsche Klassiker*, Frankfurt am Main, 1989, the text on which my translation is based, whose commentary gave me valuable guidance in preparing the endnotes. My debt to Roger Paulin grows with each new volume of the series. The present text has been greatly strengthened by his fine ear, his command of both languages, and his learning. Alessandra Tosi presided over it all with vigilance and resourcefulness. Christoph Kimmich, once again, provided me with everything I needed.

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2 See <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/section/40/1>

# Introduction

*Roger Paulin*

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Friedrich Schiller wrote *Love and Intrigue* (*Kabale und Liebe*) in 1782 after having fled from his native Württemberg, and completed it in early 1784. It was ready for the first stage performance in Mannheim on 13 April 1784.

Duke Karl August, the ruler of Württemberg, had not appreciated Schiller's talent and was more interested in his services as an army surgeon. Schiller had escaped across the border to the more congenial Mannheim, where he was to see the first two of his plays, *The Robbers* and *Fiesco*, completed and performed. His absences had incurred the Duke's displeasure. This was not to be taken lightly: in 1777, Karl Eugen had had the poet and journalist Christian Daniel Friedrich Schubart arrested and incarcerated for speaking things he did not wish to hear. While Schiller was at the cadet school founded by the Duke, the Hohe Karlsschule, the pupils were taken to see Schubart in prison. The message was clear: toe the line, or else.

During his incarceration, Schubart had written a poem, a vision of a royal burial vault, where lay side by side the good princes, the fathers of their people, and those whose reigns had spelt oppression and misrule, extravagance and favouritism. Whatever they might think of the rest of the play, audiences and readers of *Love and Intrigue* are unfailingly moved by the old retainer's account in Act Two, Scene Two, of the sale of 7,000 soldiers to fight in the American War of Independence (so-called Hessians) in order to pay for Lady Milford's diamonds. It rings true. In fact Karl Eugen did not sell his soldiers, but he did grind his subjects to build palaces for his mistress.

To this is added the subject of love across the social divide of aristocracy and commoner. In these terms, the play could be read as an anti-monarchist, anti-aristocratic tract, an indictment foreshadowing demands expressed violently in France in 1789 — just a few years ahead — and calling for a reordering of society's values. Unlike *The Robbers*, where anarchy threatens to break out, or *Fiesco*, where a regime is overthrown, *Love and Intrigue* offers no such challenges to the established order. The explosive charges mentioned in the text — by the First Minister and by Lady Milford — are metaphorical only: they are not laid under the palace (and the Duke never appears). Despite suitable punishment of wrongdoers at the end, the system does not change. At least in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, with which this play is often compared, the families cease feuding at the sight of the dead lovers. But we do not sense any change of heart here, nor are we led to expect any.

Titles and subtitles matter in plays. Schiller's first title for this play was *Luise Millerin*, the heroine's name. From this one might infer that he was placing her not merely in the centre of the action (she engages with all of the characters) but that her personal tragedy represented the main dramatic interest (as indeed it does in Verdi's opera, *Luisa Miller*). Instead, he chose a more speaking title, *Kabale und Liebe*, the only one in his oeuvre that does not name the main character directly or the milieu in which he or she operates. Was it his intention to place the court cabal in the foreground and all that it entailed, with its machinations frustrating and ultimately destroying the love that forms the second component of the title? Or do Love and Intrigue balance each other equally, the one conditional on the other? Certainly, English titles since the first translation in 1795 have reversed Schiller's order — more natural in English — as *Love and Intrigue*, as good a rendition as we shall ever get, 'cabal' in English having too strongly political overtones. But another early translator rendered the title as *The Minister*, which, while not Schiller's original, does foreground Walter's corrupt and inhuman calculations and schemings, in the toils of which the lovers are inextricably caught.

The subtitle of the play, in German 'bürgerliches Trauerspiel', is harder to render, for the simple reason that English has no such term. True, the 'middle-class tragedy', the French 'drame bourgeois', owed its origin to an ultimately English source: George Lillo's *The London*

*Merchant* (1731). That play seemed to upset the traditional subdivision of the dramatic genre into characters of high station (tragedy) and the lower orders (comedy). It was in prose, thus going further than Shakespeare, whose high characters may only occasionally speak in this form. Instead, it proposed that high sentiments, pathos, tragic confrontations and emotional entanglements may be experienced not only by kings and potentates, but by those of lower social rank, the 'middle class', who now acquire a dramatic dignity hitherto denied them by neo-classical poetics. In France, Denis Diderot stresses the domestic sphere as the place of dramatic conflict; he praises the high pathos of the middle-class family scene in painting. Both in France and Germany, the notion of a 'middle-class tragedy' goes hand in hand with the cult of feeling, German 'Empfindsamkeit', French 'sensibilité', with its appeal to the heart, to human goodness, to tears, as exemplified in England by the novels of Samuel Richardson (the kind of novel that Luise in *Love and Intrigue* has been reading). And the tragedies would be in prose, not in verse.

In Germany, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing took up this mode with his *Miss Sara Sampson* of 1755 (note the English title), with its endangered virtue and high emotional turmoil. But his second major tragedy, *Emilia Galotti* of 1772, and thus chronologically closer to Schiller, introduced elements that we see recurring in *Love and Intrigue*: the conflict between social classes and stations, the corruption of courts, the moral dilemma of the heroine. Set in an Italian court, Lessing's play reduces the action to a short span of time and a tightly reduced number of characters, all this in five acts — features adapted from the traditional classical tragedy. Schiller follows this scheme, but takes the bold step of placing his action at a German court.

Schiller has a similarly spare cast — eight main characters — and the action is restricted to two private spheres, the antechamber of a court, where the ruler, although omnipresent, never actually appears, and the domestic quarters of the Miller family. We no longer have the huge cast lists of *The Robbers* or *Fiesco*, or their frequent changes of scene. In this respect, *Love and Intrigue* foreshadows the tighter action of *Don Carlos*, the second and third parts of *Wallenstein*, and *Maria Stuart*. We are reminded, too, of how the action in *Wallenstein* is directed by the absent Emperor, who, like the Duke in *Love and Intrigue*, never intervenes personally in the action.

The classically tight *dramatis personae* also reflect the close interaction of the characters. Those around whom the main action revolves, Luise, Ferdinand, the First Minister, and Wurm, all confront each other both in the commoner's house and in the palace. Miller and his wife never leave their sphere, Kalb and Lady Milford similarly. We note certain imbalances: the First Minister has no wife and Ferdinand has no mother (she is never mentioned). Luise, on the other hand, has her father and her moral and filial duty towards him (her mother is a caricature and hardly developed). The constellations as they are set up are such that there is no female character to balance or restrain Walter senior in his corrupt dealings or to rein in Walter junior's extravagances and flights. Indeed those characters beginning with 'W' arouse our attention: Walter (which in German can suggest 'he who is in control'), and Wurm (meaning worm), who is his creature, raised from nothing to carry out his master's bidding. (The course of the action will show that the worm has more devilish cunning than the man in charge). Kalb, a figure of fun, is a useful idiot created for Walter's use, whereas Lady Milford, the only character who has the real personal freedom to rise above love and intrigue, breaks loose from the court and exercises a kind of moral awareness. She will, of course, be replaced. Nothing will have changed. There are very small grounds indeed for believing that the catastrophe in the Miller and von Walter families will effect a change of heart in the Duke.

But there are more subtle forms of interrelation: in the modes of address adopted by the characters. English cannot render these, but they deserve mention nevertheless: the formal mode of address ('Sie'), as used between persons of higher station, and by Ferdinand to his father; the intimate ('du') between members of the same family (Walter to Ferdinand, Miller to Luise), but also as a form of insult (Ferdinand to Kalb in Act Four, Scene Three); and the third-person ('Er', 'Sie') used for menials (Walter to Wurm, Lady Milford to Luise at first, but also Luise to her father). These interlocutory forms tell us who belongs where and who defines whose station. They are most revealing of the heroine, Luise. For, at sixteen, she is already educated beyond her station and expresses herself (like Shakespeare's Juliet) with a sophistication beyond her years. This places her a cut above her father, the town musician, and he seems to accept it. But this does not free her from a sense of moral responsibility towards her father, and it is he who persuades her not to

take her own life. In so doing, Miller is appealing to a residual Christian conscience not shared by the characters of higher status. It is this, too, which influences Luise's fatal admission when Ferdinand interrogates her about the letter in Act Five; the truth comes too late to save her. It also enables Luise to worst Lady Milford in moral argument, but by the same token it also delivers her into the hands of Wurm. Where Ferdinand talks lightly of eloping with Luise, she is constrained by a love and a sense of responsibility alien to him. It is not by chance that Schiller has Luise first appearing with a book; it is followed by her avowal that she is a 'great sinner' and has lost the piety that has hitherto sustained her. She is not the only heroine of a 'bürgerliches Trauerspiel' to take upon herself the burden of guilt imposed by another, and Margarete in Goethe's *Faust* is similarly placed. It informs Luise's awareness, expressed in her very first scene with Ferdinand, that their love is fated, their deaths certain. An absolute love without barriers and constraints is impossible, even if the father for whom she has so much affection and for whom she sacrifices her love is only partially worthy of it. And Ferdinand? He would hardly need to open his mouth for us to form an idea of his character. His body language would suffice — in a play where Schiller writes gestures into the text as a dramatic component, not as a mere accompaniment to language. Ferdinand's bespeak grand movements and impetuous gesticulations that go with speech interlarded with exclamation marks and dashes. We do well to study his bodily expression before imputing to him any degree of systematic reflection.

It has become a convention of some recent studies on this play to look beyond its social statement — despite our outrage at the sale of soldiers or our admiration for Miller and his bold stand against Walter — and to see in it patterns that are at bottom philosophical or even theological. Why is the world ordained as it is? Who is responsible? On the one hand, Ferdinand believes — Luise too — that theirs is a love preordained by God, a 'heaven' (Luise uses this word to Lady Milford), a paradisiac state free of social bonds and convections, an encapsulated existence with its own terms of reference, like Romeo and Juliet's, if one will. When it becomes clear to him that this cannot be and that fate or some other agency is conspiring to draw them apart — the 'Intrigue' of the title — we hear much more radical language: that of judgment, revenge, recrimination, divested of its Christian connotations and now

part of a private theology of retribution. There will be propitiation, but on his terms. He is prepared to take upon himself the role of judge and judged. We seem to hear Karl Moor's 'I am my heaven and my hell' from Schiller's first play, *The Robbers*. But Ferdinand acts alone: his favorite word appears to be 'my' or 'mine', '*my* love', '*my* understanding of greatness and fortune', 'trust *me*' (my italics). There is no-one to intervene, to tell him that this must end in death — and not only his. Not that this is anywhere systematically formulated. Ferdinand goes, it seems, from one extreme, one overwrought formulation, to the next, in the heat of the moment piling one radical vision on to another. No wonder, therefore, that he does not pause for reflection, ridden as he is by visions that are total and absolute. Despite differences, we see something of Shakespeare's Othello and Leontes in the abruptness of his manic fantasies and frenetic jealousies. Has he, like his Luise, been reading too many books, absorbing too many notions current in the century: sentimental love, 'made in heaven', a world framed by providence, man born free but now in chains? *Love and Intrigue*, like Goethe's novel *Werther* of 1774, demonstrates that the most noble and laudable ideas of the culture of feeling may be turned inwards into personal catastrophe, there a botched suicide, here lemonade laced with arsenic. (We must try hard to forgive Schiller for this 'middle-class' beverage).

Luise is not free of these high-sounding sentiments, but, as said, she is subject to constraints that Ferdinand is not. To save her father, she must place Ferdinand second. Her tormentors play on her moral virtues, knowing that she will not break an oath once given. She demonstrates greatness of soul to Lady Milford, but what good is it to her? Lady Milford, in her turn, has preserved her 'heart', her inner integrity, throughout all the changes of fortune that have landed her here at this court. She can claim to have mitigated abuses, but she is powerless against the system as such. Her decision, as ex-mistress, to leave, is not exactly heroic, but it does not lack a certain grandeur either, and it will certainly spoil the Duke's dessert.

What of the ending? A murder, a suicide, two arrests and two bereft parents. All the talk of forgiveness, of making the journey together, comes too late. Ferdinand's dying challenge to the 'Judge of this world' will not help Luise, the 'angel'. Wurm goes off like the stage villain that he is. Do we believe in the last-minute reconciliation of father

and son, the punch-line of the play? The First Minister certainly does, perhaps the last delusion in a play full of tragic misunderstandings. Or perhaps not?

## Further Reading

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# Kabale und Liebe

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ein

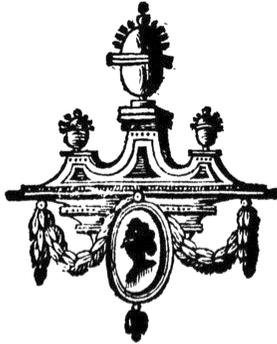
bürgerliches Trauerspiel

in fünf Aufzügen

von

Friedrich Schiller.

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Mannheim,  
in der Schwäbischen Hofbuchhandlung,  
1784.

LOVE AND INTRIGUE.  
A BOURGEOIS TRAGEDY



## Characters

FIRST MINISTER von WALTER, at the court of a German prince

FERDINAND, his son, major

CHAMBERLAIN von KALB

LADY MILFORD, favorite of the Prince

WURM, private secretary of the First Minister

MILLER, town musician

his WIFE

LUISA, his daughter

SOPHIE, chambermaid of Lady Milford

An old RETAINER of the Prince

various minor figures



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Miller just rising from his chair, his wife finishing her coffee. Engraving by Wilhelm Hecht from a woodcut by Heinrich Lossow, *Schillers Werke illustriert von ersten deutschen Künstlern* (Leipzig and Stuttgart, 1877). University of Virginia.  
Image in the public domain.

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# Act One

## Scene One

*Room in the Music Master's house*

*Miller is just rising from his chair and sets his cello aside. His wife sits at a table, still in night dress, drinking her coffee.*

MILLER (*walking rapidly up and down*). Once and for all. This business is turning serious. My daughter and the Baron—it's getting to be a scandal. My house is losing its good name. The First Minister gets wind of this and— Long story short, I'm going to show his lordship the door.

WIFE. You didn't talk him into coming here, didn't throw your daughter at him.

MILLER. Didn't talk him into coming here, didn't throw the girl at him—who's going to notice that? I'm the master here.<sup>1</sup> I should have called my daughter to order sooner. I should have seen the Major off. Or should have taken it right away to his Excellency Lord Papa. The young Baron will get away with no more than a slap on the wrist, you can be sure of that, and a thunderclap will break loose on the fiddler.

WIFE (*draining her cup with a slurp*). Nonsense! Pure talk! What can break loose on you? Who knows anything against you? All you do is practice your profession and pick up pupils where you find them.

MILLER. But just tell me, what's to come of all this business? He can't take the girl. There's not a chance of that. And make of her a— God have mercy! Listen, when such a *misseeu* with a *von* to his name has been helping himself here, there, and everywhere and has fetched himself a fine case of the-devil-knows-what, then our good browser develops a new taste, a taste for greener pastures. You just watch! You just watch! And if you put an eye to every knothole and stood guard over every drop of blood, he'll sweet-talk the girl right under your nose, give her one, and then take off again. And the girl is ruined for life, no one will have her. Or, if she comes to like that handiwork, keeps at it. (*Striking his forehead.*) Jesus Christ!

WIFE. God save us!

MILLER. Saving's just what's needed. What else can such a fly-by-night be aiming for? The girl is pretty, slender, turns a fine ankle. In the attic it can look like whatever. With you womenfolk, one doesn't care, as long as the good Lord has done right by the ground floor. When my young whipper-snapper has figured that one out—hoopla!—a light will dawn on him, like on my Rodney<sup>2</sup> when he sniffs a Frenchman, raises all his sails, and gives chase. I don't hold it against him. A man's a man. I should know.

WIFE. Should just read the lovely *billy-dooze*<sup>3</sup> his Honor is always writing to your daughter. Dear God! You'd see as clear as day he's only interested in her sweet soul.

MILLER. Now that's the limit! One kicks the dog and means the master. You want to give greetings to the flesh, you send your loving heart as messenger. How did I do it? When you've got so far that two minds meet—guess what—the bodies follow their example; the servants copy their lord- and ladyships, and in the end it was the silvery moon that coupled them.

WIFE. But only look at all the fine books the Major's brought into the house. They're your daughter's prayer books.

MILLER (*whistles*). Ho-ha! Prayer books! A lot you know. The black beef broth of Nature is too strong for his lordship's picky stomach. He must first have it cooked up fine in his pestilential poets' kitchen. Into the fire with all that rubbish. The girl is swallowing all kinds of super-divine foldarol on me—God knows whatever for. That gets into the blood like Spanish fly and tears apart on me the handful of Christianity that a father could barely manage to hold together. Into the fire, I say. The girl is filling her head with all kinds of deviltry. And after all that switching her tail in the land of milk and honey, she won't find her way back home again. She'll forget, be ashamed that her father is Miller the fiddler, and in the end she'll turn down a solid, honest son-in-law who'd have made such a good fit with my customers. No, by God! (*He leaps up, heated.*) We'll get straight to the point! I'll show the Major—yes, the Major—where the carpenter has cut the opening. (*He is at the point of leaving.*)

WIFE. Be nice, Miller. It's many a pretty penny those presents have—

MILLER (*coming back and standing before her*). My daughter's blood money? Go to the devil, you old bawd. I'll sooner take my fiddle and go begging, play for

a bowl of soup; I'll sooner smash my cello and carry manure in the sounding board than develop a taste for money my one child has paid for with her soul and her salvation. You just give up that cursed coffee of yours and the snuff you're sniffing,<sup>4</sup> and you'll not have to take your daughter's pretty face to market. I always got to eat my fill and had a good shirt on my back before that confounded nine-day-wonder sniffed his way into my parlor.

WIFE. Easy! Easy! You are all het up. I'm only saying we shouldn't spoil the Major's liking, since his Excellency is the First Minister's son.

MILLER. That's the hair in the soup. That's why, exactly why this thing must be broken up today yet. The First Minister will have to be grateful to me if he's a rightful father. You'll brush out my red plush coat and I'll have them announce me with His Excellency. I'll say to His Excellency: Your Lordship's most respected son has his eye on my daughter; my daughter is not good enough for to be Your Lordship's most respected son's wife, but she is too precious for to be his whore, and basta! *Miller's* my name!

## Scene Two

*Secretary Wurm. As above.*

WIFE. Oh, good morning, Mr. Sekertery. Have we the pleasure once more?

WURM. All mine, all mine, Cousin.<sup>5</sup> Where a Baron's honor drops by, my mere burgher's pleasure doesn't figure.

WIFE. What you don't say, Mr. Sekertery! His lordship the Major von Walter's high honor does give us the *blaisir*<sup>6</sup> now and then, but for all that we don't look down on anybody.

MILLER (*annoyed*). A chair for the gentleman, Wife. Take your things, fellow countryman?<sup>7</sup>

WURM (*lays hat and stick aside, seats himself*). Well! Well! And how is my intended? Or my once-intended? I wouldn't think— One doesn't get to see her—Mamsell<sup>8</sup> Luisa?

WIFE. Much obliged for your asking, Mr. Sekertery. But my daughter isn't proud, no, not at all.<sup>9</sup>

MILLER (*irritated, pokes her with an elbow*). Woman!

WIFE. Only regret that she can't have the honor of Mr. Sekertery. She's just off to church, my daughter.

WURM. Pleased to hear it, pleased to hear it. I'll have a pious Christian wife in her one day.

WIFE (*with a stupidly pretentious smile*). Yes— But, Mr. Sekertery—

MILLER (*visibly embarrassed, pinches his wife's ear*). Woman!

WIFE. If our house can be at your service otherwise— with the greatest pleasure, Mr. Sekertery—

WURM (*with false courtesy*). Otherwise! Many thanks! Many thanks! (*Clears his throat noisily.*)

WIFE. But Mr. Sekertery will surely see—

MILLER (*angry, kicking his wife in the rear*). Woman!

WIFE. Good is good and better is better. And you don't want to stand in the way of your only child. (*With peasant's pride.*) You've surely understood me, Mr. Sekertery?

WURM (*fidgets in his chair, scratches behind his ear, tugs at his cuffs and jabot*). Understood? Why, no— Well, yes— What would you be meaning?

WIFE. Well— Well— I just thought— I mean (*coughs*), since the good Lord most surely wants to have my daughter be a lady—<sup>10</sup>

WURM (*leaping up*). What's that you say?

MILLER. Keep your seat! Keep your seat, Mr. Secretary! The woman's a silly goose. How did a lady get into this conversation? What kind of donkey sticks its long ear out of all this talk?

WIFE. Fuss as long as you please, you. What I know, I know. And what the Major said, he said.

MILLER (*furious, leaps for his cello*). Will you shut your mouth? You want to feel this cello on your skull? What can you know? What can he have said? Pay

no attention to this twaddle, Cousin. And you march straight out to your kitchen. (*To Wurm.*) You wouldn't take me for such an idiot's brother-in-law as to want to use the girl to climb? You wouldn't think that of me, would you, Mr. Secretary?

WURM. Nor have I deserved it of *you*, Mr. Music Master. You've always shown yourself a man of his word, and my claim upon your daughter was as good as accepted. I have a position with a good living, the First Minister is well disposed toward me, I'll not want for good references when I want to move higher. You see that my intentions with Mamsell Luisa are serious, while a windbag nobleman may—

WIFE. Mr. Sekertery Wurm! More respect, if I may—

MILLER. Shut your mouth, I say! No more of this, Cousin. Nothing has changed. What I told you last autumn, I'll say again today. I'll not force my daughter.<sup>11</sup> If she likes you—well and good, and she can then see about getting on with you. If she shakes her head, better yet— In God's name, I was about to say—accept her refusal and crack a bottle with her father. The girl must live with you, not I. Why should I, out of pure willfulness, saddle her with a man she doesn't like? And have the Enemy after me like quarry in my old age; in every glass of wine, in every bowl of soup have to swallow: "You're the rascal who ruined his child!"

WIFE. Long story short: I'll not give my consent. Absolutely not. My daughter's meant for better things; I'll go to court if my husband lets himself be talked into something.

MILLER. You want me to break your neck? You hold your tongue.

WURM (*to Miller*). A bit of fatherly advice can do much with a daughter, and you, I hope, will know me, Mr. Miller?

MILLER. A pox on you! It's the girl must know you. What I, old graybeard, have seen in you is no treat for a young girl with a sweet tooth. I'll tell you to a hair if you're a man for the orchestra. But women's souls—they're too much even for a bandmaster. And to tell you straight, Cousin—like the rough and ready old Saxon that I am—you'd hardly thank me for my advice. I'll not urge my daughter toward anybody. But you I'd urge against, Mr. Secretary. Let me finish. I wouldn't trust a suitor who asks the father's help—excuse me—as

far as I can throw him. If he amounts to anything, he'll be ashamed to bring his talents before his sweetheart in this outmoded way. If he doesn't have the courage, he's a mouse—and that's no man for Luisa. He'll have to go behind the father's back to court the daughter. And make it so that the girl wishes father and mother to the devil before she'll let him go. Or so that *she* comes, throws herself at her father's feet, and begs for her one and only love or for black death. There's a man! That's what I call love! And anyone who can't get that far with the womenfolk—let him go ride his quill pen.

WURM (*reaches for his hat and stick, and out the door*). Much obliged, Mr. Miller.

MILLER (*following him slowly*). What for? What for? We didn't offer you anything, Mr. Secretary. (*Coming back.*) Doesn't hear a thing and off he goes. It's like pure green poison to see that pen-pusher. A bred-in-the-bone repulsive rascal, as if some shady dealer had haggled a way for him into the good Lord's world. Those little darting mouse eyes, flaming red hair, chin sticking out, as if Mother Nature, angry with the botched piece of work, had caught the rascal by that very part and flung him in some corner. Oh, no! Before I throw my daughter away on such a scoundrel, I'll have her— God forgive me!

WIFE (*spits*). The dog! But you're not going to get what you want.

MILLER. And you with your pestilential baron— You made me so angry. You're never so dumb as when you, for God's sake, should be smart. What was all that rubbish about your daughter and a lady supposed to mean? – Oh, I know his kind. You just have to let him get a whiff of something if you want it all over the market tomorrow. That's just such a *misseu*, the way they sniff about in people's houses, want to know the whys and wherefores about cellar and cook, and if you let something slip—boom!—Prince, mistress, and First Minister all hear about it and you have got a thunderation down your back.

### Scene Three

*Luisa Miller enters, a book in her hand. As above.*

LUISA (*lays the book down, goes to Miller, and takes his hand*). Good morning, dear Father.

MILLER (*warmly*). There's a good girl, my Luisa. Fine that you remember your Creator. Always be that way and his arm will hold you.

LUISA. Oh, I'm a great sinner, Father. Did he come, Mother?

WIFE. Who, my child?

LUISA. Ah! I forgot that there are other people besides him. My head is such a muddle. He didn't come, Walter?

MILLER (*sorrowful and earnest*). I'd have thought my Luisa had left that name at church?

LUISA (*having looked at him steadily*). I understand you, Father, feel your knife in my conscience. But it comes too late. I have no devotion any more, Father. Heaven and Ferdinand both tear at my bleeding soul, and I'm afraid—I'm afraid— (*Pause.*) But no, dear Father. The painter is best praised when the painting makes us forget him. Must God not be pleased when my pleasure at his masterwork makes me overlook Him?

MILLER (*throwing himself into a chair, cross*). There you have it! The fruit of all that godless reading.

LUISA (*going to the window, uneasy*). Where he might be just now? The fine young ladies<sup>12</sup> who see him, hear him— I'm a simple girl whom one forgets. (*Startled at what she has said, she runs to her father.*) But no! No! Forgive me. I'm not unhappy with my fate. I'll only think of him a little—that costs nothing. This bit of life—if I could breathe it out in a caressing breeze to cool his face! This bloom of youth—if it were a violet and *he* stepped on it and it could die quietly beneath him! That would be enough, Father. When a fly warms itself in sunbeams, can the proud, majestic sun punish that?

MILLER (*leans back in his chair and covers his face*). Listen, Luisa, these few remaining years— I'd give them all, if you had never seen the Major.

LUISA (*shocked*). What's that you're saying? No! He means something else, my father does. He'll not know that Ferdinand is mine, made for me, for my joy by the Father of all lovers. (*She stands reflecting.*) When I saw him the first time (*more rapid*) and the blood rose in my cheeks, my pulse leapt, every feeling spoke, every breath whispered: "He's the one"; when my heart caught sight of the one I'd always been looking for and also said, "He's the one"—and how that echoed through the whole world just as joyful—then, oh, then the first dawn broke in my soul. A thousand young feelings sprang up in my heart like flowers from the earth in spring. I saw no world anymore and yet I remember that it never was so beautiful. I knew of no God anymore and yet I had never loved Him so.<sup>13</sup>

MILLER (*hurries to her and presses her to his breast*). Luisa, dearest child, wonderful child, take my tired old head, take everything, everything! But the Major—God is my witness—him I cannot give you. (*He goes off.*)

LUISA. And I don't want him now, my father. This scant dewdrop of time—the very dream of Ferdinand drinks it up in rapture. I renounce him for this life. But then, Mother, when the barriers of difference collapse, when the hateful trappings of rank fall away from us and people are just people— I'll bring nothing with me but my innocence, but Father has said so often that finery and grand titles will become cheap when God comes and hearts will rise in price. Then I'll be rich. Tears then will count for triumphs and good thoughts for good ancestors. Then I'll have rank. What would raise him then above his girl?

WIFE (*jumping up*). Luisa! The Major! He's just leaping over the fence. Where can I hide?

LUISA (*begins to tremble*). Stay here, Mother!

WIFE. My God! How do I look! I'd be ashamed. I can't let his Honor see me like this. (*Exit.*)

## Scene Four

*Ferdinand von Walter. Luisa.*

*He flies to her. She sinks into a chair, faint and wan.*

*They regard each other silently. Pause.*

FERDINAND. You're pale, Luisa?

LUISA (*stands up and falls into his arms*). It's nothing. Nothing. You are here. It's over.

FERDINAND (*taking her hand to kiss it*). Does my Luisa still love me? My heart is just as it was yesterday; is yours, too? I've come flying by, wanted to see if you were cheerful and then go and be cheerful, too—and you are not.

LUISA. Oh, but I am, Beloved.

FERDINAND. Tell me the truth. You're not. Your soul is as clear to me as this diamond of first water (*indicating his ring*).<sup>14</sup> No bubble rises here that I'd not see; no thought crosses this face that could escape me! What's the matter? Quick now! If I just find this mirror bright, then no cloud passes over the world. What's troubling you?

LUISA (*contemplates him silently and significantly; then sadly*). Ferdinand! Ferdinand! If you only knew how handsomely this language sets off a burgher's daughter—

FERDINAND. What's this? (*Dismayed.*) Listen, my girl! Where did you get that from? You are my Luisa! Who says you should be something else? Do you see, you little traitor, in what cold terms I must respond to you? If you were wholly, solely love for me, when would you have found the time to make comparisons? When I'm with you, my reason melts into a glance, into a dream of you when I'm away. And you are not just love but also are clever? For shame! Every moment that you've lost to this kind of unhappiness was stolen from your young man.

LUISA (*taking his hand and shaking her head*). You want to soothe me, Ferdinand, to sing me to sleep. You want to lure my eyes away from this abyss into which I'll surely plunge. I look into the future: the call of fame, your projects,

your father—my nothingness. (*She starts and drops his hand.*) Ferdinand! A dagger over you and me! They'll separate us!<sup>15</sup>

FERDINAND. Separate us? (*He leaps up.*) Where did you get this misgiving, Luisa? Separate us? Who can loose the bond of two hearts or pull apart the tones of one chord? True, I'm a nobleman. But we'll just see if my patent of nobility is older than the designs for an infinite universe, or my coat of arms more valid than heaven's handwriting in Luisa's eyes, attesting: This woman is made for this man. I am the First Minister's son. That's the very reason. Who other than love itself can sweeten the hatreds that my father's extortion<sup>16</sup> will pass down to me?

LUISA. Oh, how I fear him, this father!

FERDINAND. I fear nothing—nothing—but the limits of your love. Let obstacles like mountains come between us— I'll take them for stairs up which I'll fly into Luisa's arms. The foul winds of fortune shall only raise my feelings higher, *dangers* will only make my Luisa the more alluring. No more of fear, my love. I myself, I'll watch over you the way the magic dragon watches over buried treasure. Entrust yourself to *me*. You need no other angel. I shall throw myself between you and Fate, receive every wound intended for you, catch every drop that overflows the cup of joy, bring it to you in the chalice of love. (*Embracing her tenderly.*) On this arm my Luisa will trip through life; heaven will receive you back again more lovely than it sent you here and admit, amazed, that love alone lays last hand upon a soul—<sup>17</sup>

LUISA (*pushing him away, very aroused*). No more! I beg you, say no more! If you knew— Let me go— You don't know that your hopes fall upon my heart like Furies. (*She wants to go.*)

FERDINAND (*stopping her*). Luisa! What in the world? What has come over you?

LUISA. I had *forgotten* these dreams and I was happy. But now! Now! *From this day on* my peace is over. Wild wishes—I know it—will rage in my breast. Go. God forgive you. You have thrown a brand into my peaceful young heart—a fire that never ever shall be quenched.<sup>18</sup>

(*She rushes out. He follows her, speechless.*)

## Scene Five

*Anteroom in the First Minister's suite*

*The First Minister, wearing the cross of an order and a star beside it,<sup>19</sup>  
enters, with Secretary Wurm.*

FIRST MINISTER. A serious attachment! My son? No, Wurm. You'll never make me believe that.

WURM. Your Excellency will be so gracious as to order me to prove it.

FIRST MINISTER. That he courts that little burgher chit, flatters her, even goes on about feelings—these things I find possible, forgivable, but— And the daughter of a music man, you say?

WURM. Music master Miller's daughter.

FIRST MINISTER. Pretty? But of course she is.

WURM (*vivid*). The prettiest of blondes. No exaggeration. She'd stand out beside the greatest beauties of the Court.

FIRST MINISTER (*laughs*). You're telling me—that you, too, have your eye on her, Wurm. That's what I see. But look here, my dear Wurm. That my son has feelings for womenfolk gives me hope the ladies won't exactly hate him. Then he'll get things done at Court. You say the girl is *pretty*. I like it that my son has *taste*. He professes solid intentions to the little fool? Better yet. I see he has the *wit* to lie to his advantage. He can become *minister*. He makes it happen? Perfect! I see that he has *luck*. And if this farce ends in a fine grandson— Incomparable! Then I'll toast the favorable aspects of my family tree with a bottle of Malaga and pay the legal penalty for the brat myself.

WURM. I only hope, your Excellency, you'll not have to drink that bottle to *console* yourself.

FIRST MINISTER (*grave*). Just recall, Wurm, that I, once I am persuaded, firmly persuaded, rage when I am angry. I want to take it lightly—this attempt of yours to set me on them. I gladly believe you'd want to rid yourself of this rival. Since you might find it hard to cut my son out with the girl, the *father* was to serve you as a flyswatter—that, too, I can understand. And your fine

beginnings as a rascal I find delightful. But, my dear Wurm, you must not try to fool me along with all the rest. Understand me well. Don't push the prank to the point of trespassing on my principles.

WURM. Your Excellency's pardon. If jealousy had any role here, as you suspect, it would be in what I saw, not what I say.

FIRST MINISTER. I should think it absent altogether. You dunce, what does it cost you if you receive a gold piece straight from the mint or only subsequently, from a banker? Take comfort from the local nobles: Wittingly or not, seldom is a marriage concluded among us where not at least a half-dozen guests or attendants can measure with a compass the bridegroom's chosen paradise.

WURM (*with a bow*). Then I, my Lord, am content with my burgher's rank.<sup>20</sup>

FIRST MINISTER. And furthermore you may soon have the pleasure of returning the favor most handsomely upon your rival. There's a plan afoot in Cabinet: Lady Milford, when the new Duchess arrives, will be dismissed apparently and, to perfect the deception, will enter another union. You know well, Wurm, how much my prestige depends upon the Lady's influence, how, in general, my most powerful plots are played into the Prince's changing moods. The Prince is looking for a match for Milford. Someone else could come along, conclude the bargain, acquire the Prince's confidence along with the Lady, and make himself indispensable. To keep the Prince in the toils of my family, my Ferdinand is to marry Milford. Do I make myself clear?

WURM. So clear that my eyes smart. The *Minister* at least has proved the *father* a mere beginner. If the Major proves himself as *obedient a son* as my Lord is a *tender father*, you may find your demand returned under protest.

FIRST MINISTER. Happily, I've never had to worry about the execution of a plan where I could intervene with "It shall be." And that brings us full circle, Wurm. I'll announce my son's marriage to him this very morning. The face he makes should justify what you suspect or disprove it.

WURM. By your leave, my gracious Lord. The dark face that he will surely make can be accounted as readily to the bride you bring him as to the one you take away. I beg you, try a sharper proof. Choose the most irreproachable match

in all the land, and if he consents, let Secretary Wurm drag a ball and chain about for three full years.

FIRST MINISTER (*biting his lip*). The devil!

WURM. That's the way it is. Her mother—the soul of stupidity—told me too much in her simplicity.

FIRST MINISTER (*walking up and down, suppressing his anger*). Fine! This very morning.

WURM. Only, may your Excellency not forget—the Major is son of my master.

FIRST MINISTER. *You'll* not be harmed, Wurm.

WURM. And that my service helping you *out of* an unwelcome daughter-in-law—

FIRST MINISTER. Deserves the return service of helping you *into* a wife—<sup>21</sup>  
That, too, Wurm.

WURM (*with a contented bow*). Always yours, my gracious Lord. (*About to go.*)

FIRST MINISTER. What I've just told you in confidence, Wurm— (*Menacing.*)  
If you talk—

WURM (*laughing*). Then your Excellency may produce my forgeries. (*He goes off.*)

FIRST MINISTER. I'm sure of you indeed. I'll tie you to your own villainy like a stag beetle to a string.<sup>22</sup>

ATTENDANT (*entering*). His Lordship Chamberlain von Kalb.

FIRST MINISTER. Just the one I wanted. (*To the Attendant.*) It's my pleasure.

*The Attendant goes off.*

Scene Six<sup>23</sup>

*Chamberlain von Kalb in opulent, but tasteless, court dress: chamberlain's keys, two watches, sword, his hat under his arm, his hair teased high. He flies toward the First Minister with a screech, spreading a scent of musk over the theater stalls. The First Minister.*

CHAMBERLAIN (*embracing him*). Ah! Good morning, dear friend! Well rested? Well slept? You'll forgive me that I come so late to have the pleasure—urgent business—the menu—visiting cards—arranging the guests for today's sledding party. And then I had to be present at the Prince's levée and announce the weather to His Serene Highness.<sup>24</sup>

FIRST MINISTER. Indeed, Chamberlain. You clearly couldn't get away.

CHAMBERLAIN. And on top of that my knave of a tailor stood me up.

FIRST MINISTER. And still so well turned out?

CHAMBERLAIN. That is not all. Today it's one *malheur* after another— Just listen.

FIRST MINISTER (*distracted*). Is that possible?

CHAMBERLAIN. Just listen. I've hardly alighted from my coach, the horses shy, stamp and lash out, and—I ask you!—and I am splashed up to the knees with the muck of the streets. What to do? Put yourself in my place, Baron. There I stood. It was late. It's a day's trip— But to come before His Grace in that outfit! Merciful God! What do I do? I stage a fainting fit. They rush me head over heels into my coach and I go flying home in full career—change clothes—drive back—what do you say to that—and am the first one in the antechamber. What do you say to that?

FIRST MINISTER. A splendid impromptu of human ingenuity. But aside from that, Kalb— You've already spoken with the Duke?

CHAMBERLAIN (*self-important*). Twenty minutes and one-half.

FIRST MINISTER. Quite so! And have doubtless heard important news for me?

CHAMBERLAIN (*after a silence, gravely*). Today His Grace is wearing a beaver, color merde d'oye.<sup>25</sup>

FIRST MINISTER. Just think! No, Chamberlain. In that case I have even better news for you. That Lady Milford is to become Madame Major von Walter surely comes as news to you?

CHAMBERLAIN. Think of that! And that's been all arranged?

FIRST MINISTER. Has been *signed*, Chamberlain. And you'll oblige me if you go without delay to prepare the Lady for his visit, and make Ferdinand's decision known throughout the whole residence.<sup>26</sup>

CHAMBERLAIN (*enchanted*). With the very greatest pleasure, my great friend. What could I desire more? I'll fly to do it. (*Embraces him.*) Farewell. In three-quarters of an hour, the whole town will know of it. (*He skips out.*)

FIRST MINISTER (*laughs in his wake*). Let them just say that creatures such as that are good for nothing— Now my Ferdinand *must* be willing, or the whole town has lied. (*Rings. Wurm enters.*) My son is to come in.

(*Wurm goes off. The First Minister walks up and down, deep in thought.*)

## Scene Seven

*Ferdinand. The First Minister. Wurm, who goes off again.*

FERDINAND. At your orders, honored Father—

FIRST MINISTER. Only so am I ever to have the pleasure of my son. That will do, Wurm. Ferdinand, I've been observing you for a while now and do not find the frank, high-hearted youth who once delighted me. A curious sorrow broods in your face. You avoid me. You avoid your usual circles. Come now! At *your* age you'll be forgiven ten extravagances for one moment of crotchiness.<sup>27</sup> Leave the crotchets to me, dear Son. Let me work on your future fortunes and think only of falling in with my designs. Come! Embrace me, Ferdinand.

FERDINAND. You're very gracious today, my father.

FIRST MINISTER. Today, you rogue—and this "today" said with a grimace? (*Earnestly.*) Ferdinand, for *whose* sake have I trodden the risky road into the Prince's affections? For *whose* sake have I fallen out both with my conscience

and with heaven? Listen, Ferdinand. (I'm speaking with my son.) *Who* did I make room for when I removed my predecessor—a story that cuts me the more deeply the more carefully I conceal my knife from the world. Now tell me, Ferdinand: For *whose* sake did I do these things?

FERDINAND (*stepping back, horrified*). Not for *mine*, my father? The bloody sheen of all this foulness is surely not to fall on *me*? God knows! Better, never to have been born than to serve as an excuse for these misdeeds.

FIRST MINISTER. What did you say? No matter. I'll ascribe it to all those novels you've been reading. Ferdinand— I'll not be angered, you impertinent boy. Is *that* how you reward my sleepless nights? My constant care? My eternal pricks of conscience? The burden of responsibility falls on me, on me the Judge's rage and condemnation. You receive your happiness at second hand—the legacy's not sullied by a crime.

FERDINAND (*raising his right hand toward heaven*). I solemnly renounce this legacy, which only reminds me of an atrocious father.

FIRST MINISTER. Listen, youngster, don't you anger me. If you had your way, you'd crawl in the dust your whole life long.

FERDINAND. Better that, Father, than if I crawled around the Throne.

FIRST MINISTER (*swallowing his anger*). Well, then. I'll have to force you to recognize your happiness. Where ten others cannot rise no matter how they try, you are raised up effortlessly, raised up in sleep. At twelve you were an ensign, at twenty, major. I got the Prince to give consent. Now you'll lay aside your uniform and go into the ministries. The Prince spoke of privy counselor, of embassies—extraordinary favor. A magnificent prospect opens before you. For the moment, a smooth road toward the throne, then to the throne itself, if power is indeed worth as much as the marks of power. That does not excite you?

FERDINAND. Because my understanding of greatness and good fortune is not exactly yours. *Your* happiness rarely announces itself except by ruin. Envy, fear, and ill-will are the dark mirrors in which a ruler's highness admires itself; tears, curses, and despair the dreadful fare on which these happy ones banquet, from which they rise, drunk, and stagger into eternity, before the

throne of God. My ideal of happiness withdraws into me, sufficient to itself. My wishes all lie buried in my *heart*.

FIRST MINISTER. Masterly! Perfect! Splendid! Thirty years later the first lecture comes again! A pity that my fifty-year-old head is now too thick and slow to learn! Now, then. So that this rare talent does not rust out, I'll pair you with someone with whom you can exercise such clownery at your pleasure. You shall decide—decide today—to take a wife.

FERDINAND (*steps back, startled*). My father?

FIRST MINISTER. Put plainly: I have sent Lady Milford a writing in *your* name. You will be so good as to betake yourself to her without delay and tell her that you are her bridegroom.

FERDINAND. To *Milford*, my father?

FIRST MINISTER. If she is known to you—

FERDINAND (*beside himself*). To what pillory in the duchy is she not? But it's surely ridiculous of me to take your caprice seriously? Would you want to be *father* to the *scoundrel son* who'd marry the notorious Favorite?

FIRST MINISTER. Not only that. I'd court her myself if she'd have a man of fifty. You'd not want to be *son* to such a *scoundrel father*?

FERDINAND. As God lives, no!

FIRST MINISTER. On my honor, an impertinence that I pardon for its rarity.

FERDINAND. I beg you, Father! Don't leave me any longer in an uncertainty that makes it insupportable to call myself your son.

FIRST MINISTER. Boy, are you mad? What reasonable man would not covet the distinction of changing places with his ruler?

FERDINAND. Father, you baffle me. You call it a *distinction*—a *distinction* to join one's ruler there where he, too, crawls down below the level of the *human*?

(*The First Minister bursts out laughing.*)

You can laugh—I'll overlook that, Father. How can I show myself before the simplest artisan, who at least received a body that is whole as his dowry? Or before the world? Before the Prince? How before the paramour herself, who'd want to wash the blot on her honor away in my disgrace?

FIRST MINISTER. Where in all the world have you picked up such talk, boy?

FERDINAND. I implore you, Father, by heaven and earth! Tossing your only son away like this will not make you as happy as it will make him unhappy. I'll give you my life if that can advance you. I have my life from you; I'll not hesitate a moment to offer it for your greatness. But my *honor*, Father—if you take *this*, then giving me life was frivolous roguery and I must curse the *father* like the *pander*.

FIRST MINISTER (*clapping him on the shoulder*). Well done, dear Son. I now see that you're a *solid* fellow, deserving of the best wife in the duchy. You shall have her. This very noon you'll engage yourself to Countess Ostheim.

FERDINAND (*disconcerted anew*). Is this moment to break me altogether?

FIRST MINISTER (*watching him closely*). Your honor, I presume, will raise no objection?

FERDINAND. No, my father. Friederike von Ostheim would be the happiness of any other. (*To himself, utterly confused.*) What his *bad* intentions left whole in my heart, his *good* intentions tear to pieces.

FIRST MINISTER (*still fixed on him*). I await your gratitude, Ferdinand—

FERDINAND (*rushes to him and kisses his hand fervently*). Father! Your favor stirs all my feelings. Father! Warmest thanks for your heart's intentions. Your choice is irreproachable. But I can— I may— Have pity on me— I cannot love the Countess.

FIRST MINISTER (*stepping back*). Aha! Now I have him, the young master. This trap he has walked into, the sly dissembler. So it wasn't honor that forbade the Lady? You detested, not the *person*, but the *marriage*?

(*Ferdinand stands petrified, then starts and tries to escape.*)

Where to? Stop there! Is that the respect you owe me? (*The Major returns.*) You've been announced to the Lady. The Prince has my word. Town and Court know all about it. If you make a liar of me, boy—before the Prince, the Lady, the town, the Court—listen, boy—or if I *get behind certain stories*— Ho! Ho! What has so suddenly blown out the fire in your cheeks?

FERDINAND (*pale and trembling*). What's that? It's surely nothing, Father.

FIRST MINISTER (*with a terrible glance*). And *if it's something*— And if I find out where this balkiness is coming from— Ho, boy! The very thought throws me into a rage. Go this minute. The changing of the guard is just beginning. You'll be at the Lady's door as soon as the password's given. When I appear, a duchy trembles. We'll just see if my pig-headed son's too much for me. (*He goes out, then returns.*) Boy, I say you'll be there, or beware my anger. (*He goes off.*)

FERDINAND (*emerging from a stunned state*). Is he gone? Was that the voice of a father? I'll go to her—I'll go—and tell her things, hold up a mirror to her. Worthless woman! And if you *then* still want my hand—before the assembled nobility, the military, and the people—gird yourself in all the pride of England—I'll toss you aside, hardy young Saxon that I am! (*He rushes out.*)



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Lady Milford improvising at the piano, Sophie at the window. Engraving by Wilhelm Hecht from a woodcut by Heinrich Lossow, *Schillers Werke illustriert von ersten deutschen Künstlern* (Leipzig and Stuttgart, 1877). University of Virginia. Image in the public domain.

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## Act Two

*A salon in Lady Milford's palace; a sofa stands to the right, a piano to the left.*

### Scene One

*The Lady, still in charming négligé,<sup>28</sup> her hair not yet done, is improvising at the piano; Sophie, her chambermaid, comes back from the window.*

SOPHIE. The officers are breaking up. The changing of the guard is over. But no sign of Walter.

LADY (*stands up and walks restlessly up and down the room*). I don't know what it is today, Sophie. I've never felt this way before. So you didn't see him? But of course. He'll be in no hurry. It weighs on me like a crime. Go, Sophie. Have them lead out the wildest racer in the stable for me. I must get out—see people and blue sky and ride until I feel more free.

SOPHIE. If you don't feel well, my Lady, let them gather here this evening.<sup>29</sup> Have the Duke dine here; have the hombre tables set up before your sofa. I should have the Prince and his whole Court at my disposal and yet be out of sorts?

LADY (*throwing herself on the sofa*). Spare me, please. I'll give you a diamond for every hour I can be rid of them. Am I to decorate my walls with that crowd? They're wretched people. They are horrified if I let a warm, heart-felt word slip out; they gape and snort as if they'd seen a ghost. They're all puppets on a single string; I can work them more easily than my filet needle. What am I to do with people whose hearts tick like their pocket watches? Can I enjoy asking them a question when I know in advance what they will answer? Or conversing with them when they can't find the courage to differ with me? Out with them! It's boring to ride a horse that doesn't also take the bit in its teeth. (*She goes to the window.*)

SOPHIE. But surely you'll make an exception for the Prince, my Lady? The handsomest man, the fieriest lover, the wittiest tongue in all the land!

LADY (*returning*). Because it is *his* land—and only a principality can halfway serve to justify my choice. You say they envy me. Poor thing! They ought to pity me. Among all those who nurse at the breast of majesty, the Favorite

comes away the poorest, since she's the only one to get to know the wandering beggar in that great rich man. True, he can use his greatness as a talisman to raise my every heart's desire like a fairy castle out of the earth. He puts the nectar of both Indies on his table, summons paradises out of wildernesses, makes the streams of the land play proudly in fountains. Or he burns up the life's blood of his subjects in fireworks.<sup>30</sup> But can he command his *heart* to beat *great and fiery* against another *great and fiery heart*? Can he search out a single fine feeling among his dwindling reserves? My heart starves in all this excess of the senses. What help to me are a thousand high sentiments, where I'm here only to cool passions?

SOPHIE (*looking at her, amazed*). How long have I been in your service, my Lady?

LADY. Since you come to know me only *today*? It's true, dear Sophie: I've sold my honor to the Prince, but I've kept my heart free—a heart, my girl, that is perhaps still worthy of a man, over which the poisonous wind of the Court has passed like no more than a breath across a mirror. Believe me, my dear: I'd long since have held my own against this wretched Prince, had my ambition only let me concede superior rank to another lady at the Court.

SOPHIE. And this heart submitted so readily to ambition?

LADY (*vivid*). As if this heart had not avenged itself already—were not avenging itself yet! Sophie (*laying her hand on Sophie's shoulder*), we womenfolk can only choose between *ruling* and *servicing*, but the highest delight of *power* is only a wretched makeshift if we're denied the *greater* delight of being slave to a man we love.

SOPHIE. You, my Lady, are the *last* one from whom I expected to hear *that* truth.

LADY. But why, my Sophie? Can one not see in this childish wielding of the scepter that we are only here to hold the *lead strings*?<sup>31</sup> Didn't you see in all my changing moods, in these wild pleasures, that they served only to drown the sound of wilder wishes in my breast?

SOPHIE (*stepping back, astonished*). My Lady?

LADY (*more vivid*). Satisfy these! Give me the man I'm thinking of, whom I adore, whom I must *have* or die. (*Entranced.*) Let me hear him say that tears of love sparkle more brightly in our eyes than diamonds in our hair (*fiery*)

and I'll throw the Prince's heart and his principality at his feet and flee with this man into the farthest wilderness in the world—

SOPHIE (*looking at her, shocked*). Good heavens! What are you saying? Are you quite well?

LADY (*startled*). You blanch? Have I perhaps said too much? Then let me gain your silence by my confidence: hear yet more, hear all—

SOPHIE (*looking at her, anxiously*). I'm afraid, my Lady—afraid I have no need to hear it.

LADY. The union with the Major— You and the world think it's a *court intrigue*. Sophie—don't blush—don't be ashamed of me— It is the work—*of my love*.

SOPHIE. By God! What I suspected!

LADY. They let themselves be persuaded, Sophie—the weak Prince, that scheming Walter, the silly Chamberlain. Every one of them would swear this marriage was the unfailling way to keep me for the Duke, to bind our tie the more tightly. Oh, quite! The very way to cut it forever! To break these disgraceful chains forever! Liars who've been lied to! Outwitted by a mere woman! You yourselves will now deliver my beloved to me. That was exactly what I wanted. And when I once have him—when I have him—goodbye to you, goodbye forever, detestable splendor—<sup>32</sup>

## Scene Two

*An old Retainer of the Prince, carrying a jewelry case. As above.*

RETAINER. His Grace the Duke commends himself to my Lady and sends you these diamonds on the occasion of your marriage. They have just come in from Venice.

LADY (*has opened the case and starts*). My good man! What does your Duke pay for such stones?

RETAINER (*darkly*). They don't cost him a penny.

LADY. What? *Nothing?* Are you out of your mind? (*Stepping back from him.*)  
Why are you looking at me that way? These priceless stones, they cost him  
*nothing?*

RETAINER. Yesterday seven thousand sons of the land went off to America.  
*They pay for everything.*<sup>33</sup>

LADY (*lays the jewelry down and walks rapidly through the room; pause; then to the  
old Retainer*). What is it, my man? I believe you're weeping.

RETAINER (*wipes his eyes; trembling, with a terrible voice*). Precious stones like  
*these* here— I, too, have a son or two among them.

LADY (*turns away abruptly, catching his hand*). But not conscripted?

RETAINER (*with a terrible laugh*). Oh, God, no—purely voluntary. It seems a  
handful of smart-talking fellows stepped out front and asked the colonel  
what price the Prince takes for a yoke of men—and our most gracious ruler  
had all the regiments on the parade ground march up and shoot them down,  
the troublemakers. We heard the muskets cracking, saw their brains spatter  
on the pavement, and the whole army cried: *Hi-ho, off to America!*

LADY (*falls onto the sofa*). God! God! And I heard nothing? I noticed nothing?

RETAINER. Well, yes, my Lady— Why did you have to go off on a bear hunt<sup>34</sup>  
with our Lord just as they struck up all the noise for parting? You shouldn't  
have missed something so splendid: The way the rattling drums announced  
that it was time and howling orphans ran after a living father and a raging  
mother ran to spit a nursing baby on the bayonet blades, and how they drove  
a bridegroom from his bride with sabre cuts, and we graybeards stood there  
in despair and finally threw our crutches after the fellows and off to the new  
world. And the whole time all the drums rolling so that all-knowing God  
was not supposed to hear us pray—

LADY (*stands up, very stirred*). Away with these stones—they flash the flames of  
hell into my heart. (*More gently, to the old Retainer.*) Be comforted, poor old  
man. They'll come home again. They'll see their fatherland again.

RETAINER (*warm and with conviction*). Indeed they will! Heaven knows! At the  
town gates they turned and cried: "God be with you, wife and children!  
Long live the father of our country! At Judgment Day we'll all be back again!"

LADY (*striding up and down*). Horrible! Terrible! And they told *me* I had dried them all, the tears of this land. Dreadful, dreadful, what I begin to see. Go, my man. Tell your master—that I'll come to thank him personally. (*As the old Retainer is about to go, she tosses her purse into his hat.*) And take that, for telling me the truth.

RETAINER (*tosses the purse contemptuously on the table*). Add it to the rest. (*He goes off.*)

LADY (*looking after him*). Sophie, run after him. Ask his name. He shall have his sons back.

(*Sophie goes off. The Lady walks up and down, reflecting;  
then to Sophie, who returns.*)

Was there not a rumor recently that fire had destroyed a town on the border and made beggars of nearly four hundred families? (*She rings.*)

SOPHIE. Why do you ask? Yes, it's true. And most of those poor creatures now serve their creditors as slaves or go to ruin in the shafts of the princely silver mines.

SERVANT (*entering*). What are my Lady's orders?

LADY (*giving him the jewelry*). Let this be brought immediately before the Estates General and the proceeds distributed to the four hundred ruined by the fire.

SOPHIE. My Lady, consider that you are risking the highest displeasure.

LADY (*with grandeur*). I should wear the curse of the land in my hair? (*She signals the Servant, who goes off.*) Or would you see me sink to the ground under the terrible trappings of such tears? Go, Sophie. Better to have false gems in one's hair and memory of this good deed in one's heart.

SOPHIE. But gems like these! Couldn't you have taken your worse pieces? No, indeed, my Lady. This is unforgivable.

LADY. Silly girl! For this more pearls and diamonds<sup>35</sup> will fall for me in *one* instant than ten kings carried in their diadems, and better ones—

SERVANT (*returning*). Major von Walter—

SOPHIE (*hurrying to the Lady*). God! You're blanching—

LADY. The first man who's ever frightened me— Sophie— Say I'm not well, Edward— No, wait— Is he in good spirits? Laughing? What does he say? Oh, Sophie, don't I look horrible?

SOPHIE. My Lady, please—

SERVANT. Do you order me to turn him away?

LADY (*stammering*). He is most welcome. (*The Servant goes off.*) Tell me, Sophie— What shall I say to him? How shall I receive him? I'll be speechless. He'll laugh at me. He'll— I'm afraid that— You're leaving me, Sophie? Stay! No. Rather, go! Oh, do stay.

*(The Major is coming through the anteroom.)*

SOPHIE. Compose yourself. He's here.

### Scene Three

*Ferdinand von Walter. As above.*

FERDINAND (*with a short bow*). Should I be interrupting you, my Lady—

LADY (*her heart hammering*). In nothing I would find more important, Major.

FERDINAND. I come at my father's orders.

LADY. I am indebted to him.

FERDINAND. To *announce* to you that we shall be married. Thus my father's commission.

LADY (*blanches, trembling*). And not of your own heart?

FERDINAND. Ministers and panders never ask that.

LADY (*so anxious that words fail her*). And you yourself have nothing you would add?

FERDINAND (*with a glance at Mamsell Sophie*). Quite a bit, my Lady.

LADY (*signaling Sophie, who goes off*). May I offer you this sofa?

FERDINAND. I shall be brief, my Lady.

LADY. Yes?

FERDINAND. I am a man of honor.

LADY. Whose virtues I value.

FERDINAND. A knight.

LADY. None better in the duchy.

FERDINAND. And an officer.

LADY (*conciliating*). You touch here on excellences that others have in common with you. Why no mention of those in which you are *unique*?

FERDINAND (*frosty*). Here I have no need of them.

LADY (*with mounting anxiety*). And how am I to understand this preamble?

FERDINAND (*slowly and emphatically*). As the protest of honor, should you wish to force my hand.

LADY (*drawing herself up*). What's this you say, Major?

FERDINAND (*cool*). It's the language of my heart, my coat of arms, and this sword.

LADY. It was the Prince gave you this sword.

FERDINAND. The State gave it to me, by the hand of the Prince. God gave me my heart, and half a thousand years gave me my coat of arms.

LADY. The name of the Duke—

FERDINAND (*heated*). Can the Prince twist natural rights, or stamp new acts the way he stamps his copper coins? He himself is not exalted above honor, but his gold can stop its mouth. He can cast his ermine<sup>36</sup> over his vileness. If you please, my Lady: no more of this. It is no longer a matter of prospects

and pedigree thrown away, or of this tassel on my sword,<sup>37</sup> or of this world's opinion. I am prepared to trample all that underfoot as soon as you persuade me that the *prize* is no worse than the *price*.

LADY (*turning away from him, pained*). I have not deserved that, Major.

FERDINAND (*seizing her hand*). Forgive me. We speak here without witnesses. The circumstance that brings you and me together—today and never again—entitles me, forces me not to withhold my most secret feelings. I cannot get it through my head, my Lady, that one so beautiful and so intelligent—qualities a man would value—could throw herself away on a prince who knows only to admire her *allures*, unless this lady were *ashamed* to bring a man her *heart*.

LADY (*looking him directly in the face*). Have your full say.

FERDINAND. You call yourself a *Briton*. By your leave, I cannot believe *you* are a Briton. The free-born daughter of the freest people under heaven—which is also too proud to burn incense to *foreign virtue*—would never hire herself out to *foreign vice*. *You* cannot possibly be a Briton—or this Briton's heart must be *smaller* by as much as Britain's pulse beats higher and bolder.

LADY. Are you done?

FERDINAND. One could say it is woman's vanity, passion, temperament, love of pleasure. Often enough virtue has outlived honor. Many a one who entered these shameful lists reconciled the world afterwards by means of noble deeds and ennobled this ugly business by means of becoming practices. But then why this monstrous *squeezing* of the land, such as never was before—and carried out in the name of the duchy. I am done.

LADY (*gentle and with dignity*). It is the first time, Walter, that one has dared address me thus, and you alone would I answer. That you reject my hand—for this I value you. That you malign my heart is something I forgive. That you are serious I do not believe of you. One who'd make bold thus to insult a lady who needs but one night to ruin him utterly must credit this lady with a *great soul* or be quite mad. Your putting the ruin of the land on my account we'll let almighty God forgive, who one day brought you and me and the Prince together in one place. But you have called out the Englishwoman in me and my fatherland must have answer for reproaches of this order.

FERDINAND (*leaning on his sword*). I'm eager to hear.

LADY. Hear then what I have not told anyone but you, nor ever shall. I am not the adventuress that you take me for. I could be grand and tell you: I am of princely blood, of the house of the ill-starred Thomas Norfolk, sacrificed for Mary Queen of Scots. My father, lord chamberlain to the king, was accused of treasonous relations with France, condemned by Parliament, and beheaded. All our property fell to the Crown. We ourselves were banished. My mother died on the day of execution. I, fourteen years old, fled to Germany, accompanied by my lady-in-waiting and carrying a little case of jewelry and this family cross that my dying mother passed on to me with her last blessing.

(*Ferdinand becomes thoughtful and regards the Lady more warmly.*)

(*With mounting pathos.*) Ill and without name, without protection, without fortune, a foreign orphan, I arrived in Hamburg. I had learned nothing but a bit of French, a little needlework, and piano. I knew that much better how to dine on gold and silver, sleep beneath a damask cover, send ten servants flying with a flick of my fingers, and receive the blandishments of the scions of great houses. I had passed six years in weeping, the last brooch was gone, my attendant died—and now fate brought your Duke to Hamburg. I was strolling along the Elbe, looking into the river, and I began to imagine whether *this water* or *my suffering* were the deeper. The Duke saw me, followed me, and found my lodgings, then knelt before me and swore he *loved* me. (*She pauses, very agitated, then continues, her voice breaking.*) All the images of my happy childhood awoke again, shining irresistibly; a desolate future, black as the grave, filled me with dread. My heart was burning for another heart. I sank on his. (*Rushing away from him.*) Now condemn me!

FERDINAND (*much moved, hurries after her and stops her*). My Lady! Oh, heavens! What do I hear! What have I done? My offense is horrible. You'll never forgive me.

LADY (*returning, having tried to collect herself*). Let me tell you more. The Prince had taken my defenseless youth by surprise, but the blood of Norfolk in me rebelled. "You, Emilia, born a princess," it cried, "and now a prince's concubine?" My pride contended with my fate as the Prince brought me

here and the most gruesome scene stood suddenly before my eyes. The lust of the great of this world is a ravenous hyena that hunts its prey with driving hunger. It had raged frightfully in this land: had separated bride from bridegroom, even broken the holy bonds of marriage, had razed the peaceful happiness of a family in one place, opened an inexperienced young heart to pestilential ruin in another, and the foaming mouths of dying schoolgirls pronounced their teacher's name among curses and spasms. I placed myself between the lion and the lamb, obtained a princely oath from him in a moment of passion, and this abominable sacrifice had to stop.

FERDINAND (*rushing through the room, very disturbed*). No more, my Lady! Say no more!

LADY. This sad period was followed by one sadder yet. Court and harem swarmed now with the dregs of Italy. Frivolous Parisian women toyed with the princely scepter and the population bled under their whims. They all had their day. *I saw them sink into the dust beside me, for I was a greater coquette than they.* I took the reins from the tyrant, who went slack in my embrace. Your fatherland, Walter, felt a human hand for the first time and sank, trusting, on my breast. (*Pause, in which she gives him a melting glance.*) Oh, that the man by whom alone I would not be mistaken should now force me to boast, to scorch my silent virtue on the beams of admiration! Walter, I have opened prisons, torn up death warrants, and shortened many an eternity on the galleys. I have at least poured balsam into wounds that will not heal, laid powerful evildoers in the dust, and often saved the *lost* cause of innocence by a seductive tear. Just think, young man, how sweet I found that! How proudly my heart could defeat every reproach to my princely birth! And now there comes the man who *alone* is to reward me for all these things, the man whom my exhausted fate perhaps created to redeem my early sorrows, the man whom I embrace with longing in my dreams—

FERDINAND (*intervening, deeply shaken*). Too much! Too much! That's against our understanding, my Lady. You were to defend yourself against complaint and now you make me an offender. Spare my heart, I beg you, spare my heart, torn by shame and hot regret—

LADY (*clasping his hand*). Now or never. Enough of this heroic fortitude. You must yet feel the weight of these tears. (*Very tenderly.*) Hear me, Walter— When one so unhappy, irresistibly drawn to you, embraces you, her heart

full of boundless love, and you now pronounce the cold word “honor”— When this unhappy creature, oppressed by the sense of her disgrace, sick and tired of vice, heroically lifted up by the call of virtue, now throws herself into your arms (*she embraces him in solemn entreaty*) to be saved by you, returned by you to heaven, or (*turning her face away, with a hollow voice*) fleeing from your image, answering the call of despair, pitches down into yet more hideous depths of vice—

FERDINAND (*tearing himself away from her, in terrible distress*). No, by almighty God! I cannot endure this. My Lady, I must— Heaven and earth weigh on me— I must make a confession, my Lady.

LADY (*retreating from him*). Not now! Not now, by all that’s holy— Not at this terrible moment, with my heart bleeding from a thousand wounds— Be it life or death, I cannot, will not hear.

FERDINAND. No, no, my esteemed Lady. You must. What I shall tell you now will soften my offense, will ask pardon for what’s past— I deceived myself in you, my Lady. I expected, I wished to find you worthy of my contempt. I came here intent upon insulting you, gaining your hatred— Better for us both had I succeeded! (*He falls silent, then softly and more hesitant.*) I love, my Lady, love a *burgher’s* daughter, Luisa Miller, the music master’s girl.

*(The Lady turns away; he continues, more animated.)*

I know what I am throwing myself into. But even if prudence would silence *passion, duty* speaks the more loudly. I am the guilty one. I was the one who broke the golden peace of her innocence, flattered her feeling with wild hopes and betrayed it to hot passion.<sup>38</sup> You will remind me of rank and birth, of my father’s principles—but I love. My hopes climb the higher the more deeply Nature has fallen out with convention. My resolve and mere prejudice! We shall see whether fashion or humanness carries the day.

*(The Lady meanwhile has withdrawn to the far end of the room and now covers her face with both hands. He follows her.)*

My Lady, you were saying?

LADY (*expressing great pain*). Nothing, Major von Walter! Nothing but that you destroy *yourself* and *me* and *a third person*.

FERDINAND. A third person?

LADY. We *cannot* find happiness together. We must fall victim to your father's excessive haste. Never shall I gain the heart of a man who gave me his hand because he was forced to.

FERDINAND. Forced to, my Lady? Forced to give? And gave nonetheless? Can *you* force a hand without a heart? Take from a girl a man who is all the world to her? Tear a man from a girl who is all the world to him? *You*, my Lady? Who were a moment ago the most admirable *Briton*? *You* can do that?

LADY. Because I *must*. (*Grave and fierce*.) My passion, Walter, yields to my tenderness for you. My *honor* no longer can. Our alliance is the talk of the whole land. All eyes, all the arrows of derision are trained on me. The humiliation will be a permanent stain if a subject of the Prince should refuse my hand. Plead your case with your father. Arm yourself as best you can. I shall set off all my mines.

(*She goes off rapidly. The Major stands speechless. Pause.*  
*Then he plunges through the double doors.*)

## Scene Four

*Room in the Music Master's house*

*Miller, his Wife, Luisa enter.*

MILLER (*rushing in*). I told you so!

LUISA (*appealing anxiously*). What, Father? What?

MILLER (*running up and down*). My long black coat! Quick! I have to get there first. A white shirt with cuffs! I saw it coming!

LUISA. For God's sake! What?

WIFE. What's going on? What is this?

MILLER (*tosses his wig into the room*). Straight to the wig-maker with that! What's going on? (*Leaping to the mirror.*) My beard's long as my finger again. What's going on? What would be going on, you crow bait? The devil's what is going on, blast you!

WIFE. Just look at that! I'm always the one.

MILLER. You? Yes, you and your big mouth. Who else? This morning with that diabolical baron of yours— Didn't I say so? Wurm has talked.

WIFE. Who says? How do you know that?

MILLER. How I know? Out there, before the door, there's a fellow from the ministry spooking around and asking about the fiddler.

LUISA. I am lost!

MILLER. And you, too, with your forget-me-not blue eyes! (*Laughing angrily.*) Exactly right! When the devil's laid an egg in your parlor, you'll see a pretty daughter hatched. Now I have it in cash!

WIFE. How do you know it's about Luisa? Maybe you were recommended to the Duke. Maybe he wants you in the orchestra.

MILLER (*reaching for his walking stick*). The sulfur rains of Sodom! Orchestra? Where you, dirty bawd, will howl descant and my blue backside make the thorough bass. (*Throws himself into a chair.*) God in heaven!

LUISA (*seating herself, deathly white*). Mother! Father! Why am I suddenly so frightened?

MILLER (*leaping from his chair*). Just let that pen-pusher come within firing range! I'll make him run! In this world or the next one. If I don't thrash him to a pulp, body and soul, write the Ten Commandments and the seven petitions of the Our Father, and all the books of Moses and the prophets on his hide so that they'll see the blue marks at the raising of the dead—

WIFE. Oh, just rant and rage, you. That'll keep the devil away. Help, holy Lord God! Where to now? How to find help? What to do? Papa Miller, say something! (*She runs wailing through the room.*)

MILLER. To the Minister, on the spot. I'll be the first to open my mouth. I'll file the complaint myself. You knew before I did. You could have told me. The girl would have listened then. There was still time. But no! We had to go and haggle for something, we had to go and fish for something! And you only heaped coals on the fire! You pander, you look out for your own hide. You've made your bed, now lie in it. I'll take my daughter on my arm and march with her over the border.

## Scene Five

*Ferdinand von Walter plunges into the room, alarmed and out of breath.*

*As above.*

FERDINAND. Has my father been here?

*(All speak at once.)*

LUISA *(leaping up, frightened)*. His father! Almighty God!

WIFE *(with a despairing hand clap)*. The First Minister! We're lost!

MILLER *(with an angry laugh)*. Praise God! Praise God! We had it coming!

FERDINAND *(hurries to Luisa and throws his arms around her)*. You're *mine*, and if heaven and hell should throw themselves between us.

LUISA. I'll die, it's certain. But go on. You pronounced a terrible name—your father?

FERDINAND. It's nothing. Nothing. It's over now. I have you back again. You have me back again. Let me catch my breath here in your arms. It was a terrible moment.

LUISA. What was? You're killing me!

FERDINAND *(steps back and regards her with meaning)*. A moment, Luisa, when an *alien* figure threw itself between my heart and you, when my love paled before my conscience, when my Luisa stopped being *everything* to her Ferdinand—

*(Luisa sinks into a chair, her face averted. He goes to her, stands speechless before her, then moves away, very aroused.)*

No! Never! Impossible, my Lady. *Too much* to ask. I cannot give up this innocence for your sake. No, by almighty God, I cannot break my oath, which cautions me, loud as heaven's thunder, in this sightless eye. My Lady, look *here*; look *here*, you faithless father— I should take this angel's life? Should heap hell into this heavenly breast? *(Hurrying to her, determined.)* I shall lead her before the great Judge's throne; eternal God is to say if my love is a crime. *(He takes her by the hand and lifts her from the chair.)* Take courage, my dearest one. You have won. From the most dangerous contest I return a victor.

LUISA. No! No! Keep nothing back! Pronounce the dreadful verdict. You named your *father*? Named the *Lady*? Death shudders seize me. They say that she will marry.

FERDINAND *(falls at Luisa's feet, overcome)*. Marry *me*, unhappy child!

LUISA *(after a pause, quietly, with terrible calm)*. So why should I be startled? The old man there has told me often enough. I didn't want to believe him. *(Pause. Then she throws herself, weeping bitterly, into Miller's arms.)* Father, here is your daughter again. Forgiveness, Father. Your child can't help it that this dream was so beautiful—and so frightful this awakening—

MILLER. Luisa! Luisa! Oh, God! She's beside herself. Daughter, my poor child. A curse on the seducer! A curse on the woman who procured her!

WIFE *(turns to Luisa, wailing)*. Do I deserve this curse, my daughter? God forgive you, Baron. What has this lamb done you, that you would harm it?

FERDINAND *(leaping up, determined)*. But I shall pierce the heart of all his intrigues; I'll tear through these iron chains of prejudice. Free like a man, I'll make my choice, and their little fly-speck souls will stagger at the gigantic workings of my love. *(He is about to go.)*

LUISA *(rises, trembling, and follows him)*. Stay! Stay! Where are you going? Father! Mother! At this fearful moment he would leave us?

WIFE *(hurries after and catches him)*. The First Minister is coming here. He'll maltreat our child. He'll maltreat *us*, Major von Walter, and you are leaving us?

MILLER (*laughing in rage*). Leaving us? Oh, yes, indeed. Why not? *She's* made him a gift of everything! (*Seizing the Major with one hand, Luisa with the other.*) Patience, sir! The way out of my house goes over *this one* here. Wait for your father, if you're no knave. Tell *him* how you stole into her heart, you deceiver, or before my eyes, by God, (*flinging his daughter at him*) you'll have to walk over this whimpering worm whom love for you has *ruined*.

FERDINAND (*returns and walks up and down, lost in thought*). The First Minister has great power, to be sure. The rights of a father are broad. Crime itself can hide in its folds. He can use it to take things quite far. Quite far! But *love* alone can take things to the limit. Here, Luisa! Put your hand in mine. (*He clasps her hand.*) As surely as God will not desert me at my last breath: The moment that separates these two hands will also break the thread between *me* and *Creation*.

LUISA. I'm afraid! Turn your face away. Your lips are trembling. Your eyes are rolling terribly—

FERDINAND. No, Luisa. Don't be afraid. It's not madness speaking here. It is a gift of heaven: *determination* at the very moment when the constricted breast can draw breath only by desperate means, by something unheard of. I love you, Luisa. I shall keep you, Luisa. Now to my father! (*He hurries out and runs into—the First Minister.*)

## Scene Six

*The First Minister followed by a retinue of Attendants. As above.*

FIRST MINISTER (*entering*). He's here already.

FERDINAND (*taking a few steps back*). In the house of innocence.

FIRST MINISTER. Where the son is learning obedience to his father?

FERDINAND. Spare us—

FIRST MINISTER (*interrupts him, to Miller*). This is the father?

MILLER. Town musician Miller.<sup>39</sup>

FIRST MINISTER (*to the Wife*). And this the mother?

WIFE. Oh, dear. Yes. The mother.

FERDINAND (*to Miller*). Father, take your daughter out of here. She's about to faint.

FIRST MINISTER. Unnecessary. I have smelling salts for her. (*To Luisa*.) How long acquainted with the son of the First Minister?

LUISA. I never asked after such a one. Ferdinand von Walter has visited me since last November.

FERDINAND. Has adored her.

FIRST MINISTER. You have received assurances?

FERDINAND. Just now, the most solemn before God.

FIRST MINISTER (*angrily, to his son*). To a confession of *your* foolishness you'll yet be invited. (*To Luisa*.) I'm waiting for an answer.

LUISA. He swore he loves me.

FERDINAND. An oath I'll keep.

FIRST MINISTER. Must I order you to hold your tongue? — Did you accept that vow?

LUISA (*tenderly*). I returned it.

FERDINAND (*firmly*). The bond is fixed.

FIRST MINISTER. I'll have that echo thrown from the room. (*Malicious, to Luisa*.) And he paid each time in cash?

LUISA (*attentive*). I don't quite understand the question.

FIRST MINISTER (*with a cutting laugh*). No? Well, then! I mean to say— Every trade, they say, has a price. *You*, too, I hope, will not have given away your favors— Or was it enough just with the *closing*?

FERDINAND (*erupting*). By all hell! What is this?

LUISA (*to the Major, with dignity and disdain*). Major von Walter, I release you.

FERDINAND. Father! Virtue, even in beggar's guise, commands *respect*.

FIRST MINISTER (*laughing louder*). Quite a demand! The father should respect the son's *whore*.

LUISA (*falling*). Heaven and earth!

FERDINAND (*rushing to Luisa, as he draws against his father, then lowers his sword*).  
Father, you once had a claim upon my life. That claim is satisfied. (*Putting up again.*) My debt of filial piety is cancelled.

MILLER (*who has stood timidly aside, comes forward, his teeth now grinding in rage, now chattering in fear*). Your Excellency, a child is its father's work—if it please your Honor. Anyone who calls the child a tramp slaps the father in the face, and one slap deserves another. That's our practice here—if it please your Honor.

WIFE. Help us, Lord and Savior! Now the old man has cut loose. The sky will fall on us.

FIRST MINISTER (*who has only half heard*). The pander's stirring, too? We'll talk directly, pander.

MILLER. If it please your Honor—my name is Miller, if you want to hear an adagio. But I don't deal in love stuff. As long as the Court has advance supplies, we burghers need not deliver. If it please your Honor.

WIFE. For heaven's sake, man. You'll do in wife and child.

FERDINAND. You are playing a role here, my father, where you could at least have done without these witnesses.

MILLER (*approaching him, now more bold*). In good German— If it please your Honor. Your Excellency rules as you wish here in the land. But this is *my* parlor. My most devoted compliments should I ever bring a petition, but a boorish guest I'll throw out the door. If it please your Honor.

FIRST MINISTER (*white with rage*). What is this? (*Confronting him.*)

MILLER (*backing away*). Just my opinion, sir. If it please your Honor.

FIRST MINISTER (*all alight*). Ha, you rascal! You'll talk your way into a prison with this opinion of yours. Go! Fetch the bailiffs.

*(A few go off. The First Minister rushes about in a rage.)*

Father into prison—mother and trollop of a daughter to the pillory! Justice will lend my rage its arm. I shall have satisfaction for this scandal. Is this kind of riff-raff to defeat my plans and set father and son on one another, unpunished? Ha, you wretches! I'll appease my hatred with your destruction; the whole brood—father, mother, daughter—I'll sacrifice to my revenge.

FERDINAND (*intervening, calm and firm*). Now, now. Don't be afraid. I am here. (*To the First Minister, submissive.*) Don't be hasty, my father. As you love yourself, no use of force. There's a region of my heart where the word *father* has not yet been heard. Don't penetrate that far.

FIRST MINISTER. You good-for-nothing! Silence! Don't make me even angrier.

MILLER (*emerging from a stunned state*). Look after your child, Wife. I'm going to the Duke. His private tailor—God's inspiration—takes flute lessons from me. With the Duke I can't go wrong. (*He is about to leave.*)

FIRST MINISTER. With the Duke, you say? Have you forgotten I'm the threshold you must clear or break your neck? With the Duke, you dunce? Just try it, when you, one of the living dead, are lying a tower's height under the earth, in a dungeon where night flirts with hell, and sound and light bounce back from the walls. Rattle your chains then and whimper: "This is too much for me."

## Scene Seven

*Bailiffs. As above.*

FERDINAND (*hurries to Luisa, who falls into his arms, half-dead*). Luisa! Help! The fright was too much for her.

*(Miller seizes his walking stick, puts on his hat, and prepares for attack.  
The Wife falls to her knees before the First Minister.)*

FIRST MINISTER (*to the Bailiffs, showing his star*). Seize her, in the name of the Duke. Back from the trollop, boy—fainted or not. When she's in the iron collar, they'll throw stones to wake her up.

WIFE. Have mercy, your Excellency! Have mercy!

MILLER (*pulling his wife to her feet*). Kneel before God, you whore of an old cry baby and not before—scoundrels, since I have to go to prison anyway.

FIRST MINISTER (*biting his lip*). You may miscalculate, you knave. There are gallows standing empty. (*To the Bailiffs.*) Do I have to say it twice?

*(The Bailiffs close in on Luisa.)*

FERDINAND (*placing himself before her*). Who's asking for it? (*He draws his sword, still in its scabbard, and defends himself with the grip.*) Dare to touch her, anyone who's not also hired out his pate to the courts. (*To the First Minister.*) Spare yourself. Don't go any further, my father.

FIRST MINISTER (*to the Bailiffs*). If you love your daily bread, you cowards—

*(The Bailiffs seize Luisa again.)*

FERDINAND. Death and destruction! I say, keep back. Once more: Have mercy on yourself. Don't push me to the limit, Father.

FIRST MINISTER (*outraged, to the Bailiffs*). Is that what you call zeal, you rascals?

*(The Bailiffs become rougher.)*

FERDINAND. If it must be, then forgive me, Justice! (*He bares his sword and wounds a few.*)

FIRST MINISTER (*very angry*). I'll just see if I, too, get to feel that sword. (*He seizes Luisa, lifts her bodily, and hands her over to a Bailiff.*)

FERDINAND (*laughing bitterly*). Father, you're making a farce of the Godhead, which understood its people so badly that it made *perfect hangman's hired help* into *sorry ministers*.

FIRST MINISTER (*to the others*). Away with her!

FERDINAND. Father, she's to stand in the pillory, but *with* the Major, the First Minister's son. Do you insist?

FIRST MINISTER. The more amusing will be the spectacle. Away!

FERDINAND. Father, I'll cover the girl with my officer's sword. Do you insist?

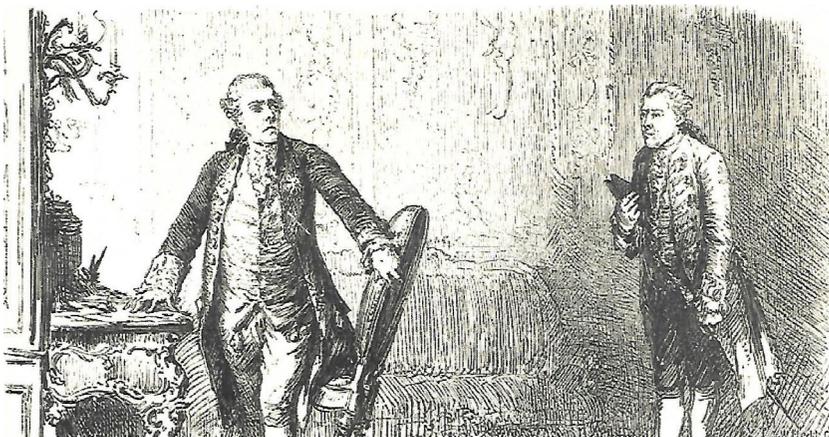
FIRST MINISTER. The *porte épée*,<sup>40</sup> worn at your side, has become quite accustomed to the pillory. Away! Away! You know my will.

FERDINAND (*pushes a Bailiff away, holds Luisa with one hand, and points the sword at her with the other*). Father! Before you disgrace my wife, I'll run her through. Do you insist?

FIRST MINISTER. Do so if the blade's as cutting as your tongue.

FERDINAND (*releases Luisa and stares upward*). You, almighty God, are my witness! I attempted every *human* means. I must now resort to a *devilish* one. Take her away to the pillory, all of you, (*quietly to the First Minister*) and I meanwhile shall tell all the residence a tale of *just how one gets to be first minister*. (*Exit.*)

FIRST MINISTER (*thunderstruck*). What was that? Ferdinand— Release her! (*He hurries after the Major.*)



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First Minister von Walter, attended by Secretary Wurm. Engraving by Wilhelm Hecht from a woodcut by Heinrich Lossow, *Schillers Werke illustriert von ersten deutschen Künstlern* (Leipzig and Stuttgart, 1877). University of Virginia. Image in the public domain.

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# Act Three

## Scene One

*Antechamber in the First Minister's suite*

*The First Minister and Secretary Wurm enter.*

FIRST MINISTER. A dirty trick.

WURM. As I feared, my Lord. Force always *embitters* enthusiasts but never will *convert* them.

FIRST MINISTER. I'd put all my hopes in that line of attack. I reasoned so: If the girl is *disgraced*, he as an officer will have to give her up.

WURM. Excellent. But it should have come to a *disgrace*.

FIRST MINISTER. When I consider now in cold blood: I should not have taken his bait. He merely threatened; he never would have followed through.

WURM. Don't believe that. Irritated passion is capable of any foolishness. You tell me the Major has always had his doubts about your regime. I can believe it. The principles he brought back here from his studies never did make much sense to me. All those fantasies about great souls and personal nobleness—what business have they at a court, where the greater part of wisdom is to be great, then small at just the right moment and adroitly. He's too young and fiery to have a taste for the slow and crooked path of intrigue; nothing will set his ambition into motion but what's grand and adventurous.

FIRST MINISTER (*annoyed*). And how is this clever gloss to mend our affair?

WURM. It'll point your Excellency to the wound and perhaps also to the bandage. Permit me: One ought never to have made either a *confidant* or an *enemy* of a character such as his. He has a horror of the means by which you've risen. Till now it was perhaps only the *son* in him that silenced the *traitor*. If you give him occasion to shake off the son, if your repeated attacks on his passion lead him to believe that you're no loving *father*, his duty as a patriot will come to the fore. Why, the curious fantasy of making so

remarkable a sacrifice to justice could seem so attractive to him that he'd even bring down his father.

FIRST MINISTER. Wurm, Wurm, you're leading me to the brink of a precipice.

WURM. Let me lead you back, my Lord. May I speak freely?

FIRST MINISTER (*seating himself*). As one condemned man to another.

WURM. Forgive me— It seems to me that you owe your rank as *First Minister* to the supple arts of the court. Why did you not entrust the *father* also to these arts? I recall how graciously you invited your predecessor to an evening of piquet and, like a friend, washed half the night away with a bottle of Burgundy—the very night a great mine would go off and blow the good man away. Why did you let your son see you as an enemy? He never should have found out that I knew about his love affair. You'd then have undermined this romance from the girl's side and kept your son's affections. You'd have been the clever general who does not attack his enemy at the center but splits his ranks instead.

FIRST MINISTER. How was that to be done?

WURM. In the simplest fashion—and the cards have not yet all been played. Forget for a while that you're a father. Don't match yourself with a passion that every resistance has only made more powerful. Leave it to *me* to use that passion's heat to hatch the worm that will eat it up.

FIRST MINISTER. Tell me more.

WURM. If I am one to read the soul's barometer rightly, the Major is as terrible in jealousy as he is in love. Arrange for him to find the girl suspect—probable or not. One *grain* of leaven is enough to set the whole mass in ferment.

FIRST MINISTER. Where do we find that grain?

WURM. Now we've reached our subject. Tell me exactly, my Lord, how much you have at risk if the Major continues to refuse? How important is it to you to put an end to the romance with the burgher girl and bring about the alliance with Lady Milford?

FIRST MINISTER. You ask, Wurm? All my influence is threatened if the match with Milford fails, and if I force the Major, I risk my neck.

WURM (*lively*). Be so gracious now and listen. We'll use craft to catch the Major in our web. We'll use your power against the girl. We'll dictate to her a billet doux addressed to a third person *and play that note into the Major's hands*.

FIRST MINISTER. Excellent idea! As if she would lend herself to writing her own death warrant—

WURM. She *must* if you give me a free hand. I know that good soul through and through. She has no more than two spots where she is mortal, where we can storm her conscience: her father and the Major. The Major's not in play here; we've got that much more scope with the musician.

FIRST MINISTER. For example?

WURM. After the scene your Excellency describes with the father in his house nothing is going to be simpler than threatening him with a capital offense. The person of the favorite and lord privy seal is attached, like a shadow, to the person of the sovereign: an insult to the minister is an insult to the ruler. At any rate, I'll use this theory I've concocted to scare the wits out of the poor devil .

FIRST MINISTER. But don't take it too far.

WURM. Not at all. Only as far as need be to drive the family to the wall. We'll arrest the music master as quietly as possible. To press them all the harder, we could take the mother along, too—speak of interrogation under torture, the scaffold, life imprisonment—and make *the letter by the daughter* the sole condition of releasing him.

FIRST MINISTER. Good! Good! I understand.

WURM. She loves her father—passionately, I would say. The threat to his life, or at least to his freedom, the reproaches of her conscience for having brought all this on, the impossibility of ever possessing the Major, and finally, her utter confusion, which will be *my* task— This cannot fail. She *must* walk into the trap.

FIRST MINISTER. But what about my son? Won't he get wind of this right away? And become even more enraged?

WURM. Let that be *my* concern, my Lord. Father and mother will not be released until the whole family has sworn upon a Bible to keep all these things secret and confirm the deception.

FIRST MINISTER. Sworn? What good is their swearing, you dunce?

WURM. Of no use among *our* kind, my Lord. But for *their* kind it means everything. And just consider how nicely we shall each reach our goal this way. The girl loses both the love of the Major and her reputation. Father and mother change their tune and, softened up by their hard fate, see it as a mercy when I give her my hand and restore that reputation.

FIRST MINISTER (*shaking his head and laughing*). I admit defeat, you villain. Your web is devilish fine. The pupil exceeds the master. Now the question: *Who's* this love letter to be addressed to? *Who'll* we use to make her suspect?

WURM. Necessarily, someone who stands to gain or lose everything by your son's decision.

FIRST MINISTER (*having reflected*). Only the Chamberlain occurs to me.

WURM (*shrugs*). Not exactly *my* taste, if my name were Luisa Miller.

FIRST MINISTER. And why not? Amazing! A dazzling way of dressing, in a fog of Eau de mille fleurs and musk, spreading ducats around by the handful— all that should not finally seduce the delicate feelings of a burgher girl? My dear friend! Jealousy is not all that choosy. I'll send for the Chamberlain. (*He rings.*)

WURM. While your Excellency sees to these things and the arrest of the fiddler, I'll go compose the love letter.

FIRST MINISTER (*going to his writing desk*). Which you'll bring me to read over as soon as it is done.

(*Wurm goes off. The First Minister sits down to write. An Attendant enters.  
The First Minister stands and gives him a document.*)

This arrest warrant must be delivered to the courts right away. Send someone to bid the Chamberlain come.

ATTENDANT. His Lordship has just driven up.

FIRST MINISTER. Excellent. — But also say the measures must be taken with great care, so that no unrest follows.

ATTENDANT. Very well, your Excellency!

FIRST MINISTER. You understand? Very quietly.

ATTENDANT. Very good, your Excellency. (*Exit.*)

## Scene Two

### *The First Minister and the Chamberlain*

CHAMBERLAIN (*in a rush*). Just *en passant*, dear friend. How are you getting on? How's your health? This evening there's the grand opera *Dido*—super fireworks—all Carthage burns to the ground—you, too, will come and watch it burn? No?

FIRST MINISTER. I've fireworks enough in my own house—fireworks enough to send my whole eminence up in smoke. You've come at just the right moment, my dear Chamberlain, to advise me, actually help me, in a matter that will advance us both or be the end of us. Have a seat.

CHAMBERLAIN. Don't frighten me, my dear.

FIRST MINISTER. As I said, advance us or be the end of us. You know of my project with the Major and the Lady. You'll also understand how indispensable it was to fix both our fortunes. That can all fall apart, Kalb. My Ferdinand refuses.

CHAMBERLAIN. Refuses—refuses— But I've told everyone. It's the talk of the town.

FIRST MINISTER. And you could be exposed as a great windbag. He loves someone else.

CHAMBERLAIN. You're not serious. That's an obstacle?

FIRST MINISTER. The most insurmountable with this pig-headed son.

CHAMBERLAIN. He's mad enough to turn his back on his own fortune? Is he?

FIRST MINISTER. *You* ask him that and see what he answers.

CHAMBERLAIN. Mon Dieu! What can he answer?

FIRST MINISTER. That he'll disclose to all the world the crime by which we've risen, that he'll come forward with our forged letters and receipts, that he'll deliver us both to the knife—that's what he can answer.

CHAMBERLAIN. Have you lost your mind?

FIRST MINISTER. That was his answer. And he was about to do it. I had to abase myself just to stop him. What do you say to that?

CHAMBERLAIN (*with a stupid face*). My mind freezes.

FIRST MINISTER. That might not be so bad. But at the same time my spies report back to me that the lord high steward von Bock would leap at the chance to sue for the Lady.

CHAMBERLAIN. You'll drive me wild. You say *who*? Von Bock, you say? Do you also know that we are mortal enemies? Do you also know why?

FIRST MINISTER. The first I hear of it.

CHAMBERLAIN. My dear! When you do hear, you'll be beside yourself. If you remember the Court ball—it's now been almost twenty years—where we danced the first contredanse<sup>41</sup> and the chandelier dripped hot wax on Count Meerschäum's domino— Good heavens! You must remember!

FIRST MINISTER. Who could forget?

CHAMBERLAIN. You see! Princess Amalie lost a garter there, in the heat of dancing. Everyone's alarmed, understandably. Von Bock and I—we were hardly more than pages—we crawl through the whole ballroom looking for the garter. I catch sight of it, von Bock notices, jumps in, snatches it out of my hands—I ask you!—brings it to the Princess and snaps up the compliment I should have had. What do you think?

FIRST MINISTER. An impertinence!

CHAMBERLAIN. Snaps up the compliment I should have had. I thought I would faint. There never was such malice! When I am finally man enough to do it, I approach Her Grace and say: Most Gracious Lady! Von Bock had the

good fortune to return the garter to Your Highness while the one who first caught sight of it rewards himself in silence and says nothing.

FIRST MINISTER. Bravo, Chamberlain! Bravissimo!

CHAMBERLAIN. And says nothing. And I'll remember it of von Bock until the Last Judgment, that sneaking abject flatterer! And that's not all: As we both leap upon the garter, von Bock wipes all the powder from half my *coiffure* and I am ruined for the evening.

FIRST MINISTER. That's the man who's going to marry Milford and become the ranking figure here at Court.

CHAMBERLAIN. A dagger in my heart! Is going to? Is going to? Why is he going to? Where's the need?

FIRST MINISTER. Because my Ferdinand refuses and there is no one else.

CHAMBERLAIN. But do you know no way to make him decide? However bizarre and desperate! Is there any means so revolting that we would not welcome it to cut out von Bock?

FIRST MINISTER. I know only *one*—it's up to you.

CHAMBERLAIN. To *me*? And is—

FIRST MINISTER. To come between the Major and the girl he loves.

CHAMBERLAIN. Come between? How do you mean? What do I do?

FIRST MINISTER. We only need to make him suspect the girl.

CHAMBERLAIN. That she *steals*, you mean?

FIRST MINISTER. Certainly not! Why would he believe that? That she has it on with someone else.

CHAMBERLAIN. And this someone?

FIRST MINISTER. Would be *you*, Baron.

CHAMBERLAIN. Be me? Me? — She's nobility?

FIRST MINISTER. Whatever for? What an idea! The daughter of a music master.

CHAMBERLAIN. Of a burgher? That won't do. No?

FIRST MINISTER. What won't do? Arrant nonsense! Who would ever think to ask a pair of nice round cheeks about its pedigree?

CHAMBERLAIN. But just consider—me a married man? My reputation at Court!

FIRST MINISTER. Now that is different. Forgive me. I didn't realize that *the man of spotless form and practices* means more to you than *the man of influence*. Shall we adjourn?

CHAMBERLAIN. One moment, Baron. That is not what I meant.

FIRST MINISTER (*frosty*). No, no! You are quite right. I, too, have had enough. I'm out of harness. I wish this von Bock luck as first minister. The world is elsewhere. I'll demand my dismissal from the Duke.

CHAMBERLAIN. And *I*? You can talk! You've been to university. And *I*—mon Dieu! What do *I* amount to if His Serene Highness dismisses me?

FIRST MINISTER. Yesterday's bon mot, last year's latest.

CHAMBERLAIN. I entreat you, my dearest! Throttle this thought! I'll lend myself to anything.

FIRST MINISTER. Are you disposed to lend your name to a rendez-vous that the Miller girl is to propose to you in writing?

CHAMBERLAIN. In the name of God! I'll lend it.

FIRST MINISTER. And to let the note drop where the Major will have to find it?

CHAMBERLAIN. For example, on the parade ground. I'll accidentally pull it out with my handkerchief.

FIRST MINISTER. And to play the girl's lover toward the Major?

CHAMBERLAIN. *Mort de ma vie!* I'll have the better of him! I'll spoil that upstart's appetite for *my amours*.

FIRST MINISTER. Perfect! The note's to be written today yet. You must come here to fetch it before evening and run through your role with me.

CHAMBERLAIN. As soon as I make sixteen calls *de la dernière importance*. Do forgive me if I take leave right away. (*He goes off.*)

FIRST MINISTER (*ringing*). I'm counting on your wiles, Chamberlain.

CHAMBERLAIN (*calling back*). Mon Dieu! You know me.

### Scene Three

*The First Minister and Wurm*

WURM. The fiddler and his wife have been very quietly taken into custody. Would your Excellency like to review the letter?

FIRST MINISTER (*having read*). Splendid, splendid, Secretary! The Chamberlain, too, has taken the bait. — Something that poisonous would bring the healthiest out in spots. Now straight to the father with our proposals and, still warm, to the daughter.

*(They go off to different sides.)*

### Scene Four

*Room in Miller's house*

*Luisa and Ferdinand*

LUISA. No more, I beg you. I no longer believe in happy days to come. All my hopes have sunk.

FERDINAND. Just as mine have risen. My father is all stirred up. He'll train all his guns on us. He'll force me to play the inhuman son. I can no longer vouch for my filial piety. Rage and despair will force the black secret of his murder from me. The son will deliver the father to the hangman. It is a moment of the *most imminent* danger. And it had to be the most imminent danger for my love to take a giant leap. Listen, Luisa. A thought as great and daring as my passion forces itself before my soul. *You, Luisa, and me and love!* Does all of heaven not lie within this compass? Or do you have need of some fourth thing?

LUISA. Leave off. No more. I blanch at what you're going to say.

FERDINAND. If we have nothing more to ask of the world, then why go beg for its applause? Why take the risk when nothing will be won and all can be lost? Will this eye not sparkle just as sweetly whether it's reflected in the Rhine or in the Elbe or the Baltic? My fatherland is wherever Luisa loves me, your footprints in a wild sandy desert more interesting to me than the minster of my homeland. Shall we miss the brilliance of the cities? Wherever we are, Luisa, a sun will rise and set—displays beside which the grandest sweep of art grows pale. If we can no longer serve God in a temple, night will still come upon us with thrilling shudders, the changing moon will preach repentance, and a reverent churchful of stars will pray with us. Shall we ever run out of talk of love? A smile from my Luisa will furnish stuff for centuries, and the dream of life will have ended before I have plumbed the depths of this tear.

LUISA. And you'd have no other duty than your love?

FERDINAND (*embracing her*). My most sacred is your peace of mind.

LUISA (*very grave*). Say no more and leave me. I have a father whose whole fortune is this one daughter, who'll turn sixty tomorrow, and for whom the First Minister's revenge is certain.

FERDINAND (*interjecting quickly*). He'll come with us. No more objections, my love. I'll go, cash in all my valuables, raise money in my father's name. To rob a robber is admissible, and is his treasure not the blood money of the fatherland? One hour after midnight a coach will draw up here. You throw yourselves into it and we flee.

LUISA. And after us, your father's curse? A curse that even murderers never pronounce unheard, that heaven's vengeance honors for the thief bound to the wheel, that will pursue us fleeing, as unmerciful as a ghost, from sea to sea? No, my beloved. If only a sacrilege can keep you for me, I have the strength to lose you.

FERDINAND (*stands still and mutters darkly*). Really?

LUISA. To *lose* you! The thought is boundlessly terrible. Horrible enough to pierce the immortal spirit and to drain the glowing face of happiness. Ferdinand! To lose you! But still—we lose only what we have once possessed

and your heart belongs to your rank. My claim was church robbery and with a shudder I give it up.

FERDINAND (*his face distorted, biting his lower lip*). You give it up.

LUISA. No! Look at me, dear Walter. No more such bitterness. Come! Let me raise your failing courage by my example. Let *me* be the heroine of this moment, restoring an escaped son to his father; let me renounce a bond that would disjoint the civil world and bring down eternal general order.<sup>42</sup> *I* am the transgressor. My heart was full of foolish, impudent wishes; my unhappiness is my *punishment*. But leave me the sweet, flattering illusion that this was my *sacrifice*. Would you begrudge me this pleasure?

(*Ferdinand, distracted and enraged, has seized a violin and tried to play it.  
Now he snaps the strings, shatters the instrument against the floor,  
and breaks into loud laughter.*)

Walter! God in heaven! What is this? Control yourself. This moment calls for resolve—this is *parting*. You have a heart, dear Walter. I know it *well*. Your love is as warm as life itself and boundless like infinity. Give it to a *noblewoman*, to someone more worthy—she'll not have to envy the happiest of her kind. (*Suppressing tears.*) You'll see no more of *me*. Let the foolish and misguided girl weep away her sorrows within solitary walls. No one will take notice of her tears. My future is empty, it has died out. But I shall ever and ever enjoy the scent of the faded bouquet of time gone past. (*She turns her face away and gives him her hand.*) Farewell, Major von Walter.

FERDINAND (*emerging from a stunned state*). I shall flee, Luisa. Will you really not follow me?

LUISA (*has sat down deep in the room and covered her face with both hands*). My duty says that I must stay and endure.

FERDINAND. You're lying, you snake. Something else is keeping you.

LUISA (*in great pain*). Go on believing that. It may make you less unhappy.

FERDINAND. Cold duty against fiery love! This tale should persuade me? A lover's keeping you. Woe betide both you and him if what I suspect proves true. (*He goes off quickly.*)

## Scene Five

*Luisa alone*

*She lies motionless and silent in the chair, then stands up, comes forward, and looks around, frightened.*

Where could my parents be? My father promised to be back in a few minutes and it's been five full hours. If something's happened— What's this I feel? Why am I so short of breath?<sup>43</sup>

*(Wurm enters the room at this point and stands in the background, unnoticed.)*

It's nothing real. It's nothing but the shudders of too much excitement. When the soul has taken in enough horror, the eye sees ghosts in every corner.

## Scene Six

*Luisa and Secretary Wurm*

WURM (*coming forward*). Good evening, Miss.<sup>44</sup>

LUISA. God! Who's speaking? (*She wheels around, sees the Secretary, and steps back, appalled.*) Oh, my prophetic soul! (*To the Secretary, with a contemptuous glance.*) Perhaps you're looking for the First Minister? He's no longer here.

WURM. It's you I'm looking for, Miss.

LUISA. I'm surprised you didn't go to the marketplace.

WURM. Why *there*?

LUISA. To fetch your bride from the pillory.

WURM. Mamsell Miller, you suspect wrongly—

LUISA (*suppressing a response*). How can I oblige you?

WURM. I come, sent by your father.

LUISA (*nonplussed*). From my father? Where is my father?

WURM. Where he doesn't like to be.

LUISA. For God's sake! Quick! I suspect the worst— Where is my father?

WURM. In the tower, if you must know.

LUISA (*looking upward*). And now this! Now this yet! In the tower? Why in the tower?

WURM. On orders of the Duke.

LUISA. The Duke?

WURM. To visit due punishment on—

LUISA. Almighty God!

WURM. —insult to the prince on the person of his deputy.

LUISA. Only that remained! That! Oh, yes, indeed. My heart held one thing dear besides the Major. That could not be spared. Insult to the prince. Holy Providence, save, oh save, my failing faith! And Ferdinand?

WURM. Must choose between taking Lady Milford and losing his inheritance.

LUISA. What a choice! But he's the lucky one. He has no father to lose. Though not to *have* one is loss enough! My father for insult to the prince, my beloved put between the Lady and a curse and banishment— Truly admirable! A perfect piece of mischief is also a perfection. No! Something's missing— Where's my mother?

WURM. In the workhouse.

LUISA (*with a pained smile*). Now it's complete! Complete! And I'd be free— released and detached from all duty, from tears and joy. And from Providence itself. I have no further need of it. (*A terrible silence.*) You perhaps have other news? Speak. I can now hear everything.

WURM. You know what *has* happened.

LUISA. But not what's coming *yet*? (*Another pause, in which she looks the Secretary up and down.*) You poor soul. Yours is a sorry business that can never save you. To wreck the happiness of others is bad enough, but it is *horrible* to be

the one who brings the news, to come wailing like the banshee and stand before the door while a heart shudders on the shaft of iron Necessity and Christians doubt their God. So help me! If every anxious tear that you see fall here were balanced by a ton of gold, I would not be in *your* place. What else can happen?

WURM. I don't know.

LUISA. You claim not to know? This news that flees the light also fears the sound of words, but in the terrible stillness of your face I see the ghost. What more is there? You said the Duke will *visit due punishment*. What do you call due punishment?

WURM. Don't ask.

LUISA. Listen, man! The hangman schooled you. How else would you know how to run the blade slowly up the snapping joints and tease the twitching heart with the offer of a blow that stills it? What fate awaits my father? There's death in what you say, laughing; what you don't say—how does it look? Say it. Let me have the whole load all at once. What awaits my father?

WURM. A criminal proceeding.

LUISA. What's that? I'm an innocent, ignorant thing, hardly understand the Latin words you people use. What is a criminal proceeding?

WURM. He'll be tried for his life.

LUISA (*stoutly*). I thank you! (*She goes quickly into the next room.*)

WURM (*perplexed*). What's this about? She wouldn't— Damn! I answer for her life. (*He is about to follow.*)

LUISA (*returns, having thrown on a wrap*). Pardon, Secretary. I'm locking up.

WURM. Where to, in such a rush?

LUISA. To the Duke. (*About to go.*)

WURM. Where to? (*Holding her back, alarmed.*)

LUISA. To the Duke. Can't you hear? To the Duke, who wants to put my father on trial for his life. No! Doesn't *want* to, *must*, because a few villains want to;

whose only part in this whole trial for insult to the prince is his authority and his princely signature.

WURM (*laughs too loudly*). To the Duke!

LUIA. I know what you're laughing at. But I'm not looking to find mercy, so help me God. Only disgust—disgust at my outcry. They've told me that the greats of this world have not yet found out what *misery* is—don't want to find out. I'll tell him what misery is, will paint for him in all the racking and wreckage of death what misery is, will cry out in bone-shattering tones what misery is—and when his hair stands on end, I'll shout into his ear that even the gods of this world, when they die, will breathe with a rattle, and that the Last Judgment sifts kings and beggars in one sieve. (*She is about to go.*)

WURM (*menacingly friendly*). Go, do go. You can do nothing smarter. Truly. I urge you, go, and I give you my word, the Duke will oblige you.

LUIA (*stops suddenly*). What? You yourself urge me? (*She comes back quickly.*) What am I to do? It must be something dreadful, if *he* urges me. How do you know that the Duke will oblige me?

WURM. Because he's unlikely to do it *for nothing*.

LUIA. Not for nothing? What price can he put on just being human?

WURM. The pretty supplicant is price enough.

LUIA (*freezes; then, her voice breaking*). Merciful God!

WURM. And I'd hope you'll not find a father overpriced at a fee so gracious?

LUIA (*walking up and down, beside herself*). It's true. Oh, yes, indeed. These greats of yours—they're fortified against the truth by their own vice, as if behind the flaming swords of cherubim. Almighty God help you, Father. Your daughter can die for you, but cannot sin.

WURM. That may be news to him, poor abandoned man. "My Luisa," he said to me, "has brought me down. My Luisa will also lift me up again." I hurry to bring him your answer, Mamsell. (*Poised as if to go.*)

LUIA (*hurrying after and holding him back*). Stay! Stay! Patience! How nimble this Satan is when he wants to drive us out of our mind. I brought him down. I must lift him up. Speak! Tell me! What can I, what *must* I do?

WURM. There's only *one* way

LUISA. This one way?

WURM. Your father, too, wishes—

LUISA. My father, too— What is this way?

WURM. It's easy for you.

LUISA. I know of nothing more difficult than dishonor.

WURM. If you would want to release the Major?

LUISA. From my love? Are you mocking me? To leave to my free choosing what  
I was compelled to do?

WURM. That's not what I meant, dear Miss. The Major must step back first, of  
his own volition.

LUISA. He won't.

WURM. So it seems. Would we turn to you, were you not the only one who can  
help us here?

LUISA. Can I force him to hate me?

WURM. Let us try and see. Sit down.

LUISA (*uncertain*). What are you hatching, man?

WURM. Sit down and write. Here's pen, paper, and ink.

LUISA (*sits down, very uneasy*). What am I to write? Who am I to write to?

WURM. To your father's hangman.

LUISA. Ha! You know well how to pin souls to the rack. (*Seizes a pen.*)

WURM (*dictating*). "My Lord" —



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Secretary Wurm presses his suit with Luisa. Engraving by Wilhelm Hecht from a woodcut by Heinrich Lossow, *Schillers Werke illustriert von ersten deutschen Künstlern* (Leipzig and Stuttgart, 1877). University of Virginia.  
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*(Luisa writes with a shaking hand.)*

“Three unbearable days have passed—have passed—since we last saw each other.”

LUISA *(stops short and lays down the pen)*. Who am I writing to?

WURM. To your father’s hangman.

LUISA. Oh, my God!

WURM. “Look to the Major for the reason—to the Major—who watches me like an Argus all day long”—

LUISA *(leaping up)*. Mischief! Purest mischief! Like none other. Who am I writing to?

WURM. To your father’s hangman.

LUISA *(walks up and down, wringing her hands)*. No! No! No! This is tyranny! Punish human beings humanly when they rub you wrong, but why catch me between two horrors? Why shunt me back and forth between death and disgrace? Why set this blood-sucking devil on my nape? Do what you like— I’ll not write this!

WURM *(reaching for his hat)*. As you please, Mademoiselle. Quite as you choose.

LUISA. *Choose, you say? As I choose? Go, you Hun! Dangle a poor soul over the pit of hell, demand something of him, and blasphemously ask if he chooses. You know all too well that our heart is bound as if by chains to natural urges. — Nothing matters anymore. Go on dictating. I’ll not think anymore. Hell has got the better of me, and I yield. (She sits down again.)*

WURM. “Like an Argus all day long”—do you have that?

LUISA. Go on! Go on!

WURM. “We had the First Minister here in our house yesterday. It was a sight to see—how the good Major defended my honor.”

LUISA. Excellent! Splendid! Keep on.

WURM. “I took refuge in a faint—in a faint—so as not to laugh out loud.”

LUISA. Dear God!

WURM. "But I can't go on pretending for much longer—much longer. If I could only get away" —

LUISA (*stops, gets up, paces with her head down, as if searching for something on the floor, then sits down again and goes on writing*). "Could only get away" —

WURM. "Tomorrow he's on duty. Watch for when he leaves and come then to a certain spot" — You have "certain spot"?

LUISA. I have it all.

WURM "To a certain spot to your loving Luisa."

LUISA. Now the address.

WURM. "To the Lord Chamberlain von Kalb."

LUISA. A name as alien to my ears as these shameful lines are to my heart. (*She stands up, stares at the writing, and finally passes it to the Secretary; in a dying voice.*) Take it, sir. It is my honorable name, it is Ferdinand, it is all the joy of my life that I now put in your hands. I am a beggar!

WURM. No, no. Don't lose courage, Mademoiselle. I'm truly sorry for you. Perhaps—who knows? I could perhaps get past certain things— Truly! By God! I'm sorry for you.

LUISA (*with a penetrating look*). Don't finish, sir. You're about to wish for something terrible.

WURM (*about to kiss her hand*). And if it were this charming hand— How so, little Miss?

LUISA (*grand and terrible*). Because I would strangle you in the wedding night and then let myself be lashed, in transports, to the wheel. (*She is about to go, but comes back quickly.*) Are we done, sir? May the dove fly?

WURM. One thing more, Miss. You must come with me and swear on the Host to acknowledge this letter as written of your own free will.

LUISA. God! God! You yourself must give your seal to keep and preserve the works of hell?

(*Wurm takes her off with him.*)



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Ferdinand with a pistol attacks Chamberlain von Kalb. Engraving by Wilhelm Hecht from a woodcut by Heinrich Lossow, *Schillers Werke illustriert von ersten deutschen Künstlern* (Leipzig and Stuttgart, 1877). University of Virginia.  
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## Act Four

*Reception room in the First Minister's suite*

### Scene One

*Ferdinand von Walter, an open letter in his hand, storms through one door, an Attendant enters through another.*

FERDINAND. The Chamberlain's not been here?

ATTENDANT. Major, sir, his Lordship the First Minister has been asking for you.

FERDINAND. Blast it all! I ask if the Chamberlain's not been here.

ATTENDANT. His Lordship is upstairs at the faro table.

FERDINAND. His Lordship should, in hell's own name, present himself.

*(The Attendant goes off.)*

### Scene Two

*Ferdinand alone, rapidly rereading the letter, standing frozen then raging through the room by turns.*

It is not possible. Not possible. This heavenly exterior doesn't hide a heart so devilish. And nonetheless! If all the angels should descend, vouch for her innocence, if heaven and earth, Creation and Creator came together to vouch for her innocence—it is *her* hand. An unheard of, monstrous deception, like none known to humankind. So *that* is why we so stubbornly resisted fleeing! *That* is why— Oh, God! Now I wake up, now everything comes clear! *That's* why we so heroically gave up all claim upon my love! And soon, quite soon this heavenly greasepaint would have fooled even *me!*

*(He rushes more rapidly through the room, then stands still, reflecting.)*

To have seen me so clearly! To return every bold feeling, every timid tremor, every fiery emotion. To grasp my soul on the indescribable fineness of a sound half-uttered. To take my measure in a tear. To accompany me up every sheer peak of passion, meet me on the brink of every staggering descent— Oh, God! Oh, God! And that was all no more than *mugging*, pulling faces? If lies have such fast color, how is it that no devil has yet lied his way into heaven?

When I told her the danger of our love, how persuasively the deceiver blanched. With what triumphant dignity she struck down my father's impudent contempt. And at that moment the woman knew herself guilty? Indeed! Did she not even withstand truth's trial by fire—she fainted. What language will you now speak, Feeling? Coquettes faint, too. How will *you* justify yourself, Innocence? Trollops, too, fall fainting.

She knows what she has made of me. She has seen my whole soul. My heart showed in my eyes in the blush of our first kiss. And she felt nothing? Perhaps felt only the triumph of her art? While my happy madness imagined that it embraced all heaven in her, that my wildest wishes were stilled? No thought appeared before me but eternity and this girl—and she felt nothing? Only the success of her attack? Only felt her charms soothed and stroked? Death and destruction! Only that I'd been fooled?

### Scene Three

#### *The Chamberlain and Ferdinand*

CHAMBERLAIN (*tripping into the room*). You let the wish be glimpsed, my dear—

FERDINAND (*to himself*). To break a scoundrel's neck. (*Aloud.*) Chamberlain, this letter must have slipped out of your pocket on the parade ground. *I (laughing angrily)* was the lucky finder.

CHAMBERLAIN. You?

FERDINAND. By happy chance. Say your prayers.

CHAMBERLAIN. You see how I am startled, Baron.

FERDINAND. Read it! Read it! (*Walking away.*) If I'm not good enough to be a lover, perhaps I'll fare that much better as a pander. (*While the Chamberlain reads, he goes to the wall and takes down two pistols.*)

CHAMBERLAIN (*tosses the letter on a table and heads for the door*). Damnation!<sup>45</sup>

FERDINAND (*leading him back by the arm*). Patience, dear Chamberlain. This seems good news to me. I'll have my finder's fee. (*Showing him the pistols.*)

CHAMBERLAIN (*recoiling*). You'll not do anything rash,, dear friend.

FERDINAND (*in a terrible voice*). More than enough to send such a rascal into the next world. (*He presses one of the pistols on the Chamberlain as he takes out his handkerchief.*) Take it! And catch one end of this handkerchief! I have it from that tramp.

CHAMBERLAIN. The length of a handkerchief?<sup>46</sup> Have you lost your mind?

FERDINAND. Take hold of the corner, I say. Otherwise you'll shoot wide of the mark, you coward. How the coward trembles! You should thank God: for the first time in life you'll get something into your head.

*(The Chamberlain again takes to his heels.)*

Easy now! Such is the request— (*He overtakes the Chamberlain and bars the door.*)

CHAMBERLAIN. In the room here, Baron?

FERDINAND. As if a trip before the walls were worth the trouble with the likes of you. Sweetheart, this way it'll crack all the louder—the *first* noise you have ever made in this world. At the ready!

CHAMBERLAIN (*mopping his brow*). You'd expose your precious life this way, you promising young man?

FERDINAND. Take aim, I say. I've no further business in this world.

CHAMBERLAIN. And *I* that much more, my dearest.

FERDINAND. *You*, fellow? How so *you*? To fill an empty place at table when there is no one else? To go seven times long and seven times short every

twenty seconds, like a salted snail? To keep a careful record of your master's stools and be a rented nag to peddle his jokes around town? Equally useful. I'll take you with me like the organ grinder's monkey, to prance to the howling of the damned, to fetch and dance attendance, and, with your courtly arts, relieve the permanent despair down there.

CHAMBERLAIN. Whatever you command, sir; exactly as you please. Just no pistols!

FERDINAND. There he stands, the man of sorrows. A disgrace to the sixth day of Creation. As if a Tübingen book dealer had pirated him from the Almighty! The ounce of brain that goes to waste in this thankless skull would have been enough to make a baboon human; in him it's no more than a scrap. To share her heart with *him*? Monstrous! Irresponsible! More suited to discourage sin than to make it alluring.

CHAMBERLAIN. God be praised! He's turning witty.

FERDINAND. I'll let him be. The tolerance that spares the caterpillar is good enough for him. One can only shrug at such as this—and admire an economy that feeds its creatures also on lees and dregs. But (*raging again*) this vermin shall not crawl onto my flower or I shall (*shaking the Chamberlain roughly*) smash it so and so and so again.

CHAMBERLAIN (*sighing to himself*). Oh, my God! To be a hundred leagues from here, in Paris at Bicêtre!<sup>47</sup>

FERDINAND. Rascal! If she's no longer *pure*? If you've *enjoyed* where I *adored*? (*More furious.*) *Feasted* where I felt myself a god. (*After a silence.*) Better you had fled to hell than met my rage in heaven! How far did you get with the girl? Confess!

CHAMBERLAIN. Let me go! I'll tell all. Just have a moment's patience. You've been deceived.

FERDINAND. *You* tell me that, you rascal? How far did you get with her? (*Pressing the pistol against his heart.*) Confess, or I'll shoot.

CHAMBERLAIN. Mon Dieu! I'll talk. Just listen. Your father, your very own father—<sup>48</sup>

FERDINAND (*fiercer*). Coupled his daughter with you?

CHAMBERLAIN. You're mad. You're not listening. I've never seen her. I don't know her, don't know anything about her.

FERDINAND (*stepping back*). You've never seen her? Don't know her? Know nothing about her? The Miller girl is *ruined* because of you and you deny her three times in one breath? Out! (*He swats him with the pistol and pushes him out of the room.*) Gunpowder wasn't invented for the likes of you.

## Scene Four

*Ferdinand, after a long silence in which his features show development of a terrible thought.*

Lost! Yes, unhappy creature! I am. *You* are, too. By God, if I am lost, then you are, too. Judge of the World! Don't require her of me. The girl is mine. I gave up your whole world for the girl, renounced all your magnificent Creation. Leave me the girl. Judge of the World, over there millions of souls wait for you. Turn your merciful eye on them. Let me act alone, Judge of the World. (*Folding his hands; terrible.*) Would the rich, all-powerful Creator covet one soul, the least in all his Creation? The girl is mine! Mine—once her god, now her devil. (*Staring wildly to one side.*)

To be lashed with her to the wheel of damnation in all eternity, eye rooted in eye, hair against hair standing on end, even our hollow whimpering melted into one— And there to repeat my endearments, to chant her vows to her— God! God! To be wedded so is terrible, but eternal.

*(He is about to leave quickly. The First Minister enters.)*

## Scene Five

*The First Minister and Ferdinand*

FERDINAND (*dropping back*). Oh! My father!

FIRST MINISTER. Good that we meet, my son. I have news for you. Something that surely will surprise you, dear Son. Shall we sit down?

FERDINAND (*stares at him at length*). My father! (*Goes to him, much moved, and takes his hand.*) My father! (*Kissing his hand and falling to his knees.*) Oh, my father!

FIRST MINISTER. What is it, my son? Stand up. Your hand is trembling.

FERDINAND (*with wild feeling*). Forgive my ingratitude, my father. I was contemptible. I mistook your goodness. Your intentions were so fatherly. You saw so clearly. Now it's too late. Forgive me! And give me your blessing, Father!

FIRST MINISTER (*assuming an innocent air*). Stand up, Son! You're talking in riddles.

FERDINAND. This Miller girl, Father. Oh, you know men. Your anger was so just, so noble, so fatherly— It just found the wrong way— This Miller girl!

FIRST MINISTER. Don't torment me, Son. I was too harsh. I've come to beg your pardon.

FERDINAND. *My* pardon? You were right to disapprove. You were harsh in order to spare me. This Miller girl, Father—

FIRST MINISTER. Is a fine girl and a dear one. My suspicion of her was hasty. She has won my respect.

FERDINAND (*leaping up*). What? You, too? You, too, Father? — But isn't she, though—a creature like pure innocence. And it's so human to love this girl?

FIRST MINISTER. It would be a crime not to love her.

FERDINAND. Unheard of! Monstrous! You who see through everyone! And you hated her! What hypocrisy! This Miller girl, Father—

FIRST MINISTER. Is worthy to become my daughter. I count her virtue as ancestry and her beauty as wealth. My principles give way before your love. She shall be yours!

FERDINAND (*plunging from the room, frightful*). This is too much! Farewell, my father! (*Exit.*)

FIRST MINISTER (*following*). Stay! Stay! Where are you storming off to? (*Exit.*)

## Scene Six

*A magnificent salon in the Lady's palace*

*The Lady and Sophie enter.*

LADY. You saw her then? Is she coming?

SOPHIE. This minute. She was still in house dress and wanted to change quickly.

LADY. Don't tell me any more. Quiet. I'm trembling like a criminal at the thought of seeing the lucky one whose feelings match my own. How did she behave at the invitation?

SOPHIE. She seemed startled, then became thoughtful, looked at me wide-eyed and said nothing. I was prepared for her excuses when, with a glance that surprised me, she answered: Your Lady orders what I was going to beg of her tomorrow.

LADY (*very uneasy*). Leave me, Sophie. Pity me. I shall be shamed if she's just an ordinary woman and I'll lose heart if she's more.

SOPHIE. But, my Lady— That's no mood to receive a rival in. Remember who you are. Appeal to your birth, your rank, your power. A prouder heart will make you more imposing.

LADY (*distracted*). What's this foolishness?

SOPHIE (*malicious*). Or is it by chance that just today your rarest diamonds sparkle on you and you wear your richest fabrics? That your antechamber swarms with footmen and pages, and a girl of burgher's rank is awaited in your most princely salon?

LADY (*walking up and down; bitterly*). Insupportable! That women should have hawk eyes for women's weaknesses. That such a one should be able to see through me! How deep have I sunk?

ATTENDANT (*entering*). Mamsell Miller—

LADY (*to Sophie*). Away with you! Remove yourself! (*Threatening when Sophie hesitates.*) Away with you! It's an order!

*(Sophie goes off. The Lady takes a turn through the room.)*

Good! Yes, good that I'm now stirred up. That's how I wanted to be. *(To the Attendant.)* The Mamsell<sup>49</sup> may enter.

*(The Attendant goes off. She throws herself on the sofa and assumes a carelessly haughty attitude.)*

## Scene Seven

*Luisa Miller enters timidly and remains standing at some distance. The Lady has turned her back and observes her carefully in a mirror opposite. Pause.*

LUISA. My Lady, I await your orders.

LADY *(turns toward Luisa and nods briefly, cold and reserved)*. Oh! Are you here?  
It's the Mamsell—a certain— What was your name?

LUISA *(taking offense)*. Miller is my father's name and your Ladyship *sent* for his daughter.

LADY. Oh, yes. Quite right. Now I remember. The poor fiddler's daughter they were talking about. *(Pause. To herself.)* Rather interesting, but no beauty. *(Aloud.)* Come closer, my child. *(To herself.)* Eyes practiced in weeping. How I love them, those eyes. *(Aloud.)* Still closer—right here. Dear child, I believe you are *afraid* of me?

LUISA *(grand and resolute)*. No, my Lady. I've no use for what people say.

LADY *(to herself)*. Look at that! Headstrong. That she learned from *him*. *(Aloud.)* You've been recommended to me, Mamsell. As someone who has skills and knows good form. Well, yes. I'm pleased to believe it. Not for the world would I doubt so warm a sponsor.

LUISA. But I don't know anyone, my Lady, who'd go to the trouble to find a patroness for me.

LADY *(stilted)*. Trouble for the client or the patron?

LUISA. I don't understand, my Lady.

LADY (*to herself*). More roguery than this open countenance would lead you to believe! (*To Luisa*.) Luisa is your name? And how young, may I ask?

LUISA. Just turned sixteen.

LADY (*stands up quickly*). There you have it! Sixteen? The first throb of passion! On the untouched keyboard, the first silvery tone! Nothing more seductive. (*To Luisa*.) Sit down. I quite like you, dear girl. (*To herself*.) He, too, loves for the first time. No wonder these two beams meet in a single dawn. (*Taking her hand, very friendly*.) For sure, I want to make you happy, dear. (*To herself*.) It's nothing, nothing but the usual sweet, swiftly passing fantasies. (*Patting Luisa's cheek*.) My Sophie is about to marry. You shall have her place. (*To herself*.) Sixteen! It can't last.

LUISA (*kisses her hand respectfully*). I thank you for this kindness, my Lady, no less than were I able to accept it.

LADY (*sitting back, incensed*). Well, look at the great lady! Young girls of *your* origin usually think themselves lucky to find a mistress— What are you saying, my precious? Are these fingers too delicate to work? Is it that bit of face you have that makes you so difficult?

LUISA. My face, my Lady, is as little mine are my origins.

LADY. Or do you perhaps believe that all this will never end? Poor thing, whoever put that in your head—be he who he may—he's fooled you both. These cheeks aren't solid gold. What your mirror would sell you as massive and eternal is but a thin film of gold leaf that will come off on your admirer's hand sooner or later. What shall we do *then*?

LUISA. Regret the admirer, my Lady, who bought a diamond because it *seemed* to be mounted in gold.

LADY (*ignoring her meaning*). A girl your age always has two mirrors, a true one and her admirer. The one finds fault with a smallpox scar, the other says, "No, wrong. It's a dimple of the Graces." You good children believe of that one only what this one has said, and so back and forth, till you no longer know— Why are you staring at me so?

LUISA. Pardon, my Lady. I was about to feel sorry for that glowing ruby that seems not to know how its mistress denounces vanity.

LADY (*reddening*). No evasions, my pert one! If it's not the prospects of your figure, what in the world could keep you from choosing the one station where you can learn good manners and polite society and rid yourself of your burgher's prejudices?

LUIA. Also of my burgher's innocence, my Lady?

LADY. Silly objection! The most unbridled rascal is too timid to tarnish us if we don't meet him halfway. Show who you are. Take on an air of honor and dignity and I'll guarantee your young years against all temptation.

LUIA. Allow me to presume to doubt that, my Lady. The palaces of certain ladies are often the preserve of the most insolent amusement. Who would credit the poor fiddler's daughter with the heroic courage to throw herself into the midst of this pestilence and resist it? Who would ever dream that Lady Milford is keeping a scorpion for her conscience, that she's paying good money for the privilege of turning red with shame every moment? I'll be frank, my Lady. Would the sight of me amuse you as you went out in search of pleasure? Could you bear it on your return? Oh, better that you let whole worlds divide us, whole seas run between us! Beware, my Lady. Moments of sobriety, of *exhaustion* could come, moments of regret, and *then*, what a torment for you to see in your maid's face the *serene calm* that innocence rewards a pure heart with. (*Taking a step backward.*) Once again, my Lady, I earnestly beg your pardon.

LADY (*moving about in ever greater agitation*). Insupportable that she says these things to me! Even more insupportable that she is right! (*Going to Luisa and looking her straight in the face.*) You'll not outwit me, girl. Mere *opinions* are not expressed with such heat. There's a fiery interest lurking behind these maxims that makes you think *my* service particularly revolting, that made your talk so heated, and (*threatening*) that I shall uncover.

LUIA (*calm and noble*). And if you uncovered it? I have no fear of your revenge, my Lady. Condemned and standing on the scaffold, one laughs to see the world go under. My wretchedness is such that even forthrightness can't make it worse. (*After a pause, very earnestly.*) You want to lift me out of my humble origins. I'll not dissect this suspect kindness. I'll only ask what could lead my Lady to think me the fool to be ashamed of those origins? What gives her the right to style herself the author of my happiness without first

knowing if I wish to receive my happiness from *her*? I had torn up my title to worldly happiness, forgiven good fortune its untimeliness—why remind me of it now? When even the Godhead hides its beams so as not to blind the angels. And how is it, my Lady, that your vaunted happiness so eagerly seeks envy and admiration from my *wretchedness*? Does your great happiness require despair as a foil? Just grant me the blindness that alone can reconcile me to my barbarous lot. For the insect in a drop of water is content until it hears of the great ocean where fleets sail and whales play! And you want to make me *happy*? (*After a pause, she goes to the Lady and asks her point-blank.*) Are you happy, my Lady?

(*The Lady moves away abruptly, Luisa follows; indicating the Lady's bosom.*)

Does this heart have the smiling face that becomes your rank? And if we were now to exchange heart for heart and fate for fate, and if I asked you innocently, asked you upon your conscience and as my mother, would you urge me to make the exchange?

LADY (*throwing herself on the sofa*). Unheard of! Beyond belief! Oh, no, my girl, this kind of greatness you weren't born with. And for a *father* it's too youthful. I hear *another* speaking—

LUISA (*looking her sharply in the eye*). I should be surprised, my Lady, if you'd thought of this *other* only now and yet offered me a situation when I entered.

LADY (*leaping up*). This can't be stood! Yes, in fact! Since I can't evade you. I know him. I know everything. Know more than I want to know. (*She stops suddenly, then, with mounting vehemence.*) But dare, just dare to love him now, unhappy creature, or to be loved by him. What am I saying? Dare to think of him or to be one of *his* thoughts. I am *powerful*, you unhappy creature, and *terrible*. As God lives, you're lost!

LUISA (*stoutly*). Beyond rescue, my Lady, as soon as you compel his *loving* you.

LADY. I understand you. But he is *not* to love me. I'll conquer this disgraceful passion, suppress my heart and crush yours. I'll throw mountains and crevasses between the two of you. Like a Fury, I'll cut straight through your heaven; my name shall frighten your embraces apart; in his arms your blossoming figure shall wither like a mummy. With him I cannot find

happiness—and *you* shall not either. Just know this, you wretch: to destroy a great happiness is also a great happiness.

LUISA. A great happiness you've forfeited, my Lady. Do not abuse your own heart. You are not capable of doing what you would bring down on me—of tormenting a creature who has done you no harm except to have felt as you did. And I love you for this feeling, my Lady.

LADY (*now more composed*). Where was I? What have I betrayed? *Who*— Did she notice? Oh, Luisa, noble soul, forgive my ravings. I'll not harm a hair of your head, my child. Make a wish! Ask what you like! I'll carry you on the palm of my hand. I want to be your friend, your sister. You are poor. Look! (*Unfastening a few diamonds.*) I'll sell these gems—and my wardrobe, my horses and carriages. It's all to be *yours*. Just give him up!

LUISA (*stepping back, astonished*). Is she mocking my despair? Or did she have no part in this barbarous business?<sup>50</sup> In that case I could style myself a heroine and dress up my helplessness to look like a good deed. (*She reflects a moment, then goes to the Lady, takes her hand and looks at her with meaning.*) Take him, then, my Lady. *Of my own free will* I give up the man ripped from my heart with hell's own hooks. You may not know it, my Lady, but *you* have razed the heaven of two lovers, pulled apart two hearts that *God* himself bound to one another, and destroyed a creature who mattered to Him as you mattered, who praised Him as you did and will praise Him no more. Now he is *yours*, my Lady. Take him! Run into his arms! Snatch him away to the altar. But remember: The *ghost* of a *suicide* will come between you in your bridal kiss. God is merciful. I cannot do otherwise. (*She plunges off.*)

## Scene Eight

### *The Lady alone*

*She stands shaken and beside herself, her eyes riveted to the door the Miller girl has hurried through. Finally she emerges from her stunned state.*

What did that unhappy creature say? The damning words still ring in my ear: *Take him!* Who, you unhappy creature? The gift of your dying breath? The legacy of your despair? God! God! Have I sunk so from all the thrones of my pride that I thirst for the bounty that a beggar girl will toss to me in

the throes of death? *Take him!* Spoken in a *tone*, accompanied by a *look*— Ha! Emilia! Was it for *this* you stepped beyond the bounds of your kind? Did you cultivate the splendid name of a great British woman only to see the edifice of your honor sink beside the higher virtue of an abandoned burgher girl? No, indeed! Emilia Milford lets herself be *shamed*, but *disgraced*—no, never. *I*, too, have the strength to renounce.

(*Walking up and down majestically.*) Be gone now, weak and suffering woman. Farewell, golden images of love. Magnanimity alone now be my guide! This loving pair is lost if Milford does not renounce her claim, if her flame is not extinguished in the Prince's heart. (*After a pause, vivid.*) It is done! The terrible obstacle removed, all bonds between me and the Duke now broken, this raging love torn from my breast! Virtue, I throw myself into your arms! Take up your contrite daughter Emilia! Ha! How relieved I feel, how much lighter, how lifted up! Great like a falling sun, I'll sink today from the peak of my highness; let my grandeur die out with my love and nothing go with me into this proud exile but my *heart!* (*Going to her writing desk, resolved.*) Now, right away, before the charms of this dear young man renew the struggle in my heart. (*She sits down and begins to write.*)

## Scene Nine

*Lady. An Attendant. Sophie. Then the Chamberlain. Finally, Servants.*

ATTENDANT. His Lordship Chamberlain von Kalb is waiting in the antechamber with a message from the Duke.

LADY (*in the heat of writing*). He will reel, this princely marionette! Yes, indeed! The idea is droll enough to split his serene skull! His sycophants will spin like dervishes! The whole land will come into ferment.

ATTENDANT and SOPHIE. His Lordship the Chamberlain, my Lady—

LADY (*turning around*). Who? What? So much the better! Creatures like that were put here to fetch and carry. I await him.

(*The Attendant goes off.*)

SOPHIE (*approaching anxiously*). I fear it's a liberty, my Lady— (*The Lady goes on writing furiously.*) The Miller girl rushed through the antechamber quite beside herself— You are all alright— You're talking to yourself— (*The Lady goes on writing.*) It's frightening. What can have happened?

(*The Chamberlain enters and bows a thousand times to the Lady's back.  
When she does not notice, he comes closer, stands behind her chair  
and tries to catch a corner of her gown and kiss it.*)

CHAMBERLAIN (*whispering timidly*). Serenissimus—

LADY (*scattering sand and scanning her writing*). He'll charge me with black ingratitude. I was a waif. He lifted me out of my misery. Misery? Detestable exchange! Tear up your account, seducer! My eternal *shame* will pay it, pay with interest.

CHAMBERLAIN (*having attempted to approach the Lady from every side*). My Lady seems to be *distract*. I'll have to be so bold. (*Very loud.*) Serenissimus, my Lady, sends me to ask if it will be Vauxhall this evening or a German comedy?<sup>51</sup>

LADY (*standing up with a laugh*). One or the other, my angel. Meanwhile, bring your Duke this card as dessert! (*To Sophie.*) You, Sophie, order the carriage. And assemble all my staff here in the hall.

SOPHIE (*going off, dismayed*). Oh, heavens! What's coming now?

CHAMBERLAIN. You are *échauffée*,<sup>52</sup> my Lady?

LADY. That much less need for lying anymore. Hurrah, my Lord Chamberlain! A vacancy is opening. Good weather for panders. (*She sees the Chamberlain peering at the letter.*) Read it, read it! I make no secret of the content.

(*While the Chamberlain reads, the Lady's staff gather in the background.*)

CHAMBERLAIN (*reading aloud*). "My Lord, a contract that *you* broke so light-heartedly cannot bind *me* anymore. The happiness of your land was the condition of my love. The deception has lasted two years. My eyes are opened. I abhor favors wet with your subjects' tears. Give the love *I* can return no longer to your weeping land instead and learn from a *British*

*princess* mercy toward your *German people*. In one hour I shall be over the border. Johanna Norfolk.”

ALL SERVANTS (*murmuring among themselves*). Over the border?

CHAMBERLAIN (*laying the note on the table, stunned*). God forbid, my most esteemed and gracious Lady! The bearer would feel his neck tingle no less than the writer.

LADY. That’s *your* problem, precious boy. Sadly, I know all too well that you and your likes choke in reciting what others have done. *My* advice would be to bake the note in a *pâté* so Serenissimus would find it on his plate—

CHAMBERLAIN. Ciel! The audacity! Do consider how you put yourself in *disgrâce*, my Lady.

LADY (*turns to the assembled Servants and speaks as follows, very moved*): You stand dismayed, good people, wait anxiously to see how this riddle will turn out? Come closer, my dears. You served me honestly and well, looked into my eyes more often than into my purse; obedience was your passion and your pride—and a blessing for me! That remembrance of your loyalty should be at the same time recall of my humiliation! A sad fate that my blackest days were your happiest! (*With tears in her eyes.*) I dismiss you, my children. Lady Milford is no more and Johanna of Norfolk is too poor to pay her debts. My treasurer is to empty my casket among you. This palace remains the Duke’s. The poorest among you will go from here richer than your mistress. (*She offers her hand, which all kiss fervently.*) I understand you, good people. Farewell! Farewell forever! (*Recovering her composure.*) I hear the carriage before the door. (*She tears herself away, moves to go out; the Chamberlain blocks her way.*) Wretched creature, are you still here?

CHAMBERLAIN (*who has been staring, witless, at the note*). This *billet* I’m to put into His Serene Highness’s very own hands?

LADY. Wretched man! Into his very own hands and announce to his very own ears that I, unable to go barefoot to Loreto,<sup>53</sup> shall labor instead for the daily wage of cleansing myself of the blot of having ruled over him.

(*She goes off. All others go their separate ways, much moved.*)



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Luisa pleads with Ferdinand, the glass of lemonade between them. Engraving by Wilhelm Hecht from a woodcut by Heinrich Lossow, *Schillers Werke illustriert von ersten deutschen Künstlern* (Leipzig and Stuttgart, 1877). University of Virginia.  
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## Act Five

*Evening twilight in a room in the Music Master's house*

### Scene One

*Luisa sits motionless and silent in a dark corner of the room, her head lying on her arms. After a long pause Miller enters, carrying a lantern. By its light he anxiously searches the room without finding her. Then he lays his hat on the table and sets down the lantern.*

MILLER. She's not here either. Once again, I see she's not here. I've been down all the lanes, visited everyone we know, asked at every gate. No one's seen my child anywhere. *(After a silence.)* Patience, poor unhappy father. Wait for morning. Then your one and only may wash up on the bank. God! God! Have I loved her like an idol? *This* punishment is hard! Heavenly Father, hard! I'll not complain, heavenly Father, but the punishment is hard. *(He throws himself into a chair.)*

LUISA *(speaking from the corner)*. You've done right, poor old man! Learn in good time how to lose.

MILLER *(leaping up)*. You're here, my child? Are you? Why so alone, and without light?

LUISA. Oh, I'm not lonely. When it gets real dark all around me, I have my best visits.

MILLER. God save you! Only a bad conscience keeps company with the owl. Sins and evil spirits fear the light.

LUISA. *Eternity*, too, Father, that speaks directly with the soul.

MILLER. My child, my child! What kind of talk is this?

LUISA *(stands up and comes forward)*. I have fought a hard fight. You know this, Father. God gave me strength. The fight is now over. One calls our sex weak and fragile. Don't believe it, Father. We quake at a spider but the black monster death and *decay* we happily embrace. So that you know, Father. Your Luisa is merry.

MILLER. Listen, Daughter! I wish you were wailing. I'd like that better.

LUISA. How I'll outwit him, Father! How I'll cheat the tyrant! Love is smarter than evil and bolder—that he didn't know, the man with the sad star on his breast. Oh, they are tricky when it only has to do with the head, but when they try something with the heart, the rascals are stupid. He thought he'd seal his fraud tight with an oath. An oath binds only the living, Father. In death even a sacred oath must melt. Ferdinand will know his Luisa— You'll take care of this note, Father? You'd be so good?

MILLER. Note to whom, my daughter?

LUISA. Strange question! Eternity and my heart have between them no room for a single thought of *him*. When should I have had time to write anyone else?

MILLER (*uneasy*). Listen, Luisa! I'm going to open this letter.

LUISA. As you like, Father. But you won't learn much. The lines lie there like cold corpses, live only for the eyes of love.

MILLER (*reading*). "You've been betrayed, Ferdinand. A piece of mischief like none other has broken the bond of our hearts. But a terrible vow has silenced me and your father has spies posted everywhere. If you have courage, Beloved, I know a *third* place where no sworn oath binds and no listener comes near." (*Miller stops and looks her gravely in the face.*)

LUISA. Why are you looking at me that way? Read it to the end, Father.

MILLER. "But you must have courage enough to travel a dark road where nothing lights your way but God and your Luisa. You must come all *love*. Leave your hopes behind and all your clamoring wishes; you can use your heart only. If you will, then start out at the stroke of twelve in the Carmelite tower. If you're afraid, strike the word *strong* from your sex—a girl will have put you to shame." (*Miller lays the note down, stares straight ahead, and then turns to her; softly.*) And this third place, my daughter?

LUISA. You don't know, Father? Really don't know? Strange! I've described it plainly. Ferdinand will find it.

MILLER. Hm! Speak more clearly.

LUISA. I can't find a pretty word for it. Don't be frightened, Father, if I name an ugly one. This place— Oh, why has love not invented names! It would have given this one the loveliest. This third place, Father—just let me finish—is the *grave*.

MILLER (*staggering into a chair*). Oh, my God!

LUISA (*goes to him and holds him*). No, no, Father. This is just horror of the word. Get rid of the word and a bridal bed is there, over which the morning spreads its golden carpet and spring strews its bright garlands. Only a howling sinner could call death a skeleton. It is a charming child, young and blooming, like they paint the god of love,<sup>54</sup> but not sly and treacherous—a quiet, helpful genius; it helps the soul, an exhausted pilgrim, across the moat of time, unlocks the fairy castle of eternal glory, and is gone.

MILLER. What are you planning, Daughter? You would lay hand—

LUISA. Don't call it that, my father. To leave a society where I'm not welcome, leap ahead to a place I can no longer do without— Is that a sin?

MILLER. Suicide is the most abhorrent, my child—the only one you can't repent—you'll have no time.

LUISA (*freezes*). Dreadful! But I'll find time. I'll jump into the river and as I *sink* pray for mercy from almighty God.

MILLER. You would regret the theft as soon as you are sure of what you've stolen? Careful, Daughter! Don't mock God at the moment you most need Him. Oh, this has gone far, very far. You've given up your prayers and merciful God has withdrawn his hand from you.

LUISA. Is it a sacrilege to *love*, my father?

MILLER. If you love God, it will never amount to sacrilege. You've bowed me down, my only one, down to the open grave perhaps. But I'll not make your heart *still* heavier. Daughter, just now I said something. I thought I was alone, and you heard me. Why keep it a secret? You were my idol. Listen, Luisa, if you still have place for a father's feelings. You were my everything. It is not just what is yours that you're now throwing away. I, *too*, stand to lose everything. You see my hair is graying. The time is coming when we fathers draw down the capital that we've laid up in our children's hearts.

Would you cheat me of this, Luisa? Make off with what belongs to your father?

LUISA (*kissing his hand, very touched*). No, Father. I go out of the world as your debtor and will pay, with interest, in eternity.

MILLER. Careful you don't miscalculate, my child. (*Very solemn.*) Shall we find each other there? Look how you turn pale! My Luisa herself understands I'll not catch up with her, since I'll not hurry off as soon as she does. (*Luisa rushes, shuddering, into his arms; he embraces her, entreating.*) Oh, Daughter, my fallen daughter, perhaps already lost! Take your father's word to heart! I cannot keep watch on you. I can take a knife away from you and you can kill yourself with a knitting needle, can keep you safe from poison and you can strangle yourself with a string of beads. Luisa, Luisa. I can only warn you. Would you let it reach the point that your faithless fantasy fades from your side as you cross the terrible divide between time and eternity?<sup>55</sup> Would you dare go before all-knowing God with this lie: "I've come because of *You*, my Creator," even while your wanton eye searches for its mortal idol? And when this fragile god of your invention, like you, a mere worm, is writhing at the feet of your Judge, when he gives the lie to your godless confidence in this doubtful moment and refers your false hopes to eternal mercy that the wretch can hardly beg for himself—what then? (*Louder.*) What then, unhappy creature? (*He holds her tighter, looks at her steadily, and releases her quickly.*) I know nothing more— (*Raising his right hand.*) God of Judgment, I'll vouch for this soul no longer. (*To Luisa.*) Do as you wish. Bring your slender young man such a sacrifice that your devils shout for joy and your good angels step aside. Just go your way! Heap up all your sins, also this one, the last, most horrible, and if that's not load enough, make up the weight with my curse. Here is a knife. Pierce your heart (*in tears, about to rush away*) and your father's!

LUISA (*leaping after him*). Stop! Stop! Oh, my father! That tenderness should compel more savagely than a tyrant's rage! What must I do?

MILLER. If your Major's kisses burn hotter than your father's tears, then die!

LUISA (*after a painful struggle, quite firmly*). Father, here is my hand. Father, I swear— What shall I do? A criminal, no matter which I choose. Father, may it be so! Ferdinand— God looks down on us! I tear up his last memory. (*She destroys the letter.*)

MILLER (*embracing her joyfully*). That's my daughter! Look at me! You're lighter by a lover and have made your father happy. (*Between laughter and tears.*) Child! Child that I was not worthy of my life long! God knows how I, simple man, have come into this angel! My Luisa, my kingdom of heaven! Oh, God. It's true: I don't know much about love, but that it must be a torment to give it up—that I understand.

LUISA. But away from here, my father. Away from this town, where my best friends laugh at me and my good name is gone. Away from the place where I find so many traces of lost happiness. Away!

MILLER. Wherever you like, my daughter. God's bread grows everywhere and he'll also provide listeners for my fiddle. We'll leave everything behind. I'll set the story of your sorrow for the lute and sing a song about the daughter who broke her heart for her father's sake. With this ballad we'll beg door to door, and the offerings of weeping women will taste sweet—

## Scene Two

*Ferdinand to join the others*

LUISA (*seeing him, throws herself with loud cries into Miller's arms*). God! There he is! I am lost!

MILLER. Who? Where?

LUISA (*with averted face points to the Major and tightens her embrace*). Him! He himself! Just look, Father. He's come to murder me!

MILLER (*seeing him, draws back*). You here, Baron?

FERDINAND (*approaches slowly, stops, and gazes long and searching at Luisa. Pause*). Bad conscience taken by surprise! My thanks! A swift and sure confession. No need for torture. Good evening, Miller.

MILLER. In God's name! What do you want, Baron? Why burst in on us this way?

FERDINAND. There was a time when the day advanced second by second, when longing for me hung itself on the weights of the dawdling wall clock, lay in wait for the heart's throb at my arrival. And now I come by surprise?

MILLER. Go away, Baron. Go away. If one spark of human kindness remains in your heart, if you don't want to murder the girl you pretend to love, go now. Happiness went out the door of my cottage the moment *you* set foot in it. You brought misery under my roof, where there'd been only joy. Are you not *yet* satisfied? You'd rub salt into the wound your luckless acquaintance has struck in my only child?

FERDINAND. Curious father, I've come with good news for your daughter.

MILLER. New hopes that lead to new despair? Bearer of unhappiness, go away! That face of yours makes your wares worthless.

FERDINAND. Finally, my hopes are realized! Lady Milford, obstacle to our love, fled the country just this moment. My father has approved my choice. Fate has left off pursuing us. Our good stars are rising. I've come to keep my word and fetch my bride, lead her to the altar.<sup>56</sup>

MILLER. Did you hear him, Daughter? Hear him make fun of your lost hopes? In truth, Baron—how it becomes the seducer to exercise his wit on his crime.

FERDINAND. You think I'm being witty? Indeed not, by my honor! What I say is *true*, like my Luisa's love, and I will keep it sacred, as *she* did her vows. I know nothing more sacred. You doubt me? No blush of pleasure on the cheeks of my new wife? Strange! Lies must be the usual currency here, if truth gets so little credit. You two mistrust my words? Then believe this writing.

*(He tosses Luisa the letter to the Chamberlain. She opens it and collapses.)*

MILLER (*not noticing*). What's this to mean, Baron? I don't understand you.

FERDINAND (*leads him to Luisa*). *She* has understood me that much better.

MILLER (*stooping over her*). Oh, God! My daughter!

FERDINAND. Deathly pale! *That's* just how I like her, your daughter. Lovely like never before, this just and pious daughter. The face of a corpse. The breath of the Last Judgment, which strips the gloss from every lie, has stripped away the paint and polish this artful sorceress used to fool the very angels of light. Her loveliest face, her *first true* face! I'll kiss it. (*About to go to her.*)

MILLER. Keep back! Keep clear! Don't lay hand on a father's heart, boy! I couldn't save her from your caresses, but I can from your rough handling.

FERDINAND. What are you doing here, you graybeard? I've no use for you. Don't meddle in a game that's clearly been lost. Or are you smarter than I thought? Did you lend your daughter's little love games the wisdom of your sixty years and disgrace this honorable gray hair by a pander's trade? If *not*, unhappy old man, then lay yourself down right now and die. There's still time; you can still go off to sleep in the sweet illusion: I was a happy father! One moment more and you'll fling this poisonous adder back into its hellish home, curse the gift and the Giver, and go, cursing God, into your grave. (*To Luisa.*) Speak, wretched girl. Did you write this letter?

MILLER (*warning Luisa*). For God's sake, Daughter! Don't forget! Don't forget!

LUISA. This letter, my father—

FERDINAND. Fell into the wrong hands? Praise be to chance! It did greater things than hair-splitting reason and will hold up better on that day than the wits of all the wise men. Chance? If Providence is present when a sparrow falls, why not when a devil is to be unmasked? I want an answer! Did you write this letter?

MILLER (*aside*). Steady, steady, my daughter! Just one "yes" and it's all over.

FERDINAND. What a farce! Her father, too, is fooled. Everyone is fooled! There she stands, this disgrace, and even her tongue has quit on her last lie! Swear by God! By the terrible, true God! Did you write this letter?

LUISA (*after a struggle in which she exchanges glances with her father; firmly*). I wrote it.

FERDINAND (*stops, shocked*). Luisa! No! That's a lie. Under torture even innocence confesses crimes it never committed. I was too harsh. Wasn't I, Luisa? That's why you confessed? Because I asked too harshly?

LUISA. I confessed what's true.

FERDINAND. No, I say. No! No! You didn't write it. That is not your hand at all. And if it were, why should imitating handwriting be harder than corrupting hearts? Tell me truly— No, don't. You could say Yes and I'd be lost. A lie,

Luisa! A lie! If you knew one now, tossed it to me with your open angel's face, persuaded just my ear, my eye, deceived this heart— Oh, Luisa! Then may all truth go out of Creation in *this* breath, and justice yield henceforth to a courtier's servile falseness! (*With a faltering voice.*) Did you write this letter?

LUISA. By God, the terrible and true! Yes!

FERDINAND (*after a pause, in great pain*). Woman! Woman! The face with which you stand before me *now!* Hand out paradises with this face—you'll not find a buyer even among the damned. Did you know what you were to me, Luisa? No! Impossible! You didn't know that you were *everything* to me. Everything. A poor word, but even Eternity can hardly travel around it all or planetary systems complete their paths within it. Everything! To toy with it so shamelessly! This is terrible—

LUISA. You have my admission, Major von Walter. I have condemned myself. Go then! Leave a house in which you were so unhappy.

FERDINAND. Fine! Fine! I am calm and quiet. So is, they say, the shuddering stretch of land the plague has swept over. And so am I. (*After a moment's reflection.*) One more request, Luisa. The last! My head's so feverish. I need to cool it. Would you make me a glass of lemonade?

(*Luisa goes off.*)

### Scene Three

*Ferdinand and Miller*

*They walk up and down on opposite sides of the room, saying nothing.*

MILLER (*finally stands still and regards the Major sadly*). Dear Baron, can it perhaps ease your sorrow if I tell that I feel for you?

FERDINAND. Let it be, Miller. (*A few more steps.*) Miller, I hardly know what brought me to your house—

MILLER. What it was, Major? You wanted to take flute lessons from me. You don't remember?

FERDINAND (*quickly*). And saw your daughter. (*Another pause.*) You've not kept your word, friend. We agreed on *peace and quiet* for my solitary hours. You deceived me, sold me scorpions. (*Seeing Miller's reaction.*) No, don't be alarmed, old man. (*Embracing him, touched.*) It's not your fault.

MILLER (*wiping his eyes*). All-knowing God knows that!

FERDINAND (*walking up and down, brooding darkly*). Strange, beyond understanding strange, how God toys with us. On slender, unseen threads terrible weights often hang. Had man but known he was to eat death in that apple— Had he known— (*Walking more rapidly, then seizing Miller's hand.*) Man! I'm paying a high price for your bit of flute— And you're not even clearing a profit— You, too, are losing—perhaps losing everything. (*Turning away, oppressed.*) Wretched flute playing. I never should have thought of such a thing.

MILLER (*to conceal his feelings*). That lemonade is taking quite a while. I'll go have a look, if you don't mind.

FERDINAND. No hurry, dear Miller, (*to himself*) at least not for the father. Stay a bit. What did I want to ask? Oh, yes. Is Luisa your only daughter? You have no other children?

MILLER (*warmly*). No others, Baron, and don't wish for any. The little maid is just right to pocket a father's whole heart. All the love I have in ready money I've put on the daughter.

FERDINAND (*shaken*). Look to the lemonade, my good Miller.

(*Miller goes off.*)

## Scene Four

*Ferdinand alone*

His only child. Do you feel that, murderer? His only one! The man has nothing else in all the world but his instrument and this only— You would rob him? Rob the last red cent from a beggar? Throw the broken crutch at the feet of a cripple? You could stomach that? And when he hurries home and can hardly wait to tell the whole sum of his happiness from the face of this

daughter, and comes in and she's lying there, the flower, withered, dead, stamped out, willfully, this one last hope— And he stands there before her, and all Nature holds its breath, and his frozen glance wanders through unpeopled endlessness in vain, seeks God and finds God no longer, and comes back more empty— God! God! *My father, too, has this one son. This, his only son, but not his only riches— (Pause.)* But what's he losing then? The girl, for whom the most sacred feelings of love were only playthings— would she be able to make her father happy? She won't, oh, no indeed! And I deserve thanks for stepping on the adder before it bites the father, too.

## Scene Five

*Miller, returning, and Ferdinand*

MILLER. At your service, Baron, right away. The poor thing's sitting out there crying herself to death. She'll give you tears to drink in your lemonade.

FERDINAND. A good thing if it were only tears! Since we've just been talking about music, Miller— *(Taking out a purse.)* I still owe you something.

MILLER. What is this? Don't even think of such a thing. Who do you take me for? That's in your good hands. Don't insult me so. And, God willing, we've not met for the last time.

FERDINAND. Who can know? Just take it. It's for life and death.

MILLER *(laughing)*. Oh, for that reason, Baron! In *that* case I think we can risk it with you.

FERDINAND. Risk it indeed— You've never heard that young men have fallen—girls and young men, children of hope, the dreams and desires of deceived fathers— What worm and age don't do, a thunderbolt may deliver. Even your Luisa's not immortal.

MILLER. I have her from God.

FERDINAND. Just listen. I tell you she's not immortal. This daughter is the apple of your eye. You've attached yourself, heart and soul, to this daughter. Be careful, Miller. Only a desperate gambler puts everything on a single

throw. The merchant who loads all his treasure on a single ship is called a fool— But why don't you take your money?

MILLER. What, my Lord? This whole almighty purse? What is your Grace thinking of?

FERDINAND. Of what I owe. Here! (*He tosses the purse on the table, where gold pieces fall out.*) I can't hang on to this stuff forever.

MILLER (*nonplussed*). God help us! That didn't sound like silver pieces! (*He goes to the table and cries out.*) What in heaven's name, Baron? This is—or I've been— It's God's own gold—by the handful— Oh, no, Satan! You'll not catch me with that!

FERDINAND. Have you been drinking this year's or last year's, Miller?

MILLER (*blunt*). Lord help me! Look at that! Gold!

FERDINAND. And?

MILLER. I ask you—for God's sake— Gold!

FERDINAND. Remarkable enough.

MILLER (*after a silence, going to him; with feeling*). My Lord, I'm a simple, up-standing man, in case you want to put me up to something. That much money can't be had for anything good.

FERDINAND (*moved*). No need to fear, dear Miller. You've long since earned this money and God forbid that I should make you pay for it with your good conscience.

MILLER (*jumping for joy*). Mine then! Mine! With God's knowledge, by His will, mine. (*Running to the door, shouting.*) Wife! Daughter! Victory! Come here! (*Coming back.*) But how've I suddenly come into all these wild riches? How do I deserve them? How do I make this good?

FERDINAND. Not with music lessons, Miller. With this money I pay you for— (*Overcome, he stops.*) I pay you for (*pause; sadly*) a three months' happy dream with your daughter.

MILLER (*taking his hand and pressing it*). Gracious Lord! If you were a plain little burgher man—(*quickly*) and my girl didn't love you— I'd want to stab her

dead, the girl. (*Returning to the money and throwing himself on it.*) But now I have everything and you have nothing, and I'll have to shell out the whole lot again?

FERDINAND. Don't be concerned, friend. I'm about to go away—to where that mint's not good.

MILLER (*staring at the gold meanwhile, overjoyed*). It's mine then? Mine? I'm sorry, though, you're going away. Just wait! What a figure I'll cut! And the spread for my table! (*He puts his hat on and flies through the room.*) I'll give lessons on the market square, for free, and smoke Three Kings number five and if I make-do with a two-penny place again, the devil take me. (*About to go.*)

FERDINAND. Stay here! And say nothing! Gather up your money. (*With emphasis.*) Say nothing just for this evening and, as a favor to me, no more music lessons.

MILLER (*more fevered, fastening Ferdinand by the waistcoat*). And, good sir! My daughter! (*Releasing him.*) Money doesn't make the man. Oh, no. I've eaten potatoes, I've eaten wildfowl: enough to eat's enough. This coat will last forever if God's own sun does not shine through the sleeves. For me that's all tinsel. It should go to the girl, everything that I can see she wants—

FERDINAND (*hastily*). Oh, quiet, quiet—

MILLER (*more and more heated*). She'll learn French for me, from a to z, and to dance the minuet, and singing—they'll read about it in the papers; and she'll wear a bonnet like the privy counselor's daughters and a bustle, as they call it, and they'll talk about the fiddler's daughter for four leagues around—

FERDINAND (*seizing his hand*). No more! No more! Not one more word, for God's sake! Just for *today*. The only thanks I ask of you!

## Scene Six

*Luisa with the lemonade, to join the others*

LUISA (*her eyes red, her voice trembling, brings the Major the glass of lemonade on a tray*). At your service, if it's not strong enough.<sup>57</sup>

FERDINAND (*takes the glass, sets it down, and turns suddenly to Miller*). Oh, I almost forgot! May I ask something of you, my dear Miller? A little favor—

MILLER. A thousand for one! Your orders—

FERDINAND. They'll be expecting me at table. But I'm badly out of sorts. Impossible for me to go into company. Will you bring my excuses to my father—

LUISA (*alarmed; quickly*). I can run that errand.

MILLER. To the First Minister?

FERDINAND. Not to the First Minister himself. Leave the message with the attendant at the door. My watch here will vouch for you. Wait for an answer. I'll still be here when you come back.

LUISA (*very anxious*). Can't I see to that?

FERDINAND (*to Miller, who is about to leave*). And one more thing! Here's a letter for my father, included in a packet I received this evening. Perhaps urgent. This, too—

MILLER. As good as done, Baron!

LUISA (*holding him back, deeply alarmed*). But, Father, I could do all that full well.

MILLER. You are alone and it is black night, my daughter. (*Exit.*)

FERDINAND. Light your father's way, Luisa. (*While she accompanies Miller with a light, he goes to the table and drops poison into the glass of lemonade.*) Let her drink it! The powers above nod their assent, heaven's vengeance puts its name to it, her good angel lets her go—

## Scene Seven

### *Ferdinand and Luisa*

*Luisa returns slowly, carrying the light. She sets it down and stands on one side, her head down, glancing timidly at the Major from time to time.*

*He stands on the other side, staring straight ahead.*

*(A deep silence to announce this scene.)*

LUISA. If you'd like to accompany me, Major von Walter, I'll play a piece on the fortepiano.

*(She opens the piano. Ferdinand gives her no answer. Pause.)*

You also owe me a return game on the chessboard. Shall we play a round, Major von Walter?

*(Another pause.)*

Major von Walter, the letter case I once promised to embroider for you — I've begun it. Would you like to see the pattern?

*(A third pause.)*

Oh, I'm so miserable!

FERDINAND *(unmoving and unmoved)*. That may well be.

LUISA. It's not my fault, Major von Walter, that you meet with such a poor reception.

FERDINAND *(laughs to himself insultingly)*. No. What can *you* do if I'm so dumb and awkward?

LUISA. I knew we shouldn't be alone together here. I was frightened when you sent my father away. I admit that. Major von Walter, we must both find this moment unbearable. If you'll let me, I'll go invite a few of my acquaintances.

FERDINAND. Oh, please do. And I'll go ask a few of mine.

LUISA *(looks at him uncertainly)*. Major von Walter?

FERDINAND *(very spiteful)*. By my honor! The cleverest thing that one can think of at this pass. We'll turn this charming duet into a party; we'll call on gallantries to avenge ourselves on love's silly notions.

LUISA. You're in good spirits, Major von Walter?

FERDINAND. Enough to attract a pack of urchins in the marketplace! In truth, Luisa, your example has converted me. You'll be my teacher. Only fools natter on about eternal love. Eternal sameness is boring; variety is the soul of pleasure. Done, Luisa! Count me in. We'll skip from one little romance to another, you here, me there. Perhaps I'll find my lost peace of mind in some bordello. Perhaps, after all these pleasures, we'll run into one another again, two moldering skeletons, and with the pleasantest surprise know each other, children of one mother, by our family resemblance, the way it happens in comedies. Shame and disgust will then strike up a harmony we found impossible in tenderest love.

LUISA. Oh, come, come! It's not enough to be unhappy? You must also deserve to be?

FERDINAND (*through clenched teeth*). I'm unhappy? Who told you that? Woman, you're too great a nullity to have feelings. How can you weigh another's feelings? Unhappy, she said? That word could rouse my anger even in the grave. She knew that she'd make me unhappy—knew it and betrayed me nonetheless— Death and destruction! Look, you snake, that was the one scrap of forgiveness— What you just said will break your neck. Till now I could dress up your wantonness in your simplicity; my *contempt* almost spared you my *revenge*. (*He seizes the glass.*) Now I know you weren't frivolous, you weren't stupid—you were just a devil. (*He drinks.*) The lemonade is flat and lifeless as your soul. Taste it!

LUISA. Dear God! I didn't fear this scene for nothing.

FERDINAND (*commanding*). Taste it!

*(Luisa takes the glass somewhat reluctantly and drinks.  
As she sets the glass to her lips, Ferdinand turns away, suddenly pale,  
and hurries into the farthest corner of the room.)*

LUISA. The lemonade is good.

FERDINAND (*without turning; shaken*). To your health!

LUISA (*sets down the glass*). If you knew, Walter, how you offend my soul.

FERDINAND. Huh!

LUISA. A time will come, Walter—

FERDINAND (*coming forward*). Oh, we're about finished with time.

LUISA. —when you might regret this evening.

FERDINAND (*walks up and down, more uneasy than ever; removes his sword and sash*). Good night to you, courtly service!

LUISA. My God! Are you all right?

FERDINAND. Hot and hemmed in— Want to be comfortable.

LUISA. Then drink! The lemonade will cool you.

FERDINAND. That it surely will. A kind-hearted whore—they all are!

LUISA (*rushing into his arms, full of love*). That to your Luisa, Ferdinand?

FERDINAND (*pushing her away*). Oh, no! Not these gentle, melting eyes! It'll defeat me. Come in all your frightfulness, you snake, rise up before me, worm—unwind your coils, raise your back—as horrible as hell ever saw you. Just no angel anymore. No angel. It is too late. I'll stamp on you like an adder or despair. Have mercy!

LUISA. Oh, that it had to come to this!

FERDINAND (*observing her in profile*). This work of a heavenly sculptor— Who can believe it? Who should? (*Taking her hand and raising it.*) I'll not call you to account, Creator, but why your poison in such lovely vessels? Can depravity prosper in these mild climes? Oh, it is curious.

LUISA. To have to hear this and keep silent!

FERDINAND. And this sweet voice—how can such melody come from broken strings? (*Dwelling on the sight of her.*) So lovely, so harmonious, so perfect! As if all Creation had come about just to prepare the Creator for this masterpiece! And God should have gone wrong only with her *soul*? Such as this came spotless into the world? (*Moving away from her.*) Or did He see an angel emerging under his chisel and correct His error with an evil heart?

LUISA. This intransigence! Before he admits any fault, he'll blame heaven.

FERDINAND (*throwing his arms around her, in tears*). Once more, Luisa, once more as at our first kiss, when you first called me Ferdinand— Unending happiness seemed to blossom there— Eternity lay before our eyes like a day in May, a thousand golden years passed like dancing brides before our souls— I was happy then. Oh, Luisa! Luisa! Why have you done this to me?

LUISA. Weep, Walter, weep. Your sorrow is more just toward me than is your anger.

FERDINAND. You're wrong. These are no tears of sorrow, not the warm dew that falls as balsam into the wounded soul and sets the frozen wheel of feeling back into motion. These are cold single drops, my love's farewell. (*He lays his hand on her head, solemn and terrible.*) Tears for your soul, Luisa, tears for the Godhead, which failed here of its boundless good will, that is so willfully stripped of the grandest of its works. I think all Creation should put on mourning, appalled at what's happening in its midst.

LUISA. Don't drive me to the limit, Walter. I have a soul as strong as any, but it must be tested in human fashion. Walter, one word more and then we part— A terrible fate has scrambled the language of our hearts. If I could speak, Walter, I could tell you things— But hard fate has bound my tongue the way it bound my love, and I must endure it when you treat me like a common tramp.

FERDINAND. Do you feel well, Luisa?

LUISA. Why this question?

FERDINAND. Otherwise I'd be sorry to see you go from here with this lie.

LUISA. I entreat you, Walter—

FERDINAND (*very aroused*). No! No! That revenge would be too satanic! No! So help me God! I don't want to take it all the way into *that* world. Luisa! Did you love the Chamberlain? You'll not leave this room.

LUISA. Ask what you like. I'll not answer anything more. (*She sits down.*)

FERDINAND (*more earnest*). Think of your immortal soul, Luisa! Did you love the Chamberlain? You'll not leave this room.

LUISA. I'll not answer anything more.

FERDINAND (*falling at her feet*). Luisa! Did you love the Chamberlain? Before this light burns down, you'll be standing before God!

LUISA (*leaping up, shocked*). Jesus! What are you saying? — I feel very sick. (*She sinks back into her chair.*)

FERDINAND. Already? You women and the eternal puzzle. Your tender sinews withstand crimes that attack humanity at the root; a little grain of arsenic, though—

LUISA. Poison! Poison! Lord God!

FERDINAND. I'm afraid so. Your lemonade was seasoned in hell. You've drunk a toast to death.

LUISA. Die! I'll die! Merciful God! Poison in the lemonade! I'll die! Have mercy on my soul, God of forgiveness.

FERDINAND. That's the main thing. I, too, ask Him.

LUISA. My mother—my father— Savior! My poor, lost father! Is there no saving me? My young life and no saving it! I must go already?

FERDINAND. No saving it. You must go already. But don't be afraid. We'll go together.

LUISA. You, too, Ferdinand? Poison, Ferdinand! From you? Oh, God, do not remember it of him; merciful God, hold him blameless—

FERDINAND. *You* look to your own accounts. I fear they're not in good order.

LUISA. Oh, Ferdinand! Ferdinand! Now I can break my silence. Death suspends all oaths. Ferdinand! Heaven and earth hold nothing more unhappy than you. Ferdinand, I die innocent.

FERDINAND (*shocked*). What's she saying? They don't usually take a lie with them on *this* journey?

LUISA. I'm not lying, not lying, have lied only *once* in all my life—ooh! it's running ice cold through my veins—when I wrote that letter to the Chamberlain—

FERDINAND. Ha! That letter! Praise God! Now I have all my manhood back.

LUISA (*her tongue faltering, her fingers cramping*). This letter—steel yourself—my hand wrote what my heart condemned. Your father dictated it.

*(Ferdinand stands rooted to the spot; finally he falls, thunderstruck.)*<sup>58</sup>

Oh, the terrible misunderstanding—Ferdinand—they forced me—forgiveness—your Luisa would have chosen death—but my father—the danger—they were so treacherous.

FERDINAND (*shoots to his feet*). God be praised! I don't yet feel the poison. (*He whips out his sword.*)

LUISA (*weaker and weaker*). What would you do? It's your father—

FERDINAND (*in an unbridled rage*). Murderer and father of a murderer! He'll make this journey, too. So that the Judge of the World will rage against the guilty party. (*He is about to go.*)

LUISA. Dying, my Redeemer forgave. A blessing on you and Him. (*She dies.*)

FERDINAND (*turns just in time to see her dying gesture and falls before her*). Wait! Wait! Don't escape me, heavenly angel! (*He seizes her hand and releases it quickly.*) Cold, cold and damp. Her soul is gone. (*He leaps up again.*) God of my Luisa, mercy, mercy on the most atrocious of murderers. It was her last prayer. And how lovely now in death! The Destroyer, himself touched, spared these glowing cheeks when he passed over them. This mildness was no false face. It withstood even death. (*Pause.*) But why don't I feel anything? The strength of my young years would save me? Thankless effort! I believe not! (*He reaches for the glass.*)

## Final Scene

*Ferdinand. The First Minister. Wurm and Servants.*

*All rush into the room, alarmed. Then Miller accompanied by court Attendants and a crowd, which gathers in the background.*

FIRST MINISTER (*the letter in his hand*). Son, what is this? I'll never believe—

FERDINAND (*throwing the empty glass at his feet*). Then look, you murderer!

FIRST MINISTER (*staggering back*). My son! Why have you done this to me?

(*Everyone freezes. Pause.*)

FERDINAND (*without looking at him*). Oh, yes, indeed! I should have let the statesman tell me whether *this* trick is also in his deck of cards. Shrewd and admirable, this feint that was intended to break our hearts' bond by jealousy, that I admit. A masterful calculation. A pity, though, that angry *love* did not let its strings be pulled like that wooden marionette of yours.

FIRST MINISTER (*searching the circle gathered around him*). Is there no one here who'd have pity on a desolated father?

MILLER (*behind the scene*). Let me in! For God's sake, let me in!

FERDINAND. The girl is a saint—another must plead her cause.

(*He opens the door to Miller, who plunges in with court Attendants and a crowd.*)

MILLER (*in the most terrible anxiety*). My child! My child! Poison! Someone, they say, has taken poison here. Daughter, where are you?

FERDINAND (*leading him to stand between Luisa's body and the First Minister*). I am innocent. Thank *this one here*.

MILLER (*falling beside the body*). Oh, Jesus!

FERDINAND. In few words, Father—they're becoming costly for me—I've been knavishly robbed of my life, robbed through *you*. I tremble to think how I stand with God, but a villain I never was. My eternal lot may fall out as it will—let it not fall on *you*. But I have committed murder (*raising his voice*), a murder *you* shall not presume to see me bring before the Judge of the World *alone*. I here solemnly heap the greater part on you; how you'll arrange yourself with that is yours to decide. (*Bringing him to Luisa's body.*) Here, you savage! Feed on this, the terrible fruit of your inventiveness. Your name's inscribed, distorted, on this face, where the angels of death will read it. Let a figure like this one pull back the curtain of your bed and give you its ice-cold hand in sleep, a figure like this stand before your soul when you die and block your last prayer, a figure like this stand on your grave

at the Resurrection and—beside God when he judges you. (*He faints; court Attendants support him.*)

FIRST MINISTER (*gesturing toward heaven*). Not from me, not from me, Judge of the World! Demand these souls of *this one here!* (*He steps up to Wurm.*)

WURM (*startled*). Of me?

FIRST MINISTER. Of you, you damnable! Of you, you Satan! You're the snake that so advised me. *You'll* answer for it. I wash my hands.

WURM. Me? (*A hideous laugh.*) Oh, delightful! *Now* I know how devils thank each other. I'll answer, you stupid scoundrel? Was he *my* son? Did he owe *me* obedience? I'll answer? A sight like this that chills me to the bone? I should answer? Fine! *I'll* be lost; but *you'll* be lost along with me. Up and out! Cry murder through the streets! Wake justice from its sleep! Bailiffs, bind my hands! Lead me away! I'll reveal secrets to make your skin crawl. (*About to go.*)

FIRST MINISTER (*holding him back*). You wouldn't, madman?

WURM (*clapping him on the shoulder*). I shall, comrade, I shall— True, I'm raging—that's your doing. And I shall do what madmen do: Arm in arm with *you* to the scaffold! Arm in arm with *you* to hell! I'll be tickled, rascal, to be damned with *you!* (*He is hustled off.*)

MILLER (*who has lain with his head in Luisa's lap, stands up and tosses the purse at the Major's feet*). You sneaking poisoner! Keep your cursed gold! You wanted to *buy* my child from me? (*He plunges out.*)

FERDINAND (*his voice breaking*). Go after him! He's despairing. Gather up this money for him. It is my acknowledgment of a terrible debt. Luisa, I am coming—farewell— Let me die upon this altar.

FIRST MINISTER (*emerging from his numbness*). Ferdinand, my son! No last glance for a shattered father?

(*The Major is laid beside Luisa.*)

FERDINAND. The glance is for my God of mercy.

FIRST MINISTER (*kneeling before him, tormented*). Both the created and the Creator desert me—no glance to restore me at this last?

*(Ferdinand extends his dying hand. The First Minister leaps up.)*

He forgave me! (*To the others.*) Your prisoner!

*(He goes off. Attendants follow. The curtain falls.)*

# Notes

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## Act One

1. The important motif of patriarchal privilege and responsibility. It returns in the question of Ferdinand's duty to his father and of Luisa's to hers.
2. George Brydges Rodney, English admiral who attacked the French at sea at the time of the American revolt against British rule.
3. *Billets doux* (tender notes, that is, love letters). One of many instances of the Wife's ignorance and pretentiousness, and of the presence of French and Frenchness at the small German courts of the time.
4. Coffee and tobacco were heavily taxed under the sumptuary laws of the time. The Wife is instantly recognizable as a type in the German literary tradition: foolish, expensive, untidy, but also loyal to her husband and loving toward her child.
5. The German is *Frau Base*, here a friendly form of address among the middle classes rather than a title of kinship.
6. *Plaisir* (pleasure), with a German accent.
7. Also a friendly form of address among burghers.
8. Derived from *mademoiselle*. A polite title specific to a young unmarried woman of burgher's rank.
9. The Wife's responses are all predicated on her conviction that Luisa is too good for Wurm and will marry Baron Ferdinand von Walter.
10. The German is *gnädige Frau*, a title and a form of address for a woman of superior rank.
11. The first sign of Miller's generosity toward his daughter.
12. The German is *Fräulein*, at the time an honorific reserved to unmarried women of rank.

13. Both Luisa and Ferdinand experience love in cosmic terms.
14. A visible sign of his high rank.
15. Luisa, like Thekla in Schiller's *Wallenstein*, has a sixth sense of the impending disaster.
16. The German is *Landeswucher*, probably tax farming, an ancient practice of collecting rents on the land on behalf of the state, long associated with oppression and corruption.
17. Ferdinand, like Luisa, experiences love in cosmic terms. Unlike Luisa, he is categorical.
18. Ferdinand has awakened Luisa's desire—a responsibility that he will remember.
19. These are the insignia of high office.
20. Wurm, unlike Miller, is quite stiff-necked about his standards for women's conduct.
21. Wurm has proposed a double intrigue: to separate Ferdinand from Luisa and to acquire Luisa for himself.
22. An amusement practiced among boys at the time.
23. Schiller, for his own amusement and for ours, has hung his bourgeois tragedy and send-up of the nobility on three binaries. The plot itself turns on an opposition of the world of the honest burgher and the courtly world of the nobility in a rather small, unspecified German town that is the seat and ducal residence of one of Germany's many small principalities. Within this opposition lies another: that of the solid, unpretentious German world, usually but not exclusively of the burgher, and the French-infected world of the court, represented most pungently in the figure of the Chamberlain, who now enters. This opposition implies a third, that between masculine and feminine, most accessible again in the frenchified—and feminized—figure of the Chamberlain. The play privileges the first member of each of these oppositions.
24. A recital of just how the Chamberlain spends his days. It reflects both the scope of the Chamberlain himself and the scope of the princely household he runs.
25. The color of goose droppings—last year's rage in Paris.
26. The capital of a duchy, where the duke resides.
27. The conversation that follows plots convivial eighteenth-century court life against ideals of solitude and inwardness that mark the first stirrings of a new, romantic era.

## Act Two

28. That is, not yet dressed for the day. The Lady is presented in a natural state, her hair still open, playing by ear. She is a daring rider, impatient of convention, and full of feeling.
29. Sophie, and then the Lady, describe a typical evening at a princely court: The company gathered, entertained themselves with conversation, at cards (games of *hombre*, *faro*, *piquet*), or with music. The ladies did fine needlework such as *filet*.
30. Rare spices, formal gardens, leaping fountains, and costly fireworks are typical forms of princely display.
31. Strings by which a wandering child was controlled.
32. Effectively, the Lady has crossed the First Minister's court intrigue with one of her own.
33. Troops, such as the famous Hessians, purchased (strictly speaking, leased) to fight in the American revolt against British rule, 1775–1783
34. The German is *Bärenhatz*, a particularly ostentatious form of "hunt" or, rather, a harrying of a dangerous wild animal confined within a closed compound. See Velázquez's *Tela real* in the National Gallery, London.
35. "Pearls and diamonds" is a metonymy for "tears."
36. The ermine of office. See the robe of the Duke of Friedland on the cover of Schiller's *Wallenstein* in this series.
37. Like the privilege of carrying a sword, the tassel on the grip is a mark of high birth.
38. Ferdinand takes responsibility for awakening Luisa's desire. See Luisa's last speech, Act One, scene four, above.
39. Town musicians, traditionally, were governed by the local musicians' guild. The title is known to English speakers from the medieval tale of the "Town Musicians of Bremen." The German is *Stadtmusikant*.
40. A leather holder, sewn at the waist of a uniform, by which a sword was carried.

## Act Three

41. *Contredanse* is from “country dance” and an illustration of how something new and modish among the upper classes travels from England to France and, as something French, finally turns up in Germany.
42. This is the notion of patriarchal rule. It is subtended by a chain of order: As God rules the universe, just so the king rules the country and the father rules his household and, importantly, his son. It is a God-given order and holds the civil world together.
43. Wurm’s entrance is staged as the entrance of the devil.
44. The German is *Jungfer*, which is distinct from *Fräulein* for the well-born and, unlike *Mamsell*, a native German honorific.

## Act Four

45. The original is *Verflucht!* Deeply alarmed, the Chamberlain reverts to German expletive.
46. At point-blank range, and indoors: a particularly savage form of dueling.
47. Ancient Parisian charity hospital.
48. The German possessive pronoun is *Ihr* (or *ihr*). The Chamberlain intends “your father” (*Ihr*), exposing the First Minister’s plot. Ferdinand understands “her father” (*ihr*) and concludes the Chamberlain is denying responsibility.
49. The Lady’s use of the definite article carries a note of haughty condescension.
50. Luisa had suspected that the Lady was complicit in Wurm’s plot.
51. The choice of entertainment for the evening is between an imitation of the famous English pleasure garden and a German play, with a sly reference to the German play before us.
52. Heated, stirred up. The Wife, Act One, scene one, rendered the same thought in the language of her class: approximately, as “all het up.”
53. A pilgrimage of penance.

## Act Five

54. In ancient iconography, love was represented as a child with a torch held high, death as a child with torch inverted. The motif of Eros and Thanatos as two aspects of the same will return.
55. Miller now cautions Luisa not to substitute her love of Ferdinand for her love of God.
56. Here, and below, Ferdinand is speaking double: He speaks in terms of love and means the murder he intends.
57. Luisa adopts the language of her station, restoring class distinction.
58. Ferdinand understands at last what the Chamberlain tried to tell him. See above, Act Four, scene three, the Chamberlain's second-last speech.



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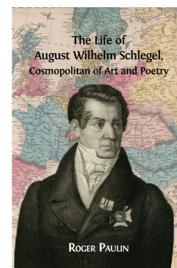
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# Love and Intrigue

Friedrich Schiller

Translated by Flora Kimmich

Introduction by Roger Paulin

Schiller's play *Kabale und Liebe*, usually translated into English as *Love and Intrigue*, represents the disastrous consequences that follow when social constraint, youthful passion, and ruthless scheming collide in a narrow setting. Written between 1782 and 1784, the play bears the marks of life at the court of the despotic Duke of Württemberg, from which Schiller had just fled, and of a fraught liaison he entered shortly after his flight. It tells the tale of a love affair that crosses the boundaries of class, between a fiery and rebellious young nobleman and the beautiful and dutiful daughter of a musician. Their affair becomes entangled in the competing purposes of malign and not-so-malign figures present at an obscure and sordid princely court somewhere in Germany. It all leads to a climactic murder-suicide.

*Love and Intrigue*, the third of Schiller's canonical plays (after *The Robbers* and Fiesco's *Conspiracy at Genoa*), belongs to the genre of domestic tragedy, with a small cast and an action indoors. It takes place as the highly conventional world of the late eighteenth century stands poised to erupt, and these tensions pervade its setting and emerge in its action. This lively play brims with comedy and tragedy expressed in a colorful, highly colloquial, sometimes scandalous prose well captured in Flora Kimmich's skilled and informed translation. An authoritative essay by Roger Paulin introduces the reader to the play.

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Cover image: Luise reaches for the glass of lemonade. From Friedrich Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe*, engraved by Conrad Geyer after a drawing by Arthur von Ramberg (ca. 1859).

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