

DONIZETTI
THE DAUGHTER OF THE REGIMENT

English Version by Donald Pippin

Cast of Characters

The Marquise of Berkenfield, at times foolish and fussy, but basically good hearted.

Hortensius, her obsequious steward.

Marie, rescued as a baby, the “daughter” of the twenty first regiment.

Sulpice, sergeant of the regiment, one of her many fathers.

Tonio, a spunky young Tyrolean peasant.

The Duchess von Krakenthorp, ancient aristocracy.

Farmers and their wives, soldiers, ladies in waiting, servants.

While their wives turn to the holy virgin for assistance, a scruffy, rag tail outfit of Tyrolean farmers, armed with shovels and pitchforks, rises to the defense of their land and livestock, apparently unable to grasp the simple idea that the French soldiers firing cannon shots at them are doing it for their own good. Inspired by Napoleon, they come not to conquer but to liberate.

Stranded on the very road where the two armies are colliding, the terrified Marquise of Berkenfield cannot but recall a similar scene of panic, chaos and horror some fifteen years earlier, when a tiny child was lost in the wreckage and never recovered.

Amid rumors that the French have run for cover and the present crisis is over, she and her even more terrified steward find themselves, as luck would have it, surrounded by the prize French battalion, the celebrated Twenty First regiment, who show no symptoms of defeat. In fact, their morale is remarkably high, no doubt boosted by their pretty vivandiere, a bright, energetic, down to earth girl in her mid teens named Marie, whose job is to hand out food and drink to the fighting soldiers. We are soon to learn the facts of her strange history: a baby in a basket, found on the battlefield, taken in hand by the soldiers, sheltered, nurtured and adored -- indeed, looked upon as their daughter. Alert minds may have begun to put two and two together.

Marie has recently weathered her own crisis. To the dismay of her multiple

fathers, she has fallen in love. Worse yet, Tonio, her young man, is a Tyrolean, one of the still threatening enemy, possibly a spy. Their hopes of getting married are in jeopardy. Romeo and Juliet, you will recall, had a similar problem. But Tonio rises to the occasion: since Marie is committed to marry none but a member of the regiment, the solution is self-evident: he joins the regiment, thus making everyone happy. The marriage can proceed.

But the Marquise has also come to the obvious conclusion. Overjoyed to reclaim her lost niece, and quick to exert her new-found authority, she demands that the girl abandon the rough and tumble of army life for the sedate marble halls of her own stately chateau. There she can at last receive a proper education and be introduced to decent, respectable society. In despair, Marie has no choice but to leave the only home and family she has ever known, and say goodbye to her fiancé, possibly forever.

ACT ONE

Scene: a country road in the Austrian Tyrol. Farmers rise in resistance to ward off the French advance, as their wives pray to the virgin.

MEN

**Lurking in the shadows,
The foe close at hand,
With pitchfork and shovel,
Friends, take a stand!
Stalwart, stubborn,
We stand prepared.**

WOMEN

**Blessed Madonna!
Dear holy virgin!
Weep as we pray
In desperation.**

**Mother of mothers,
Turn not away;
Ward off disaster
Again today.**

**Dear holy virgin,
Turn not away;
Ward off disaster
Again today.**

The Marquise staggers in with her servant Hortensius, both in a state of near collapse.

HORTENSIUS

**Marquise! Pursued, harassed and hounded,
Let us be brave! Try not to look so glum.**

MARQUISE

**Caught by surprise, and by the foe surrounded!
I fear the worst is yet to come.**

HORTENSIUS

Harassed and hounded . . .

MARQUISE

And by the foe surrounded!

HORTENSIUS

In crisis, let us be brave.

MARQUISE

I fear, I fear the worst is yet to come.

HORTENSIUS

**Let us be brave.
With courage we'll overcome.**

FARMERS

**Lurking in the shadows, the foe close at hand,
Friends and neighbors here take a stand.
The call has resounded
To save house and home.**

FARMERS & WIVES

**Blessed Madonna!
Dear holy virgin!
Weep as we pray
In desperation.**

**Mother of mothers,
Turn not away;
Ward off disaster
Again today.**

A PEASANT (running in breathlessly)
**The French are gone! They have left the mountain.
All, all are gone. None remain.**

SOPRANOS

**Oh, happy day! By the grace of the virgin,
Safe at last, we can breathe again.**

MARQUISE

**Dare they forget my noble name?
War I deplore, for clear as crystal,
Facing cannon ball or pistol,
Ragged or rich are all the same.**

**I don't suppose to them it matters
That I belong at home in bed,
Or that my nerves are torn to tatters.
Foreigners one and all!
What do they care about my throbbing head?**

CHORUS

Or if we rise or fall?

MARQUISE

**Oh, these French appear so disarming
Until they snarl and show their teeth;
Though on the surface smooth and charming,
They are tigers and wolves underneath.**

**With bandits and hoods we are dealing;
Too well I know what lies ahead.
They are men devoid of feeling;
As for regard, they've not a shred.**

**Oh, these terrible men, these unbearable men!
I remember, remember, remember back when.
All told, unlawful, awful men!**

CHORUS

**Oh, these terrible men, these unbearable men!
You remember, remember, remember back when.
All told, unlawful, awful men!**

PEASANT

What is to fear? The emergency is over.

CHORUS

They are by now running for cover.

MARQUISE

**Safe and free from fear of attack.
Pray to God they never come back!**

MARQUISE & CHORUS

**They've taken a beating,
Much to my delight.
To armies retreating
I say serves'em right.**

**Freedom, health and pleasure
In peace we'll pursue.
This land that we treasure
Will flourish anew.**

MARQUISE

**The stars we thank!
Our own resolve aside,
It is fate that has turned the tide.
The hand of fate has turned the tide.**

CHORUS

**We turn now to pleasure
So long overdue.
The land that we treasure
Will flourish anew.**

ALL

**They've taken a beating,
Much to my delight.
To armies retreating
I say serves'em right.**

MARQUISE & HORTENSIUS

**The battle is over,
So now we have nothing to fear.
Those French run for cover.
We hope far from here.**

**Now the battle is over,
We've nothing to fear.
They're on the run,
We hope far from here.
They are gone!
Pray to God they never return.
To God I pray, I pray, I pray, I pray!**

OTHERS
They run for cover,
We hope far from here.
They are gone! Now life can go on.
(the peasants disperse)

MARQUISE: *(calling after them)* Friends, you're not leaving me here alone, stranded, in this horrible crisis?

HORTENSIUS: But the crisis is over. The French are gone. We have nothing to fear.

MARQUISE: How can you be so sure? This could be a false report, a trick, a trap! There is nothing I would put past the French. Oh, why did I ever set out on this wretched trip?

HORTENSIUS: People tried to warn you.

MARQUISE: How was I to know that on the very day I leave my safe, comfortable chateau that the French would start advancing from the opposite direction, leading to a head on collision? And reminding me of that catastrophic day of confusion and panic . . .

HORTENSIUS: Fifteen years ago!

MARQUISE: Some things never fade from the memory. The very thought makes me tremble. You can see that I'm shaking all over. What can be more heart-rending than the loss of a child? My dear sister's sweet little daughter, less than a year old and already an orphan. To this day, no one even knows if she herself is dead or alive.

HORTENSIUS: Madame knows that my heart goes out to her.

MARQUISE: What I need is a cup of tear, or I shall certainly collapse. That little farmhouse on the left . . . surely they would not refuse a helpless woman of rank and position . . . *(near tears)* turned beggar.

HORTENSIUS: And a bite to eat would not be unwelcome.

MARQUISE: Surely you are not planning to come, too? What about the carriage? My wardrobe, the gold, the jewels, waiting for some highway hoodlum to swoop down and snatch them up.

HORTENSIUS: But Madame . . .

MARQUISE: Duty first. Please, no complaints. I shan't be long. *(she leaves)*

HORTENSIUS: *(alone)* Fine position for a steady, quiet, peace-loving steward. Suddenly thrust into the horrors of war . . . Did I ask for it? No! Do I enjoy it? No! Oh, these French! I'd like to meet one of them face to face. I'd give him a piece of my mind he would not forget.

SULPICE: *(entering)* Morbleu! Qu'est-ce que c'est?

HORTENSIUS: *(startled)* Ah, Monsieur! *(overwhelmingly polite)* Bon jour, bon jour . . . Quelle surprise!

SULPICE: *(a bit gruff)* What are you doing here?

HORTENSIUS: Just passing through.

SULPICE: Your purpose?

HORTENSIUS: The scenery, the mountains . . . so lovely this time of year.

SULPICE: So you're a tourist?

HORTENSIUS: Exactly! Only a tourist, nothing more. Accompanying a noble lady – that is, if you will be so kind as to allow us to continue our journey.

SULPICE: No objections from here. And while you're at it, you can tell the rest of your country folk that they can come out of hiding. We French are not cannibals. We're not out to conquer, but to liberate!

HORTENSIUS: Ah, to be sure . . . we are all most grateful.

SULPICE: So be off! On your way!

HORTENSIUS: *(hurrying to obey)* Oh, merci! Merci beaucoup! I'll go inform the lady. *(he leaves)*

(Marie enters, with a fanfare)

SULPICE: And what have we here? Ah, Marie! The darling of the regiment! Our daughter!

**What a pearl! What a prize!
No parent could be prouder.
We army men are lucky guys
That can boast of such a daughter.**

MARIE

**I like to think I am one of your own.
Secure, here I have found
The only loving care I have ever known.**

SULPICE

True enough . . .

MARIE

**All along, you've been my chosen fathers
And for guidance I've turned to you.**

SULPICE

As you ought.

MARIE

**But then . . . pardon my boasting . . .
They say I do you some credit, too.**

SULPICE:

Sweet as an angel! Fair as a flower!

MARIE

**Also rough and tough!
And on the field, there I show my stuff.**

**In thunder of battle
I have tasted life,
And heard from the cradle
The drum and the fife.**

**For courage and valor
I need no command.
Inspired by devotion,
I'd give my right hand,
Prepared to live or die
For my native land.**

SULPICE

**The battle cry mid waving banners
You even learned upon my knee;
Instead of prim and proper manners,
I made a soldier of Marie,
My dear Marie! I made a soldier of Marie.**

Lost and found! The precious little bundle

I held in my arms, heaven-sent.
At dawn amid the distant rumble
Tiny cries filled the army tent.

MARIE
Soon each of you became a father.
On your shoulders how often I sat!

SULPICE
Riding high!

MARIE
Like a true soldier's daughter,
I would lay my head on a rugged mat.

SULPICE
And there you slept without a care.

MARIE
Because I knew that you were there.

SULPICE
As the drums beat a (rapid) rat-a-tat.

MARIE
But now at last that I am older
You are so polite, so correct.

SULPICE
A doting father, as well as soldier,
Ought to demonstrate respect.

MARIE
On days of feasting or of fighting
I'm on duty, rain or shine.

SULPICE
To lift the spirits by providing
From your cart a cup of wine

MARIE
And when the time is ripe for leisure,
Who entertains you with a song?

SULPICE
And with a smile gives so much pleasure?

Of course! You knew it all along.

MARIE

**Putting me to work, one day you voted –
What a moment! What a great event! --
To vivandiere I was promoted.**

SULPICE

By eager unanimous consent!

MARIE

The new vivandiere!

SULPICE

The vote was cast without dissent.

MARIE

**And ever since, when off to battle,
I'd march along in case of need.**

SULPICE

Even when small.

MARIE

**Yes, and facing fire, to show my mettle,
I'd even fight if you agreed.**

SULPICE

Bravest of all!

MARIE

**Daughters are as brave as their fathers.
They set the tone.**

SULPICE

Ah, she stands alone!

MARIE

I'd march along . . .

SULPICE

Whether rain or shine.

MARIE

I'd even fight.

SULPICE
There I draw the line.

MARIE
Ever on!

SULPICE
Ever on!

MARIE
I can hear the battle cry!

SULPICE
From a child, the battle cry!

BOTH
Ever on! Ever on!



In thunder of battle
I have tasted life,
And heard from the cradle
The drum and the fife,
Rataplan, rataplan . . .
The song of my heart!

SULPICE
In thunder of battle
There you have tasted life itself,
And heard from the cradle
The drum and the fife,
Rataplan, rataplan . . .

See her snap into step with the beat:
“To courage and valor!”
The song of her heart –
Vivandiere and daughter to boot!

MARIE
Present arms! March! Salute!
Then to the front, ever on!
Rataplan, rataplan . . .
“To courage and valor!”

**The song of my heart!
The song for me!**

**SULPICE
Ever on, rataplan, rataplan . . .
See her snap into step with the beat:
“To courage and valor!”
The song of her heart – for me!**

SULPICE: Soldiers come and go, but the regiment remains!

MARIE: As does their daughter.

SULPICE: Oh, yes, ever since that unforgettable day. Of course, you don't remember. Battle raging, evacuees desperate to escape, roads cluttered with broken wagons, and there, practically under the horses' hooves, a tiny infant, wrapped up in a bundle, abandoned . . .

MARIE: And no doubt bawling her head off.

SULPICE: No, smiling . . . stretching out her little hands . . . How could anybody resist? The best thing that ever happened to the Twenty First Regiment.

MARIE: Certainly the best thing that ever happened to *me*. Taken in, given a home, fed, educated . . .

SULPICE: And spoiled, just a little bit.

MARIE: Well, if you *will* let me get away with bossing you around at times.

SULPICE: But my dear, what of these rumors going around? You and a young man? I assume there's nothing to it . . .

MARIE: Oh, but you're wrong! It's all true.

SULPICE: What! How can this be? How did you even meet?

MARIE: We never exactly met. It was only a week ago. I was on a mountain trail hunting for flowers. I spotted a beauty, just out of reach. I slipped, I fell . . .

SULPICE: Mon dieu!

MARIE: Into his arms!

SULPICE: Now see here, a young lady ought not to fall into anybody's arms but her father's.

MARIE: Dammit! I couldn't stay up in the air till the regiment came along.

SULPICE: And then what happened?

MARIE: He was so sweet, so nice . . . I liked him a lot!

SULPICE: A Tyrolean? You were conversing with the enemy in wartime?

MARIE: We weren't talking politics.

SULPICE: But this is breaking all the rules.

MARIE: *(somewhat sadly)* No matter. We've already said goodbye. I couldn't let him take such a risk. He could be shot on sight. No, I'm afraid it's over. I'll probably never see him again.

SOLDIERS

(entering, with Tonio in tow)

Come on! Come on! March! March!

Let's move along. March! March!

Know who's in charge.

Sneaky spy, prowling around at large.

MARIE

Can it be? Mon dieu! Here he is!

SULPICE

Drag him over.

MARIE

Stop at once! It's him!

SULPICE

Good Lord! Your gallant would-be lover!

TONIO

To be so close is all I've wanted.

MARIE *(quietly to Tonio)*

Why are you here among your foe?

TONIO *(quietly but meaningfully)*

You are the one who ought to know . . .

SOLDIERS

Sly subversive!

Even worse if

Found dispersing secret plans.
Death we trust is
Only justice.
Die he must, in the name of France!

MARIE

A moment, if you please!
I am down upon my knees.
Oh, my friends! No, no, no!
In tears before you,
How I implore you!
Let him go!

SOLDIERS

Sneaky traitor! Agitator!
Death we trust is
Only justice.
Die he must, in name of France!
Simple justice – now, not later.

MARIE

Spare this man! To save my life, he put his own in peril.

SOLDIERS

This subversive? Perhaps we'll think again.

SULPICE

Cared so much?

MARIE

I slipped while climbing on a cliff,
About to fall, holding on . . .
He saved my life
While risking his own.
Do you still believe he's a traitor?

SULPICE

No, indeed! No, indeed! If that's the case
This friend in need we now embrace.

SOLDIERS

No, indeed! No, indeed!

TONIO (*aside*)

I say amen! And I mean it sincerely.
For now I can be close to her I love so dearly.

SULPICE

Come on! A toast to celebrate the friend
Who saved our child in mortal danger.
Reconciled, a hearty hand we now extend.

SOLDIERS

A friend who put his life at stake?

SULPICE

A round of rum! A pause for celebration!
A toast to fair Bavaria,
Our foe, but your own native land.

TONIO

No, no! Not that! The glass I'd sooner break.

SOLDIERS

You object?

TONIO

Here's to France, and the friends I've lately found!

SOLDIERS

To France then, and to friendship!
A thought to quench the thirst.

SULPICE (to Marie)

To make our harmony complete,
Dear, won't you give us all a treat?
How about the song of the regiment?

TONIO & SOLDIERS

Celebrate, celebrate the valiant Twenty First!

MARIE



All know the name, all say the same: we Twenty-First are first in the nation.

Ah! All know the name,

All say the same:

We Twenty First are first in the nation.

When we appear,

Crowds wave and cheer,

Rising to offer a standing ovation.

Soldiers of France
Reach for romance.
As husbands and lovers fear the worst,
Ladies overcome, swoon with admiration.



Anytime, anywhere,
We are there, all set!
Do we mean to suggest
We're the best? You bet!
As a team
We are cream of the crop.
Meet the fabulous Twenty First,
Number one, and the team on top.

OTHERS

Anytime, anywhere,
We are there, all set!
Do we mean to suggest
We're the best? You bet!
As a team
We are cream of the crop.
Meet the fabulous Twenty First,
Number one, and the team on top.

TONIO

Long live the Twenty First!

SULPICE (*silencing him*)

There's still one more stanza.

MARIE

Once we begin.
We fight to win,
To come back as heroes, soon domesticated.
Home once again, peace now restored,
Comes the reward of a kiss long awaited.

After the fight,
No time for rest.
Then must the lover meet the test,
Men much in awe,
Women captivated.

**Anytime, anywhere,
We are there, all set!
Do we mean to suggest
We're the best?**

**OTHERS
You bet!**

**MARIE
Making love at the drop of a hat,
Meet the fabulous Twenty First,
Number one, and the cream of the crop.**

**OTHERS
Anytime, anywhere,
We are there, all set!
Do we mean to suggest
We're the best? You bet!
Making love at the drop of a hat,
Meet the fabulous Twenty First,
Number one, and the cream of the crop.**

**MARIE
Long live the Twenty First! My regiment!**

**OTHERS
Long live the regiment!**

**SOLPICE
Back inside for the roll.
No more song.
Remember, rules are rules;
We stand for protocol.
You, my boy, come along.**

**MARIE
The prisoner is mine!
He can be left with me.**

**SOLPICE
Not while I have the say.
He is to join the line.**

**SOLDIERS
When the call has sounded,
We blindly obey,**

**Ready to be counted, right!
And form rules the day.**

**Charging into battle,
The norm we defy.
When the sabers rattle
Then it's do or die.**

**In thick of battle
Then it's do or die,
Few rules apply
When do or die.**

SOLPICE: *(last to leave, over music)* Marie, aren't you coming with us? So you'd rather stay behind and pout? All right, have it your own way. (Bad business!)
(He also leaves and Marie is alone)

MARIE: How provoking! They've taken him away, just when things looked promising. But look! Someone running down the hill! I do believe . . .

TONIO: *(running in breathlessly)* Marie! I'm back!

MARIE: My goodness, I thought . . .

TONIO: You thought they had me in custody. So did they. But I was too smart for them. I gave them the slip.

MARIE: You could have got yourself killed for being so slippery. You shouldn't have done it.

TONIO: I had to come back. Marie, I love you! I'll never love anyone but you, and I'd rather die than lose you.

**MARIE
Love! Do you mean it?**

**TONIO
How can you question? Listen first;
You can then be the judge, Your Honor.**

**MARIE
Go on, go ahead, and the court will decide.**

**TONIO
One day you fell into my arms,
So pale and shaken, your life in danger.**

**Right away, though a total stranger,
I was overpowered by your charms.**

MARIE

**That was then. What about the present?
The past is playing a trick on you.**

TONIO

**Not so fast, not so fast!
And wait till I am through.
So much to say, I've barely started.**

MARIE

All right, go ahead, and the court will decide.

TONIO

**My native land, the ties that bind,
Devoted friends, ever tried and true,
All I've got I would leave behind
For the bliss of being close to you.**

MARIE

**My goodness gracious, so capricious!
I have to wonder, have to wonder
When I'll be left for someone new.**

TONIO

**Then hear me out: in desperation,
Urgent measures I had to take.
Braving bullets and rifle fire,
Here I came, putting life itself at stake.**

MARIE

(So much in love!)

TONIO

**Even death I defy,
If only to hold you again.**

MARIE

(So much in love, even ready to die!)

TONIO

**Here I'm driven by the pain
Of burning passion.**

MARIE

**When you're truly in love, who wants to die?
Live for love and for tomorrow –
Or so it seems to me.**

**To proof of love so tender
Oh, say I'm not to blame
If freely I surrender,
For in fact I feel the same,
As I have all along, all along.**

TONIO

**To proof of love so tender
No, no, you're not to blame
If freely you surrender
When in fact you've felt the same,
The very same . . .
Now that I've spoken from the heart,
Are you satisfied?**

MARIE

Be judge and jury.

TONIO

My turn. Go ahead, and the court will decide.

MARIE

**A foolish child, naïve and shallow,
I would laugh when a lover sighed.
Wise now, more mature and mellow,
Deeper feelings I no longer hide.**

**Enthusiastic,
My heart was set on waging war.
But something happened rather drastic.
My former foe I've come to adore.**

**When you saved me from falling,
When paralyzed I nearly died of fright,
A flower wet with your own tears you gave me,
A flower filled with sweetness so enthralling
That near my heart I guard it day and night,
Here closely day and night.
So what's the answer? Are you persuaded?**

TONIO
My darling!

MARIE
Ah! With proof of love so tender,
What now am I to do?
In sweet, complete surrender
I give my heart to you,
You alone, you alone.

TONIO
With proof of love so tender,
What now am I to do?
Completely I surrender
My heart and soul to you.

My heart is forever
And constant as the stars that shine,
But all that light would soon go out
Were you no longer mine, all mine.

BOTH
My heart I give forever,
And life has just begun.
I'd rather it be over/All would be over)
Were we no longer one.

MARIE
But we are one . . .

TONIO
Forevermore!

BOTH
My heart I give forever,
And life has just begun.

SULPICE: *(entering just as Tonio embraces Marie)* What's going on here?
Young man!

MARIE: Sulpice!

TONIO: Sir, don't get the wrong idea. This is the real thing. We're engaged!

SULPICE: Not so fast. If and when Marie gets married, it will be to be member of the regiment. That has long been understood.

MARIE: Good Lord, I'd forgotten! In that case, I shall never marry. Dearest Tonio, if I can't marry you, I'm certainly not going to marry anyone else.

TONIO: You will marry me!

SULPICE: Impossible!

TONIO: You may say so. Excuse me. I have an urgent matter that needs attending to. *(he runs off)*

SULPICE: So much for youthful determination.

MARIE: It was you that chased him off. Because you're jealous, cruel, heartless!

SULPICE: There, there, child. It's for your own good. If a young man gives up so easily, he's not worth holding on to.

MARIE: I can't bear to talk about it. You've ruined my life! *(she rushes off in tears)*

HORTENSIUS: *(returning with the Marquise)* There he is, the French officer I was telling you about.

SULPICE: *(muttering to himself)* That coward! That trouble-maker! I ought to have him arrested and shot.

HORTENSIUS: Arrested and shot! Good heavens, what did I do? *(hastily positions himself behind the Marquise)*

MARQUISE: *(approaching Sulpice)* Oh, captain! I'm sure no harm was intended.

SULPICE: Captain! So I've been promoted?

MARQUISE: I appeal to your kindness. As my steward probably told you, I was setting out on a journey, but these unsettled conditions have put my nerves in such a state that I simply cannot continue. No, I have no choice but to return to my own chateau, close by.

SULPICE: Advance or retreat, who is stopping you?

MARQUISE: Ah, mon dieu! Danger at every turn! Soldiers here, soldiers there, waiting to take advantage of a frail, helpless woman . . . But you seem such a perfect gentleman . . . kind, understanding, gallant . . .

SULPICE: *(bowing gallantly)* And how can I prove it?

MARQUISE: By providing me with an escort. It's only for a few miles. From the next hill on a clear day you can see the towers of Berkenfield.

SULPICE: Berken, Barken, what was that again?

MARQUISE: Berkenfield. My family name.

SULPICE: Good Lord! There was a certain Robert . . .

MARQUISE: (*with a cry of recognition*) Captain Robert!

SULPICE: You knew him?

MARQUISE: (*agitated*) Many years ago. That is to say, I did not know him myself. It was my sister . . .

SULPICE: Your sister . . . where is she now?

MARQUISE: Alas, passed away many years ago. She was married to this French captain, much against her parents' wishes. They had a child . . .

SULPICE: A daughter!

MARQUISE: How did you know? Poor, dear little thing! Her father, the captain, the day before he died a hero's death on the field, wrote to me begging me to take care of her. She never reached me. Already an orphan, entrusted to an elderly servant . . . the baby . . . oh, it's too horrible! Lost, abandoned, crushed in the chaos . . . who knows?

SULPICE: No, no, no! Not lost but found!

MARQUISE: If it were only true!

SULPICE: And now a lovely, healthy, happy young lady!

MARQUISE: Oh, monsieur! I am about to faint. Where can I find my niece?

SULPICE: Come with me.

MARQUISE: Oh, God be thanked! You're not deceiving me? You have proof?

SULPICE: A letter that I've kept all these years. You can read it and judge for yourself. It names you her guardian.

MARQUISE: Oh, hurry, hurry! At last! Let me lean on you. Help me. Bring me

to her - - the sole heir of my family fortune!
(They leave together as soldiers enter with a marching song)

SOLDIERS

**Rataplan, rataplan, rataplan,
Rataplan, plan, plan, rataplan!
Hear the trumpet sound
Making pulses pound
To the rhythm of the drum.**

**Rataplan, rataplan, rataplan.
Fellows, up on your feet!
On alert, no time for retreat
As proudly we come
Here summoned by the beat.
Rataplan, rataplan, rataplan,
To the pounding drum.**

**War is of bravery and glory,
Born out of struggle and of strife.
Not even death can mar the story
When a brave soldier gives up his life,
His breath with his life.
Here's to the fighter, living or dead.
Rataplan, rataplan, rataplan!**

CORPORAL

**Look who's coming! Today's recruit,
The newest member of the regiment!**

(Tonio returns in jubilation)

TONIO

**O happy day! I've signed up for action!
Now I can march along with you.
O happy day! I've signed up for action
To serve a nation proud and free.
The love that drove me to distraction
Has instead made a hero out of me.**

**Oh, what a day! Oh, lucky me!
To serve a nation proud and free.
A chance to wave the flag of France.**

**The girl my heart was surely made for
Nodded yes, with the smile I prayed for.**

But my future now depends
On a bit of help from my friends.

O happy day! I've signed up for action!
Now I can march along with you.
O happy day! I've signed up for action
To serve a nation proud and free.
A chance to wave the flag of France!
Oh, what a day! Oh, lucky me!
Now I can march along with you.

SOLDIERS

The man is in love, his head in a whirl.

TONIO

I ask for the hand of your daughter.

SOLDIERS

What! You want our own little girl?

TONIO

If I can speak, I can persuade. Please!
Oh, put yourselves in my position.
On bended knee, let me implore.
Oh, my friends! Love must be obeyed.
I must wed the girl I adore.

SOLDIERS

No, sir, never! On no condition.
A former foe, out to make a catch.
No, she can find a better match;
She is meant for a better man.
So much for your absurd ambition!

TONIO

Then you refuse?

SOLDIERS

And furthermore,
She only is to marry a member of the corps.

TONIO

That I found out before,
And precisely why
I enlisted, for I
Now belong to the corps.

SOLDIERS

Out of the blue, a clever coup!

TONIO

**Devoted fathers! Oh, band of brothers!
My fellow soldiers, I'm one of you.**

SOLDIERS

Out of the blue, a clever coup!

TONIO

And I'm the husband she wants.

SOLDIERS

Only a child, so immature . . .

TONIO

**But she loves me.
Believe me, of this I'm sure.**

SOLDIERS

In love? Not our daughter!

TONIO

Your own daughter, I swear to God!

SOLDIERS

**How is it to wind up?
If she's made her mind up,
Can fathers here lined up
Stand back and say no?**

**Still I'm hot and bothered –
She that we have fathered
Willing to be wed
To a knucklehead.
The daughter we have fathered!**

**But no use refusing
The man of her choosing.
Still I'm hot and bothered –
She that we have fathered
Willing to be wed
To a knucklehead.**

(they huddle in conference)

TONIO

What now?

CORPORAL

**We're satisfied, and give you our consent
In the name of the regiment.**

SOLDIERS

We consent in the name of the regiment.

TONIO

**Day of wonder! All sunshine!
I have found her and she'll be mine.
Pain now over,
Oh, what a life!
Her faithful lover,
Now the soldier takes a wife,
An adorable wife.
Oh, day of wonder! All sunshine!
I have found her and she'll be mine**

SOLDIERS

**Friend, are you certain
That your love is true and lasting?**

TONIO

I know my heart.

SOLDIERS

**Is it true? Are you sure
That your love will endure?**

TONIO

**Day of wonder! All sunshine!
I have found her and she'll be mine.
Lucky me! A recruit
And a husband to boot.
Lucky me!
Today I'm a soldier and a husband to be.**

(Sulpice returns with Marie in tears)

TONIO

Our long awaited goal is near.

SULPICE (*angrily*)
Sorry, but it's out of the question.
Her new auntie has chosen to haul her away.

**Force our daughter to leave?
Almighty God! How come?**

**Forced away, torn apart!
Stolen out of my arms!
Oh, say it's all a dream.**

TONIO
Oh, what to say? Too deep the pain.
Losing Marie, can I go on?

**So dark a day I've never known.
Losing Marie leaves nothing but pain.**

**So dark a day! Too deep the pain.
Losing Marie, can I go on?**

**I'm told to say goodbye to dear familiar faces,
Share no longer the genial life we've led,
Torn away from the warmth**

Of your tender, fond embraces,
For cold marble instead
Of the wide open spaces.
I am to leave . . . what can I say?
Ah, please, for me!
Please, for me, delay your tears.
A fond, a fond farewell . . . who knows how long?

TONIO

Hear me, oh hear! For her I am pleading.
Hold her secure, safe in your keeping.
Hold on! Don't let her leave. No, no!

MARIE

Ah! I'm told, I'm told to leave;
I'm allowed no delay.
From those I love I'm torn away. Adieu!
Ah! I'm told, I'm told to leave;
I'm allowed no delay.
From those I love, you and you,
You and you, I'm torn away.

CORPORAL

So dark a day I've never known.
Pain past believing,
What can we do but stumble on?
She'll soon be gone . . . what can we say?
Pain past believing,
What can we do but stumble on, and on?

SULPICE

So dark a day I've never known.
Losing Marie, I am alone.
Without Marie, all else is gone.
Dark day!

OTHERS

Oh, say not so, not so! Don't leave us!

TONIO

No matter where you go, I go, too.

SULPICE

Young man, have you forgot?
You have signed up to fight.

MARIE

Ah, mon dieu! Tonio!

TONIO

Marie, my darling!

MARIE

The final blow that breaks my heart.

TONIO

My darling! My darling!

MARIE

To lose you on the day we meant to be married.

TONIO

My darling! My darling!

SULPICE

He signed on the line.

MARIE

**Speak to me! Oh, say it's all untrue.
Ah, mon dieu!**

TONIO

My love, I did it all for you.

SULPICE & SOLDIERS

**Though in tears, on her knees.
She must leave on command.
To hell with that Marquise
Who now has got the upper hand!**

**In the thick of the thunder,
Under fire all the while,
This angel kind and tender
Was there to encourage with a smile.**

MARIE & TONIO

**Our future fades and hopes turn hollow;
Golden dreams lasted but a day.
Ah! How to survive in days that follow
When true love has no right of way?**

MARIE

The time has come for a final farewell.

Your hand, Peter, Jacques, I'll miss you.
And you, my dear old Tom.

MARQUISE (*emerging*)
What's going on?

MARIE (*to her friends*)
A howling brat, I was held in your arms.

MARQUISE
How could you!

MARIE
Once more, Sulpice, embrace me.

MARQUISE
None of that! None of that!

MARIE (*to Marquise*)
To them all I owe my life, and more.

SOLDIERS
Still the daughter we adore!

TONIO
I gave my heart to you, Marie,
And I'll never let you go.
No matter what, I shall find you again.

MARIE
Say you'll not forget. Promise!
Tell me you will not forget.
Adieu! Adieu! My love, adieu!

TONIO
I gave my heart to you forever,
To you alone. My own, my own,
My heart and soul are yours alone.
My darling! Adieu, adieu!

MARQUISE
So come, dear niece, we must depart.
The hour is late, the coach awaits.
Come, no time for stalling, High time we start.
Do hurry! Do hurry! We must, we must depart.
High time we start. Come on!

HORTENSIUS

**The hour is late, we must depart.
No time for stalling, High time we start.
Do hurry! We must, we must depart.
High time we start. Come on!**

SULPICE & SOLDIERS

**We must behave as manly soldiers.
Salute your daughter and stop (the) bawling.
The devil with that woman! No tears, please!
Send her along with a hearty salute.
To hell with that Marquise,
A lady I would like to shoot.
That woman, that woman making off with her loot.
Goodby, Marie, goodbye!**

ACT TWO

Still pining for the rugged life and warm companionship that she was forced to forego, and most of all for her beloved Tonio from whom she was so abruptly torn away, Marie is making a valiant effort to live up to her new-found aunt's expectations. After a crash course in gentility, a year of assiduous tutoring, polishing, refining and reshaping on the part of the Marquise, she is showing signs of improvement, despite occasional lapses. Today is the big test. The Marquise, pleased with her progress, though not without trepidation, is finally ready to take the gamble of putting her on display before what will no doubt be a fastidious audience. She has found a suitably prestigious match of impeccably aristocratic lineage, and Marie, most reluctantly, is about to be introduced to her blue blooded groom (a far cry from a soldier) and his formidable mother. By the end of the act, if all goes according to plan, little Marie, the former daughter of the regiment, the vivandiere of the battlefield, will wind up a grand duchess.

Or, on the other hand . . .

Scene: drawing room of the Chateau Berkenfield, a year later.

MARQUISE: Ah, Sulpice!

SULPICE: You sent for me? (I smell trouble.)

MARQUISE: And how is your wounded limb?

SULPICE: You mean my leg? Better every day.

MARQUISE: Marie was so upset when she heard about it. It was she that insisted

that you come here to recuperate.

SULPICE: Best friend I ever had!

MARQUISE: Then you will certainly want to prove that you are *her* friend as well.

SULPICE: Has it ever been in doubt?

MARQUISE: You've already been a great help to me. Together we have smoothed away some of Marie's rough edges. I do believe the darling girl is now ready for marriage.

SULPICE: She was ready enough a year ago.

MARQUISE: Yes, but that was a different matter. This time I have done the selecting myself and I have found a far more suitable match. In fact, a magnificent match! Just think – our little Marie, a grand duchess!

SULPICE: And what does our little Marie have to say about this magnificent match?

MARQUISE: Well, it's a delicate issue. She's not exactly said no, but she is certainly less enthusiastic than I would wish. And frankly, on the other side it's not entirely settled either.

SULPICE: (*belligerently*) They think Marie's not good enough?

MARQUISE: You know how fastidious, how fussy the nobility can sometimes be – some would say narrow minded. They consider Marie somewhat rustic, unrefined – well, you know her deplorable background.

SULPICE: The best vivandiere you could ask for!

MARQUISE: Hush! Don't let me hear that word again. Almost as bad as a chamber maid. It is precisely what I do not want them to know. I am expecting the present Duchess von Krakenthorp this very evening, with the son I've picked out for Marie, and a few other highly distinguished guests. Marie will sing for them and charm them all with her lovely voice. It is the opening of a brilliant future – if we make the right impression. (*calling*) Marie dear! Rehearsal time! Sulpice, you must back me up, coax her into cooperating.

MARIE: (*entering*) Yes, Auntie.

MARQUISE: Dear, we must run through your song once more. We want it to be letter perfect for this evening.

MARIE: Why not one of my old songs?

MARQUISE: Those vulgar ballads from the barracks? No, no, no! Think elevation. Let us ascend to a higher sphere.

MARIE: *(with barely concealed disdain)* Venus and the shepherd. Flowers, leafy bowers . . .

MARQUISE: So exquisite, so poetical! And in the best of taste! I'm sure you can do it justice.

MARIE; *(with a sigh)* I'll try.

SULPICE: And I'll try to listen.

MARIE

(accompanied by the marquise at the piano)

**"As dew of dawn adorned the flowers,
Lovely Venus appeared from on high
To seek among the leafy bowers
The swain so sweet who waited nigh."**

SULPICE

I like a song with more pizzazz.

SULPICE then MARIE

Rataplan, rataplan! The good old days of razzmatazz.

MARQUISE *(perplexed)*

That's not the way it goes.

MARIE

**I beg your pardon, Auntie.
Absent-minded, I suppose,
I was starting to wander.**

MARQUISE

Then try again, for heaven's sake!

MARIE

**Pardon, pardon, my mistake.
"To the youth so valiant, so daring,
The goddess gave her supreme reward.
Not only Venus, all women doted and adored,
So fair was his face, fair was his face . . ."**

SULPICE (*prompting*)
“Fair was his face, proud his bearing.”

MARIE
“Fair was his face, proud his bearing. . .”
Anytime, anywhere,
We are there, all set!
Do we mean to suggest
We’re the best? You bet!
As a team, we are cream of the crop.
Meet the fabulous Twenty First!

SULPICE (*joining in*)
All set! You bet!
As a team, we are cream of the crop.
Meet the fabulous Twenty First!

MARQUISE
Have you gone mad? What on earth?
So uncouth, so uncouth, unrefined!

MARIE & SULPICE
Your stupid song is too refined.
Our songs I prefer by far.
I cannot put them out of mind.
Common and uncouth though they are.
Well, ho hum . . . more to come.

MARQUISE
Try one more time.

MARIE
Try as I do,
What it means I have not a clue.
“Arm in arm through verdant meadows
The lovers strolled in rapture reborn.
The nightingale among the shadows
Could but sigh of love forlorn.”
(*with marquise*) “Sigh of love forlorn.”

SULPICE
That bird may appeal to some.
Me, I prefer the fife and the drum.

MARQUISE
Improving. Let us sigh together.
Tra la la la la la la . . .

MARIE
Tra la la la la la la . . .

MARQUISE
No, no! That will never do.

MARIE (*speaking*)
You expect coloratura? Tra la la la. Ah! Ah!

SULPICE
It starts to grow on you.

MARQUISE
Sing out! Too loud! Too loud!
Not bad! No good! Not bad!

MARIE
What the hell? I give up!
Back not so long ago I sang to suit myself.

MARQUISE
The language of the gutter! I tried to help.

MARIE
Ever on! Ever on!

SULPICE
Ever on!

MARIE & SULPICE
Now that's the way we sang before,
Stepping high to the sound of the beat.
Rataplan, rataplan, plan, plan.
No return, no regret, no retreat.
Ever the first in love and war.
Carry on, plan, plan . . .

MARQUISE
So unrefined! So unromantic!
This change of tone –
From an air sublime and sweet,
A story tender and romantic

To a beat so coarse and crude
It drives a proper person frantic --
Is worse than a crime: it is rude!

MARIE & SULPICE

Stepping high to the sound of the beat.
Rataplan, rataplan, plan, plan.
No return, no regret, no retreat.
This is how we sang before.

MARQUISE

So uncouth! So unromantic!
How can sweet romance compete
With a military beat?
Can a song full of charm, furthermore
A story given with a sigh
Stand up to the beat?
How can a tale that I adore
Or a gentle sigh compete?
What to say! What to think! What to say!
That vulgar song they've sung before
Of soldiers first in love and war.
Oh, what to think? Oh, what to say?
That vulgar song how I deplore!
Far from the way I like a song.
No, I deplore that solid beat,
That vulgar song they've sung before
Of soldiers first in love and war.

MARIE

Hip hooray! Twenty First! Rah! Rah! Rah!
That good old song we sang before
Of soldiers first in love and war.
That is the way I like a song.
Give me a strong and solid beat.
That good old song we sang before
Of soldiers first in love and war.

SULPICE

Ever first in love and war,
Stepping high to the sound of the beat.
Hip hooray! Twenty First!
We soldiers first in love and war,
That is the way I like a song.
Give me a strong and solid beat.
That good old song we sang before

Of soldiers first in love and war.

MARQUISE Really, niece! I fail to understand. A relapse like this just when I was beginning to feel that we were making progress.

MARIE: I'm sorry, Auntie. Something just comes over me every now and then.

MARQUISE: Sulpice! This was your doing! You egged her on.

SULPICE: Me? I was just talking to myself.

MARQUISE: It must not happen this evening. With so much at stake . . .

MARIE: I promise I'll do better.

MARQUISE: There, there. That's a good girl. Now I must be off to attend to last minute details. Sulpice, come, give me a hand. Dear Marie, I'm counting on you. It's for your own good. You must learn to trust the wisdom of your elders – even when it hurts. *(to Sulpice as they leave)* She really is adorable. She deserves the best.

MARIE: *(alone)* Where is Tonio? Why has he abandoned me? What have I let myself be drawn into?

**The die is cast; wedding plans will proceed.
Not a soul can I find to give the help I need.**



**In tears but fighting off surrender,
I survive by dreaming of the past.**

**Beneath the jewels and the laces
I bury my grief and despair,
Sheer despair! Sheer despair!
For what's the use of frills and graces
When he is not around to share?
I think of you who gave me shelter,
My fathers so kind, so humane.
Body and soul I now would offer
To return to your world again
And that life I long for in vain.**

**Sign the fatal deed while others celebrate.
But duty must be done, though I still vacillate . . .**

(a military march is heard in the distance)

But that sound from outside . . . A dream? Or am I awake?
Unmistakable music! Just when the sky seemed black!
Miracle I prayed would happen!
Friends in need, friends indeed.
Yesteryears they've not forgotten;
Like a dream from the past they appear,
Ever close, ever dear,
Loyal friends on the move,
Bearing hope, bearing love. Ah!



With hope of sweeter,
Brighter tomorrows.

A new call to carry on,
Forward, undaunted,
Full speed ahead!

I waver no longer
Nor cower in dread;
Now braver and stronger,
I rise from the dead.

A new day of bluer skies!
Old friends are on the move,
Hurray for happiness,
Friendship and love,
Today and tomorrow!

SOLDIERS (*entering*)

Eureka! Our daughter!
You are here, safe and sound!
Long and hard we have hunted,
And at last you are found.

MARIE

Oh, my friends! Just in time!
Overcome, here I am
On the verge of surrender,
So close to giving in!
But arm in arm,
Together we are bound to win.

A new dawn, a ray of light!
Welcome the heroes
In hope of sweeter,

Brighter tomorrows.

**A new call to carry on,
Forward, undaunted,
Full speed ahead!**

**I waver no longer
Nor cower in dread;
Now braver and stronger,
I rise from the dead.**

**A new day of bluer skies!
Old friends are on the move,
Hurray for happiness,
Friendship and love,
Today and tomorrow!
Welcome the heroes!**

SOLDIERS

**All over we've hunted.
Long and hard we have hunted,
And at last you are found.**

SULPICE (*joining them, followed by Hortensius*) Jacques! Tom! You're all here!

SOLDIERS: To a man! Sulpice! Marie!

MARIE: Except for one . . .

SOLDIERS: We've saved the best for last. Come in, Tonio!

MARIE: Tonio!

TONIO: (*entering in triumph*) Officer Tonio! Marie!

MARIE: I thought you'd forgotten me.

TONIO: Not for a minute! But I had to prove myself before I could hope to make any headway with your aunt.

SOLDIER: And prove himself he has – now leader of the regiment!

MARIE: Dearest, I'm so proud! So proud and so happy. My aunt will surely be impressed, and maybe . . . Come, let's have wine to celebrate!

HORTENSIUS: Soldiers and more soldiers! Is this an army canteen?

MARIE: Hortensius! Take them down to the orangery.

HORTENSIUS: Madame will not be pleased.

SULPICE: You heard what the lady said. An order is an order. Quick march!
Men, follow the leader. *(they leave, led by a reluctant Hortensius)*

MARIE: The three of us together again!

SULPICE: Like old times!

MARIE, TONIO & SULPICE

**Arm in arm, like a dream,
We are back as a team,
Stepping high, never mind stormy weather.
Here we are, furthermore
Closer far than before,
Happy birds of a feather,
On the wing, in the wind, and together.**

**With a nod, we admit
Like a knot we are knit.
By a turn of the tide
Side by side, here we stand,
Evermore arm in arm, as before.**

**After days bleak and black,
Here we are, back on track.
After wind, after rain,
Sunny days come again!**

SULPICE

The times we had!

TONIO

I've not forgotten.

MARIE

That awful day . . .

SULPICE

You left in tears . . .

TONIO

We'll laugh again.

SULPICE
And even louder.

TONIO
Our day will come.

SULPICE
We'll make it happen.

MARIE
Those days are gone, but here we are
Still arm in arm as before.
For better days are still in store.

ALL THREE
Arm in arm, like a dream,
We are back as a team,
Stepping high, never mind stormy weather.

With a nod, we admit
Like a knot we are knit.
By a turn of the tide
Side by side, here we stand,
Evermore arm in arm, as before.

After days bleak and black,
Here we are, back on track.
After wind, after rain,
Sunny days come again!

TONIO (*to Sulpice*)
For me you'll intercede . . .

MARIE (*to Sulpice*)
My aunt you will persuade . . .

TONIO
For me . . .

MARIE
For both.

TONIO & MARIE
We count on you for aid.

TONIO

To say what can be said.

MARIE

To help a friend in need.

MARIE & TONIO

Go ahead, go ahead!

SULPICE

But . . . but . . . but . . . but . . .

There's something you should know.

TONIO

For two devoted lovers . . .

MARIE

You see how much he suffers . . .

SULPICE

There's something you should know

Let me explain . . .

MARIE

We love each other so.

You'll get her to unbend.

TONIO

You'll lay it on the line.

MARIE

You'll do it as a friend.

SULPICE

Now listen here, let me explain!

Something I should say

And something you should know.

And . . . but . . . if . . . well . . .

You . . . but . . . but . . .

TONIO, then MARIE

Think back a bit when you were young.

How can I love another? What are we to do?

SULPICE

The devil! Just hold your tongue.

MARIE & TONIO
Arm in arm, like a dream,
We are back as a team,
Stepping high, never mind stormy weather.

ALL THREE
With a nod, we admit
Like a knot we are knit.
By a turn of the tide
Side by side, here we stand,
Evermore arm in arm, as before.

After days bleak and black,
Here we are, back on track.
After wind, after rain,
Sunny days come again! Here we are!

SULPICE: So I'm the one that's supposed to tackle the tiger.

MARIE: She likes you, she will listen to you.

TONIO: No, this job is mine. I'll lay out the facts, appeal to her heart. But if that doesn't work, I've an ace up the sleeve. I don't want to play it, but if I must, I must.

MARIE: I'm sure you can win her over. She may be straitlaced, she may be old fashioned, but she's not heartless, and I do believe that she loves me *almost* like a mother.

SULPICE: All the more reason to stay on alert.

TONIO: Once she understands the way we feel about each other . . .

MARQUISE: (*entering*) What's this? A soldier in my drawing room? When I'm expecting guests any minute? Sulpice, I thought better of you.

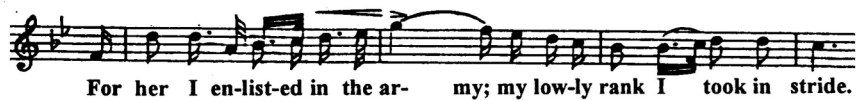
MARIE: But Auntie . . .

MARQUISE: Marie, for shame!

TONIO: I'll tell you why I'm here. It's because I love Marie, she loves me, and we belong to each other.

MARQUISE: That is neither here nor there!

TONIO



For her I en-list-ed in the ar- my; my low-ly rank I took in stride.

**All for love, I faced death and danger,
Yet all the while, a greater fear I tried to hide.
Am I to lose all I ever wanted
To splendor, vanity and pride?
Ah, how can I live to suffer longer
With love itself devalued and denied?
How am I to live if not allowed to love?**

**My desperation gives me courage;
The girl I love I claim my own.
And shy though I am, I must acknowledge:
In that desire I am not alone,
That like myself, she cries in anguish,
A cry that reaches from the heart.
How can we live to suffer longer
If two in love are torn apart?**

**With desperation lending courage,
We are speaking from the heart
Oh, why live on to suffer longer?
Why live on when torn apart?**

MARQUISE: Young man, your feelings do you credit. I admire you for speaking up, but it will not do. I have other plans for Marie. She deserves far more than you could possibly give her. And furthermore, she is already engaged. The marriage contract is drawn up and it will be signed within the hour. There is no point in entertaining false hopes. So you will please have the kindness to leave my house at once.

TONIO: So you dismiss me, deny the claims of love, override Marie's own wishes?

MARQUISE: If that is the way you choose to look at it.

TONIO: Then you compel me to do something I don't like doing. And you won't like it either. I had hoped to keep it to myself, but now the truth comes out.

MARQUISE: How dare you!

TONIO: Captain Robert never married your sister!

MARQUISE: That's enough! I refuse to listen. Marie, he doesn't know what he's

talking about.

TONIO: He never married your sister for the simple reason that you never had a sister. And Marie is not your niece.

SULPICE & MARIE: What's this? No sister? What are you saying?

MARQUISE: God in heaven!

TONIO: (*pursuing relentlessly*) Which means that Marie is free to do as she chooses. You have no legal claim on her whatever. She can marry anybody she wants to.

MARIE: Can this be true?

MARQUISE: My dear, dear child! I beg you, implore you. This is total fabrication. Don't believe a word of it.

TONIO: I've combed through the records. I have proof, and I've come to take Marie with me.

SULPICE: He has every right to. The law is on his side.

MARQUISE: Sulpice! You, too! Young man, you will leave immediately. (*Sulpice indicates for Tonio to obey*) Marie, go to your room. And if you have any feeling for me at all, you will forget this deplorable incident and follow the wishes of one who truly loves you and has only your best interest at heart. Go, child, go! Sulpice, you remain. (*Marie leaves*)

SULPICE: (I'd just as soon be elsewhere.)

MARQUISE: I need your help, and advice. Do you really think he will follow through on this odious threat?

SULPICE: I don't doubt it for a minute. If what he says is true, and Captain Robert was not your brother-in-law . . .

MARQUISE: Hush! It must not get around.

SULPICE: Then you really are not Marie's aunt?

MARQUISE: Sulpice, you are a man of honor. You would not compromise the reputation of a woman who has confided in you.

SULPICE: Not for all the gold in Africa.

MARQUISE: There are some secrets that break the heart, besides leading to ruin.

SULPICE: What secrets are you talking about?

MARQUISE: The young man was right. I am not Marie's aunt. I am her mother.

SULPICE: Her mother?

MARQUISE: I've no time to tell you the whole story. An elopement, every intention of marriage, chaotic times, my lover killed in battle, my poor baby lost, presumed dead. The years of grief that followed. The miracle of finding her again, and finally a chance to give her everything that a mother would want her to have, a marriage that will shore up these shaky foundations. Sulpice, are you with me?

SULPICE: A hundred percent. But if I were you – which of course I'm not – I'd look for some other way to make Marie happy.

MARQUISE: Whether you agree with me or not, you must bring Marie to her senses. Go talk to her. She will listen to no one else. You needn't . . . tell her everything.

SULPICE: I'll do my best. *(he leaves)*

HORTENSIUS: *(at the door)* Madame, your guests are arriving.

MARQUISE: What a moment to receive! But this is no time to give up.

(The Duchess of Krakenthorp and her entourage make a majestic entrance)

MARQUISE: Dear Duchess, you do us such an honor by coming. My niece and I have been so looking forward to meeting you at last. *(Sulpice quietly returns; she whispers to him while the Duchess peers about the room, no doubt evaluating the furniture)* Sulpice, where is Marie? Why is she not with you?

DUCHESS: *(with hauteur)* I do not see your niece. I was expecting her to be first in line to greet me.

MARQUISE: Of course. I can't imagine what is keeping her.

SULPICE: *(whispering to the Marquise)* She's not coming!

MARQUISE: Not coming? Doesn't she realize . . .

DUCHESS: Common courtesy would demand . . .

MARQUISE: *(desperately trying to juggle two conversations)* We quite agree. *(to*

Sulpice) Didn't you talk to her?

SULPICE *(to Marquise)* I talked a blue streak. She wouldn't listen.

MARQUISE: Oh, Duchess! I do believe the dear is nervous. Overwhelmed by the honor. Such an important moment in her life. *(to Sulpice)* Go back. Try again.

SULPICE: *(to Marquise)* No use. She's made her mind up.

MARQUISE: I hope that your trip was not unpleasant. Unpredictable weather this time of year. *(to Sulpice)* I will not take no for an answer.

DUCHESS: Bad weather is all too predictable, whenever I venture out.

SULPICE: *(to Marquise)* There's only one way to do it.

MARQUISE: *(to Sulpice)* For God's sake, name it.

SULPICE: *(to Marquise)* Tell her the truth. A mother's plea might turn the tide.

MARQUISE: *(to Sulpice)* What have I left to lose? Go, get her at any price.
(turning to the Duchess) Duchess, as I was about to say, we were so hoping that your son would come as well to meet his future wife.

DUCHESS: Poor boy, he's been looking tired of late, and yesterday he was coughing and sniffing. I was not at all sure that the exertion would be good for him.

MARQUISE: Of course.

DUCHESS: And as you observed, the weather looked dubious. I said to him, there will be ample opportunity, darling, for the two of you to get acquainted after you are married.

MARQUISE: Very sensible, I'm sure.

DUCHESS: But that does not excuse your niece. A Von Krakenthorp is not accustomed to being ignored, neglected, insulted . . .

MARQUISE: (Dear God, help me survive this ordeal!) Ah, there she is!

SULPICE: *(returning, with Marie)* Now comes the test. Everyone is watching.

MARIE: *(embracing the Marquise, with deep emotion)* Mother!

MARQUISE: Marie, my child, my daughter!

DUCHESS: Madame, what does this mean?

MARIE: I shall do as you wish. Give me the contract. I'm ready to sign it.
(offstage noise)

ALL

From outside! That din would rouse the dead.

TONIO *(outside, to soldiers)*

Follow me, follow me!

(Tonio enters, with soldiers)

GUESTS

How come this wild stampede?

SOLDIERS

**Just in time to save our daughter,
Here we come, full speed ahead!
Faithful friends, we've not forgot her
In her dark hour of need.**

**Though the crisis calls for courage,
None shall force her into marriage.
Dear Marie, we understand
And extend a helping hand.**

TONIO *(indicating Marie)*

**The sacrificial lamb is headed for the slaughter.
They leave me no recourse.
In goading you to marry,
For you they've no concern.
Instead, they want to force
A point of no return.**

SOLDIERS

But not while we're around!

TONIO

I must speak out!

GUESTS

What does he mean?

TONIO

Too long you've been misled.

TONIO & SOLDIERS
Behold the daughter of the regiment!
On the field she served food and drink.

GUESTS
Scandalous! Such a lowly status!
What is a proper person to think?

SULPICE
(Some would think they were snobs.)

GUESTS
Food and drink!

MARIE
True! Lost and alone,
Battle raging around me,
Some kind soldiers found me
And gave me a home,
A small, helpless child
Whom they fondly befriended,
Nurtured and tended
For years to come.

GUESTS
How charming is her candor,
So simple and sincere.

MARIE
Could I forget what they have given?
A lifetime of love and care.

GUESTS
We cannot but commend her,
And even shed a tear.

MARIE
Ah! They gave a lifetime of loving care.
Now that you know, I'll sign what you want me to sign.

TONIO
You're giving in?

MARIE
Giving up.

MARQUISE

**My own child, now in despair,
Made so unhappy by my own doing . . .
Stop! You mustn't sign!**

CHORUS

What is the lady saying?

MARQUISE

**I've been a fool . . . a fool!
How I have made you suffer!
Pride, stupid pride! My daughter shall do as I did:
Follow the heart!**

MARIE, TONIO & SULPICE

Yes, go on . . .

MARQUISE (*pointing to Tonio*)

There's your man!

MARIE

Tonio!

TONIO

My darling!

SULPICE

**Good girl! Bravo, Bravissimo!
All to the good: their dream comes true.
For this I could kiss her mother, too!**
(the duchess and her entourage sweep out in high dudgeon)

MARIE, with OTHERS

**A new day has started!
So ends the story.
Thus crowned in glory,
Love finds the way,
Today and tomorrow!**

THE END