

## ACT V

### SCENE

A dungeon in the public prison of Padua; Guido lies asleep on a pallet (L.C.); a table with a goblet on it is set (L.C.); five soldiers are drinking and playing dice in the corner on a stone table; one of them has a lantern hung to his halbert; a torch is set in the wall over Guido's head. Two grated windows behind, one on each side of the door which is (C.), look out into the passage; the stage is rather dark.

### FIRST SOLDIER

[throws dice]

Sixes again! good Pietro.

### SECOND SOLDIER

I' faith, lieutenant, I will play with thee no more. I will lose everything.

### THIRD SOLDIER

Except thy wits; thou art safe there!

SECOND SOLDIER

Ay, ay, he cannot take them from me.

THIRD SOLDIER

No; for thou hast no wits to give him.

THE SOLDIERS

[loudly]

Ha! ha! ha!

FIRST SOLDIER

Silence! You will wake the prisoner; he is asleep.

SECOND SOLDIER

What matter? He will get sleep enough when he is buried. I warrant he'd be glad if we could wake him when he's in the grave.

THIRD SOLDIER

Nay! for when he wakes there it will be judgment day.

SECOND SOLDIER

Ay, and he has done a grievous thing; for, look you, to murder one of us who are but flesh and blood is a sin, and to kill a Duke goes being near against the law.

FIRST SOLDIER

Well, well, he was a wicked Duke.

SECOND SOLDIER

And so he should not have touched him; if one meddles with wicked people, one is like to be tainted with their wickedness.

THIRD SOLDIER

Ay, that is true. How old is the prisoner?

SECOND SOLDIER

Old enough to do wrong, and not old enough to be wise.

FIRST SOLDIER

Why, then, he might be any age.

SECOND SOLDIER

They say the Duchess wanted to pardon him.

FIRST SOLDIER

Is that so?

SECOND SOLDIER

Ay, and did much entreat the Lord Justice, but he would not.

FIRST SOLDIER

I had thought, Pietro, that the Duchess was omnipotent.

SECOND SOLDIER

True, she is well-favoured; I know none so comely.

THE SOLDIERS

Ha! ha! ha!

FIRST SOLDIER

I meant I had thought our Duchess could do anything.

SECOND SOLDIER

Nay, for he is now given over to the Justices, and they will see that justice be done; they and stout Hugh the headsman; but when his head is off, why then the Duchess can pardon him if she likes; there is no law against that.

FIRST SOLDIER

I do not think that stout Hugh, as you call him, will do the business for him after all. This Guido is of gentle birth, and so by the law can drink poison first, if it so be his pleasure.

THIRD SOLDIER

And if he does not drink it?

FIRST SOLDIER

Why, then, they will kill him.

[Knocking comes at the door.]

FIRST SOLDIER

See who that is.

[Third Soldier goes over and looks through the wicket.]

THIRD SOLDIER

It is a woman, sir.

FIRST SOLDIER

Is she pretty?

THIRD SOLDIER

I can't tell. She is masked, lieutenant.

FIRST SOLDIER

It is only very ugly or very beautiful women who ever hide their faces. Let her in.

[Soldier opens the door, and the DUCHESS masked and cloaked enters.]

DUCHESS

[to Third Soldier]

Are you the officer on guard?

FIRST SOLDIER

[coming forward]

I am, madam.

DUCHESS

I must see the prisoner alone.

FIRST SOLDIER

I am afraid that is impossible. [The DUCHESS hands him a ring, he looks at and returns it to her with a bow and makes a sign to the Soldiers.] Stand without there. [Exeunt the Soldiers.]

DUCHESS

Officer, your men are somewhat rough.

FIRST SOLDIER

They mean no harm.

DUCHESS

I shall be going back in a few minutes. As I pass through the corridor do not let them try and lift my mask.

FIRST SOLDIER

You need not be afraid, madam.

DUCHESS

I have a particular reason for wishing my face not to be seen.

FIRST SOLDIER

Madam, with this ring you can go in and out as you please; it is the Duchess's own ring.

DUCHESS

Leave us. [The Soldier turns to go out.] A moment, sir. For what hour is . . .

FIRST SOLDIER

At twelve o'clock, madam, we have orders to lead him out; but I dare say he won't wait for us; he's more like to take a drink out of that poison yonder. Men are afraid of the headsman.

DUCHESS

Is that poison?



FIRST SOLDIER

Ay, madam, and very sure poison too.

DUCHESS

You may go, sir.

FIRST SOLDIER

By Saint James, a pretty hand! I wonder who she is. Some woman who loved him, perhaps. [Exit.]

DUCHESS

[taking her mark off] At last!

He can escape now in this cloak and vizard,

We are of a height almost: they will not know him;

As for myself what matter?

So that he does not curse me as he goes,

I care but little: I wonder will he curse me.

He has the right. It is eleven now;

They will not come till twelve.

[Goes over to the table.]

So this is poison.

Is it not strange that in this liquor here

There lies the key to all philosophies?

[Takes the cup up.]

It smells of poppies. I remember well  
That, when I was a child in Sicily,  
I took the scarlet poppies from the corn,  
And made a little wreath, and my grave uncle,  
Don John of Naples, laughed: I did not know  
That they had power to stay the springs of life,  
To make the pulse cease beating, and to chill  
The blood in its own vessels, till men come  
And with a hook hale the poor body out,  
And throw it in a ditch: the body, ay, -  
What of the soul? that goes to heaven or hell.  
Where will mine go?

[Takes the torch from the wall, and goes over to the bed.]

How peacefully here he sleeps,  
Like a young schoolboy tired out with play:  
I would that I could sleep so peacefully,  
But I have dreams. [Bending over him.]  
Poor boy: what if I kissed him?  
No, no, my lips would burn him like a fire.  
He has had enough of Love. Still that white neck  
Will 'scape the headsman: I have seen to that:  
He will get hence from Padua to-night,  
And that is well. You are very wise, Lord Justices,  
And yet you are not half so wise as I am,  
And that is well.  
O God! how I have loved you,

And what a bloody flower did Love bear!

[Comes back to the table.]

What if I drank these juices, and so ceased?

Were it not better than to wait till Death

Come to my bed with all his serving men,

Remorse, disease, old age, and misery?

I wonder does one suffer much: I think

That I am very young to die like this,

But so it must be. Why, why should I die?

He will escape to-night, and so his blood

Will not be on my head. No, I must die;

I have been guilty, therefore I must die;

He loves me not, and therefore I must die:

I would die happier if he would kiss me,

But he will not do that. I did not know him.

I thought he meant to sell me to the Judge;

That is not strange; we women never know

Our lovers till they leave us.

[Bell begins to toll]

Thou vile bell,

That like a bloodhound from thy brazen throat

Call'st for this man's life, cease! thou shalt not get it.

He stirs--I must be quick: [Takes up cup.]

O Love, Love, Love,

I did not think that I would pledge thee thus!

[Drinks poison, and sets the cup down on the table behind her: the noise wakens GUIDO, who starts up, and does not see what she has

done. There is silence for a minute, each looking at the other.]

I do not come to ask your pardon now,  
Seeing I know I stand beyond all pardon;  
Enough of that: I have already, sir,  
Confessed my sin to the Lords Justices;  
They would not listen to me: and some said  
I did invent a tale to save your life;  
You have trafficked with me; others said  
That women played with pity as with men;  
Others that grief for my slain Lord and husband  
Had robbed me of my wits: they would not hear me,  
And, when I sware it on the holy book,  
They bade the doctor cure me. They are ten,  
Ten against one, and they possess your life.  
They call me Duchess here in Padua.  
I do not know, sir; if I be the Duchess,  
I wrote your pardon, and they would not take it;  
They call it treason, say I taught them that;  
Maybe I did. Within an hour, Guido,  
They will be here, and drag you from the cell,  
And bind your hands behind your back, and bid you  
Kneel at the block: I am before them there;  
Here is the signet ring of Padua,  
'Twill bring you safely through the men on guard;  
There is my cloak and vizard; they have orders  
Not to be curious: when you pass the gate  
Turn to the left, and at the second bridge

You will find horses waiting: by to-morrow

You will be at Venice, safe. [A pause.]

Do you not speak?

Will you not even curse me ere you go? -

You have the right. [A pause.]

You do not understand

There lies between you and the headsman's axe

Hardly so much sand in the hour-glass

As a child's palm could carry: here is the ring:

I have washed my hand: there is no blood upon it:

You need not fear. Will you not take the ring?

GUIDO

[takes ring and kisses it]

Ay! gladly, Madam.

DUCHESS

And leave Padua.

GUIDO

Leave Padua.

DUCHESS

But it must be to-night.

GUIDO

To-night it shall be.

DUCHESS

Oh, thank God for that!

GUIDO

So I can live; life never seemed so sweet

As at this moment.

DUCHESS

Do not tarry, Guido,

There is my cloak: the horse is at the bridge,

The second bridge below the ferry house:

Why do you tarry? Can your ears not hear

This dreadful bell, whose every ringing stroke

Robs one brief minute from your boyish life.

Go quickly.

GUIDO

Ay! he will come soon enough.

DUCHESS

Who?

GUIDO

[calmly]

Why, the headsman.

DUCHESS

No, no.

GUIDO

Only he

Can bring me out of Padua.

DUCHESS

You dare not!

You dare not burden my o'erburdened soul

With two dead men! I think one is enough.

For when I stand before God, face to face,

I would not have you, with a scarlet thread

Around your white throat, coming up behind  
To say I did it.

GUIDO

Madam, I wait.

DUCHESS

No, no, you cannot: you do not understand,  
I have less power in Padua to-night  
Than any common woman; they will kill you.  
I saw the scaffold as I crossed the square,  
Already the low rabble throng about it  
With fearful jests, and horrid merriment,  
As though it were a morris-dancer's platform,  
And not Death's sable throne. O Guido, Guido,  
You must escape!

GUIDO

Madam, I tarry here.

DUCHESS

Guido, you shall not: it would be a thing  
So terrible that the amazed stars



Would fall from heaven, and the palsied moon  
Be in her sphere eclipsed, and the great sun  
Refuse to shine upon the unjust earth  
Which saw thee die.

GUIDO

Be sure I shall not stir.

DUCHESS

[wringing her hands]

Is one sin not enough, but must it breed  
A second sin more horrible again  
Than was the one that bare it? O God, God,  
Seal up sin's teeming womb, and make it barren,  
I will not have more blood upon my hand  
Than I have now.

GUIDO

[seizing her hand]

What! am I fallen so low  
That I may not have leave to die for you?

DUCHESS

[tearing her hand away]

Die for me?--no, my life is a vile thing,  
Thrown to the miry highways of this world;  
You shall not die for me, you shall not, Guido;  
I am a guilty woman.

GUIDO

Guilty?--let those  
Who know what a thing temptation is,  
Let those who have not walked as we have done,  
In the red fire of passion, those whose lives  
Are dull and colourless, in a word let those,  
If any such there be, who have not loved,  
Cast stones against you. As for me -

DUCHESS

Alas!

GUIDO

[falling at her feet]  
You are my lady, and you are my love!  
O hair of gold, O crimson lips, O face  
Made for the luring and the love of man!  
Incarnate image of pure loveliness!

Worshipping thee I do forget the past,  
Worshipping thee my soul comes close to thine,  
Worshipping thee I seem to be a god,  
And though they give my body to the block,  
Yet is my love eternal!

[DUCHESS puts her hands over her face: GUIDO draws them down.]

Sweet, lift up

The trailing curtains that overhang your eyes  
That I may look into those eyes, and tell you  
I love you, never more than now when Death  
Thrusts his cold lips between us: Beatrice,  
I love you: have you no word left to say?  
Oh, I can bear the executioner,  
But not this silence: will you not say you love me?  
Speak but that word and Death shall lose his sting,  
But speak it not, and fifty thousand deaths  
Are, in comparison, mercy. Oh, you are cruel,  
And do not love me.

DUCHESS

Alas! I have no right  
For I have stained the innocent hands of love  
With spilt-out blood: there is blood on the ground;  
I set it there.

GUIDO

Sweet, it was not yourself,  
It was some devil tempted you.

DUCHESS

[rising suddenly]

No, no,  
We are each our own devil, and we make  
This world our hell.

GUIDO

Then let high Paradise  
Fall into Tartarus! for I shall make  
This world my heaven for a little space.  
The sin was mine, if any sin there was.  
'Twas I who nurtured murder in my heart,  
Sweetened my meats, seasoned my wine with it,  
And in my fancy slew the accursed Duke  
A hundred times a day. Why, had this man  
Died half so often as I wished him to,  
Death had been stalking ever through the house,  
And murder had not slept.  
But you, fond heart,  
Whose little eyes grew tender over a whipt hound,  
You whom the little children laughed to see

Because you brought the sunlight where you passed,  
You the white angel of God's purity,  
This which men call your sin, what was it?

DUCHESS

Ay!

What was it? There are times it seems a dream,  
An evil dream sent by an evil god,  
And then I see the dead face in the coffin  
And know it is no dream, but that my hand  
Is red with blood, and that my desperate soul  
Striving to find some haven for its love  
From the wild tempest of this raging world,  
Has wrecked its bark upon the rocks of sin.  
What was it, said you?--murder merely? Nothing  
But murder, horrible murder.

GUIDO

Nay, nay, nay,  
'Twas but the passion-flower of your love  
That in one moment leapt to terrible life,  
And in one moment bare this gory fruit,  
Which I had plucked in thought a thousand times.  
My soul was murderous, but my hand refused;  
Your hand wrought murder, but your soul was pure.

And so I love you, Beatrice, and let him  
Who has no mercy for your stricken head,  
Lack mercy up in heaven! Kiss me, sweet.

[Tries to kiss her.]

DUCHESS

No, no, your lips are pure, and mine are soiled,  
For Guilt has been my paramour, and Sin  
Lain in my bed: O Guido, if you love me  
Get hence, for every moment is a worm  
Which gnaws your life away: nay, sweet, get hence,  
And if in after time you think of me,  
Think of me as of one who loved you more  
Than anything on earth; think of me, Guido,  
As of a woman merely, one who tried  
To make her life a sacrifice to love,  
And slew love in the trial: Oh, what is that?  
The bell has stopped from ringing, and I hear  
The feet of armed men upon the stair.

GUIDO

[aside]

That is the signal for the guard to come.

DUCHESS

Why has the bell stopped ringing?

GUIDO

If you must know,  
That stops my life on this side of the grave,  
But on the other we shall meet again.

DUCHESS

No, no, 'tis not too late: you must get hence;  
The horse is by the bridge, there is still time.  
Away, away, you must not tarry here!  
[Noise of Soldiers in the passage.]

A VOICE OUTSIDE

Room for the Lord Justice of Padua!  
[The LORD JUSTICE is seen through the grated window passing down  
the corridor preceded by men bearing torches.]

DUCHESS

It is too late.

A VOICE OUTSIDE

Room for the headsman.

DUCHESS

[sinks down]

Oh!

[The Headsman with his axe on his shoulder is seen passing the corridor, followed by Monks bearing candles.]

GUIDO

Farewell, dear love, for I must drink this poison.

I do not fear the headsman, but I would die

Not on the lonely scaffold.

But here,

Here in thine arms, kissing thy mouth: farewell!

[Goes to the table and takes the goblet up.] What, art thou empty?

[Throws it to the ground.]

O thou churlish gaoler,

Even of poisons niggard!

DUCHESS

[faintly]

Blame him not.



GUIDO

O God! you have not drunk it, Beatrice?

Tell me you have not?

DUCHESS

Were I to deny it,

There is a fire eating at my heart

Which would find utterance.

GUIDO

O treacherous love,

Why have you not left a drop for me?

DUCHESS

No, no, it held but death enough for one.

GUIDO

Is there no poison still upon your lips,

That I may draw it from them?

DUCHESS

Why should you die?

You have not spilt blood, and so need not die:

I have spilt blood, and therefore I must die.

Was it not said blood should be spilt for blood?

Who said that? I forget.

GUIDO

Tarry for me,

Our souls will go together.

DUCHESS

Nay, you must live.

There are many other women in the world

Who will love you, and not murder for your sake.

GUIDO

I love you only.

DUCHESS

You need not die for that.

GUIDO

Ah, if we die together, love, why then  
Can we not lie together in one grave?

DUCHESS

A grave is but a narrow wedding-bed.

GUIDO

It is enough for us

DUCHESS

And they will strew it  
With a stark winding-sheet, and bitter herbs:  
I think there are no roses in the grave,  
Or if there are, they all are withered now  
Since my Lord went there.

GUIDO

Ah! dear Beatrice,  
Your lips are roses that death cannot wither.

DUCHESS

Nay, if we lie together, will not my lips

Fall into dust, and your enamoured eyes  
Shrivel to sightless sockets, and the worms,  
Which are our groomsmen, eat away your heart?

GUIDO

I do not care: Death has no power on love.  
And so by Love's immortal sovereignty  
I will die with you.

DUCHESS

But the grave is black,  
And the pit black, so I must go before  
To light the candles for your coming hither.  
No, no, I will not die, I will not die.  
Love, you are strong, and young, and very brave;  
Stand between me and the angel of death,  
And wrestle with him for me.  
[Thrusts GUIDO in front of her with his back to the audience.]  
I will kiss you,  
When you have thrown him. Oh, have you no cordial,  
To stay the workings of this poison in me?  
Are there no rivers left in Italy  
That you will not fetch me one cup of water  
To quench this fire?

GUIDO

O God!

DUCHESS

You did not tell me

There was a drought in Italy, and no water:

Nothing but fire.

GUIDO

O Love!

DUCHESS

Send for a leech,

Not him who stanch'd my husband, but another

We have no time: send for a leech, I say:

There is an antidote against each poison,

And he will sell it if we give him money.

Tell him that I will give him Padua,

For one short hour of life: I will not die.

Oh, I am sick to death; no, do not touch me,

This poison gnaws my heart: I did not know

It was such pain to die: I thought that life

Had taken all the agonies to itself;

It seems it is not so.

GUIDO

O damned stars

Quench your vile cresset-lights in tears, and bid

The moon, your mistress, shine no more to-night.

DUCHESS

Guido, why are we here? I think this room

Is poorly furnished for a marriage chamber.

Let us get hence at once. Where are the horses?

We should be on our way to Venice now.

How cold the night is! We must ride faster.

[The Monks begin to chant outside.]

Music! It should be merrier; but grief

Is of the fashion now--I know not why.

You must not weep: do we not love each other? -

That is enough. Death, what do you here?

You were not bidden to this table, sir;

Away, we have no need of you: I tell you

It was in wine I pledged you, not in poison.

They lied who told you that I drank your poison.

It was spilt upon the ground, like my Lord's blood;

You came too late.

GUIDO

Sweet, there is nothing there:

These things are only unreal shadows.

DUCHESS

Death,

Why do you tarry, get to the upper chamber;

The cold meats of my husband's funeral feast

Are set for you; this is a wedding feast.

You are out of place, sir; and, besides, 'tis summer.

We do not need these heavy fires now,

You scorch us.

Oh, I am burned up,

Can you do nothing? Water, give me water,

Or else more poison. No: I feel no pain -

Is it not curious I should feel no pain? -

And Death has gone away, I am glad of that.

I thought he meant to part us. Tell me, Guido,

Are you not sorry that you ever saw me?

GUIDO

I swear I would not have lived otherwise.

Why, in this dull and common world of ours

Men have died looking for such moments as this

And have not found them.

DUCHESS

Then you are not sorry?

How strange that seems.

GUIDO

What, Beatrice, have I not

Stood face to face with beauty? That is enough

For one man's life. Why, love, I could be merry;

I have been often sadder at a feast,

But who were sad at such a feast as this

When Love and Death are both our cup-bearers?

We love and die together.

DUCHESS

Oh, I have been

Guilty beyond all women, and indeed

Beyond all women punished. Do you think -

No, that could not be--Oh, do you think that love

Can wipe the bloody stain from off my hands,

Pour balm into my wounds, heal up my hurts,

And wash my scarlet sins as white as snow? -

For I have sinned.



GUIDO

They do not sin at all

Who sin for love.

DUCHESS

No, I have sinned, and yet

Perchance my sin will be forgiven me.

I have loved much

[They kiss each other now for the first time in this Act, when suddenly the DUCHESS leaps up in the dreadful spasm of death, tears in agony at her dress, and finally, with face twisted and distorted with pain, falls back dead in a chair. GUIDO seizing her dagger from her belt, kills himself; and, as he falls across her knees, clutches at the cloak which is on the back of the chair, and throws it entirely over her. There is a little pause. Then down the passage comes the tramp of Soldiers; the door is opened, and the LORD JUSTICE, the Headsman, and the Guard enter and see this figure shrouded in black, and GUIDO lying dead across her. The LORD JUSTICE rushes forward and drags the cloak off the DUCHESS, whose face is now the marble image of peace, the sign of God's forgiveness.]

Tableau

CURTAIN