

Orchestral Prelude

ACT I

Lucieta

Dear Mother...

Margarita

My child

Lucieta

What a great time we're having. It's Carnival

Margarita

How very exciting

Lucieta

Exciting indeed

Margarita

It could not be more dreary than a funeral. Y'know, it's a year since I married your father. You'd have thought he'd have taken me out, but not him; such pleasures never enter his head

Lucieta

I've been hoping and hoping that he would marry a second wife!
When I was alone, I thought my father must be lonely as well. I had no one to come and take me out for a little bit of fun

Margarita

Y'don't say!

Lucieta

I thought that if I only had a stepmother, it would be different. He married you, but it never made the slightest difference

Margarita

He's a bear, that man, there's nothing he enjoys, so no pleasure for us! Y'know, my dear mother brought me up to be a lady and we knew all the right people. And what have I come down to? I pity you. The time will come when you'll be married. I hope you're happy

Lucieta

How soon am I to be married?

Margarita

Y'know, Heav'n knows when that will be

Lucieta

Heaven knows but I'm not allowed to know

Margarita

You'll know it when the time's right

Lucieta

Won't you tell me? Is there nothing settled yet?

Margarita

Sort of

Lucieta

You know nothing?

Margarita

Your father would beat me. If you ask no questions, you'll hear no lies

Lucieta

You never tell anything

Margarita

Will you shut up

Lucieta

You're impossible. No-one loves me

Margarita

Now you know I love you!

Lucieta

They're all against me, ruining my life

Margarita

Don't talk such nonsense

Lucieta

My father just shouts and curses me

Margarita

And how do I treat you?

Lucieta

You're kind, but you're still my father's wife. There's no-one to love me

Margarita

How can you say such wicked things!

Lucieta

Y'know

Margarita

What was that you said?

Lucieta

Nothing. She gives me false hope and then destroys it

Margarita

Should I tell her the truth? When I talk it gives her hope; when I'm quiet it makes her anxious

Lucieta

No-one wants me. There must be someone who can be my suitor

Margarita

I hope that very soon she will know true happiness. Here comes your father

Lucieta

Get back to work!

Margarita

Here he is now!

Lucieta

He's like a cat. He says nothing. Good morning, Sir

Margarita

Good morning. Sir, do you have no greeting for us today?

Lunardo

Get to work. Would you leave your work undone?

Margarita

Y'know, do you think we're a pair of slaves?

Lunardo

Pair of idlers! What am I then? A savage? A bear? Or do you think that I'm an ogre? I'll stand no contradiction and that's the long and short of it. Do your work and I'll look after your spare time

Lucieta

I know you really are the best of fathers. I can tell you're going to take me to Carnival

Lunardo

Carnival!?

Margarita

There now, he's lost his temper!

Lunardo

And you've the cheek to tell me you want to go out in a mask? You stupid hussy, have you ever known me to go out in a mask? Who are you to go masking? Such things are forbidden for girls like you

Margarita

Are wives allowed?

Lunardo

No dear, wives neither

Margarita

Y'know, who are all the women there then?

Lunardo

Y'know, y'know - all I can say is I don't care

Margarita

This is it, this is it - you're just a curmudgeon

Lunardo

Margarita, don't provoke me

Margarita

Lunardo, don't goad me

Lucieta

I would rather not go than make you angry. Please Sir, be kind to your most loving daughter. It's Carnival tonight. I don't need to be masked but please can I go?

Margarita

Lucieta is a gem. Whoever marries her will be very lucky. I hope she'll find happiness.

Lunardo

I have only one ambition left - to make you happy. Well, I have news for you both. I dare say you've thought that I haven't been always good natured, but today I'm feeling cheerful. Let me tell you, we are dining in company tonight.

Lucieta

How exciting, father! Tell us where!

Lunardo

At home! I've invited three worthy gentlemen and their ladies to dine.
We shall spend a pleasant evening together

Lucieta

Not bad

Margarita

Not bad, y'know. Who are they?

Lunardo

Wait a moment... I have asked Simone Maroele

Lucieta and Margarita

Oh!

Lunardo

Maurizio de le Strope

Lucieta and Margarita

Even better!

Lunardo

And Sior Cancian Tartufola

Lucieta and Margarita

Oh my God!

Lunardo

Men of substance, surely?

Lucieta and Margarita

They are three curmudgeons: their manners are worse than yours

Lunardo

You're just like all women; you judge a man purely by his manners. When you meet one who's serious and prudent and has not got a brain full of sawdust, what do women say? What's their opinion? He's a curmudgeon, a savage, and a bear. I know what women want: they like to chatter, slander their neighbours, to discuss the latest fashions, spend a fortune on opera and ballet. When they're at home they think they're in a prison. Look around: you can see with your own eyes – every day comes the news of disaster when the husband is not the master. I know what women want... Am I not right?

Margarita

Oh yes, you're always right. Did you ask Marina?

Lunardo

She's coming with her husband, as is correct

Margarita

Shall we see Felice?

Lunardo

Certainly -with her husband. If we ask them all together, then it will look like a normal party, and...³⁶ What are you doing here?

Lucieta

May I not listen?

Lunardo

[I shan't be happy 'til I'm rid of her.] Get out of here

Lucieta

What have I done?

Lunardo

Be off, I tell you

Lucieta

What's the matter?

Lunardo

Take yourself off and be quick about it or I'll smack you

Margarita

You must do as your father tells you

Lucieta

I'm going! I'm going... I've gone

Margarita

Tell me, have you found the girl a husband?

Lunardo

Not so fast. I think I've arrived at something like a settlement

Margarita

With whom? Won't you tell me?

Lunardo

Quiet! For not a soul must know. He's the son of Maurizio

Margarita

Filipeto?

Lunardo

Shh!

Margarita

Are we into smuggling?

Lunardo

Why should all the world know my family's affairs?

Margarita

Quite right. And your daughter? When will you tell her?

Lunardo

On her wedding day

Margarita

And you won't let them meet before that?

Lunardo

Certainly not. It's not my custom to allow such goings on. If a man even looks at her – Bingo, he'll have to marry her

Margarita

But if she doesn't like him?

Lunardo

That's my affair

Margarita

But, my dear lord and master, supposing he doesn't like her?

Lunardo

That's impossible. His father has given me his word on it. The whole thing now is settled.

Margarita

That's a nice sort of marriage!

Lunardo

I tell you, I do not approve of all these sentimental goings on. I'll have you know that in my house girls do not have to do love

Margarita

What terrible fate has bound me to this gem of a husband? In the whole world, there couldn't be another one like this. If this marriage doesn't change for the better, I'd rather go into a convent for the rest of my life

Lunardo

Do you know who's here?

Margarita

Who?

Lunardo

Maurizio

Margarita

The young man's father? Coming to arrange the day?

Lunardo

Leave the room

Margarita

Leave the room?

Lunardo

Of course

Margarita

I am your wife

Lunardo

And I am your husband

Margarita

What do you mean by that?

Lunardo

There is the door, madam

Thank goodness she has gone. If I don't shout, nothing happens. I love her with all my heart, but in this house she must obey

Maurizio

Lunardo, good morning

Lunardo

Maurizio - your servant

Maurizio

I have spoken to my son

Lunardo

And what does he say?

Maurizio

Well, he's pleased enough, but he would like...just to have a glimpse of her

Lunardo

No, our contract does not contain that clause

Maurizio

Keep calm. To my son, my word is law

Lunardo

So to the long and short of it; the dowry is ready

Maurizio

In investments, I hope

Lunardo

Just as you prefer

Maurizio

Don't waste money - no trousseau

Lunardo

I'll give her to you just as she is

Maurizio

What do you mean?

Lunardo

Silk, that's out

Maurizio

In my house, I don't approve of silk, hair-curlers, wigs, fancy clothes

Lunardo

I agree with every word you have said. Do you give her jewels?

Maurizio

Bracelets, a little ring, a pair of earrings... Then for the wedding she can wear the necklace that once belonged to my late wife

Lunardo and Maurizio

Rest in peace

Lunardo

I hope you won't have the stones reset in a modern setting

Maurizio

That would be crazy. Such a stupid thing I'd never do. If you reset the stones with every change of fashion, in a hundred years you'd have spent twice what they cost

Lunardo

There are few who think that way

Maurizio

There are few who have as much money as us!

Lunardo

How good it is to be secure

Maurizio

Lots to eat at every meal

Lunardo

To pay with cash

Maurizio

To have no debts

Lunardo

Not to make waves

Maurizio

Without worries

Lunardo

We are the masters

Maurizio

With obedient wives

Lunardo

From generation to generation

Maurizio

That's the way things are. That's how I've brought up my son

Lunardo

And me my daughter

Maurizio

He's very strong

Lunardo

My daughter can do everything; she even does the dishes

Maurizio

To avoid my son demeaning himself with the servants, he's been taught to darn his socks and repair his trousers himself

Lunardo

What a great idea

Maurizio

I knew you'd like it

Lunardo

Let's get to the contract

Maurizio

Let's indeed

Lunardo

Then you'll come and dine with us

Maurizio

We'll eat

Lunardo

And we'll have fun

Maurizio

We'll stuff our faces

Lunardo

We'll get merry

Lunardo and Maurizio

To think that people say we don't enjoy ourselves! Meddling idiots, nosy parkers. Let them go hang!

Marina

My mirror tells me I'm beautiful, with the complexion of a white rose. Get on with it

Maid

It's too heavy

Marina

You girls are good for nothing. There's more to fetch

Maid

Yes, yes ma'am

Marina

And be sure not to drop them

Maid

No, no ma'am

Marina

And the mirror tells me my complexion is whiter than a rose. But roses have thorns. And beautiful women, husbands who are jealous. Stupid girl, can't you look where you're going?

Maid

Sorry ma'am, but it wasn't my fault

Marina

Beautiful women always have jealous husbands. If there's any trouble with mine, I lock the door on him and sleep alone

Filipeto

Aunt Marina!

Marina

Filipeto, how amazing!

Filipeto

You haven't heard the news?

Marina

What's happened?

Filipeto

But where's my Uncle?

Marina

Our bear is not here. Tell me the news

Filipeto

Stand there. Keep a lookout. If he comes, tell me and I'll run. Didn't my father say something?

Marina

No, tell me

Filipeto

I hardly dare...

Marina

Come on

Filipeto

He has found, he has found, yes he has found...he has found me a wife

Marina

I can breathe again, thank God! Bring the Campari and peanuts

Filipeto

No thanks, Aunt Marina. I've slipped away, father doesn't know and if he finds out I'll be in trouble

Marina

No, now that you've come you've got to stay. I want to hear all about the blushing bride

Filipeto

She is the daughter...of Sior Lunardo Crozzola

Marina

Lucieta? That's great. You like her?

Filipeto

Not having seen her, I can't say

Marina

They'll surely let you meet her

Filipeto

Well I'm thinking...they won't

Marina

Oh what pigs! But what if you don't like her?

Filipeto

If I don't like her, I'll leave her where she is and run

Lucieta! This name warms my heart. I want to repeat it over and over again, but without a good face, the name means nothing. But what would my heart do without love? Nothing would be more awful. If nobody comes to my help, I'll be in total despair

Marina

If only I could arrange for you to meet

Filipeto

My sweetest Aunt Marina, you that have a young heart that understands me. Help me, I'm desperate

Marina

I want to work against circumstances so you can follow your heart

Filipeto

Please break the chains that make me suffer

Marina

If I do not act, he will suffer

Maid

Here he is!

Filipeto

Here's my uncle

Marina

Stay here!

Simone

What are you doing here in this house, you scally?

Filipeto

Your servant, sir

Simone

Mornin'

Marina

That's a nice way to speak to my nephew

Simone

When I married you, I told you straight, I didn't want to see your relations

Filipeto

I'll go

Simone

Good

Marina

What have you against him?

Simone

Not a thing, but I won't have him here

Filipeto

Dear aunt, please let me to go. My uncle, I won't be back, I promise

Marina

This boy is my nephew, I want him to stay. What was his crime?
Why all this fuss?

Simone

I don't hate him, but I won't have him here.

Filipeto

Dear aunt, please let me to go. My uncle, I won't be back, I promise

Marina

What was his crime? Why all this fuss?

Filipeto

Goodbye Sir. Goodbye Madam

Marina

Bye darling

Filipeto

(Go to hell) Goodbye!

Marina

Dear boy

Simone

Catch!

Marina

Why are you here?

Simone

Because I am

Marina

Did you go to the shops?

Simone

No

Marina

So there's no dinner?

Simone

No

Marina

What? No dinner?

Simone

No

Marina

But why on earth not?

Simone

Today, we are dining out

Marina

Great. Where, then?

Simone

With me

Marina

Yes, but where?

Simone

Just come with me and eat

Marina

But first you are going to tell me...

Simone

Nothing

Marina

Shall I dress up?

Simone

There's no need for where we're going

Marina

But where are we going?

Simone

You're going out with me

Marina

It's obviously a strange occasion

Simone

It's certainly a strange occasion

Marina

I'm going to rest then

Simone

And I to eat

Marina

But where are you going to take me? For Heaven's sake, tell me?

Simone

Come with me and you'll find out

Marina

If he treats me like this, I'll undress and go to bed, with the door locked. He can knock as much as he wants. This gem of a husband. So affectionate and gentle!

Maid

Ma'am, they are here

Marina

Who are here?

Maid

Felice, with her gentleman "friend" and Cancian just behind

Marina

Who asked them to come?

Maid

I don't know. But they insisted

Marina

Have you no common sense, you little twerp? Run down at once. Tell them to stay downstairs. I'm not ready. Hurry!

Felice

Don't trouble yourself for us, Marina dearest. I looked up from the street and fancied coming up here.

Marina

Stupid woman!

Felice

Felice, I was christened. Happiness is my name. I've come to visit Marina, whose looks are from Paradise

Marina

May you be blessed. Go and get the chairs out

Riccardo

Ma'am, I am your most humble servant

Marina

Most obedient. Who is this gorgeous gentleman?

Felice

A Count

Marina

How amazing!

Felice

He's come all the way from Florence. A friend of my husband, and he will tell you the rest

Cancian

Me? I know nothing

Felice

I hope you'll be indulgent. Carnival is here. You must allow my husband to have his stupid little joke. Is that not so, Cancian?

Cancian

If that's what I have to swallow, certainly dear

Felice

Look at all these flowers. I never saw so many. And how well you have done to keep them in this muggy weather

Marina

Yes, what weather we are having! You'd almost think it was Easter. Won't you be seated?

Felice

You are kindness itself

Riccardo

How fortunate that I can sit by you

Cancian

And where should I sit?

Riccardo

Let's not stand by convention. You are the boss. Sit there!

Felice

My lord, how can you be so amusing? You may be afraid that my husband could be jealous. But never; he knows me too well. My husband's like a baby. He's happy anywhere. He'll be content on that bench. There... He's going...Almost there...He's seated! My husband is a worthy man who loves and respects me. That is why he expects

me to be a perfect model wife, to converse with gentlemen who lead pure and blameless lives. Is that not so, Cancian?

Cancian

Certainly

Riccardo

I must confess I had doubts, but now it will be a pleasure to be at your service

Cancian

What an idiot I was, to introduce him to her

Marina

She's a sly one

Felice

We're going to dine together.

Marina

Where then?

Felice

Surely you know?

Marina

No, really

Felice

At Lunardo's

Marina

Now I understand, there's going to be a wedding

Felice

Wedding?

Marina

You didn't know?

Felice

No I didn't. Do tell me!

Marina

You'll be surprised!

Felice

Lucieta?

Marina

Quiet, it's still a secret

Felice

Who told you?

Marina

Can they hear us?

Felice

Just look at my poor husband sitting all alone. Be kind and chat to him. He loves to join in polite conversation. He's a man of letters. Is that not so, Cancian?

Cancian

Don't disturb him. I don't need entertaining

Felice

Did you hear that? What a charming reply. Let's put him in his place and get him to shut up

Riccardo

Right away

Cancian

I'll sort him out later

Felice

Now you can tell me everything. Is it Lucietta?

Riccardo

Cancian, why are you so quiet?

Cancian

I have other things on my mind

Felice

What! He hasn't yet seen her?

Marina

No – they're not to meet until the wedding

Felice

Not to meet? Good Heavens, whoever heard such nonsense

Marina

Just what I feel

Felice

But now I wonder if we could somehow...

Marina

Quiet, they'll hear us

Felice

Perhaps in masks for Carnival

Marina

Quiet, they'll hear us

Felice

What impertinence! How dare you listen! I'll tell you my plan

Riccardo

Tell me, this evening – where do we go?

Cancian

Back home

Riccardo

And your wife?

Cancian

Back home

Riccardo

I see now, you've a chat at home?

Cancian

Yes - in bed

Riccardo

In bed? At what time?

Cancian

Eight

Riccardo

He must be sending me up

Cancian

Dead right

Felice

What do you think?

Marina

I've always said that you're an arch intriguer

Felice and Marina

A woman always wins the game by cunning. We could put Satan to shame. We've set the trap for those curmudgeons. They'll fall into it. They'll regret it, but it will be too late

Cancian

I can't bear my wife's new friend - the very devil. Marriage always brings trouble

Felice and Marina

Let's sing victory in the name of women, masters of the universe

Riccardo

I yearn for an angel, the fairest on all the earth below; an angel for whom I languish...

Cancian

I can't bear my wife's new friend - the very devil. Marriage always brings trouble

Simone

Marina? What's all this noise! What are you doing? Who's that with you?

Felice

Good morning, Sir

Simone

Morning

Felice

I'm here to visit you

Simone

To visit who?

Felice

You

Simone

Go away

Marina

That's not the way to behave in front of guests

Simone

I'll do what I want. Go away, I tell you

Marina

Me?

Simone

You

Marina

Me?

Simone

Yes

Felice

Go Marina. You must obey your husband. Just look at me with mine.
He hardly says a word and it's done

Marina

I'm with you...Your servant

Riccardo

Your most humble servant

Simone

See you again

Marina

Your most obsequious servant

Simone

See you again, see you again, see you again!

Marina

I'm going and I'm saying nothing. But it's to my shame that I have to show you blind obedience. Farewell. If you think you've won, you're absolutely wrong. Your obedient servant, most obedient. You're notorious as a curmudgeon, you're famous for it. Your humble servant. You don't deserve to have such a loyal wife. Fare you well.

You don't deserve to have such a loyal wife. Fare you well. What's tickling? Most obedient! This naughty little ringlet. Humble servant. What with all this curtseying my hair is collapsing. My hair is ruined. Most obedient. You brute!

Simone

Who's that?

Riccardo

If you want to know, I myself will tell you: I am the Count Riccardo Arcolai. If you cross me, watch out! The faithful friend of Cancian and servant of my lady Felice. I am proud to dedicate to both of them my life, my goods and chattels and my sword

Simone

Don't you think he's a dangerous type for your wife to flirt with?

Cancian

Well, what can I do?

Felice

There, there! What do you think? You can see how very different my husband is. I'm so disappointed we can't dine together tonight. I'll see you at the opera tonight, and I'll tell you a little secret

Cancian

Something new?

Felice

Absolutely. The sun's gone in and I'm feeling chilly. Please help me with my coat. That's better

Cancian

It's time we moved. There, there! What can I do, what can I do?

[End of Act I]