

## ACTS II & III

### Intermezzo

### Act II

#### Lucieta

They want to trick me, but I know what's going on. These old men are planning to marry me off. After all these years at home, I want another life. I'm up for it and have been for a long time. Santa Maria, *ora pro nobis*

A husband? Of course. I want that with passion. He will be handsome and mine alone. Every morning and every evening, he'll tell me: "My dear wife, I want to be with you always". Santa Maria, *ora pro nobis*

I shall wear a veil, the same as the Madonna. He'll be dressed in his Sunday best. I will say: "Look – isn't he perfect. There's not a better matched couple". Santa Maria, *ora pro nobis*.

Look, look my mother is in her best clothes. She has finery and I have none. She always said she'd give me lace and pearls. I haven't had a thing

Of course she says...my father wouldn't like it, because I'm too young. She says...that my father shouts. But me, I say...she's the one who won't do this. Because I am young and beautiful, far more than her. That's the way it is

And more than that, I saw her through the keyhole this morning. She took a paintbrush, dipped it into a jar, then very gently, just here and there, on to her lips and eyelids and on her cheeks. She plastered it on. What did she do that for? How should I know? And then she dabbed it all over like this

Shh! Here she comes. Bravo dear mother. How elegant you are. You look like a star in the sky. Shouldn't I have the manchettes now? Thank you so much dear mother. How I love you! And the other?

**Margarita**

Here we are

**Lucieta**

Oh thank you! How happy I am! If I dare to say it, you are positively regal. (I wonder where the pearls are?)

**Margarita**

What more do you want little girl? Y'know, do you want our guests tonight to think I'm the kitchen maid?

**Lucieta**

Happiness comes to those who are free to enjoy life, who have everything they want. But me, poor soul, I've been all but forgotten. Even the angels have abandoned me. You look elegant in this finery, but poor me, I am in tatters.

**Margarita**

Tatters? With the flashy manchettes I gave you...?

**Lucieta**

They're from my great grand-mother. Just look at them, they're falling to bits

**Margarita**

Naughty girl. Always whingeing? Don't think for a moment I'll give you the pearls! Oh no! What's all this blubbering for?

**Lucieta**

You promised you'd give the pearls, and now no-one wants to give them to me

**Margarita**

If you annoy me you won't get them

**Lucieta**

So can I have them?

**Margarita**

Take them!

**Lucieta**

Look! This pearl is missing

**Margarita**

Make it so it won't show

**Lucieta**

How many missing pearls are there?

**Margarita**

What?

**Lucieta**

How many years have you had this necklace?

**Margarita**

If you're so ungrateful, I'll take it back

**Lucieta**

You always shout!

**Margarita**

But you always mutter!

**Lucieta**

How is that?

**Margarita**

Not bad

**Lucieta**

And with my complexion?

**Margarita**

Divine dear

**Lucieta**

I don't believe you. I want to see for myself

**Margarita**

You've got a mirror?

**Lucieta**

Just a shard. My father! I didn't have time to look

**Lunardo**

What's that? What's that? My dear - you look like a flagship! Are you going to a ball?

**Margarita**

Come on! If once in a season I dress up, y'know, immediately you start growling

**Lunardo**

What's that? What's that? What are you wearing round your neck, miss?

**Lucieta**

A piece of tat

**Lunardo**

Those manchettes, dear? Who gave you those baubles?

**Lucieta**

My mother

**Lunardo**

Take off that tat immediately!

**Lucieta**

As you command, Sir

**Margarita**

She's acting naïve!

**Lucieta**

Me?

**Lunardo**

Shut up

**Margarita**

And me?

**Lunardo**

And you, get out off those clothes at once! You look like a tart

**Margarita**

Do you really mean that?

**Lunardo**

Yes I do

**Margarita**

I have half a mind to tear this dress up

**Lunardo**

Start right away. I'll help you

**Lucieta**

Father, people are coming!

**Lunardo**

Stupid idiots arrive unannounced!

**Marina**

Margarita

**Margarita**

Marina

**Lucieta**

Your humble servant

**Marina**

Lucieta

**Margarita**

Simone

**Simone**

Your servant

**Marina**

Lunardo...nothing? Patience

**Lunardo**

Hello. Get out now!

**Lucieta**

I won't!



**Simone**

Lunardo, we are here and await your condescension

**Lunardo**

(Y'know, I wonder what Simone will be saying to himself when he sees my wife with yards of stuff tied round her)

**Marina**

How politely he receives you

**Simone**

Quiet. Mind your own business

**Marina**

What lovely manners you have!

**Margarita**

Marina, do you want us to go elsewhere?

**Marina**

If you would

**Lunardo**

Go and get out of those clothes!

**Margarita**

Y'know, don't snap at me? What do you think of him? Isn't he a beauty, a gem, this husband of mine? Ah! My sugar plum, my lollipop

**Marina**

Appreciate him, mine's more like a pig than many others

**Lunardo**

To hell! They think that they can laugh at me as though I'm Cancian

**Simone**

And you made me lose my temper for two hours with that bloody dress. Go home and get properly dressed!

**Marina**

You'll have a long wait!

**Margarita**

Let's go. Marina, surely nobody was over-dressed?

**Marina**

It's simply how these men are

**Margarita**

If they had seen Felice dressed to kill...

## **Marina**

How beautiful – it was way beyond us

## **Marina and Margarita**

Do you hear us? Dressed to kill! Her gown was embroidered in silver

## **Simone and Lunardo**

Go and get changed! Battle-axes! Vipers! Rattle snakes! Your only pleasure is to poison those who keep you in great comfort

## **Marina, Lucieta and Margarita**

Let's go girls. Let them witter on

## **Simone and Lunardo**

You are our misfortune, the cause of all our ills. We work like dogs to keep you well

## **Marina, Lucieta and Margarita**

These poor fools expend their bile. They're like slugs who leave a trail. If you haven't cleaned them, you can't eat them. Let's wait. They'll then be soft and tender

## **Simone and Lunardo**

They need to be pulverised in a mortar. They're the embodiment of evil. They're living devils rather than women

**Simone**

Get married and see how happy you'll be!

**Lunardo**

Nowadays, it's simply impossible to get married

**Simone**

It's certainly not the time

**Lunardo**

Impossible

**Simone**

All past and gone. Where are the women of a former age?

**Lunardo**

Where are they now? The women used to be much better bred. Angels of goodness falling from the sky – quiet and obedient, a pleasure to live with; retaining her modesty before becoming a good wife. So much sweetness, so much kindness – we have lost the type. All past and gone

**Simone**

How happy the homes of the old generation, where everyone was kept in their place. One look was enough, one gesture; no one ever

disputed a father's command. The stricter you were, the greater the respect. These were our sacred customs. All past and gone

### **Lunardo and Simone**

When they came home from work, they found peace and rest. The son showed respect by kissing his father's hand. The man of the house was sultan of his domain. Such happy memories. All past and gone

Now it's the opposite. Women spend their time cackling and gossiping

### **Lunardo**

Congratulations. How's he doing? Did he enjoy the party?

### **Simone**

I enjoyed the ball

### **Lunardo and Simone**

He enjoys theatre. Mine learnt the minuet...Am I well enough dressed? He holds my hand. He sighs. What delight! What joy! I feel a frisson. When he touches me, I'm delirious! Women without judgement, be ashamed!

### **Lunardo**

To tell the truth, once I rather liked women

### **Simone**

Me too, I must admit

**Lunardo**

But only at home

**Simone**

Alone

**Lunardo**

Behind closed doors

**Simone**

With the balcony locked

**Lunardo and Simone**

Every man does the same and can learn the best techniques from us

**Felice**

I am your most obedient servant

**Lunardo and Simone**

Madam

**Felice**

What frightfully nice manners. I thought I was invited. Permit me. Allow me. Where's Cancian? He's gone, the idiot. Is there anyone here? Anyone at home? Are you all dead? My dear Margarita!

**Margarita**

Let me catch my breath!

**Felice**

My god, what's happening now?

**Margarita**

She's told everything

**Felice**

Who did?

**Margarita**

Her!

**Felice**

Marina?

**Margarita**

The cow! She told Lucieta all there is to know – everything!

**Felice**

What's going to happen? Wasn't she supposed to know? Now everybody knows

**Lucieta**

Oh God!

**Marina and Felice**

We're going to have a wedding. We pay you our respects. We want to celebrate the wedding with you. By the end of the day, you will be man and wife. Spare your blushes. Look at us with our curmudgeons. Now we rather enjoy them. For you, it's going to be very different. Let your face light up with joy

**Lucieta**

Tell me, this young man, is he really good looking?

**Marina**

Absolutely

**Lucieta**

How lucky I am

**Margarita**

Look at her!

**Lucieta**



Tell me, what's his name?

**Felice**

Filipeto

**Lucieta**

What a nice name. Is he well-mannered?

**Marina**

Of course, he's my nephew

**Lucieta**

You'll be my auntie; I'll be your niece

**Margarita**

What ridiculous nonsense!

**Lucieta**

I'm sure you were once just as foolish yourself.

**Margarita**

That's certainly true and you can see the husband I got!

**Lucieta**

Don't take it the wrong way, but please, please tell me when I'll see him?

**Felice**

Why are you in such a hurry?

**Lucieta**

Why not?

**Felice**

Well, listen, you must meet each other soon to find out if you're in love

**Lucieta**

So you think he might not like me?

**Margarita**

Y'know - do you think you're Venus?

**Lucieta**

Not really but I'm not a monster. Look at me. Tell me the truth. Do you think there's something he won't like? Perhaps my nose is hooked? Is my posture poor? Am I lop-sided? Am I ugly? What do others have that I don't? Look at me. Do I walk badly? I'm not Venus, but there are many worse than me

**Felice, Marina and Margarita**

Hark at her. What pretention!

**Lucieta**

I have my own charm. I may be tiny but I'm cunning. If he wants me to be serious, here I am. If he wants me to be tender, it's me. If he wants me to dance, if he wants me to sing, so be it! Please may he accept me

**Felice, Marina and Margarita**

We'll see about that

**Lucieta**

We'll know very soon. I'm ready. It is time for our paths to cross

**Felice, Marina and Margarita**

But look, the devil's already inside her

**Lucieta**

When shall I see him?

**Felice**

This instant, he's about to appear

**Margarita**

Here?

**Lucieta**

Here?

**Marina**

Here?

**Felice**

Here! He'll come in a mask, dressed as a woman, brought by a gentleman

**Marina**

What, with the fine count I met this morning?

**Lucieta**

How fantastic!

**Margarita**

But suppose my cannibal comes across him – there'll be a massacre

**Lucieta, Marina and Felice [240]**

Don't be concerned. He'll come in a mask as a woman...

**Felice (with Lucieta and Marina)**

We should invent a story. The man's my brother-in-law here with my sister

**Lucieta**

Someone's knocking!

**Felice**

Quick, to your places

**Margarita**

I'm terrified, please let's not do this

**Marina and Felice**

Jump to it, open the door. Don't be concerned

**Lucieta, Marina and Felice**

He'll come in a mask as a woman...

**Lucieta**

I'm still terrified

**Marina and Felice**

Go and open the door. Please I beg you

**Lucieta**

My heart is pounding

**Marina and Felice**

What fun

**Lucieta**

He's about to arrive

**Marina**

If you don't want to have fun during Carnival, you should jump into the canal

**Felice**

I'm having such fun. I feel as though the devil's in me

**Lucieta**

When I see him, my heart will go faster and faster

**Lucieta, Marina and Felice**

He's here

**Margarita**

Two masked characters are here and wish to see you

**Riccardo**

My dear ladies, your most obedient servant to command

**Felice**

Delighted

**Marina**

Little masks, hello

**Felice**

Madam with the mask, I am most pleased to meet you

**Lucieta**

Look, what a lovely figure

**Marina**

And you, Lucieta, what do you think? Do you like these Carnival-goers here?

**Lucieta**

What can I say?

**Filipeto**

What lovely pink cheeks!

**Margarita**

You must excuse us, it's late and we're just about to dine

**Riccardo**

Of course, Madam. We must be going

**Filipeto**

Too bad. I haven't had the chance to see her

**Marina**

Please stay

**Margarita**

If my husband arrives...let's pray

**Felice**

A word please. How do like her?

**Filipeto**

I really do

**Felice**

Do you think she's pretty?

**Filipeto**

For sure



**Lucieta**

Mother

**Margarita**

What do you want now?

**Lucieta**

I wish I could see what he's like

**Margarita**

I swear I'll take you away

**Lucieta**

Calm

**Marina**

Pretty Carnival-goer, do you like the girl?

**Filipeto**

She's OK

**Marina**

A pinch of snuff?

**Filipeto**

Yes please

**Marina**

If you take snuff, you'll have to take your mask off

**Lucieta**

Oh, how handsome!

**Marina**

She's really pretty

**Felice**

She's my sister

**Lucieta**

I'm going to laugh

**Filipeto**

What a lovely laugh

**Felice**

Pull his wig off

**Lucieta**

My heart is on fire. Which of these girls is prettier?

## **Filipeto**

Now I'm close to her, what a beautiful face and complexion. She's looking at me

## **Lucieta**

How handsome he is. I couldn't bear to lose him. I'm in love

## **Felice, Marina and Margarita**

How lovely to see the courting couple...

## **Riccardo**

What a comedy. I'm glad I'm here

## **Felice**

Look, they can't get their words out

## **Marina**

One waits for the other to speak

## **Filipeto**

Why is my heart beating so erratically?

## **Margarita**

Y' know, it's time to call a halt. Please thank this lady and pray that one day you'll be married

**Felice**

Yes, go away. That's enough for now

**Filipeto**

I'll go, but to leave her is a torture

**Lucieta**

My heart's going to burst

**Margarita**

Thank God that everything has gone well

**Marina**

Put your wig back on

**Filipeto**

How?

**Felice**

Come here

**Lucieta**

Poor fellow, he needs some help

**Filipeto**

She's teasing me

**Lucieta**

No

**Filipeto**

Mischievous girl

**Lucieta**

Poor fellow

**Filipeto**

Watch out, I'm going to catch you

**Margarita**

Heaven help us, my husband's arriving

**Marina**

And mine too

**Felice**

Quick, we must hide our visitors!

**Margarita**

In this room

**Riccardo**

What a crazy day

**Felice**

I'm sure I saw it – a mouse

**Lunardo**

What are you doing? Is this a madhouse? And what's the matter with you? You look ashen

**Felice**

Father, a mouse... Do you still want me to go?

**Lunardo**

No, stay right there. Tell them it's nothing

**Lucieta**

I'm trembling

**Lunardo**

Today I want there to be a party. Don't you agree, gentlemen?

**Simone and Cancian**

For sure

**Lunardo**

Lucieta come here

**Lunardo, Simone and Cancian**

What a good girl!

**Lunardo**

But what's the matter?

**Lucieta**

I simply don't know

**Lunardo**

Have you a temperature? Listen to me and it will go away. In the presence of these worshipful gentlemen and their worthy wives, I announce that you are to be married... What? Don't you like the idea?

**Lucieta**

No, I really do

**Lunardo**

Do you know the name of the young man?

**Lucieta**

Oh yes

**Lunardo**

You know already? Who told you?

**Lucieta**

No, no, I know nothing. I don't know what I'm saying

**Lunardo**

Look at her. The innocence of a dove

**Felice**

If he knew the whole story

**Lunardo, Simone and Cancian**

What a good girl!

**Lunardo**

The boy is Mr Maurizio's son

**Marina, Felice and Margarita**



Filipeto?!

**Marina**

My nephew?

**Felice**

What extraordinary news!

**Margarita**

What on earth are you saying!

**Marina**

I'm delighted

**Felice**

Me too

**Lunardo (with Lunardo and Simone)**

Maurizio has gone to fetch his son. As soon as he arrives, we'll have the wedding breakfast

**Lucieta**

Good heavens!

**Felice and Marina**

In such a rush!

**Margarita**

Poor me!

**Lucieta**

I'm exhausted!

**Lunardo**

What's the matter

**Lucieta**

Nothing

**Lunardo, Simone and Cancian**

What a good girl!

**Lunardo**

You're here?

**Maurizio**

I am

**Lunardo**

What's the matter?

**Maurizio**

I'm beside myself!

**Lunardo, Simone and Cancian**

What happened?

**Maurizio**

I went home to fetch the lad, but couldn't find him anywhere. From my enquiries, I understand he was last seen with a foreigner – a certain Riccardo, a gentleman “friend” of Felice. Who is this Riccardo? How does he know my son?

**Felice**

I don't know anything about your son, but the foreigner is an honourable man. Don't you agree, Cancian?

**Cancian**

I simply don't know him except that he was sent by hell. I've kept quiet. I've gone along with everything so far; but now I'm no longer on board. He's a low-life

**Riccardo**

You talking to me?

**Lunardo**

In my house?

**Maurizio**

Where's my son?

**Riccardo**

He's there

**Lunardo, Simone and Cancian**

In the next room?

**Maurizio**

Shame on you!

**Filipeto**

Father, don't kill me!

**Margarita**

I was never really part of it

**Lucieta**

Hold him back. He'll want to kill me

**Lunardo**

And you, you little slut, I knew what would happen. And in my house too! Such a scandal. You little viper, I'll kill you!

**Marina, Felice and Margarita**

They've all gone mad. What a terrible business. Quiet you beasts!  
They'd like to bite our heads off. But I can give as good as I get

**Lucieta**

Please don't kill me father. I'm not guilty. It's not me

**Riccardo**

I didn't realize there'd be such a furore. I'd like to help put it right

**Lunardo**

I'd like to strangle you. Don't push me any further or I'll kill you

**Lunardo, Simone and Cancian**

Fallen woman. Why were they created? Vipers!

## **ACT III**

**Lunardo (with Simone and Cancian)**

How did they have the nerve to trick us?

**Simone**

How shall we punish them?

**Lunardo, Simone and Cancian**

If it was left to me, I'd tear off their heads

**Lunardo**

My friends we have to plan. This is it. What shall we do? With Lucietta it's easy. The wedding's axed. She'll be banished. But for the rest of 'em, what do we do? Advise me

**Cancian**

It's hard

**Simone**

We could send them to a convent with the girls. Then we'll be rid of the lot

**Cancian (with Simone)**

Some chains. Four walls. And we're sorted. Locked up with nothing to eat – that'll stop the chatter

**Lunardo**

I can tell you, if they can't gossip, they'll be destroyed in three days

**Simone**

Let's destroy them!

**Lunardo**

Is that too much?

**Cancian (with Lunardo and Simone)**

Without women, things can go wrong

**Lunardo**

But why not beat them now and again?

**Cancian**

But if they rebel?

**Lunardo and Simone**

**Lunardo and Simone**

Rebel?

**Cancian**

It can happen

## **Lunardo and Simone**

Our friend has been trained by his wife

## **Lunardo**

I don't know what to do

## **Simone**

Should I return her to her family?

## **Lunardo**

They'll send me up

## **Cancian and Lunardo**

Just send her to the country till the grass grows round her

## **Simone and Lunardo**

Lecture her. But it would be like giving a lecture in the middle of the desert

## **Simone and Cancian**

Let's just hide her clothes and starve her in the cellar

## **Lunardo**

I've tried everything, but nothing works



**Simone**

I've got the answer

**Lunardo**

Well?

**Simone (with Cancian and Lunardo)**

Take her as you find her. There's no other cure

**Lunardo (with Simone and Cancian)**

But why don't they come with sugar and spice? On this earth we might experience some of the joys to come in Heaven

**Simone (with Lunardo and Cancian)**

Maybe in Heaven there are angels and no women. After all we only need three

**Cancian (with Lunardo and Simone)**

We all want perfect women who don't provoke domestic strife. But let's face it, it isn't going to happen. Let's just beat them, let's just slice them in half, just strangle them

**Felice**

Oh, what nice guys!

**Lunardo, Simone and Cancian**

What a cheek!

**Felice**

I could not help over-hearing you, and your glowing compliments. I come here today in all humility

**Cancian**

You've come to confront us

**Felice**

What have I done?

**Cancian**

Don't push me

**Felice**

But I'm here to see you

**Cancian**

Come back home

**Felice**

I won't

**Cancian**

For Heaven's sake come with me!

**Felice**

I can fight back. You didn't find me in the gutter. I'm not your maid. That's not the way to behave to women like me. Such threats. How dare you raise your hand to me? You've learnt all this from these men. Cancian, have you anything in your head?

**Simone**

Have you ever heard such nonsense?

**Lunardo**

I'd like to wring her neck. He's like a potato

**Felice**

I'm talking to all of you. If you have something to say, say it now.

**Lunardo and Simone**

Well...

**Felice**

Just stop it, you monsters! What a way to treat your wives! Can't you love them for ever? This is it! Let's get to the point. Lunardo wants to marry off his daughter, but she knows nothing about it. The boy's handsome and well-mannered. That's nice for her. But are you sure he's right for her? What if he's not, blockhead! You've only one daughter – what if you ruin her life?

It was right that they should meet. The step-mother was not brave enough. Marina had a plan. The mask was my idea, and I persuaded Riccardo to come with us. They fell in love at first sight. You should kiss the ground in thanks. You should forgive Margarita. You should apologize to Marina.

If you have any decency, you should do all of this. Lucietta and Filipeto are sincere and we all have clear consciences. You should be grateful that Heaven has sent this clever woman to sort everything out. All your prejudices are over-turned; all your concepts, entirely invalid

If you want to maintain your ingratitude and your views about the fairer sex, then may every disease and infirmity fall upon you. It wouldn't be a great loss if all three of you broke your necks

That's the end of the lecture. Let the wedding celebrations begin.  
Plaudits please for the lawyer

### **Cancian**

Listen Lunardo, Felice may have her flaws, but sometime I have to confess she's brilliant

### **Felice**

Don't you agree Cancian?

### **Lunardo**

But I tell you...

### **Felice**

It's a shame you don't listen, you oaf!

**Lunardo**

Why are you ordering me around?

**Felice**

Because I'm the boss

**Lunardo**

Don't hold me back

**Simone (with Lunardo and Cancian)**

Such is life! Sometimes we just have to give in

**Lucieta, Marina and Margarita**

In all humility we come before you to await our sentence

**Felice**

I am the one who is guilty

**Lunardo**

You have invited men into my own house. Damn you!

**Felice**

Me?

**Cancian**

You're talking to my wife?

**Lunardo**

I've had enough

**Lucieta, Marina, Margarita, Felice**

Congratulations for your pig-headedness

**Simone**

And you should be punished as well

**Marina**

I'm going to my bedroom

**Felice (with Lucieta, Marina and Margarita)**

Hang on. Poor Lunardo, he's still recovering

**Felice**

He forgives you and, when the young man arrives, the wedding begins. Not so Lunardo?

**Lunardo**

Yes, yes and no!

**Maurizio**

Get out of here!

**Lunardo**

Why are you upset?

**Marina, Felice and Margarita**

All this dilly-dallying. Why can no one make up their mind?

**Lucieta and Filipeto**

If Heaven could help us...

**Maurizio, Simone and Cancian**

Animals fighting...

**Lunardo**

Let them get married. I've had enough

**Margarita**

My darling!

**Felice**

And when the young man's here, the knot's going to be tied. Not so, Lunardo?

**Lunardo**

Lucieta

**Lucieta**

Father?

**Lunardo**

Come here

**Lucieta**

I'm here

**Lunardo**

Do you want to get married?

**Lucieta**

Oh yes

**Lunardo**

Have you seen the boy already?

**Lucieta**

Oh yes

**Lunardo**

Maurizio?

**Maurizio**

What on earth do you want?



**Lunardo**

Don't talk to me like a codger. This is it

**Maurizio**

Come here, you

**Filipeto**

I'm here

**Maurizio**

Have you repented?

**Filipeto**

I have, Sir

**Maurizio**

Even married, you'll still have to rely on me

**Filipeto**

I know

**Maurizio**

Lucieta, I take you as my daughter. God bless you both. Hold hands

**Filipeto**

How?

**Felice**

Just give her your hand

**Marina and Felice**

Like this

**Marina**

How moving!

**Margarita**

Simone and Cancian, you are the witnesses

**Simone and Cancian**

We are indeed

**Cancian**

How moving!

**Lunardo**

Now children, let's be happy. It's time for lunch

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