

THE VAMPIRE BY CHARLES NODIER

Translated and Adapted by Frank J. Morlock C 2000

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Etext by Dagny

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CHARACTERS IN THE PROLOGUE:

Ituriel, angel of the moon
Oscar, genius of marriage
A Vampire
Vampires
Phantoms

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY:

Lord Rutwen
Sir Aubrey, Lord of Staffa
Malvina, his sister
Brigitte, Malvina's old governess
Edgar, Sir Aubrey's valet de chambre
Scop, Sir Aubrey's servant
Petterson, overseer of Marsden Castle
Lovette, his daughter
Oscar
Servants
Villagers

PROLOGUE

The overture portrays a storm.

At rise, the heaven is dark and all objects confused. It lights up little by little. The scene takes place in a basalt grotto whose long prisms end in unequal angles facing heaven, the arch is bare; the circle of the grotto is strewn with tombs and diverse shapes, columns, pyramids, cubes of rough and clumsy workmanship.

On a tomb in the foreground, one sees a young girl lying on a bed, plunged in the most profound sleep. Her head is leaning on her arm and covered by her veil and hair.

Opposite her, Oscar is seated. He rises and paces about the stage uneasily. The light progressively increases. A shape that embraces a luminous cross arises in the grotto and stops. The angel of the moon, in a floating white robe, addresses Oscar.

Ituriel

What do I see? Is it you, my dear Oscar? You, the genius, the protector of marriage in these dreadful parts that I myself fear to light up? Yes, all the lugubrious scenes of the night whose starry escort serves to dissipate the horror doesn't affright me until I approach the grottos of Staffa. When the first rays of the moon break on the dazzling snow of the summits of Caledonia, I shiver despite myself—and the sight of these tombs seizes me with a horror I am still unable to explain to myself.

Oscar

Grace be rendered you, Ituriel. Your arrival consoles me and reassures me—for as for me, I can no longer defend myself against an invincible horror in this dwelling. But, do I need to tell you what case brought me here? Let one of your glances fall on this tomb.

Ituriel

What do I see? A young girl sleeping in these parts where all breathe uncertainty and terror.

Oscar

You don't yet know all the secrets. This young girl is Miss Aubrey, the most beautiful and the richest heiress in Scotland. Tomorrow she must marry Count Marsden who possesses vast lands—superb—in Scotland and who is known throughout Europe, which he's just crossed, by the renown of his wit and the perfection of his qualities.

Ituriel

What strange luck brought her into these solitudes?

Oscar

The Count de Marsden is not expected until tomorrow. Miss Aubrey was following the hunt with her brother, when the terrible storm arose that your first rays had so much difficulty dissipating. You know, heaven was on fire, the earth trembling and the sea shaking to the depth of its abysses.

Ituriel

Then, it's you who saved her. Ah! I recognize you in this case—but what are you doing in the midst of the ices of Staffa?

Oscar

No spot on earth fixes my attention more than this, when it's a question of marriage—and that an innocent young girl, unaware of the misfortunes that are reserved for her, is ready to fall from the arms of love to those of death.

Ituriel

Explain yourself. Is it true that horrible ghosts can sometimes, under the appearance of the rights of marriage, cut the throat of a timid virgin—and drink her blood?

Oscar

These monsters call themselves Vampires. A power, whose inscrutable decrees we are not permitted to scrutinize, has permitted that certain funereal souls—doomed to torments that their excesses have attracted on earth, play with this terrible right that they exercise by preference on the virginal bed and on the cradle as soon as they descend, formidable, with the hideous power that death has given them. By and by, more privileged because their career is short and their future frightening, they obtain, and assume, shapes lost in the tomb and reappear in the light of the living—under the aspect of bodies they have animated.

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Ituriel

And this young unfortunate was pursued?

Oscar

Wandering shades of Vampires, in the clouds of the night, have increased by their clamors the tumult of the storm. Some insidious voices, though internal, have misled her steps to the grotto of Staffa. She rushed there to find an asylum against the storm, when chance caused my eyes to fall on her from the highest celestial regions. I followed her to save her.

Ituriel

And these monsters have appeared?

Oscar

The first hour of day wakens them in their sepulchres. Once the reverberation of the hour struck has expired in all the echoes of the mountain, they fall back, motionless into their eternal dwellings. But there's one amongst them on whom my power is more limited. What am I saying? Destiny itself never can recall his decrees. After having brought desolation to twenty separate lands, always vanquishing, always living, always more thirsty for the blood which preserves his frightful existence, in thirty–six hours, at the first hour of evening, he must finally submit to nothingness, a legitimate punishment for a train of insoluble crimes, if he cannot join to him one more crime, and add yet another victim.

Ituriel

Nothingness!

Oscar

The most severe of punishments inflicted by the Great Spirit. And as his future is without resources, he has all the resources of the present. He can take all shapes—assume all languages, use all seductions. Nothing of the appearance of life is lacking in him, but death, which never abandons its prey entirely, has imprinted its mark on his face. And even this is hidden from the eyes of those he wishes to deceive.

Ituriel

Alas! What do you hope to do? Our power is limited—and the realms of death are sacred to us.

Oscar

They are not shut to divine justice. Since a term was placed on the crimes of the Vampire—why can't I halt this course? Whatever may be the duties which call me elsewhere, don't be astonished to find me two or more times in Scotland.

Ituriel

Ah—may you succeed in your plans! Your conversation has kept me a long while above these grottos.

(A distant clock can be heard sounding one o'clock in a tone. The gong repeats it echo by echo.)

Oscar

Stop and look.

(All the tombs open from the moment the hour strikes. Pale shades half leave and fall back under the tombstones, in proportion as the noise vanishes in echoes. A spectre dressed in a shroud escapes from the most noticeable of the tombs. His face is revealed. He rushes to the place where Miss Aubrey is sleeping shouting “Malvina!”)

Oscar

Withdraw.

Spectre She belongs to me.

Oscar (seizing the young sleeping girl)

She belongs to God, and soon you will belong to nothingness.

Spectre (withdrawing, but threatening still as he repeats)

Nothingness.

(Ituriel crosses the stage in a cloud.)

All light vanishes. The scenery changes and represents one of Sir Aubrey's apartments.

BLACKOUT

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ACT I

Hall in the Castle of Staffa.

Brigitte

Come, rest yourselves in this hall, children. Our young mistress has been found—she's resting in her apartment.

Scop

Heaven be praised!

Brigitte

You must be really worn out.

Edgar

By God! After having beaten the forest all night.

Brigitte

Here's something that will refresh you.

Scop

Much obliged, Miss, for I feel myself hoarse from having shouted on all sides: “Miss Aubrey”—only echoes replied to us.

Edgar

Indeed, it is surprising that she didn't hear us. What time did she return?

Brigitte

After two in the night. It seems she wandered off yesterday evening— at the end of the hunt—and then the storm surprised her. She finally met her brother in the vicinity of the castle—and they returned together, by the little gate in the park which gives on the footpath to the grotto.

Scop

The Goodness of Heaven! She got lost near the grottos!

Edgar

By Saint George. It must be that it was the only part of the forest that we didn't search. That idiot never wanted us to go on that side.

Scop

Think of it! Heaven preserve me from night's approach by those hellish grottos. The grottos of Staffa, the haunt of evil spirits!

Edgar

Eh, simpleton! As for me, I don't believe in spirits—

Scop

So much the worse for you—evil will happen to you—rather ask Miss Brigitte.

Brigitte

It's true, since our arrival in this isle, I've heard tell of ridiculous things on this subject.

Scop

Say frightful, terrifying! Don't you know the story of the last heir of Staffa?

Edgar (drinking)

What happened to this heir?

Brigitte (mysteriously)

Peace! If someone heard us—

Scop

Ah! You know the story then?

Brigitte

No—But Sir Aubrey had threatened to kick out whoever discusses these supernatural things—which he calls chimeras.

Edgar

My word, he's right. But at the moment he's not here, so go on, Scop, satisfy the curiosity of Mrs. Brigitte. Tell us

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the story of this heir.

Scop

I'm going to tell you about this, it's awfully pretty, but promise me not to be afraid. Yes, you act brave—but as for me, only to think of it give me gooseflesh. Here, come close and hold yourselves very tight. Imagine, there was once a young girl who wanted to experience marriage. This same young girl was affianced to a young and rich Scottish Lord. The marriage celebration was prepared in this castle. It was given as you must imagine on the wedding morning. In the evening, the two lovers were walking in the forest. They took their path toward the grottos—and they never came back again.

Edgar

Good!

Scop

Not at all. Never—they searched for them by land and sea. Where were they then? Where were they? And the next day what did they find? The body of the young girl all covered with blood, she had had her throat cut. As for the young man, no one has heard him spoken of since—and it was a hundred years ago. It's at that time that Staffa Castle passed into the hands of Sir Aubrey's family.

Brigitte

Ah! My God! Do you know, this story is frightful?

Edgar

Those spirits, I think, were in cahoots with Sir Aubrey's ancestors to make them have a rich inheritance.

Scop

It was a hundred years ago it happened. You are indeed thinking I wasn't around then; but the great uncle of my grandfather had it from the grandfather of my grandmother, so it's certain. If it had been the heirs who had played a trick like that, they would have known it, but instead, they say it was one of those horrible spirits who cause young fiancées to perish—and that are called Vampires.

Edgar

All this is foolishness.

Brigitte

Ah, my God! Vampires—young fiancées—What kind of danger have I exposed myself to? How imprudent I was.

Scop

How's that, Miss?

Brigitte

The other day, didn't I have the curiosity to visit that grotto—and the boldness to go through it—accompanied only by the Steward? I am no longer astonished if I experience amid those grottos a certain emotion.

Scop (naively)

Go on, mistress! You risked nothing. Those spirits only want young girls.

Brigitte

You aren't very gallant, Mr. Scop, but I am forgetting myself in talking with you. If Lord Aubrey knew we were discussing these things, he would put himself in a furious rage. The other day he told me: "If I learn that you dare to repeat to my sister, the ridiculous stories you hear in this country, I'll kick you out immediately."

Scop

Let's indeed be careful of speaking loud.

Brigitte

Discretion, that's agreed. I am running to my mistress, who must have need of me.

(Exit Brigitte.)

Scop

Say, Mr. Edgar, you who were in London with our master, do you know this Lord who's come to marry Miss Malvina?

Edgar

No. All I know is his name's Lord Marsden.

Scop

ACT I

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From the castle which is on the coast facing this isle—where your betrothed is from?

Edgar

Precisely.

Scop

He's arrived, then, almost precisely to be present at your wedding?

Edgar

He can honor them by his presence if he arrives today.

Scop

Then, we're going to see two weddings! How pleased I am! Because we're going to dance—we're going to laugh. (drinking) To your bride, Mr. Edgar.

Edgar

With all my heart. Now, to Miss Malvina. May she be as happy in her marriage as she deserves.

Scop

Ah! God! I really think so, if ever I was her husband I would really make her happy. That girl's an angel. (Malvina and Brigitte enter.)

Malvina

Thanks a lot, my friends. They told me you took great care finding me last night. I thank you for it.

Edgar

Ah! Miss, you are too good.

(They bow and leave.)

Brigitte

Truly, my dear mistress. I need for you to reassure me about your condition. I'm afraid that fatigue and the coolness of the night may have altered your health.

Malvina

No, my dear, I feel very well, I assure you.

Brigitte

You seem very worn down. Despite your smile, I see signs of illness.

Malvina

It's true. I don't know what trouble is agitating me—but in truth, I wouldn't dare to confide the subject to you. I fear seeming ridiculous to you. This vague uneasiness I am experiencing is, I think, the fruit of a dream.

Brigitte

Of a dream, you say? Ah! Sometimes heaven permits—(controlling herself) Ah, Miss, after the education you have received, can such a subject trouble you? (with curiosity) Then, the dream was very frightening?

Malvina

Frightening! Yes, even horrible. Yesterday evening, lost in the forest, my uncertain steps led me toward that famous grotto to which the vulgar, they say, attach mysterious traditions. In the light from lightning, I noticed I was near the entry of the grotto. I was seeking refuge there to avoid the storm which announced to all it must pass. I sat down on a rock covered with moss. I was overwhelmed with fatigue, the darkness was complete. I fell asleep to the noise of winds which whistled through the caverns and rain that struck the leaves of the forest. Suddenly, it seemed to me that the grotto was lit up. It seemed to me I could distinguish the depths of these hollows. I who had intruded my life under its vaults. I admired the multiple colonnades, the irregular and gigantic forms. When letting my gaze fall around me, I saw the stones which compose the soil raise—as if by themselves.

Brigitte

Ah! Great God!

Malvina

Livid ghosts left these open tombs. One of them directed himself toward me. A shiver seized me, but an invincible power held me motionless—and I couldn't even turn my eyes away from the terrible apparition. I envisaged it—O surprise! I saw the features of a handsome young man. Only, he was pale and appeared ill. His eyes fixed on me with the most touching expression—seeming to ask for my help. The closer he approached me,

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the more the fear I had experienced diminished. But when he was quite close, when his face almost seemed to touch mine—O terror! His eyes became caves, shone with extraordinary brilliance. His face decomposed, his features shattered, his lips enlarged with a horrible convulsion. I thought my destiny was to be the prey of a devouring monster.

Brigitte

Is it possible?

Malvina

In that frightful moment, an unknown power seemed to tear the ghost from me. He returned to the ground. Uttering plaintive moans, I woke up. My breathing was almost suffocated. I was covered with a cold sweat. The storm had ceased. The moon lit the entry to the grotto, I rushed out. Still terrified, I tried to remember my path, when an honest old man met me and led me to the avenue. Then, I found my brother and I returned with him to the castle.

Brigitte

That's a really terrifying dream. I am quite atremble. But you were wrong to frighten yourself like that.

Malvina

What do you mean?

Brigitte

Yes, you found yourself alone at night. Ah, God! Ghosts! You mustn't put faith in all they say; that's to frighten children. Ah, if I had been there. I am still shivering. No, think no more of it! These are stories you have heard—that explains everything.

Malvina

Still, there are some circumstances that I seek to explain to myself. Didn't you tell me you had visited this grotto after we arrived?

Brigitte

No doubt. I wandered through all the paths.

Malvina

In the hollow, to the right, under a sort of dome—does there exist a black, pyramid shaped rock resembling a mausoleum?

Brigitte

Yes, that's what they call the tomb of Fingal—but it's situated in the most obscure place—and can be seen only by the light of torches.

Malvina

Well, I saw it last night! It was from there the ghost issued, the one that frightened me so much in my dream.

Brigitte

Now, that is really extraordinary, my dear mistress. But, here's your brother, Miss. Give up all these ideas. They are visions! Hide them from him, especially the subject which occupies us. A dream. Fie!

Malvina

Ah! I am very careful in speaking to him of it. He's such a great enemy of what they call superstition that I don't want to expose myself to his sarcasm.

(Enter Aubrey.)

Aubrey

Well, sis, are you completely recovered? What—already dressed? I know your inclination for promptness. It's a good omen. Brigitte, go tell them to set a man on the tower and let him warn me as soon as the Count appears. (Brigitte leaves) This day, my dear Malvina, must prepare for your happiness. But you seem sad—is this the way you plan to receive your spouse?

Malvina

Ah, brother! The portrait given us of Marsden, with his qualities and his virtues, suffices, doubtless to predispose us in his favor, but the nearer the moment approaches, the more my uneasiness grows. My dear Aubrey, don't forget that my fate was confided to you, don't risk making me unhappy.

Aubrey

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Malvina, your uneasiness is ill founded. Never, as you know, have I sought to force your inclination. Everything makes me desire this connection, but Count Marsden is coming here to obtain you only from yourself and if he lacks the luck to please you—

Malvina

I didn't say that, brother. But you, who wish him to become my spouse, don't know him.

Aubrey

It's true, but if he resembles his brother, who was my best friend, he'll have no trouble touching your heart. His brother was the most seductive man, the most likeable. No one could prevent themselves from loving him.

Unfortunate Rutwen!

Malvina

Every time you mention his name, you become tender.

Aubrey

Alas! How can I not eternally regret this generous, this touching model of friendship? Are you unaware, sis, all that I owe him?

Malvina

You told me that he saved your life, and that very reason is, doubtless, the cause of my heart being moved each time you speak to me of him. But, are you very sure he no longer exists?

Aubrey

Ah! Would that I could preserve the least doubt. But, alas, that fatal event will ceaselessly present itself to my thoughts. At the period of my last voyage, I spent some time in Athens. I met Lord Rutwen, an enthusiast, like me, for the beauties of nature. He became the companion of my excursions and my pleasures. We were soon linked by the strongest friendship. The more I knew him, the more I appreciated his extraordinary qualities. This man seemed to have something more than human about him. I wanted, I admit it, for stronger links to form between us. I had brought your portrait. He admired it and was the first to speak to me of this alliance I wanted. We were preparing to return to Scotland to consult your feelings, when one evening—O deplorable memory! Rutwen went to the country to be present, I believe, to be present at the wedding of a young girl that his good works had secretly dowered. I was returning, towards evening, with some servants, about three miles from Athens to meet my friend. After a long delay he arrived in disorder. "Let's flee," he said to me. "These parts are infested with brigands, I've just been pursued." Hardly had he said these words when we were assailed. My servants put two assassins to flight. The last attacked us with fury. I found myself disarmed. He threw himself between us. The brigand disappeared. I threw myself on the body of my expiring friend. He said to me, clasping my hand, "I've saved your life, I die content. I have only one regret, it's that of not having the title of your brother." Unlucky Rutwen, to have to perish there in the flower of his age. So far from his fatherland and to remain deprived of a sepulchre.

Malvina

What! You didn't render him funeral services?

Aubrey

An extraordinary circumstance prevented me from accomplishing this last duty. Lying on the ground, near my unhappy friend, I bathed his face with my tears. He said to me in a hoarse voice, "All help is useless to me. Don't expose yourself by staying alone, near me, to this danger of a new attack. Hasten to get away." Then, considering the moon was going to rise behind the clouds, he added, "Turn me towards the night star and I will rejoice in dying with this last sight." I placed him, with some effort, on a neighboring hillock. Hardly had I placed him there, than he expired. I got away to reunite with my servants. I spent an hour looking for them. We returned to take his body—it was no loner there.

Malvina

It was no longer there!

Aubrey

Only some trampled grass and red with blood, allowed me to recognize the place where I had left him. I presumed the assassins had carried off the cadaver to destroy the evidence of their crime. For two months I made unfruitful searches. Finally I left Greece and learned that Lord Marsden was in Venice. I wrote him and sent him the effects of his unlucky brother, among which was found your portrait. He seemed rather taken, in his turn, with your

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attractions and proposed to replace Rutwen. This alliance not only honors us, but Lord Marsden is, they tell me, one of the most favored lords at the court of the monarch.

Malvina

Would Rutwen still lived, brother! It seems to me what he did for you already disposes me in his favor.

Brigitte (entering)

Milord, the Count of Marsden has just arrived at the castle.

Aubrey

Sister, let's go receive him.

Malvina

Ah, brother, allow me not to be present at his arrival. I am still very upset.

Aubrey

Go back for a moment to your apartment. (to Brigitte) Brigitte, accompany Malvina to her apartment. As for me, I fly before the Count. But, it's too late, here he is himself.

(Rutwen enters.)

Aubrey

The honor you do me, My Lord. Heaven! What do I see? What a resemblance!

Rutwen

Do my features remind Sir Aubrey of an old friendship?

Aubrey

It's his voice. I cannot doubt it. It's Rutwen.

Rutwen

Such was my name until the death of an older brother put me in possession of the title of Marsden.

Aubrey

Can I believe my senses? Rutwen, are you the ghost of my old friend?

Rutwen

My dear, Aubrey, come to my arms to take that doubt from you.

Aubrey

Great God! It's really true. But, is this possible? Didn't I leave you for dead by the hills of Athens?

Rutwen

Powerful help preserved my existence. When I was able to get together with you, you had left Greece. I learned some time later of the death of my brother. Returned to London, I wrote you in his name, and I wanted, when I arrived in Scotland, to take possession of his inheritance to cause you a surprise that would be really sweet for both of us.

Aubrey

What is my joy! I see my friend again, and my friend finds a friend worthy of him in me. For, there's no doubt of it, Rutwen, it was still you that I greeted as Marsden, and my sister, that I destined for you, was only engaged to your brother to acquit my debt towards you.

Rutwen

Generous friend! But, do you believe I'll be lucky enough to please the adorable Malvina?

Aubrey

I wouldn't doubt it. She was clearly touched by the story I told her of your misfortunes. She wept with me, for the one she thought had died for her brother. She will love you, Rutwen. In that generous heart that is still free, gratitude will give birth to love.

Rutwen

Ah! May you not be flattering me with a vain hope. My friend, you cannot imagine the happiness I am building on this marriage that your friendship prepares for me. I feel, yes, my entire existence is attached to it.

Aubrey

I recognize you well, Rutwen. Always enthusiastic, exalted. My sister is simple—ignorant of passion—don't go frighten her.

Rutwen

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I will control myself—to please her, if necessary to hide the violence of my feelings. But, what's keeping me from the joy of her sight?

Aubrey

She's coming. How surprised she will be.

(Enter Malvina and Brigitte.)

Aubrey, My dear sister, behold my incomparable friend, whose loss we were deploring this morning. By a miracle, he lives. It's he who saved my life. May love, by uniting you, pay the debt of gratitude.

Rutwen

Charming Malvina, never had friendship for your brother appeared more precious to me than at this moment. But the prize he destined for me is above the idea I had formed of it. The more I tremble not to obtain it. Henceforth, my fate depends on a word from your mouth.

Malvina

My Lord, the life of a cherished brother. My duty. (she looks at his face) Heaven! What do I see?

Aubrey

You're growing pale, Malvina. What's wrong with you? My friend, she's ill.

Rutwen

Oh, heaven! What can cause this sudden emotion?

Brigitte

My dear mistress! Come to yourself.

Malvina

Ah, those features. The ghost of last night!

Brigitte

Mercy. Miss, control yourself. What an idea you've got.

Rutwen

Well, this trouble has dissipated.

Malvina

Ah, yes. How foolish I was, indeed. My Lord, excuse a passing weakness due to an accident which happened to me last night.

Rutwen (astonished)

Last night!

Aubrey

It's only the effect of a little fatigue. We returned very late to the castle, my sister and I. My friend, can't you see that your appearance has made its accustomed impression?

Malvina (aside)

I don't know what sentiment agitates me in his presence.

Rutwen

Ah! Beautiful Malvina, reassure my heart. How should I interpret this emotion?

Malvina

My Lord, the shock of seeing you alive, after having deplored your death—

Rutwen

Is it possible that before meeting me the story of my sorrows interested you in me?

Malvina

My Lord, how could I remain insensible to such touching devotion? I am Aubrey's sister, and my heart—filled with gratitude. (aside) I don't dare look at him.

Rutwen (taking her hand)

Gratitude! Ah, it's I alone who owe it here, my friend. And what won't I owe him if your heart approves his generous plans. Ah, tell me that you confirm them or I'll die at your feet.

Malvina

Ah! Heaven! This rapture—

Rutwen

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Has nothing which can affright you. It's in the preserve of your brother, it's with his consent that here I take this oath to adore you until death. Oh, my friend, join your prayers to mine.

Aubrey

This union is the object of my dearest wishes. Malvina is not ignorant of it—and your love may already have surpassed my authority.

Malvina (aside)

I don't know where I am—what inconceivable charm acts on me? Ah, my goodness, if it's from love, why does it suffer?

Rutwen

Oh, my friend, my whole being is reassured by her sight. You know, blasted by misfortunes, isolated on earth, you see me ever ready to abandon, without regret, the nothingness which surrounds me to seek a nothingness as yet unknown. This angel, this dream alone can attach me to existence. It's with her that I am awaiting a new life. It seems to me that I can already draw it in from her looks. Oh, Malvina, may your sweet mouth confirm a hope so sweet.

Malvina

My Lord! Each of his words seems to echo to the bottom of my soul.

Rutwen

Eh! What—a word to assure me a certainty of happiness—and you refuse it to me?

Malvina

My Lord! My brother can always count on my obedience.

Aubrey

And he takes it upon himself from your response. My friend, I congratulate you. Can't you read your victory in the trouble in her eyes?

Rutwen

I am at the height of joy. Ah, Miss, do you consent then?

Malvina

Ah, brother, don't abuse my confusion. Let me retire, I beg you.

Brigitte

This Lord is very fine, my dear mistress. I have a very good opinion of him.

(Exit Malvina and Brigitte.)

Aubrey

Rutwen, my wishes are fulfilled; we are going to be brothers.

Rutwen

My generous friend, there remains one thing for me to ask of you: that my marriage be concluded without delay.

Aubrey

That's my plan. I am going to hasten the preparations and tomorrow, if my sister doesn't raise any obstacles—

Rutwen

Tomorrow! Until tomorrow!

Aubrey

It's really the least—how eager you are!

Rutwen

I am forced to hasten. I can only live a short time in this country.

Aubrey

You astonish me.

Rutwen

Matters of the greatest importance recall me to London.

Aubrey

But, still, the term you've fixed—

Rutwen

In short, I have only thirty–six hours to spend with you.

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Aubrey

That's not believable. You told me you were coming to take possession of your brother's goods.

Rutwen

It will suffice for me to present myself at Castle Marsden and the distance is not great. I could be there and return here before the end of the day.

Aubrey

My surprise is extreme! Can't you explain to me?

Rutwen

You will learn much later the reasons that oblige me to make this prayer to you, but let us begin, my friend. Go, rejoin your sister, and decide her.

Aubrey

There's nothing I can refuse you. Still, I fear my sister may be frightened by this precipitateness.

Rutwen

Know that my existence will be compromised by the least delay. If this life of your friend is dear to you—

Aubrey

You make me shiver! You must reveal this strange mystery to me! But, friendship speaks and shelves curiosity. I rush to plead your cause. Later, I will hear your reasons.

(Aubrey leaves. Rutwen walks about in agitation, hand on his face. Then, Edgar, who was at the back of the stage, comes forward.)

Edgar

Milord!

Rutwen

What do you want?

Edgar

Allow me to demand your protection. I am one of the servants of Sir Aubrey.

Rutwen

In what way can I protect you?

Edgar

I am going to marry the daughter of the keeper of your Castle Marsden. They say that you are disposed to visit your domain.

Rutwen (excitedly)

His daughter is your fiancée?

Edgar

Yes, Milord.

Rutwen

And, when are you having the wedding?

Edgar

Tonight, Milord.

Rutwen (with concentrated joy)

Tonight!

Edgar

Yes, Milord.

Rutwen

I will be there.

Edgar

Oh! Milord, respect prevents me from begging you, but if your Lordship would deign to do us the honor of signing the contract—Sir Aubrey has indeed wanted to provide me the same favor.

Rutwen

I'll be doing myself a pleasure.

Edgar

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Ah! Milord, how good—

Rutwen

How much time do we need to return to Marsden?

Edgar

The sea is calm. We have good oarsmen, the plan could be accomplished in less than an hour.

Rutwen

Ready a boat; and tell my people to prepare to depart.

Edgar

I am going to execute that order, Milord.

(Exit Edgar, Aubrey returns.)

Aubrey

Everything is arranged, my friend. Tomorrow we will have the wedding!

Rutwen (joyous)

Your sister consents, too. (aside) Two fiancées!

Aubrey

I've ordered that everything be prepared in the chapel of the castle tonight, on our return.

Rutwen

You want to accompany me?

Aubrey

You are staying such a short time with me, that I can't consent to our being separated a single moment.

Rutwen

Worthy friend, you enchant me.

Edgar (returning)

Milord, everything is ready for the departure.

Aubrey

Come on, let's go. You will inform me on the way of the extraordinary reason for your hurried departure.

(In the back a boat can be seen. Rutwen and Aubrey get in it.)

CURTAIN

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ACT II

The stage represents a farm house. It is open in the back, but a small wall crosses the stage and guards the entrance. Above it are mountains covered with snow and ice. In the midst, a small path leading to the summit.

AT RISE, Petterson and Lovette are surrounded by young girls who are finishing putting on their finery.

Lovette (excitedly)

Well, father! Father, have you seen Edgar? He must have arrived.

Petterson (smiling)

Not yet, my dear Lovette. Give him time to finish the trip.

Lovette

It's really bad of him. When he was in love, he came from Castle Aubrey in two hours.

Petterson

You think he no longer loves you?

Lovette

Ah, my good father—don't tell me that. I would die of chagrin. But because the gentleman must get married today, he's in no hurry. They tell me all of these villainous men are like that.

Petterson

Come on—don't get annoyed. The preparations for your wedding are not yet finished.

Lovette

But, father, it seems to me that the husband is the essential thing.

Petterson

Your toilette is at least as important, and it isn't yet over since this morning.

Lovette

Oh, it's not finished. Go away! To punish him, I'm going to make myself even more pretty. (to her companions) Put this little hat, ribbons and flowers on me. Ah, Mr. Edgar, you like to wait—I'm going to scold you—I'll play the coquette. But father, you stay there. See if you don't notice him on the hill. Perhaps something bad has happened to him.

(Voices offstage: There's Edgar, there's Edgar.)

Lovette (rising)

Ah, my God. There he is.

Edgar (entering, followed by young men)

Ah, My good Lovette.

Petterson

Finish up, Mr. Intended.

Lovette

Ah, how long you've been!

Edgar (hugging her)

Pardon, pardon! My heart was always with you.

Lovette (pulling back)

Well! What am I doing! As for me, I intended to scold you.

Edgar

I was forced to accompany my master, who is returning here. Ah, my God, Mr. Petterson, I was forgetting to tell you—Sir Aubrey is coming here with Lord Rutwen.

Petterson (very surprised)

Rutwen! He's not dead?

Edgar

No. Those rumors are often false.

Petterson

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Still, his brother, our good Lord who wept for him at every moment. Ah! What a misfortune that he'd loved him so much—he's perhaps dead of chagrin to survive him.

Edgar

This one seems good. He ought to be as virtuous as his brother. He will console you for having lost him.

Sir Aubrey (entering)

Ah! My dear Petterson, you've been informed of the happy return of Rutwen.

Petterson

What, Milord, they don't dare say he's still alive? They are trying to betray you. Alas, it's only too true that the brother of the Count was murdered in Rome.

Aubrey

Who told you at Rome? You are mistaken. It was at Athens.

Petterson

He was really at Rome. His poor brother expected—

Lovette

Oh, yes, Milord. It was really at Rome, since his brother wanted to go there to die.

Aubrey

I have trouble conceiving the strange error you are in. Athens is the place which ought to shroud his mortal remains. I cannot abuse myself—it was at my side that death struck him. The fatal blow was destined for me.

Petterson

How is it that all the reports made to us at this time agreed in naming Italy? I cannot believe in his existence. Pardon, Lord Aubrey, but are you really convinced this is the true Rutwen?

Aubrey (smiling)

Fear nothing. The heart doesn't wander easily—and you know I am difficult to fool. But, I noticed on my arrival that you are preparing a celebration.

Petterson

Today we are celebrating the marriage of Edgar and Lovette.

Aubrey

Well, may the wedding feast also be that of his return.

Petterson

No, Count, it is impossible that Lord Rutwen still exists, for even we've had news of his fate. No, no—it's impossible.

Edgar

You are quite opinionated. But my dear Petterson, would you recognize his features?

Petterson

Ah, no doubt; they are engraved in my heart. He too much resembles his brother for me ever to forget them.

Edgar

Your eyes may convince your mind which is a little too made up.

Petterson

No, count, I cannot have faith.

(Voices outside: Long live Milord.)

Edgar

Do you hear the gay shouts of his vassals?

Petterson

The man who had taken his name is an impostor.

(Enter Rutwen, followed by villagers.)

Petterson

What do I see? Is it really he? Ah, Milord—What, speak to me, talk to me—say you are Lord Rutwen.

(A moment of silence.)

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Rutwen

Yes, good Petterson, you recognize the features of Rutwen, though they are blasted with misfortune.

Petterson (falling to his knees)

I recognize you now, pardon, but I didn't dare believe in the joy of pressing, of blessing this so cherished hand.

Rutwen

Arise, Petterson. My heart is touched by your proofs of friendship and I shall know how to recognize the attachment that you have always borne to my family. Especially, I beg you, don't let my presence interfere with your happiness. You are going to celebrate a wedding?

Petterson

Yes, Milord. Here's the intended and my little Lovette is the fiancée.

Rutwen (aside)

Another fiancée—and in twenty–four hours.

Aubrey

The fiancée is charming.

Lovette

Oh! Oh! Milord, you are—

(Lovette curtsies and Rutwen fixes his gaze on her.)

Edgar (in a low voice)

Shut up, Coquette, and lower your eyes.

Lovette (excitedly)

I forbid you to be jealous today.

Edgar

Well, I promise you—

Petterson

Come, children. Go deliver yourselves to pleasure, to the dance.

(A light thundering can be heard.)

Rutwen

Why send them away? I want to share their intoxication. You will allow me to dower the young fiancée and myself to place the crown on her head. Marriages are celebrations for me.

All

Long live Milord.

(The thunder increases.)

Edgar (going to a window)

Ah, my God. What a storm. The thunder, the rain.

Lovette

How annoying this is! We won't be able to go dance in the valley.

Petterson

Milord, it will be impossible for you to return in a reasonable hour— at the risk of becoming lost or falling in some precipice.

Aubrey

The day is advanced. Nothing prevents us from spending the night here.

Rutwen

The night? What! You delay my happiness?

Aubrey

What does it matter, my friend? A day the sooner, a day the later—

Rutwen

A day the later!

Petterson

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Milord, give in to our wishes. We are eager for the pleasure of possessing you.

Aubrey

Come on, surrender yourself to their prayers. Anyway, the storm won't allow us to leave this place.

Rutwen (who has not ceased to look at Lovette)

Well, since heaven wishes it, I consent to spend the night with you.

(Pettersen gives a sign; they form a platform for Rutwen. The ballet is ready to begin—when one hears the notes of the harp. Curious, Edgar goes to the back to see what this can be, then returns.)

Edgar

Milord, it's a poor bard—an old man that the storm had forced to seek refuge. He asks to rest.

Pettersen

Allow it, Milord. His songs could please you.

Rutwen

I consent with a good heart.

Lovette

Ah! How satisfied I am! Sometimes they have very pretty songs.

Rutwen (aside)

God! How beautiful this fiancée is!

(The Bard [Oscar] enters. An old man whose venerable head inspires respect. His demeanor has something imposing and mysterious in it.)

Oscar

Many thanks, good young man. May the angel of peace always protect you as the cedar protects the shrub. (he comes forward, considers Rutwen and says, quite low) There he is!

Pettersen

Sit there, worthy son of Ossian.

Lovette (giving him something to drink)

Have some, grandpa, and then you will tell us something.

Oscar

Yes, young lady. I will tell you the hymn of marriage. May my songs teach you happiness and may the Great Being on his throne of clouds watch always over your rest!

Rutwen (aside)

What's he mean by that sinister tone?

Edgar

Come, brave man, begin. The rest of you, quiet—and sing in chorus.

Oscar (accompanying himself)

O young virgin of Staffa Beaming in your first passion Whose heart palpitates already To the sweet names of lover and wife At the moment of uniting your destiny To the lover of your thoughts Beware, young fiancée Of love that brings death.

(Oscar watches Rutwen, whose face expresses the greatest fury. All the other characters surround the old man with a sort of interest.)

Oscar

When the sun of the deserts No longer gilds the mountain peaks Then the angels of Hell Come to caress their victim If their sweet voice puts you to sleep Recoil—their hand is icy Beware young fiancée Of the love that brings death.

(At the end of the couplet Rutwen can hardly contain his fury. He stands up, agitated.)

Aubrey

What's the matter with you, my dear friend?

Rutwen

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The lugubrious song of this man reminds me of very sad thoughts.

Aubrey

Send him away—

Petterson

Come, old man, leave. Your songs are displeasing to Milord.

Oscar (in a somber voice)

I believe it.

Lovette

Since it's that way—go—but when you return to the valley, come see me—and you will receive my little offering.

Oscar

Alas! Tomorrow—perhaps my eyes will never see you again. (they send him away with several peasants accompanying him)

Petterson

Children, before beginning the celebration, let's prepare the banquet and we will drink to the lucky return of our victorious visitor.

All

Come!

Petterson (low to Aubrey)

Milord, if you have the complaisance to second us, we could do something worthy of you and him.

Aubrey

Very willingly. I want to take my share of the pleasure of welcoming him.

(Everyone prepares to leave. Edgar gives his arm to Lovette; Rutwen stops him.)

Rutwen

Beautiful Lovette, will you listen to me for a moment?

Lovette (looking at Edgar)

Goodness, Milord, I am no longer my own.

Rutwen

I hope that your spouse—

Edgar

What, come on—Madame, since the Count does you the honor—(in a low voice) I am not jealous of this one.

Lovette

Here I am at your orders.

(Everyone moves away.)

Edgar

How amiable he is! How bountiful to speak with my wife. It's to give her a gift, I am sure. (he leaves)

Rutwen

Approach, charming fiancée.

Lovette (recoiling)

I don't dare—

Rutwen (in the sweetest tone)

Be without fear. If you knew the intoxication I feel seeing you! An irresistible love leads me to you. I shiver walking on the tracks of your steps and near you, I breathe the air of joy.

Lovette (surprised and a bit annoyed)

Me, Milord! Is it possible?

Rutwen

Alas, my heart has never thrilled except for a single woman, a celestial creature, and your features remind me of hers. This morning my heart was worn out with regrets. The sweet flame of love was extinguished in my

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soul—and tonight, it has just been reilluminated by the fire of your glance—and tonight—I burn—

Lovette

But, Milord—the one you loved?

Rutwen

She's dead!

Lovette

She's dead?

Rutwen

You alone could make her relive for me.

Lovette

What are you saying?

Rutwen

Ah! Lovette—do you know the happiness of finding again the object one adores?

Lovette

I never loved anyone except Edgar.

Rutwen

Except Edgar! He alone! How lucky he is! And how great my misfortune. Ah! Why have the Gods hidden you from my eyes? Or rather why have they let me see you?

Lovette

Well, Milord! Don't look at me any more. Never see me again. It makes you suffer too much. (taking a step to leave)

Rutwen

Stop! Lovette, let your sight console me a moment for all that I have lost. I want to delight my spirit in fancies of a happiness that no longer exists. I want to believe myself for a moment to be your spouse—believe yourself for a moment with Edgar. Don't refuse me this sweet illusion. I will have nothing more to do than to die.

Lovette

What are you asking of me?

Rutwen

The most trivial of favors—a look—your hand, a smile.

Lovette

Ah! Cease, I beg you, cease—if Edgar—

Rutwen

Ah! I would give my entire existence for an hour of your love, and if only one of my sighs could be heard in your heart you would love me.

Lovette (moved)

No, Milord, no—leave me. I am too upset.

Oscar (appearing on the mountain)

Beware young fiancée Of the love that brings death.

Lovette (utters a scream and escapes with terror)

Ah!

Rutwen (low)

It's hell that pursues me. (aloud) Don't go away—or tremble—

Lovette

Ah! Milord, for pity!

Rutwen

I won't hear of anything, you must love me!

Lovette (bursting into tears)

Ah! My God!

Rutwen

Your tears flow. It's for me.

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Lovette

Don't think that. No, no—don't think that!

Rutwen

It's in vain. My life depends on you—till this evening. (music) Think of it carefully, my life depends on you. And tomorrow, happiness or death! They're coming. Silence!

(Rutwen puts a purse in Lovette's hand. She refuses to open it. Everyone appears and she is forced to take it. They bring in tables, trophies, garlands, etc.)

Petterson

Come, come, everything is prepared, Milord. When you order it, the celebration will begin. Sir Aubrey won't delay rejoining you, but he doesn't want his absence to delay our pleasures.

Lovette (raising her eyes to Rutwen)

I don't know what's going on in me. My soul is no longer the same.

Edgar

My good Lovette, it seems to me you are pouring tears.

Lovette

No, my friend.

Petterson (clapping his hands)

Come on, on the way, everybody.

(The ballet begins. Aubrey is seated at a table. Rutwen refuses to be placed. Young girls bring refreshment. They are thanked without taking them. At the overture, Lovette, oppressed, is being followed by her companions and leaves. Rutwen, profiting by the moment when Edgar pours a drink, disappears on the steps of Lovette. They keep dancing, but soon Edgar, no longer seeing Lovette, stands up suddenly.)

Edgar

Father! Father! Where is Lovette?

Petterson

I don't know. That's the way lovers are.

Edgar (troubled)

And Milord! I no longer see him.

Aubrey

What's wrong? What's the matter with you?

(Edgar is already far away. Petterson and Aubrey get up. The dance continues and one hears shouts in the wings.)

Lovette (enters, running, pale, hair in disorder)

Father! Save me! Save me!

Petterson

Great Gods! My daughter!

Aubrey

Oh Heaven! What's wrong with you? And Rutwen?

(Rutwen enters, pursued by Edgar.)

Edgar

Villain! (shoots him with a pistol)

Rutwen

Ah! I'm dying.

(Everyone utters a shout. Lovette falls in a faint. Tableau: the actors freeze.)

Aubrey

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A murder! (he draws his sword)

Petterson (restraining Edgar)

Edgar, what have you done?

Edgar

Father! Milord! Stop! Don't accuse me. Look at Lovette. The monster wanted to dishonor me!

All

Is it possible?

Aubrey (to Edgar)

Coward! I am going to bathe in your blood.

Rutwen

Stop, Aubrey—

Aubrey

Gods! He's still alive. Oh, my friend.

(Everyone moves to go near.)

Aubrey (furious)

Get away! Get away! Do you want to snatch his last breath from him? Get back.

(Petterson makes them leave, and remains alone, a little to the rear.)

Aubrey

Oh, my friend! My brother—

Rutwen

No sadness, Aubrey; my last breath of life is ready to exhale.

Aubrey

No, no, I intend to save you.

Rutwen

I feel all help is useless. I ask of you only one service—the last, you can't refuse me.

Aubrey

Ah, ask, take my life. It is unbearable without you.

Rutwen

My friend, I ask that for twelve hours only, you make the most profound secret of what his happened to me.

Aubrey

For twelve hours—

Rutwen

Promise me that Malvina will know nothing of it and that you will do nothing to avenge my death.

Aubrey

What! You are going to perish.

Rutwen

Don't question me. Swear to me the secret on my expiring heart.

Aubrey

I swear it. I swear it to you.

Rutwen (in a very weak voice)

Goodbye. We will see each other again one day. (the lighting has become obscure, the moon, hidden by the clouds begins to shine on his last words) Aubrey, let the moon shine on my eyes with its last light so I can see it and address my last prayers to it.

(Rutwen's head falls back. Aubrey, helped by Petterson, places Rutwen on the rock at the back. His kisses his hand again and Petterson leads him away. The moon shines completely on the body of Rutwen and lights the ice capped peaks of the mountains. The curtain falls.)

CURTAIN

ACT II

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ACT III

The stage represents a large gothic vestibule. The door of the chapel is seen at the back. Preparations for the celebration can be seen.

Brigitte (approaching stealthily)

Scop! Scop!

Scop (asleep)

Ah! Who goes there? I'm here. What's wrong?

Brigitte

Our master is going to return, it's day. I wish that he may find everything ready for the ceremony.

Scop

It won't be difficult. Everything's been done since yesterday evening. It's strange, they tell us—Hurry up, decorate the chapel, get the Chaplain to come—and then the intended and the brother-in-law go to Marsden and don't come back.

Brigitte

The violent storm which took place last night doubtless prevented them from returning. But the sea is calm. At daybreak boats can be seen leaving the shore. They can't delay being here. I've just announced it to my mistress who appeared to me to be very impatient.

Scop

Right—we'll finally see this wedding. I'll go inform everybody and wake up all our sleepers.

(Exit Scop. Enter Oscar dressed as a monk.)

Brigitte

Now we are alone. Approach, venerable monk. No one can hear us. They tell me you possess the power of conjuring spirits and reading the future.

Oscar

They didn't deceive you.

Brigitte

You know why I wanted this meeting.

Oscar

To calm your uneasiness about the fate of a mistress that you love.

Brigitte

Astonishing man. I believe in your art. Tell, tell what you know.

Oscar

If you love your mistress, listen and profit. Before the needle has reached the first hour of night, get Miss Aubrey away from this castle. A great danger threatens her.

Brigitte

Just heaven! The fear that I experienced was, then, an inspiration from heaven?

Oscar

Innocence and beauty no longer have refuge here. This country is inhabited by powerful creatures. The earth of Staffa is fecund in prodigies.

Brigitte

I tremble—And Sir Aubrey scorns my advice!

Oscar

The moment approaches when he will receive terrible punishment for his incredulity.

Brigitte

Great God! Will he be in danger of perishing?

Oscar

No, you will see him soon. But you'll have trouble recognizing him. He'll be agitated like a madman,

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overwhelmed by the weight of a terrible uncertainty, his speech will be tied and his words seem unintelligible. At these stages you will recognize the truth of my advice. Woman, I repeat to you: get Miss Aubrey away from here.

Brigitte

But what to do, today?

Oscar

All danger will cease as soon as the castle clock strikes one.

Brigitte

One o'clock and it's only six. They're coming. Go away so they don't surprise us together. I will follow your advice. But in the name of heaven, don't leave the castle. I need you to explain these terrifying things to me. We will see each other again.

Oscar

I will stay. (he exits)

Brigitte (alone)

He makes me tremble with his predictions. The removal of Sir Aubrey and Milord who left us alone in this castle—there, if I am not mistaken, is the cause of the danger.

Malvina (entering)

Brigitte, I was looking for you. I need you to make you share in my joy.

Brigitte

My darling mistress, this is not the moment to be gay. The absence of Sir Aubrey—

Malvina

Don't be uneasy any longer. Rutwen just told me that my brother is going to arrive.

Brigitte

My Lord is here?

Malvina

Can you imagine? Opening the window to my room which gives on the flower beds—he was the first person I noticed. He was gathering this enormous bouquet. He ran to present it to me and he's coming to rejoin me here for the ceremony which he is burning to complete. We have to leave for London right away.

Brigitte

This very morning? (aside) What good luck!

Malvina

Yes, he explained to me the reason for this prompt departure. He's been warned the King intends to surprise him and is awaiting him to make him marry a lady of the court that he doesn't love. He has no other way of avoiding this order than to present me to the King with the title of his wife.

Brigitte

And we are leaving this morning? (aside) Come, there's a reason to get away which prevents me from finding another. (aloud) Let's hurry, Miss. I'm indeed in a hurry to leave this castle. I think I'll die of it.

Malvina

What are you saying? This place displeases you to that degree?

Brigitte

Ah! Great Gods! Listen, I'd really like to tell you. But no, if you knew—it's impossible. But, I'm running to make the preparations for departure. They're coming. Doubtless it's Milord. Hurry the ceremony. I'll rejoin you in a moment, Miss.

(Brigitte exits, Aubrey enters.)

Malvina

Ah! It's you, brother, you came opportunely. Have you met Milord?

Aubrey

Milord—Alas!

Malvina

What a sad air you have. What has happened to you?

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Aubrey

To me, nothing. (aside) How to break this terrible news to her?

Malvina

Everything is ready for our marriage. Milord has doubtless told you the important reasons which force us to leave for London this very morning. This speed at first frightened me, but if you will accompany us—Ah! What a charming trip. You aren't listening to me—you're sighing—what's wrong with you?

Aubrey

Ah, sister, let's no longer think of this marriage.

Malvina

What are you saying? After all the oaths taken. Didn't you yourself forge these chains? Alas! That was yesterday. But today—what? Could you have taken back your word without consulting me?

Aubrey

It's not I. It's Rutwen—yesterday evening—

Malvina

Impossible. Just now even, at my feet, he swore our eternal love, and pressed me to hasten our union.

Aubrey

What? What's this, my sister? Your wits are wandering!

Malvina

What I tell you is so strange?

Aubrey (stupefied)

Rutwen you say, spoke to you just now?

Malvina

Why this astonishment? What's wrong with you? What are your new plans? Speak! Speak! Speak!

Aubrey

One of the two of us is delirious. I who saw him perish, the unfortunate man.

Malvina (with a smile)

Perish! Ah!

Aubrey

Do the tombs reject their prey?

Malvina (uneasy)

But brother, the trouble you are in, these incomprehensible words, in the name of heaven—instruct me in everything.

Aubrey

You wish to know everything: well, summon up all your courage; if your heart felt love—prepare yourself for the most horrifying news.

Malvina

You overwhelm me! Indeed, he delays appearing. My anxiety grows with each moment.

Aubrey

Since I have to resolve to break your heart. Know that all my plans have been blasted. A terrible event, unexpected, has deprived us—me of a friend, you of a spouse—the unfortunate Rutwen.

Rutwen (advancing, seizing the arm of Aubrey and speaking in a terrible voice)

Think of your oath!

Aubrey (recoiling, stunned)

Great Gods! It's a ghost!

Malvina (terrified)

My dear Aubrey, is it possible?

Rutwen

Tremble to say a word.

Aubrey

Flee! Get away! You are only a lying spectre. Go, I don't wish to see you. My friend is dead.

Rutwen

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Aubrey, come to yourself, I beg you, in the name of friendship.

Aubrey

You are trying to imitate his voice. It's in vain.

Malvina

Oh Heaven. Is it possible?

Aubrey

Rutwen was pierced by a mortal blow before my eyes. You are not Rutwen. Where is your wound? Is it still bloody? Show it.

Malvina

His reason is lost.

Rutwen

My friend, look at me, touch my brow. I am Rutwen.

Aubrey

Get away, phantom—sister, hide yourself from the pursuit of this monster. He will tell you he is your spouse. Refuse your oath. This marriage is a curse.

Rutwen

His condition is disturbing. Hey there! Scop, Brigitte.

Aubrey

My sister, believe me. The spouse I destined for you is lost to you. Last night Edgar surprised him—it's his fiancée—

Rutwen (aside to Aubrey, in a terrible voice)

Aubrey! Remember your oath.

(The Servants enter. Rutwen gives them a sign to take Aubrey away. They seize him.)

Aubrey

What do you want with me? Why do you seize me, wretches?

Malvina

Stop! What are you doing?

Rutwen

His condition requires help.

(Rutwen explains to them that Aubrey is mad.)

Aubrey

Sister, swear to me to preserve your liberty until the moment that bronze has struck one o'clock.

Rutwen (shivering, aside)

One o'clock. (aloud) My friends, lead him to his apartment. Lavish on him all the help of the art.

Aubrey

Sister—until one o'clock.

Malvina

Ah! My God! My God! My poor brother!

(Pantomime during which the Servants lead Aubrey off.)

Rutwen

That dear Aubrey. What a shame!

Malvina

His condition alarms me! What do you want to say?

Rutwen

How often I've pitied him for being subject to disorders of the mind.

Malvina

Truly? I've never noticed.

Rutwen

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I witnessed them several times in the course of our voyages, and they happened to him almost always at the end of spirited opposition. His soul, you know, is open to strong impressions, and his imagination is sparked by deep reflections and exalted thoughts, which sometimes trouble his reason.

Malvina

You think so?

Rutwen

I attest to it.

Malvina

To believe it, I need for you to affirm it to me, for what he said was so astonishing—and so cruel—that my heart is still shivering. This marriage is a curse!

Rutwen

Malvina, you must banish—

Malvina

Pardon, but Aubrey has served as my father and I have for him all the friendship that nature and gratitude can inspire.

Rutwen

I am far from reproaching you, but still, Malvina, if you love me—

Malvina

Ah! If you suspect that, how unhappy I will be.

Rutwen

It's the only misfortune that I fear in this world. On your love depends my repose, my happiness, all my destiny. On your love depends my life. Swear to me then to forget vain terrors and to be forever mine—mine alone!

Malvina

I swear by the God who can read my soul.

Rutwen

O joy! Then it's done—you are mine—your hand, your heart, all your being belongs to me. Receive the sacred ring which engages you to me forever.

Malvina

Ah! Give it to me. (she offers him her hand)

Rutwen (with a ferocious smile)

You are shivering. What's the matter with you?

Malvina

I am agitated by an unfamiliar feeling. It has—I don't know what— something about it that's so sad. My eyes are filling with bitter tears. My heart is breaking and I still hear him. "Sister, at one o'clock you will learn this fatal secret."

Rutwen (shivering)

Great Gods! If the hour should strike! (aloud) Malvina, think no more of these vain dreams of a wandering imagination. Let's hasten to consecrate the bonds which unite us. All must be prepared for the ceremony.

Remember what you have promised me, and don't wander off—we are going to march to the altar.

(Rutwen leaves excitedly and meets Brigitte who he orders by gesture to watch over Malvina. Brigitte, terrified by Rutwen's appearance turns away.)

Malvina

How I am moved! The approach of this ceremony causes me a troubling astonishment. I can hardly breathe. This moment is going to decide my future. Oh! But I will be happy. I have the sweetest presentiment of it.

Brigitte (aside)

Poor Miss, how distracted she is. Ah, when one is marrying for the first time, it's natural.

Malvina

Oh, yes, I will be happy.

Brigitte (aside)

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Well, I don't know, that man has taken on for some time an extraordinary appearance. As for me, I wouldn't marry him.

(Malvina is pensive for a while. Brigitte coughs to be heard.)

Malvina

Ah, it's you, my maid!

Brigitte

I didn't dare speak to you—tell me, Miss, what's going on in this castle. What's happened to your brother?

Malvina

Alas, I cannot tell you.

Brigitte

He's agitated, he runs, he stops, he talks of you. It's like an access of madness. Here, Miss, would you like to know what I think? (in a low voice) I think he's possessed by an evil spirit.

Malvina

Don't think that!

Brigitte

Hmm! Hmm! As for you, you don't believe it. Still, I don't wish it on him, but I much fear it. That poor Sir Aubrey. He affects me. They are taking all the care in the world to protect him. He wants to leave. He asked more than ten times what time it was. I went to see—and it's like a doom. The castle clock has stopped since this morning.

Malvina

The clock has stopped and he's waiting for one o'clock to disclose to me his secret. Well, what did you do?

Brigitte

When I told him, he went into a rage. I ran to warn the concierge.

Malvina

What a confusion of strange events.

Brigitte

Ah! I am all atremble. I am really afraid that this day will finish badly—

Malvina

Brigitte! The day of my marriage—

Brigitte

Ah, pardon, my good mistress. I afflict you. Pardon, I no longer know what I'm saying. Don't pay attention to me.

(Solemn music announcing the ceremony. The back of the stage opens. It's a great portiere and allows the chapel to be seen lit up. Servants place cushions and some vessels at her knees. It creates a solemn tableau.)

Rutwen

Come, Madame. Come, bring my happiness to completion.

Malvina

I follow you, Lord.

Brigitte

My God, what's going to happen?

Rutwen (with the most noticeable impatience)

Well! Why tarry longer? (turning) Where then is the chaplain? Run, find him. Let him be brought to me instantly.

A Servant

Here he is, Milord.

(He appears dressed in his awesome costume.)

Rutwen

Come, Malvina. Heaven awaits your oath. (taking her hand)

(Great uproar is heard outside and Aubrey shouting “Sister! Sister!” Everyone stops. Aubrey runs in, followed

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by Servants who seize him.)

Rutwen

Good Heavens! It's Aubrey.

Aubrey

Release me! Release me! My sister—where is she? I want to see her. Give me back my sister. Are you going to let her sacrifice herself?

Malvina

My brother, don't you recognize your Malvina any more?

Aubrey

I heard her voice. (she extends her arms to him) Ah! It's you? Are you still my sister? Hear me, I've recovered my reason.

Rutwen

The madman! Malvina, don't listen to him, come—

Malvina

Pity!

Aubrey

Stop! Don't follow him. He's leading you to the tomb. This priest is a minister of death. These torches are funeral torches.

Rutwen

Malvina, follow me.

Aubrey (throwing himself at his feet)

Barbarian! I forbid her. You have no rights over her—and as for me, I am her brother!

All (to Rutwen)

Milord! Milord!

Rutwen

I am not listening to any of this. This woman is mine. This lunatic wants to ravish her from me.

Malvina

No, no—

Rutwen

Can't you see he's in a delirium?

Aubrey (forcefully)

You are mistaken. In an instant the time will release me from my oath and I can tell all. (retaining Malvina)

Rutwen (seizing him by the hair)

Wretch! If you utter a word—(with his other hand he tries to drag Malvina who resists, then he draws his dagger)

Aubrey

You'll have to bathe it in my blood.

Rutwen

Both of you will perish!

(Rutwen goes to stab Aubrey when one o'clock strikes. Malvina faints into the arms of Brigitte. Thunder rolls.)

Rutwen

Nothingness! Nothingness!

(Rutwen's raised arm falls. The lightning flashes. The rear of the stage opens revealing the shades of the Vampire victims. They are young women covered by veils. They pursue him, pointing to their breasts from which blood still flows from the wounds. At that moment, the angel of love crosses the stage in a luminous chariot.)

All (seized by fright)

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Oh Heaven!

(Thunder rolls more strongly and lightning strikes the Vampire who is consumed.)

CURTAIN