

'Tis granting I might possibly be false,
To cast about in search of testimony,
No—if an angel from the sky should come,
And proffer me his aid in such a cause,
I would, with humblest reverence, refuse it.
Of this no more—conduct me to thy Lady.
[Exit.]

[The scene is a chamber in the castle of Rothsay.]

[Alfreda enters.]

[Alfreda looks at her reflection in a mirror.]

ALFRED A.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ALFRED A.

[Alfreda looks at her reflection in a mirror.]

[Alfreda looks at her reflection in a mirror.]

ACT

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ACT IV.

SCENE, *The Inside of ROTHSAÏ'S Monument.*

Enter ALFRED A.

ALFRED A.

THIS glow so warm, this beating of the bosom,
These pulses flut'ring, these delicious tremors,
That rush o'er all my frame, when he is near me,
What do they mean? Alas!—I fear, I fear,
I love him more than I confess'd to Rothsay,
Yea more than to myself I dare confess.
O Melville! had it been my happy fate,
To charm thy noble heart like yon sad wand'rer,
I would—O heavens! what would I not have done,
To make each hour, each minute of thy life,
Pass as in Paradise! Yet ev'n the bliss,
I must not share myself, shall be my work:
That once completed, and Vimonda thine,
My task is finish'd.

Enter VIMONDA.

VIMONDA.

Where is my Alfreda?
She knows not to deceive. Give me thine arm;
And

And while I live, O never leave me more.
If 'tis hard service, trust me, 'twill be short.

ALFREDA.

My dearest Lady, or if humble duty,
Embolden'd by thy kindness, may presume,
My dearest friend I'll call thee, and with sighs,
Earnest as e'er thy lover breath'd before thee,
Intreat thee tell me, why these burning tears,
And why admittance was denied Lord Melville?

VIMONDA.

What thou wilt not believe, 'tis vain to tell
thee.
Oft didst thou sooth my fond delusive dreams,
While I lov'd Melville.—Cruel, cruel fate!
Must he be lov'd no more?—Yes, thou hast
made,
In praising him, the longest day seem brief.
Alas, Alfreda! thou hast but conspir'd
With my own foolish heart to ruin me.
I, like a cygnet flumb'ring on the stream,
Lull'd by soft gales and waves that murmur
glide,
Have floated through sweet woods and fragrant
meads;
Now wak'd by roaring torrents, lo, I hang
A moment struggling on the precipice;

But fainting soon, I quit my feeble hold,
And shoot in darkness to the yawning deep.

ALFREDA.

Has Melville been the cause of this?—Im-
possible!
Some subtle villain—some mean cringing coward,
Who skulks in darkness, like his kindred fiends,
With foul and pestilential lies hath blasted
The fame and fair opinion of thy lover.
Is it not so?

VIMONDA.

No; nothing has been told me.
Things have been pointed out of blackest proof,
Which I, deluded, could not mark before.

ALFREDA.

Deluded! ay, most certain! But 'tis now
Delusion holds thee; all before was fair,
And bright as day. Shall circumstances
Of vague report, uncertain observation,
And doubtful import, form a proof so strong;
That the high fame acquir'd by many years
Of glory and of truth must fall before it?
What — shall this matchless youth — this youth
so lately
The idol of thy heart, be meanly watch'd,
For broken phrases, hints, insinuations,

To form a tale of slander; and condemn'd,
Perhaps, ev'n unaccus'd?

VIMONDA:

Would it were so! . . .
Would he were far from hence, ev'n unaccus'd!
For that most dreadful office I must take,
And charge him with such crimes as Heav'n will
blush at.

ALFREDA.

Hear me.—If thou regard'st thy love and life,
Or fear'st distraction, vain remorse, and death,
Abandon this design.—Should you accuse him,
His gen'rous soul, conscious of innocence,
Will rise indignant at the mean suspicion,
And scorn reply; or if reply be deign'd,
It will be dreadful, not to plead excuse,
But to defy the proof. Avoid it therefore,
Go to him—fly—and even on thy knees
Confess thou'st wrong'd him, and implore his
pardon.

Be sure that, ere to-morrow's sun shall set,
You'll bless me for this counsel.

VIMONDA.

'Tis in vain—
I've pledg'd my faith, and on the surest grounds,
Ev'n here, and at this very hour, to charge him

With

With Rothsay's death. Dundore, at my request,
Now brings him. Help me to the air a little.
But for a little shall I need thy help.
Thou canst not think what this poor bosom feels:
Another shock will end its throbs for ever.
This way—I tremble but to look upon him.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter DUNDORE and MELVILLE.

DUNDORE.

Thus unfought kindness often is receiv'd
Unthankfully. Thou chafest and frown'st at me,
Because I warn thee of the bursting storm,
And counsel thee in time to 'scape its fury—

MELVILLE.

Thy warning and thy counsel equally
Deserve my scorn. What, thou would'st have
me fly?

I do believe thee there; but not one word
Touching the cause thou giv'st me. No! Vi-
monda

Is of a soul too simple, and too gen'rous,
E'er to suspect without the strongest proof,
Or to condemn ev'n one she hates unheard;
But where she loves, it were impiety
To say, to think, she can admit a doubt
So horrible.

H 2

D U N -

DUNDORE.

Fool that I was, to waste
 My courtesy on thee! Mark me, young Lord,
 Not to enjoy thy secret conference,
 To this sequester'd corner have I brought thee;
 To me thy presence never was so gracious;
 But by express command of her whose love
 Thou vainly vaunt'st. — Doubt this — deny it,
 In such rude terms as fit thy peevish spleen;
 Few moments shall confound thee. — Lo, she
 comes.
 Mark if she meet thee with a lover's look.

Enter VIMONDA and ALFREDA.

ALFREDA.

Once more I charge thee stop — forbear —
 retire!
 By Heav'n, by all things dear; by fame, by
 virtue,
 Thy blameless lover's life, thy father's peace!
 What have I said? — Forego this fatal purpose!

VIMONDA.

I hear thee not; — the hand of fate is on me;
 Stern justice calls me, and my father's shade
 Points to his gaping wounds, and chides delay.
 Thou Pow'r supreme, who mad'st me, and who
 know'st

Each

Each trembling fibre of my tender frame,
 Each movement of my weak, my rending heart,
 In this dread hour support me! — O, inspire me,
 Lost in dark doubts — all feeble, faint, and dying,
 With pow'r to act the duty of a daughter,
 Then grant me soon a silent grave; on earth
 I have no more to hope, no more to fear!

[Rises, goes to the tomb, and lifts the sword.]

Lord Melville, by the faith thou ow'st to knight-
 hood,

Tell where thou hadst this weapon?

MELVILLE *[aside.]*

'Tis ev'n so.

She dares to think me base! — had this been told
 me

By saints, by angels, I had not believ'd it.

ALFREDA.

O do not hesitate, my Lord! — reply!
 Thou art belied most foully; but the lady
 Is not to blame. Tell them th' eventful tale;
 And tell besides thou canst produce a witness,
 To vouch for all thou say'st.

DUNDORE.

Here's a kind girl!
 What, silent still with such a ready prompter?
 This looks like innocence!

MEL.

Infernal villain!
I can reply to thee. This is thy work;
Which thou, be sure, shalt answer to my sword.
Withdraw with me.

DUNDORE.

O awful pow'r of conscience!
I marvel not, this place is irksome to thee.
That warlike figure shakes thee; that sad tomb
Recalls the bloody night, and strikes thee mute.

VIMONDA.

O torture! misery!—Alfreda, hear—
See—he's amaz'd, and dares not risk denial!

MELVILLE.

Madam, I am not wont, with idle words,
To vouch my truth. Never, till this curs'd hour,
Has it been question'd. 'Tis your cruel pleasure
To think me false. I should in vain repeat,
What now is disbeliev'd. Therefore to you
I bow in silence; and in pain must bear
Your hardest thoughts. But if there breathes a
man,

Who dares step forth, and with a villain's voice
Accuse me of this fact,—I throw my gage;
To meet him in the very throat of death,
And there deny it as becomes a soldier.

DUN-

DUNDORE.

I take it up, as champion for the lady;
And do maintain, before this sacred marble,
That, like a coward traitor, thou in secret
The noble Rothsay slew'st; that his fair daughter,
This beauteous unsuspecting innocence,
Thou didst, by lies and damned plots, deceive;
And that for thee his spirit cannot rest,
But nightly wanders here, and groans for ven-
geance.

Enter ROTHSAÏ from behind the Tomb.

VIMONDA.

'Tis there!—'tis there!—Great God, it is my
father!

ROTHSAÏ.

Yes, thy fond father, who with rapture sees
His daughter's virtue. [*Runs and embraces her.*]

VIMONDA.

Earth and skies! he speaks!
I feel him still alive to love and bless me!

DUNDORE [*aside.*]

Alive! Demons of hell! what curst mischance
Preserv'd him?—If he knew us—no! he could
not—

This

This may be managed yet.—My noble lord,
Such welcome as an humble friend can give;
Struck with amaze, and unexpected pleasure;
Accept from me.

ROTHSAY.

Dundore, my friend, my son,
How shall I thank thee to thy worth's desert?
I have heard all,—thy zeal,—and his confusion.
Be calm, Vimonda; why so pale and trembling?
Thou seest me safe and happy. Fair Alfreda,
What think'st thou of my false suspicions now?
Canst thou, all partial as thou art to Melville,
The slightest veil invent to hide his guilt?

ALFREDA.

It were a vain invention. Guilt and Melville
Can never meet.

ROTHSAY.

Degen'rate, wretched youth!
Thy father is most happy, that he sleeps
Safe in his peaceful tomb: How would it grieve
The brave companion of my youthful battles,
To see his son thus branded for a villain!

MELVILLE.

My Lord, this idle railing I despise.
An old man, and Vimonda's father too,

Shall

Shall not unsheath my sword. My fame traduced
Is lodged with righteous Heav'n to vindicate;
And ne'er did time creep with a heavier pace,
Ev'n in the long hours of expecting love,
Than now, till I can meet this—famous cham-
pion
In mortal strife.

DUNDORE.

To-morrow, when the sun,
With earliest ray, shall gild the eastern cliffs,
I will await thee at the castle-gate.
Rothsay himself be umpire of the field,
And fame and fair Vimonda grace the victor.

MELVILLE.

Now thou talk'st honourably, and I thank thee.
Till then I will retire. Farewel to all.
Vimonda—not one look?—not one short glance?
Patience, kind Heav'n, but for one weary day!
To-morrow comes—I will not live despis'd. [*Exit.*]

ROTHSAY.

Fine brav'ry! He has learn'd the trick of
boasting.
But what avails it?—Ha—why droop'st thou,
girl?
Art thou my daughter? Dost thou thus receive me,
With tears, and bursting fobs, cold looks, and
trembling?

I

Thou

Thou hadst been pleas'd still to believe me dead,
So thy vile minion had remain'd unquestion'd.

VIMONDA.

O cruel doubt! My lord, my father, hear me!
I'll speak but sadly, for my heart is heavy,
And some cold weakness creeps about my breast;
But oh! if ere thy child was dear to thee,
Forbid this savage combat.

ROTHSAY.

No, Vimonda;

It cannot be; th' appeal is made to Heaven.

ALFRED.

No, hold it sure, I would it were this mo-

ment!
Lady, thou know'st not Melville: Hadst thou

seen him

On Joppa's vale, or by Damascus' wall,
Impatient spurring on his fiery steed,
Rushing where thickest stood th' Arabian ranks,
Now plung'd and lost amid the battle's tumult,
Now quickly rearing his white helm again
From out the scatter'd squadrons, fiercest chiefs
Shrinking beneath his arm, — O thou wouldst smile
At this contemptible, this cringing villain;
Who is no more oppos'd to Melville's sword,
Than to the headlong storm the dustle's down.

VIMONDA.

VIMONDA.

His matchless force in arms I know full well;
And speak not as in dread of danger for him.
I know not what I speak. Too late, I fear,
That past redress I've wrong'd him. O my Lord,
That doubtful shape in which thou canst conceal'd,
Inspir'd such desperate things, so fear'd my heart,
Each thought in blood and vengeance dyed so deep,

That in mere frenzy I have held for proofs
The slightest trifles. Now thy safety breaks
My blind delusion.

ROTHSAY.

No, unnatural girl,
Thine impious love deceives thy better judgment,
Go—if thou fear'st a father's dreadful curse,
Dare not another word to plead for him.
Beware!

VIMONDA.

I have no father—lover—friend!
Alfreda—thou too hatest me!

ALFREDA.

No; Heav'n knows,
I'd give my life this day had never been.
Cruel old man, what miseries await thee!

Far better in the dungeon hadst thou died,
Than in thy dotage here to work such ruin.
I care not for thy frown—no nor thy curse.
Thou know'st me well; and after what I've told
thee,

Were not suspicion rooted in thy soul,
This villain's accusation thou wouldst scorn.
Suspect!—if thou for ever must suspect,
Why stands he free?—When thou wast stabb'd
by ruffians,

I have inform'd thee where Lord Melville was.
But where was this dark, dismal, gloomy man,
Whose face invites the question?—Where was
he?

DUNDORE [*aside.*]

She shakes me. Curses blast her bitter
tongue!—

What slanders thou hast told my friend; I know
not;

Nor what thou know'st, nor what thou art I care.
I judge thee some familiar, some convenient
Of this deceitful youth, placed here by him,
With artful speech to taint thy lady's ear,
And well prepared in all to take his part.
Now, in despair of clearing him, thy cunning
Flies off, and fain would fix the guilt on me.
Thou art beneath resentment—but to-morrow
Thine insults shall sit heavy on my sword. [*Exit.*]

VIMONDA.

VIMONDA.

O help me to my bow'r!

ROTHSAY.

For his conjecture
There may be cause. Alfreda, tell me—

ALFREDA.

No—I'll tell thee nothing.
Come, gentle Lady, come; we'll go together,
And weep thy father's weakness. Do not sob so—
Joy may return—to-morrow we shall smile,

VIMONDA.

All joy is dead; and I shall smile no more.

[*Exeunt VIM. ALF.*]

Enter BARNARD.

BARNARD [*aside.*]

Poison! pernicious slave!—I cannot bear it.
Lord Rothsay lives, and I may still be faithful,

ROTHSAY.

Ha—who art thou?

BARNARD.

A wretch,
Unfit to tread the earth, to breathe the air;
But chiefly most unfit, thou good old Lord,
To stain with trait'rous steps thy noble presence.

And

And O, when I have told my horrid tale,
If thy good sword would open this vile breast,
My pangs, my tears, and my deep penitence,
Perhaps might hallow ev'n a wretch's death,
And Heav'n accept the sacrifice!

ROTHSAY,
A KENTIAN.

Be brief.

I know thee not—what art thou?

BARNARD.

A villain, hadst thou known of—
Whose face, plow'd up by guilt and deep despair,
No longer bears the likenefs of poor Barnard.

ROTHSAY.

Barnard!—it is. Most welcome. In good
time

Thou comest, mine ancient, faithful follower,
To see my wrongs redress'd. Give me thy hand.

BARNARD.

Never, brave gen'rous Lord, I never can,
Did I not tell thee that I was a villain?—
I come to prove it. By to-morrow's dawn,
Thou reckon'st on Lord Melville's blood as shed
By just appointment?

ROTHSAY.

With thee doubt it, Barnard?

What

What else can happen, when in lists of death
A recreant traitor and a true knight meet,
Appealing to just Heav'n?

BARNARD.

So 'tis believ'd;

And if 'tis true, thou shalt behold Dundore
Breathe out his gloomy soul, raving for mercy
In vain; while gallant Melville—

ROTHSAY.

What of Melville?
Is he not base? to truth and virtue dead?
A mean, dissembling, ruthless hypocrite?
Almost a coward?

BARNARD.

No: Yon glorious sun,
That shines so bright; regardless of our woes,
Sees not in his aerial round a youth
Braver, nor nobler, kinder, nor more injured.
If thou couldst know how he reveres thee, Rothsay;
If thou couldst know, with what pure fervent pas-
sion
He loves, he doats on thy unhappy daughter—

ROTHSAY.

O if I knew, indeed!—If thou couldst give
Shadow of truth, or probability,

To

To these strange words,—what joy, what rapture
yet!

There's not a deed so black thou canst have done,
Which I'd not pardon—even tho' thy hand
Had borne the dagger that attack'd my life.

BARNARD.

By Heav'n, it did! and let not Heav'n shed
mercy

On my last perilous hour, if what I tell thee
Be not fair truth! My heart Dundore impos'd,
By thousand arts to fiends like him well known;
Robb'd me of all the heav'n-born sensibility,
Which once could shake my frame at thoughts of
guilt;

Wrought me at last to lift this cursed arm
Against my master's life. The two assassins,
Who laid thee bleeding on the bank of Tweed,
Were only he and I.

ROTHSAY.

O where is Melville?
How I have wrong'd him!—Barnard, this con-
fession
Makes me thy friend for ever. How Vimonda
Will smile at this!—Away, in search of Melville.

BARNARD.

My Lord, I saw him now, with troubled look,

And

And wav'ring pace, advancing to the wood.
He is not safe—

ROTHSAY.

But if Vimonda's arms,
Twining around him, be good sanctuary,
He shall be safe, old man.—Come, follow me.
Heav'n smiles once more. My life of late has
been

Like a long journey through a land of storms:
Involv'd in dreary fogs, all day I've toil'd,
Oft drench'd in bitter show'rs, oft scar'd by thun-
der;

But now the ev'ning sun beams out serene,
Beneath some peaceful shade I'll lay me down,
Enjoy the calm, and sink in happy sleep. [*Exeunt.*]

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

K

ACT