

Excerpts from the novel, play, and libretto

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Final Scene (play)

*Armand Duval, believing that his lover **Marguerite Gautier** has betrayed him, has insulted her at a party and thrown money in her face. What he does not know, however, is that she has left him only at the request of his father, **Georges Duval**, pleading on behalf of Armand's sister who is about to get married. Marguerite, who is terminally ill with consumption, retires to a small apartment with her maid **Nanine**, and is close to death. Belatedly realizing the depth of Armand's love for Marguerite, his father has written to him explaining what really happened. The young man rushes to Paris to be with her once more.*

ARMAND

Here I am, Marguerite, so repentant, so guilty, I did not dare to cross your threshold. If I had not met Nanine, I would still be in the street, weeping and praying. Do not curse me, Marguerite! My father has told me everything in a letter. I was so far from you; I did not know where to go to flee my love and my remorse.... I dashed off like a madman, traveling night and day, without rest, without sleep, pursued by a terrible foreboding, imagining your house draped in black. Oh, if I have not found you, I would be dead, since it is I who would have killed you. I have not seen my father again. Marguerite, tell me you forgive both of us. Ah, how good it is to see you!

MARGUERITE

Forgive you, dear friend? I am the only one to blame. But how could I have done otherwise? I wanted only your happiness, even at the expense of my own. But your father will not separate us any longer. I know I have changed since you last saw me, but I am young and will regain my beauty since I will be happy. You will forget the past. Today, we will begin a new life!

ARMAND

I'll never leave you again. Listen, Marguerite, we'll leave this house right now. We will never see Paris again. My father knows your true nature. He will love you as his son's good angel. My sister is married now. The future is ours.

MARGUERITE

Talk to me, talk to me! I feel my soul reborn in your words, my health return with your breath. I was saying this morning that a single thing could save me. I did not expect you, yet

here you are! We will not lose any more time, and if life is passing by me, I shall seize it as it passes. Did you hear? Nichette is getting married to Gustave this morning. We'll go; it will do us good to go into a church, to pray to God, and enjoy the happiness of others. What a surprise Providence has saved for me as a New Year's present! But tell me again that you love me.

ARMAND

Yes, I love you, Marguerite. My whole life is yours.

Nanine comes into the room

MARGUERITE

Nanine, give my my things. I want to go out.

ARMAND

Good Nanine! Thank you for taking such good care of her.

MARGUERITE

We would talk about you every day, just the two of us; no one else would dare mention your name. It was Nanine who consoled me, who said we would see each other again. She was not lying. You have seen such beautiful places; you must take me there.

She stumbles

ARMAND

What is it, Marguerite! You've gone so pale...!

MARGUERITE, *with difficulty*

Nothing, my love, nothing! Happiness cannot so quickly to a heart so long deprived of it without causing a little strain.

She sits and allows her head to fall back.

ARMAND

Marguerite, speak to me! Marguerite, I beg you!

MARGUERITE, *recovering*

Don't be afraid, my love. You know I've always been prone to these sudden weaknesses. But they quickly pass. See, I'm smiling, I'm strong! It's only the astonishment of being alive that upsets me.

ARMAND, *taking her hand*

You're trembling!

MARGUERITE

It's nothing! Come on, Nanine, give me a shawl, a hat...

ARMAND, *with dread*

My God! My God!

MARGUERITE

I can't do it!

She falls onto the sofa.

ARMAND

Nanine, run quickly for the doctor!

MARGUERITE

Yes, yes. Tell him that Armand has returned, that I want to live, that I must live...! [*Nanine goes out*]. But if your return cannot save me, nothing can save me. Sooner or later, every human being must die of the very thing that kept them alive. I lived for love; I die of love.

ARMAND

Hush, Marguerite; you will live, you must!

MARGUERITE

Sit beside me, as close as you can, Armand, and listen well. I had a sudden moment of rage against death, but I shouldn't have done; death is inevitable. I even thank it, because it waited for you before claiming me. If your father had not known I was going to die, he would never have written to you.

ARMAND

Don't speak like that, Marguerite; you'll drive me mad. Don't tell me you're going to die. Tell me you don't believe it, that it cannot be, that you forbid it!

MARGUERITE

Although I don't want to die, dear friend, I have to yield, because it is God's will. If I were a virgin saint, then perhaps I would weep at the idea of leaving a world in which you still live, because the future would be full of promise, and my chaste past would give me a claim on it. When I am dead, everything you recall of me will be pure; while I am still alive, there will always be a stain on my love.... Believe me, God is doing the right thing.

ARMAND, *rising*

Ah, I can't breathe!

MARGUERITE, *holding him back*

What, is it I who should be giving you courage? Listen, do what I say. Open that drawer, and take out the locket... it is my portrait, made when I was still beautiful. I had it made for you. Look after it; it will help your memory later. But if one day there is some young woman you love and you marry—as it's right you should, as I wish that you should—and if she finds this portrait, tell her that it's of a dear friend who, if God permits her a place in the farthest corner of heaven, will be praying every day both for her and for you. If she is jealous of your past, as we women tend to be, if she demands that you get rid of the portrait, do so without a second thought; it is only right, and I forgive you in advance. A woman in love suffers terribly when she feels she is not loved in return. Do you hear me, dear Armand; do you understand?

Nichette enters with alarm, but is relieved to see Marguerite smiling at her and Armand at her feet. Gustave enters after her.

NICHETTE

Dear Marguerite, you wrote that you were dying, but here you are awake and smiling!

ARMAND, *in a low voice*

Gustave, I am so wretched!

MARGUERITE

I'm dying, but I'm happy too, and my happiness hides my death. Look at you two newlyweds! How strange this first life is, and what is in store for the second. You have nothing but happiness ahead. Talk about me sometimes, won't you? Armand, give me your hand. I assure you, it is not difficult to die. [*Gaston enters*] Here is Gaston come to see me. I am glad to see you again, dear Gaston. My happiness made me ungrateful; I had almost forgotten you. [*to Armand*] He has been so good to me.... Ah! How strange...!

She gets up.

ARMAND

What is it

MARGUERITE

The pain has gone... It's like life is coming back... I feel a strength I've never felt before... I'm going to live! Ah, what joy!

She sits and seems to fall asleep.

GASTON

She's sleeping

ARMAND, *with anxiety, then with terror*

Marguerite! Marguerite! Marguerite! [*A great cry. He has to make an effort to tear his hand away from hers. He falls back, stunned.*] She's dead! [*Running to Gustave*] My God! What will become of me?

GUSTAVE, *to Armand*

She loved you well, the poor girl!

NICHETTE, *kneeling beside her*

Sleep in peace, Marguerite! You will be much forgiven, for you have loved so much.

Final Scene (libretto)

Alfredo enters, pale with emotion. They are in each other's arms as they exclaim:

VIOLETTA

Beloved Alfredo! Oh joy!

ALFREDO

My Violetta! Oh, joy!

The fault is mine—I know everything now, dear.

VIOLETTA

I know only that you have come back!

ALFREDO

Let my emotion teach you how I love you.

I cannot live without you.

VIOLETTA

Ah, if you have found me still alive,
it means grief has not the power to kill.

ALFREDO

Forget your sorrow, my adored one,
and forgive my father and me.

VIOLETTA

What is there to forgive? The guilty one is me;
but it was love alone which made me so.

ALFREDO, VIOLETTA

Now neither man nor demon, my angel,
will ever be able to take you away.

Duet-cavatina: Parigi, o cara, noi lasceremo

ALFREDO

From Paris dear, we shall go away,
to live our lives together.
We shall make up for all our heartache,
your health will come back again.
You will be the light of my life,
the future will smile upon us.

VIOLETTA, *echoing him as in a dream*

From Paris dear, we shall go away,
to live our loves together...
We shall make up for all our heartache... etc.

VIOLETTA

No more now, Alfredo let us go to church
to offer thanks
for your return.

She sways, as if to fall.

ALFREDO

You are pale—

VIOLETTA

It is nothing!
Such sudden joy cannot come
to a sorrowing heart without disturbing it.

She throws herself down, upon a chair; her head falls back.

ALFREDO, *holding her up, terrified*

Great God! Violetta!

VIOLETTA, *with great effort*

It's my illness—
A moment of weakness! Now I am strong.
See? I am smiling.

ALFREDO

Ah, cruel destiny!

VIOLETTA

It was nothing. Annina, bring me my dress.

ALFREDO

Now? Wait.

VIOLETTA

No. I want to go out.
*[Annina gives her a dress which she tries to put on,
but is too weak to do so]*
Dear God! I cannot!

ALFREDO

[aside] Heaven! What is this!
[to Annina] Go to call the doctor.

VIOLETTA

Tell him that Alfredo has come back to his love.
Tell him I want to live again.

Annina goes out.

If in returning you have not saved my life,
then nothing on earth can save me.

Duet-cabaletta: *Gran Dio! Morir sì giovine*

VIOLETTA

Ah! Dear God! To die so young.
when I have sorrowed so long!
To die, when now, at last,
I might have ceased my weeping!
Ah, it was but a dream,
my credulous hope;
to sheathe my heart in constancy
was all in vain.

ALFREDO

My very breath of life, sweet
pulse of my heart!
My tears must flow
together with yours.
But more than ever, ah, believe me,
we have need of constancy.
Ah! Do not close
your heart to hope.
Ah, my Violetta, be calm,
your grief is killing me, be calm!

VIOLETTA

Oh, Alfredo, what a cruel end
for our love!

Violetta sinks down upon the sofa. Germont enters, followed after a moment by Dr. Grenvil.

GERMONT

Ah, Violetta!

VIOLETTA

You, sir!

ALFREDO

Father!

VIOLETTA

You had not forgotten me?

GERMONT

I am fulfilling my promise.
I have come to embrace you as a daughter.
O generous woman!

VIOLETTA

Alas, you have come too late!
[*She embraces him.*]
But I am grateful to you.
Grenvil, see? I am dying in the arms
of the only dear ones I have.

GERMONT

What are you saying!
(Oh, heaven, it is true!)

ALFREDO

Do you see her, father?

GERMONT

Don't torture me any longer.
My soul is already devoured by remorse.
Every word she speaks is a thunderbolt.
Oh, rash old man!
Only now do I see the harm I have done.

Meanwhile, with great difficulty, Violetta has opened a secret drawer of her dressing table. She takes from it a medallion and gives it to Alfredo.

VIOLETTA

Come nearer to me—
Listen, beloved Alfredo...

Quartet: Prendi, quest'è l'immagine

VIOLETTA

Take this, it is a portrait
painted some years ago.
It will help you to remember
the one who loved you so.

ALFREDO

Ah, you will not die, don't tell me so—
You must live, my darling.
God did not bring me back to you
to face such a tragedy.

GERMONT

Dear noble victim
of a hopeless love,
forgive me
for having made your heart suffer.

VIOLETTA

If some young girl
in the flower of life
should give her heart to you—
marry her—I wish it.
Then give her this portrait:
Tell her it is the gift
of one who, in heaven among the angels,
prays for her and for you.

GERMONT

As long as my eyes have tears,
so long shall I weep for you.
Fly to the realm of the blessed,
God calls you unto him.

ALFREDO

So soon, oh no, death
cannot take you from me.
Ah, live, or a single coffin
will receive me as well as you.

VIOLETTA, *getting up, as if reinvigorated*

How strange!
The spasms of pain have ceased:
A strange vigour has brought me to life!
Ah! I shall live—
Oh, joy!

She falls down, senseless, upon the sofa.

M. Duval and Marguerite (novel)

*In Dumas' novel, but not the play, the occasion when **Armand's father** visits **Marguerite** to ask her to give him up does not occur in chronological sequence. Instead, Marguerite describes it in one of the letters she writes to **Armand** during her terminal illness. This is the relevant part of that letter.*

Your father had written me a very polite letter, in order that I might consent to see him; he did not present himself quite as he had written. His manner at first was so stiff, insolent, and even threatening, that I had to make him understand that I was in my own house, and that I had no need to render him an account of my life, except because of the sincere affection which I had for his son.

M. Duval calmed down a little, but still went on to say that he could not any longer allow his son to ruin himself over me; that I was beautiful, it was true, but, however beautiful I might be, I ought not to make use of my beauty to spoil the future of a young man by such expenditure as I was causing.

At that there was only one thing to do, to show him the proof that since I was your mistress I had spared no sacrifice to be faithful to you without asking for more money than you had to give me. I showed him the pawn tickets, the receipts of the people to whom I had sold what I could not pawn; I told him of my resolve to part with my furniture in order to pay my debts, and live with you without being a too heavy expense. I told him of our happiness, of how you had shown me the possibility of a quieter and happier life, and he ended by giving in to the evidence, offering me his hand, and asking pardon for the way in which he had at first approached me.

Then he said to me:

“So, madame, it is not by remonstrances or by threats, but by entreaties, that I must endeavour to obtain from you a greater sacrifice than you have yet made for my son.”

I trembled at this beginning.

Your father came over to me, took both my hands, and continued in an affectionate voice:

“My child, do not take what I have to say to you amiss; only remember that there are sometimes in life cruel necessities for the heart, but that they must be submitted to. You are good, your soul has generosity unknown to many women who perhaps despise you, and are less worthy than you. But remember that there is not only the mistress, but the family; that besides love there are duties; that to the age of passion succeeds the age when man, if he is to be respected, must plant himself solidly in a serious position. My son has no fortune, and yet he is ready to abandon to you the legacy of his mother. If he accepted from you the sacrifice which you are on the point of making, his honour and dignity would require him to give you, in exchange for it, this income, which would always put you out of danger of adversity. But he can not accept this sacrifice, because the world, which does not know you, would give a wrong interpretation to this acceptance, and such an interpretation must not tarnish the name which we bear. No one would consider whether Armand loves you, whether you love him, whether this mutual love means happiness to him and redemption to you; they would see only one thing, that Armand Duval allowed a kept woman (forgive me, my child, for what I am forced to say to you) to sell all she had for him. Then the day of reproaches and regrets would arrive, be sure, for you or for others, and you would both bear a chain that you could not sever. What would you do then? Your youth would be lost, my

son's future destroyed; and I, his father, should receive from only one of my children the recompense that I look for from both.

"You are young, beautiful, life will console you; you are noble, and the memory of a good deed will redeem you from many past deeds. During the six months that he has known you Armand has forgotten me. I wrote to him four times, and he has never once replied. I might have died and he not known it!

"Whatever may be your resolution of living otherwise than as you have lived, Armand, who loves you, will never consent to the seclusion to which his modest fortune would condemn you, and to which your beauty does not entitle you. Who knows what he would do then! He has gambled, I know; without telling you of it, I know also, but, in a moment of madness, he might have lost part of what I have saved, during many years, for my daughter's portion, for him, and for the repose of my old age. What might have happened may yet happen.

"Are you sure, besides, that the life which you are giving up for him will never again come to attract you? Are you sure, you who have loved him, that you will never love another? Would you not-suffer on seeing the hindrances set by your love to your lover's life, hindrances for which you would be powerless to console him, if, with age, thoughts of ambition should succeed to dreams of love? Think over all that, madame. You love Armand; prove it to him by the sole means which remains to you of yet proving it to him, by sacrificing your love to his future. No misfortune has yet arrived, but one will arrive, and perhaps a greater one than those which I foresee. Armand might become jealous of a man who has loved you; he might provoke him, fight, be killed. Think, then, what you would suffer in the presence of a father who should call on you to render an account for the life of his son!

"Finally, my dear child, let me tell you all, for I have not yet told you all, let me tell you what has brought me to Paris. I have a daughter, as I have told you, young, beautiful, pure as an angel. She loves, and she, too, has made this love the dream of her life. I wrote all that to Armand, but, absorbed in you, he made no reply. Well, my daughter is about to marry. She is to marry the man whom she loves; she enters an honourable family, which requires that mine has to be no less honourable. The family of the man who is to become my son-in-law has learned what manner of life Armand is leading in Paris, and has declared to me that the marriage must be broken off if Armand continues this life. The future of a child who has done nothing against you, and who has the right of looking forward to a happy future, is in your hands. Have you the right, have you the strength, to shatter it? In the name of your love and of your repentance, Marguerite, grant me the happiness of my child."

I wept silently, my friend, at all these reflections which I had so often made, and which, in the mouth of your father, took a yet more serious reality. I said to myself all that your father dared not say to me, though it had come to his lips twenty times: that I was, after all, only a kept woman, and that whatever excuse I gave for our liaison, it would always look like calculation on my part; that my past life left me no right to dream of such a future, and that I was accepting responsibilities for which my habits and reputation were far from giving any guarantee. In short, I loved you, Armand.

The paternal way in which M. Duval had spoken to me; the pure memories that he awakened in me; the respect of this old man, which I would gain; yours, which I was sure of gaining later on: all that called up in my heart thoughts which raised me in my own eyes with a sort of holy pride, unknown till then. When I thought that one day this old man, who was now imploring me for the future of his son, would bid his

daughter mingle my name with her prayers, as the name of a mysterious friend, I seemed to become transformed, and I felt a pride in myself.

The exaltation of the moment perhaps exaggerated the truth of these impressions, but that was what I felt, friend, and these new feelings silenced the memory of the happy days I had spent with you.

“Tell me, sir,” I said to your father, wiping away my tears, “do you believe that I love your son?”

“Yes,” said M. Duval.

“With a disinterested love?”

“Yes.

“Do you believe that I had made this love the hope, the dream, the forgiveness—of my life?”

“Implicitly.”

“Well, sir, embrace me once, as you would embrace your daughter, and I swear to you that that kiss, the only chaste kiss I have ever had, will make me strong against my love, and that within a week your son will be once more at your side, perhaps unhappy for a time, but cured forever.”

“You are a noble child,” replied your father, kissing me on the forehead, “and you are making an attempt for which God will reward you; but I greatly fear that you will have no influence upon my son.”

“Oh, be at rest, sir; he will hate me.”

I had to set up between us, as much for me as for you, an insurmountable barrier.

I wrote to Prudence to say that I accepted the proposition of the Comte de N., and that she was to tell him that I would sup with her and him. I sealed the letter, and, without telling him what it contained, asked your father to have it forwarded to its address on reaching Paris.

He inquired of me what it contained.

“Your son’s welfare,” I answered.

Your father embraced me once more. I felt two grateful tears on my forehead, like the baptism of my past faults, and at the moment when I consented to give myself up to another man I glowed with pride at the thought of what I was redeeming by this new fault.

It was quite natural, Armand. You told me that your father was the most honest man in the world.

M. DUVAL returned to his carriage, and set out for Paris.

I was only a woman, and when I saw you again I could not help weeping, but I did not give way.

Did I do right? That is what I ask myself to-day, as I lie ill in my bed, that I shall never leave, perhaps, until I am dead.

You are witness of what I felt as the hour of our separation approached; your father was no longer there to support me, and there was a moment when I was on the point of confessing everything to you, so terrified was I at the idea that you were going to hate and despise me.

One thing which you will not believe, perhaps, Armand, is that I prayed God to give me strength; and what proves that he accepted my sacrifice is that he gave me the strength for which I prayed.

At supper I still had need of aid, for I could not think of what I was going to do, so much did I fear that my courage would fail me. Who would ever have said that I, Marguerite Gautier, would have suffered so at the mere thought of a new lover? I drank for forgetfulness, and when I woke next day I was beside the Count.

That is the whole truth, friend. Judge me and pardon me, as I have pardoned you for all the wrong that you have done me since that day.

M. Duval and Marguerite (play)

When Dumas reshaped his novel as a play, it was obvious that he would have to show the above scene in its sequence as a confrontation that we might witness in person, turning reported speech into direct speech. In doing this, he rearranged his original text, putting the various arguments into a quite different order from that in the novel—without knowing it, setting the pattern for the eventual opera libretto.

M. DUVAL, *in the doorway*

Mademoiselle Marguerite Gautier ?

MARGUERITE

I am she, monsieur. To whom do I have the honor of speaking?

M. DUVAL

To M. Duval.

MARGUERITE

To M. Duval!

M. DUVAL

Yes, mademoiselle, to Armand's father.

MARGUERITE, *disturbed*

Armand is not here, monsieur.

M. DUVAL

I know, mademoiselle. But it is with you that I need to make things clear. Please hear me out. My son, mademoiselle, is compromising and ruining himself for you.

MARGUERITE

You are mistaken, monsieur. God be thanked, nobody talks of me any more, and I do not accept money from Armand.

M. DUVAL

That is the question, since your luxury and extravagance are well-known, and my son is a wretch to spend with you the money you obtain from others.

MARGUERITE

Pardon me, monsieur; I am a woman and in my own house, two things that should require your courtesy. The tone in which you speak to me is not what I would expect of a gentleman whom I have the honor of meeting for the first time. And...

M. DUVAL

And...?

MARGUERITE

I beg you to allow me to retire, more for your sake than for my own.

M. DUVAL

I must say, when I hear such language, when I see such manners, I must remind myself that the language is borrowed and the manners acquired. They were right you tell me you are a dangerous woman.

MARGUERITE

Yes, monsieur, dangerous, but to myself, not to others.

M. DUVAL

Dangerous or not, mademoiselle, it's still the fact that Armand is ruining himself for you.

MARGUERITE

I repeat, monsieur, with all the respect that I owe to Armand's father, that you are mistaken.

M. DUVAL

So what is the meaning of this letter from my notary that Armand intends to give you all he owns?

MARGUERITE

I assure you, monsieur, that if Armand has done this, it is without my knowledge, because he knows well that if he had made such an offer I would have refused.

M. DUVAL

All the same, you have not always taken this attitude.

MARGUERITE

That is true, monsieur; but then I was not in love.

M. DUVAL

And now?

MARGUERITE

Now I love him with all the purity a woman can find in the depths of her heart, when God has taken pity on her and given her repentance.

M. DUVAL

What grand phrases you're using now!

MARGUERITE

Listen to me, monsieur.... My God, I know how little one can believe the oaths of a woman like me, but by all I hold dearest in the world, by my love for Armond, I swear to you that I knew nothing of this gift.

M. DUVAL

All the same, mademoiselle, you must be living on something.

MARGUERITE

You force me to tell you something I would rather have kept quiet, monsieur. But because you are Armand's father, I will speak. Since I have known your son, for whom my love has nothing in common with the way those in my circle usually use the word, I have pawned or sold cashmeres, diamonds, jewels, carriages. And when just now that told me that someone was asking for me, I had expected to receive an agent through whom I intend to sell my furniture, my art, my tapestries, and all the rest of the luxury you reproach me for. In short, if you doubt my words, read this bill of sale. Since I was not expecting you, you cannot believe I prepared it just for you.

She gives the bill of sale to Prudence who hands it to him.

M. DUVAL, *reading*

A sale of your furniture, to pay your creditors and send you what remains.... [*He looks at her with astonishment*] Have I been mistaken?

MARGUERITE

Yes, monsieur, you are mistaken, or rather you have been deceived. Yes, I have been foolish; yes, I have had a sad past; but now I truly love, I would give every last drop of my blood to wipe it out. Whatever people have told you, I have a heart, I am a good person; you will see that when you know me better. It's Armand who has transformed me! He loved me; he loves me still. You are his father, so you must be as good as he is. I beg you, don't speak badly of me; he would believe you, as he loves you. And I too respect and love you, since you are his father.

M. DUVAL

Pardon me, madame; I approached you badly just now. I did not know you, and could not foresee all I would find in you. I was angry at my son for his silence and ingratitude, and I blamed you for it. Forgive me, madame.

MARGUERITE

I thank you for your kind words, monsieur.

M. DUVAL

Yet, in the name of these fine feelings that I must endeavour to obtain from you a greater sacrifice than you have yet made for my son.

MARGUERITE

Oh, monsieur, do not say more, I beg you! You are going to ask me something terrible, still more terrible than I have always feared. Fate brought you here; I was too happy.

M. DUVAL

I am not angry any more. We are talking like two honest people, having the same love, but with different purposes, both intent, I think you'll agree, to prove our love to the one dearest to us.

MARGUERITE

Yes, monsieur, yes.

M. DUVAL

Your soul has a generosity unknown to many women. But it is as a father that I must address you, Marguerite, a father who begs for the happiness of his two children.

MARGUERITE

His two children?

M. DUVAL

Yes, Marguerite, his two children. I have a daughter, young, beautiful, pure as an angel. She loves a young man, and she, too, has made this love the dream of her life; but she has a right to her love. I intend to see them married. I wrote all that to Armand, but, absorbed in you, he made no reply; I might be dead for all he will acknowledge it. Well, my daughter Blanche is about to marry a good man. She is to enter an honourable family, which requires that mine has to be no less honorable. The world has certain standards, especially the world of the provinces. Purified though you may be in Armand's eyes, and in mine from what you have just told me, you are not pure in the eyes of a world that cannot look beyond your past, and who will shut their doors to without pity. The family of the man who is to become my son-in-law has learned what manner of life Armand is leading in Paris, and has declared to me that the marriage must be broken off if Armand continues this life. The future of a child who has done you no harm could still be shattered by you. Marguerite, in the name of your love, grant me the happiness of my daughter.

MARGUERITE

You are good, monsieur, to speak to me like this, and how could I refuse such words? Yes, I understand you; you are right. I'll leave Paris; I'll separate from Armand for a while. It will be painful, but I'll do it for you, so you have nothing to reproach me with. Anyway, the joy of our reunion will erase the pain of separation. You will allow him to write to me from time to time, and when his sister is married...

M. DUVAL

Thank you, Marguerite, thank you; but it is something else that I am asking.

MARGUERITE

Something else! What more could you ask of me?

M. DUVAL

Listen to me, my child, and let's face frankly what we have to do. A brief absence would not be enough.

MARGUERITE

You want me to give up Armand completely?

M. DUVAL

It's the only way.

MARGUERITE

Never! Don't you know how much we love each other? Don't you know that I have neither friends, nor parents, nor family? That he has sworn to be all that to me and more, and that I have enfolded my whole life into his? You may not know, then, that I am suffering from a mortal illness, and only have a year or so to live? To leave Armand, monsieur, would be to kill myself right now!

M. DUVAL

Come, let's be calm and not exaggerate. You are young, you are beautiful, and your illness is probably no more than the fatigue of a hectic life; you certainly won't die before the age when one is glad to die. I'm asking an enormous sacrifice, I know, but the circumstances demand it. Listen: you have known Armand for three months, and you love him—but has so new a love the right to destroy an entire future? And it is my son's future that you would be destroying by staying with him. Are you sure of the eternity of this love? Might you not be mistaken too? And if suddenly—too late—you find that you do not love my son, if you fall in love with someone else...? Pardon, Marguerite, but your past gives grounds for such questions.

MARGUERITE

Never, monsieur; never have I loved, and never will I love like I love him!

M. DUVAL

All right, you are not deceiving yourself. But what if he is? As his age, can one make a lifetime's commitment? Doesn't the heart constantly change its affections? It's the same heart that, as a son, loves his parents more than anybody else; as a husband, loves his wife more than his parents; and later as a father, loves his children more than parents, wives, and mistresses. Nature is demanding because it is so prodigal. It is possible that you will both deceive each other, even probable. Instead, look at the realities and the certainties. You hear me, I hope?

MARGUERITE

My God, how I hear you!

M. DUVAL

You are ready to sacrifice everything for my son. But for this sacrifice to be equal, what could he give you in exchange? He would take your loveliest years, and later, when you have had enough—and that time will come—what will happen then? Either he will behave like an ordinary man and, throwing your past in your face, he will leave you telling you that you are worth little more. Or he will behave like a gentleman, and marry you, or at least keep you by his side. This liaison, or marriage, which has neither chastity as its foundation, nor religion as its support, nor a family as its outcome, might be excusable in a young man, but not in a mature one. What ambition might he pursue? What career would be open to him? What support could I expect from my son, after giving twenty years to his welfare? Your affair is not the sympathy of two pure souls, the union of two innocent affections. It is passion, both mundane and human, born of caprice on one hand and fantasy on the other. In short, your love is a result and not a cause. What will become of it when you have both grown old? Who can say that the wrinkles on your brow will not rip the veil from his eyes, or that his love will not die with your youth?

MARGUERITE

Oh, that's too true!

M. DUVAL

Imagine yourselves both aged, both deserted, both isolated, both useless. What memories would be left? What would you have achieved? My son and you have followed opposite paths, which crossed for a moment by sheer chance, but which logic separates for ever. In the kind of life you have chosen, you can never be sure what will happen next. You have been happy for three months; don't spoil that happiness by looking for a continuity that is impossible. Keep it as a memory in your heart; it will give you strength, but that is all you can expect of it. One day you will be proud of what you did; all your life you will have your own good esteem. I speak as a man who knows life; as a father, I can only beg. Prove, Marguerite, that you truly love my son, and take courage!

MARGUERITE, *to herself*

So no matter what she does, a fallen woman can never have peace. God may pardon her, but the world condemns. By what right can you claim a place in the heart of a family, reserved for the chaste and pure? By saying you're in love—but what kind of justification is that? No matter how much proof you give of your love, nobody will believe you, and nor should they. Who are you to speak of love and a future? What are these new words? Think of the mud of your past life, and ask what man would want to call you his wife, what child would want to call you mother?

You are right, monsieur, in what you say. I have said it to myself countless times in terror; but since I was alone when I said it, I did not have to listen to the bitter end. But you spell it out; it's the truth, and I must obey. You speak in the name of your daughter, and you are right to invoke her names, since it's for the sake of that innocent young girl that I sacrifice my happiness. One day you can tell her that it comes from a woman who only had one hope, one thought, one dream in this world... but who at the invocation of her name, gave all that up, crushed her heart between her own hands, and died—for I shall die, monsieur, and then perhaps God will pardon me.

M. DUVAL, *moved despite himself*

Poor woman!

MARGUERITE

You pity me, monsieur, and I see you're crying. Thank you for those tears; they will give me the strength to do as you ask. You say that I must break with your son for his peace of mind, for his honor, and for his future; so how should I do it? Tell me; I'm ready.

M. DUVAL

Tell him you no longer love him.

MARGUERITE, *with a sad smile*

He won't believe me.

M. DUVAL

Then leave.

MARGUERITE

He'll follow me.

M. DUVAL

Then...

MARGUERITE

Tell me, monsieur, do you believe I love Armand... with a disinterested love?

M. DUVAL

Yes, Marguerite.

MARGUERITE

Do you believe that I had made this love the joy and the forgiveness of my life?

M. DUVAL

Implicitly.

MARGUERITE

Well, monsieur, embrace me once, as you would embrace your daughter, and I swear to you that that kiss, the only chaste kiss I have ever had, will make me strong against my love, and within a week your son will once more be at your side, perhaps unhappy for a time, but cured forever. And I assure you that he will never know what took place between us.

M. DUVAL, *embracing Marguerite*

You are a noble child, Marguerite, but I greatly fear...

MARGUERITE

Have no doubt, monsieur; he will hate me.

Germont and Violetta (libretto)

GERMONT

Mademoiselle Valéry?

VIOLETTA

Yes.

GERMONT

I am Alfredo's father!

VIOLETTA, surprised

You!

GERMONT

Yes, father of this reckless lad, who is rushing to his ruin because of you.

VIOLETTA, *rising, with resentment*

I, sir, am a woman and in my own home.
Now please excuse me,
more for your sake than for mine.

She is on the point of going out.

GERMONT

(What spirit!) And yet—

VIOLETTA

You have been badly advised.

GERMONT

He wants to give you all his possessions.

VIOLETTA

So far, he hasn't dared, I should refuse.

GERMONT, *looking about him*

Such luxury—

VIOLETTA

This paper is a secret from everyone.
But it shall not be from you.

She gives him the paper.

GERMONT, *after looking at it briefly*

Heavens! What is this!
You wish to sell
everything you own?
Ah, why does your past accuse you so?

VIOLETTA

The past does not exist—I love Alfredo now;
God wiped out my past with my repentance.

GERMONT

These are truly noble sentiments!

VIOLETTA

Ah, how good to hear these words from you!

GERMONT

And in the name
of these sentiments, I ask a sacrifice—

VIOLETTA, *rising*

Ah, no, do not say it.
Certainly you would ask some frightening thing.
I knew it—I expected you—I was too happy.

GERMONT

Alfredo's father
asks you to decide the fate
of his two children.

VIOLETTA

His two children!

GERMONT

Yes.

Quasi-Cavatina

God blessed me with a daughter,
like an angel in her purity;
if Alfredo refuses to return
to the bosom of his family,
the young man in love and beloved in turn,
who was soon to marry my daughter,
would reject this bond
on which our happiness depends.
Ah, do not be the cause of love's roses
changing into thorns.
Do not let your heart refuse
what I so fervently ask of you. No! No!

VIOLETTA

Ah, I understand—I must leave Alfredo
for a time. It will be painful
for me—yet—

GERMONT

That is not what I ask.

VIOLETTA

Heaven, what more can you ask!
I offered much!

GERMONT

But not enough.

VIOLETTA

You want me to give him up forever?

GERMONT

You must!

VIOLETTA

No—never! No, no!

Quasi-cabaletta

Can you not see what tremendous,
burning love I feel for him,
I, who have no friends or family
among the living?
Don't you know that Alfredo swore
that I should find everything in him?
Don't you know that my life
is endangered by a terrible disease,
that I have but a short time to live?
To leave Alfredo forever?
Ah, the anguish would be so cruel
that I should prefer to die.

GERMONT

The sacrifice is great,
but hear me out patiently.
You are still young and beautiful;
in time...

VIOLETTA

Ah, say nothing more.
I understand—I cannot—
I shall never love anyone but him.

GERMONT

That may well be—but men are often fickle.

VIOLETTA

Oh God!

Duet introduction

GERMONT

Once time has staled
the delights of love,
tedium will follow quickly.
Then what? Think—
Even the deepest feelings
can bring you no balm,

since this bond was never
blessed by heaven.

VIOLETTA

It's true! It's true!

GERMONT

Ah, then lay aside this beguiling dream.

VIOLETTA

It's true! It's true!

GERMONT

Be rather the consoling angel of my family.
Violetta, think—you still have time.
Young lady, it is God who inspires
these words on a father's lips.

VIOLETTA

All hope of rising again is forever gone.
For the wretched woman who erred one day!
Even if God grants her mercy charitably
Man will always be implacable.

Duet-cavatina

VIOLETTA, *weeping*

Oh, tell your daughter, so lovely and pure,
that a poor and wretched woman,
who has but one precious thing in life—
will sacrifice it for her—and then will die!

GERMONT

Weep, weep, poor girl. I see now
that the sacrifice I asked could not be greater.
Within my heart I feel what you must suffer;
be brave, your noble heart will conquer all.

VIOLETTA

Tell me what I must do.

GERMONT

Tell him you don't love him.

VIOLETTA

He won't believe me.

GERMONT

Go away, then.

VIOLETTA

He will follow me.

GERMONT

Then—

VIOLETTA

Embrace me as if I were your daughter -
it will give me strength.

They embrace.

Soon he will be yours
again, but desperately sad.
[pointing to the garden]
Out there you may wait
to comfort him.

Violetta sits down to write.

GERMONT

What are you doing?

VIOLETTA

If I told you, you would oppose my wish.

GERMONT

Generous woman! What can I do for you?

Duet-cabaletta

VIOLETTA

I shall die! Let him not
curse my memory;
when I am dead, let someone
tell him of my suffering.

GERMONT

No, generous woman, you must live,
and live in happiness.
Heaven one day
will recompense these tears.

VIOLETTA

Let him know the sacrifice
which I made for love—
for the very last breath of life
will be for him alone.

GERMONT

And your heart's sacrifice
will be rewarded.
Then your heart will be proud
of so noble an act.

VIOLETTA

Someone is coming...you must leave.

GERMONT

Oh, how grateful I am to you!

VIOLETTA

Leave me. We may never see each other again.

They embrace.

VIOLETTA, GERMONT

May you be happy.

VIOLETTA

Goodbye!

GERMONT

Goodbye!

VIOLETTA

Let him know the sacrifice...

GERMONT

Yes.

VIOLETTA

...which I made for love...
...for the very last breath of life...
Goodbye!

GERMONT, VIOLETTA

May you be happy... goodbye!

Germont goes out through the garden door.

