

# Blood Wedding

*Translated by Gwynne Edwards*

HEANOR GATE SCIENCE COLL.  
KIRKLEY DRIVE  
HEANOR  
DERBYSHIRE  
DE75 7RA

This translation of *Blood Wedding* was first performed at the Contact Theatre, Manchester on 11 November 1987, with the following cast:

THE MOTHER	Maureen Morris
THE BRIDE	Sara Mair Thomas
THE MOTHER-IN-LAW/GIRL 2	Anni Domingo
THE NEIGHBOUR/THE SERVANT	Fenella Norman
THE WIFE OF LEONARDO	Charlotte Harvey
GIRL 1/DEATH (as a beggar woman)	Joan Carol Williams
LEONARDO	Tyrone Huggins
THE BRIDEGROOM	Ewen Cummins
THE FATHER OF THE BRIDE/THE MOON	Wyllie Longmore
YOUTH	Mark Crowshaw
WOODCUTTERS/GIRLS/GUESTS	played by members of the
Company	

*Directed by* Anthony Clark

*Designed by* Netie Edwards

*Musical Director/Composer* Mark Vibrans

*Lighting by* Stephen Henbest

*Choreography by* David Needham

## Act One

### Scene One

*Room painted yellow.*

BRIDEGROOM (*entering*). Mother.

MOTHER. What?

BRIDEGROOM. I'm going.

MOTHER. Where to?

BRIDEGROOM. To the vineyard. (*He starts to go out.*)

MOTHER. Wait.

BRIDEGROOM. Do you want something?

MOTHER. Son, your food.

BRIDEGROOM. Leave it. I'll eat grapes. Give me the knife.

MOTHER. What for?

BRIDEGROOM (*laughing*). To cut them.

MOTHER (*muttering and looking for it*). The knife, the knife . . . Damn all of them and the scoundrel who invented them.

BRIDEGROOM. Let's change the subject.

MOTHER. And shotguns . . . and pistols . . . even the thickest knife . . . and mattocks and pitchforks . . .

BRIDEGROOM. Alight.

MOTHER. Everything that can cut a man's body. A beautiful man, tasting the fullness of life, who goes out to the vineyards or tends to his olives, because they are his, inherited . . .

BRIDEGROOM (*lowering his head*). Be quiet.

MOTHER. . . . and that man doesn't come back. Or if he does come back it's to put a palm-leaf on him or a plateful of coarse salt to stop him swelling. I don't know how you dare carry a knife on your body, nor how I can leave the serpent inside the chest.

BRIDEGROOM. Is that it?

MOTHER. If I lived to be a hundred, I wouldn't speak of anything else. First your father. He had the scent of carnation for me, and I enjoyed him for three short years. Then your brother. Is it fair? Is it possible that a thing as small as a pistol or a knife can put an end to a man who's a bull? I'll never be quiet. The months pass and hopelessness pecks at my eyes . . . even at the roots of my hair.

BRIDEGROOM (*forcibly*). Are you going to stop?

MOTHER. No. I won't stop. Can someone bring your father back to me? And your brother? And then there's the gaol. What is the gaol? They eat there, they smoke there, they play instruments there. My dead ones full of weeds, silent, turned to dust; two men who were two geraniums . . . The murderers, in gaol, as large as life, looking at the mountains . . .

BRIDEGROOM. Do you want me to kill them?

MOTHER. No . . . If I speak it's because . . . How am I not going to speak seeing you go out of that door? I don't like you carrying a knife. It's just that . . . I wish you wouldn't go out to the fields.

BRIDEGROOM (*laughing*). Come on!

MOTHER. I'd like you to be a woman. You wouldn't be going to the stream now and the two of us would embroider edgings and little woollen dogs.

BRIDEGROOM (*he puts his arm around his mother and laughs*).

Mother, what if I were to take you with me to the vineyards?

MOTHER. What would an old woman do in the

vineyards? Would you put me under the vine-shoots? BRIDEGROOM (*lifting her in his arms*). You old woman, you old, old woman, you old, old, old woman.

MOTHER. Your father, now he used to take me there. That's good stock. Good blood. Your grandfather left a son on every street corner. That's what I like. Men to be men; wheat wheat.

BRIDEGROOM. What about me, mother?

MOTHER. You? What?

BRIDEGROOM. Do I need to tell you again?

MOTHER (*serious*). Ah!

BRIDEGROOM. Do you think it's a bad idea?

MOTHER. No.

BRIDEGROOM. Well then?

MOTHER. I'm not sure. It's so sudden like this. It's taken me by surprise. I know that the girl's good. She is, isn't she? Well-behaved. Hard-working. She makes her bread and she sews her skirts. But even so, when I mention her name, it's as if they were pounding my head with a stone.

BRIDEGROOM. Don't be silly.

MOTHER. It's more than silly. I'll be left alone. Only you are left to me now and I'm sorry to see you going.

BRIDEGROOM. But you'll come with us.

MOTHER. No. I can't leave your father and your brother here. I have to go to them every morning, and if I leave, one of the Felixes could die, one of the family of murderers, and they'd bury him next to mine. I won't stand for that. Never that! Because I'll dig them up with my nails and all on my own I'll smash them to bits against the wall.

BRIDEGROOM (*strongly*). Back to that again!

MOTHER. I'm sorry. (*Pause*) How long have you known her?

BRIDEGROOM. Three years. And now I've bought

the vineyard.

MOTHER. Three years. She had another young man, didn't she?

BRIDEGROOM. I don't know. I don't think so. Girls have to be careful who they marry.

MOTHER. Yes. I didn't look at anyone else. I looked at your father, and when they killed him I started at the wall in front of me. One woman with one man, and there it is.

BRIDEGROOM. You know that my girl's good.

MOTHER. I don't doubt it. All the same, I'd like to know what her mother was like.

BRIDEGROOM. What's it matter?

MOTHER (*looking at him*). Son.

BRIDEGROOM. What do you want?

MOTHER. It's true. You're right. When do you want me to ask for her?

BRIDEGROOM (*happy*). Does Sunday seem alright?

MOTHER (*serious*). I'll take her the brass earrings, the really old ones, and you buy her . . .

BRIDEGROOM. But you know more . . .

MOTHER. You buy her some patterned stockings, and for yourself two suits . . . No. Three! I've only got you!

BRIDEGROOM. I'm going. I'll go and see her tomorrow.

MOTHER. Yes, yes, and see if you can make me happy with six grandchildren, or as many as you want, seeing your father didn't have a chance to give them to me.

BRIDEGROOM. The first one for you.

MOTHER. Yes, but let them be girls. Because I want to embroider and make lace and be at peace.

BRIDEGROOM. I'm sure you'll love my bride.

MOTHER. I will. (*She goes to kiss him but stops.*) Go on. You are far too big for kisses now. Give them to your wife. (*Pause. Aside.*) When she is your wife.

BRIDEGROOM. I'm going.

MOTHER. Dig the land by the little mill. You've been neglecting it.

BRIDEGROOM. It's settled then.

MOTHER. God go with you.

*The BRIDEGROOM leaves. The MOTHER remains seated, with her back to the door. A NEIGHBOUR appears at the door dressed in dark colours, a handkerchief on her head.*

Come in.

NEIGHBOUR. How are you?

MOTHER. You can see for yourself.

NEIGHBOUR. I came down to the shop so I've come to see you. We live so far from each other.

MOTHER. It's twenty years since I went to the top of the street.

NEIGHBOUR. You look well.

MOTHER. You think so?

NEIGHBOUR. Things happen. Two days ago they brought my neighbour's son home . . . both arms cut clean off by the machine. (*She sits down.*)

MOTHER. Rafael?

NEIGHBOUR. Yes. There it is. I often think your son and mine are better off where they are, sleeping, resting, no chance of being crippled.

MOTHER. Be quiet. It's all talk that, but there's no comfort in it.

*They both sigh. Pause.*

NEIGHBOUR (*sadly*). How is your son?

MOTHER. He's gone out.

NEIGHBOUR. He's bought the vineyard then!

MOTHER. He was lucky.

NEIGHBOUR. He'll get married now.

MOTHER (*as though waking up and drawing her chair to the*

*NEIGHBOUR'S chair*). Listen.

NEIGHBOUR (*in a conspiratorial manner*). What is it?

MOTHER. Do you know my son's sweetheart?

NEIGHBOUR. A good girl!

MOTHER. Yes, but . . .

NEIGHBOUR. But there's no one knows her really well. She lives alone with her father out there, it's so far away, ten leagues from the nearest house. But she is good. She's used to solitude.

MOTHER. What about her mother?

NEIGHBOUR. Her mother, now I did know her. A good-looking woman. A glow on her face like a saint's; but I never liked her. She didn't love her husband.

MOTHER (*strongly*). Well, the things people get to know! NEIGHBOUR. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to offend; but it's true. Now if she was respectable or not, no one ever said. No one ever mentioned that. She was proud.

MOTHER. It's always the same!

NEIGHBOUR. You did ask me.

MOTHER. I wish no one knew either of them – the girl or her mother. That they were like two thistles that no one dares name, and if you do they prick you.

NEIGHBOUR. You're right. Your son's precious.

MOTHER. He is. That's why I take care of him. They told me the girl had a young man some time ago.

NEIGHBOUR. She must have been fifteen. He got married two years ago now, to a cousin of hers in fact.

No one remembers the engagement.

MOTHER. Why do you remember?

NEIGHBOUR. You do ask some questions!

MOTHER. Everyone likes to know about the things that hurt them. Who was the boy?

NEIGHBOUR. Leonardo.

MOTHER. Which Leonardo?

NEIGHBOUR. Leonardo, one of the Felix family.

MOTHER (*getting up*). The Felix family!

NEIGHBOUR. Woman, how can Leonardo be blamed

for anything? He was eight years old when those things happened.

MOTHER. I know . . . But I hear that name – Felix – and for me Felix is the same as filling my mouth with slime (*She spits*) and I have to spit, I have to spit so it doesn't poison me.

NEIGHBOUR. Calm down. What good does it do you?

MOTHER. None. But you understand.

NEIGHBOUR. Don't stand in the way of your son's happiness. Don't tell him anything. You're an old woman. Me too. You and me, we have to keep quiet.

MOTHER. I won't say anything.

NEIGHBOUR (*kissing her*). Nothing.

MOTHER (*calmly*). Things! . . .

NEIGHBOUR. I'm going. My family will be back soon from the fields.

MOTHER. Have you ever seen such a hot day?

NEIGHBOUR. The children were fed up taking water to the harvesters. God be with you, woman.

MOTHER. God be with you.

*The MOTHER moves towards the door stage-left. Half-way there she stops and slowly crosses herself.*

#### Scene Two

*A room painted pink, with copper ornaments and bunches of common flowers. Centre-stage, a table with a cloth. It is morning. LEONARDO'S MOTHER-IN-LAW with a child in her arms. She rocks it. The WIFE, in the other corner, is knitting.*

MOTHER-IN-LAW. Lullaby, my baby sweet,

Of the great big stallion

Wouldn't drink the water deep.

There the water's oh so black,  
Where the trees grow thick and strong.  
When it flows down to the bridge,  
There it stops and slings its song.

Who can say, my little one,  
What the water's anguish is,  
As he draws his tail along,

Through that nice green room of his.  
WIFE (*quietly*). Go to sleep, carnation,  
For the horse will not drink deep.

MOTHER-IN-LAW. Go to sleep, my little rose,  
For the horse now starts to weep.

Horse's hooves are red with blood,  
Horse's mane is frozen,  
Deep inside his staring eyes  
A silver dagger broken.

Down they went to the river bank,  
Down to the stream they rode.

There his blood ran strong and fast,  
Faster than the water could.

WIFE. Go to sleep, carnation,  
For the horse will not drink deep.

MOTHER-IN-LAW. Go to sleep, my little rose,  
For the horse now starts to weep.

WIFE. Horse will not touch the bank,  
Even though the bank is wet,  
Even though his mouth is hot,  
Streaming tiny drops of sweat.

To the mountains cold and hard,  
He could only call and neigh,  
Horse's throat is hot and parched,  
And the river bed is dry.

Oh, the great big stallion,  
Wouldn't drink the water deep,  
Pain as sharp as coldest ice,  
Horse at break of day will weep.

MOTHER-IN-LAW. Don't come near. Stay outside.  
Close the window, close it tight.

Weave a branch of finest dream,  
Dream a branch so fine and light.

WIFE. Now my child is sleeping fast.  
MOTHER-IN-LAW. Now my child will rest at last.

WIFE. Horse, I would have you know,  
Baby has a nice soft pillow.

MOTHER-IN-LAW. Baby's cradle made of steel.  
WIFE. Baby's quilt so fine to feel.

MOTHER-IN-LAW. Lullaby, my baby sweet.  
WIFE. Oh, the great big stallion,  
Wouldn't drink the water deep.

MOTHER-IN-LAW. Don't come near, don't come in.  
Seek the far off mountain.

Find the dark, the grey valley,  
There the mare will waiting be.

WIFE (*looking*). Now my child is sleeping fast.  
MOTHER-IN-LAW. Now my child will rest at last.

WIFE (*quietly*). Go to sleep, carnation,  
For the horse will not drink deep.

MOTHER-IN-LAW (*rising and very quietly*).  
Go to sleep, my little rose,

For the horse now starts to weep.

*They take the child out.* LEONARDO *enters.*

LEONARDO. Where's the baby?  
WIFE. Fast asleep.

LEONARDO. He wasn't well yesterday. He cried in  
the night.

WIFE (*happy*). He's like a dahlia today. What about you?

Did you go to the blacksmith's?

LEONARDO. That's where I've come from. Would you believe? More than two months putting new shoes on the horse, and they always come off him. I reckon he rips them off on the stones.

WIFE. Couldn't it be you ride him a lot?

LEONARDO. No. I hardly ever ride him.

WIFE. Yesterday the neighbours told me they'd seen you the other side of the plains.

LEONARDO. Who said that?

WIFE. The women who pick capers. It surprised me, I can tell you. Was it you?

LEONARDO. No. What would I be doing over there, in that dry place?

WIFE. That's what I said. But the horse was half dead from sweating.

LEONARDO. Did you see him?

WIFE. No. My mother.

LEONARDO. Is she with the baby?

WIFE. Yes. Do you want a drink of lemon?

LEONARDO. With the water really cold.

WIFE. Not coming back to eat!

LEONARDO. I was with the wheat-weighers. They always hold people up.

WIFE (*making the drink, softly*). Do they pay a good price?

LEONARDO. Average.

WIFE. I need a dress. The baby needs a cap with ribbons.

LEONARDO (*getting up*). I'm going to see him.

WIFE. Take care. He's asleep.

MOTHER-IN-LAW (*entering*). So who's racing the horse like that? He's down there stretched out with his eyes bulging as if he's come from the end of the world.

LEONARDO (*sharply*). Me.

MOTHER-IN-LAW. Excuse me, he is yours.

WIFE (*timidly*). He was with the wheat-weighers.

MOTHER-IN-LAW. For all I care, he can burst. (*She sits down. Pause.*)

WIFE. The drink. Is it cold enough?

LEONARDO. Yes.

WIFE. Do you know they're asking for my cousin?

LEONARDO. When?

WIFE. Tomorrow. The wedding will be in less than a month. I expect they'll invite us.

LEONARDO (*seriously*). Who knows?

MOTHER-IN-LAW. I don't think his mother was very happy about the wedding.

LEONARDO. Perhaps she's right. That one needs watching.

WIFE. I don't like you thinking bad things about a good girl.

MOTHER-IN-LAW (*with malice*). When he says that it's because he knows her. Don't you know she was his girl for three years?

LEONARDO. But I left her. (*To his wife*.) Are you going to cry now? Stop it! (*He roughly pulls her hands from her face*.) Let's go and see the child.

*They go out with their arms around each other. A GIRL enters. She runs on happily.*

GIRL. Señora.

MOTHER-IN-LAW. What is it?

GIRL. The young man came to the shop and he bought all the best things.

MOTHER-IN-LAW. Was he alone?

GIRL. No. With his mother. Serious, tall. (*She imitates her.*) But very posh.

MOTHER-IN-LAW. They've got money.

GIRL. And they bought these fancy stockings! You should have seen them! The stockings women dream of! Look: a swallow here (*She points to her ankle*), a boat

there (*She points to her calf*), and here a rose. (*She points to her thigh*.)

MOTHER-IN-LAW. Child!

GIRL. A rose with the seeds and the stalk! And all in silk!

MOTHER-IN-LAW. Two fortunes joined together.

LEONARDO and his WIFE enter.

GIRL. I've come to tell you what they're buying.

LEONARDO (*angrily*). We couldn't care less.

WIFE. Leave her.

MOTHER-IN-LAW. Leonardo, there's no need for that.

GIRL. Excuse me. (*She goes out weeping*.)

MOTHER-IN-LAW. Why do you have to upset people?

LEONARDO. I didn't ask for your opinion. (*He sits down*.)

MOTHER-IN-LAW. Very well. (*Pause*.)

WIFE (*to LEONARDO*). What's the matter with you?

What's boiling away inside your head? Don't leave me like this, not knowing anything . . .

LEONARDO. Stop it!

WIFE. No. I want you to look at me and tell me.

LEONARDO. Leave me alone. (*He gets up*.)

WIFE. Where are you going?

LEONARDO (*sharply*). Can't you stop it?

MOTHER-IN-LAW (*forcefully, to her daughter*). Be quiet! (*LEONARDO leaves*.) The baby.

*She goes out and reappears with the child in her arms. The*

*WIFE is still standing, motionless.*

Horsey's hooves are red with blood.

Horsey's mane is frozen.

Deep inside his staring eyes

A silver dagger broken.

Down they went to the river bank,

Down to the stream they rode.

There his blood ran strong and fast,  
Faster than the water could.

WIFE (*turning slowly, as if in a dream*).

Go to sleep, carnation,

For the horse will now drink deep.

MOTHER-IN-LAW. Go to sleep, my little rose,

For the horse now starts to weep.

WIFE. Lullaby, my baby sweet.

MOTHER-IN-LAW. Oh, the great big stallion,

Wouldn't drink the water deep!

WIFE (*strongly*). Don't come near, don't come in.

Go away to the far-off mountain.

Oh, the pain is sharp as ice,

Horse of dawn that's breaking.

MOTHER-IN-LAW (*weeping*).

Now my child is sleeping fast.

WIFE (*weeping and slowly drawing closer*).

Now my child will rest at last.

MOTHER-IN-LAW. Go to sleep carnation,

For the horse will not drink deep.

WIFE (*weeping and leaning on the table*).

Go to sleep, my little rose,

For the horse now starts to weep.

*Curtain*

Scene Three

*Interior of the cave where the BRIDE lives. At the back a cross of big pink flowers. The doors are round with lace curtains and pink ribbon. On the walls, made of a white hard material, are round fans, blue jars and small mirrors.*

SERVANT. Please come in . . . (*She is pleasant, hypocritically deferential.*)

*The BRIDEGROOM and the MOTHER enter. The MOTHER is dressed in black satin and wears a lace mantilla. The BRIDEGROOM in black corduroy, wearing a chain of gold.*  
 Would you like to sit down? They'll be here soon.

*She goes out. The MOTHER and the BRIDEGROOM remain seated, stiff as statues. A long pause.*

MOTHER. Have you got your watch?

BRIDEGROOM. Yes. *(He takes it out and looks at it.)*

MOTHER. We have to get back in good time. These people live so far away!

BRIDEGROOM. But this land's good.

MOTHER. Yes, but too isolated. Four hours' journey and not a house or tree.

BRIDEGROOM. These are the dry lands.

MOTHER. Your father would have covered them with trees.

BRIDEGROOM. Without water?

MOTHER. He'd have looked for it. The three years he was married to me, he planted ten cherry trees. *(Recalling.)*

Three walnut trees by the mill, a whole vineyard and a plant called Jupiter that has red flowers. But it dried up. *(Pause.)*

BRIDEGROOM *(referring to the BRIDE)*. She must be getting dressed.

*The FATHER of the BRIDE enters, an old man with shining white hair. His head is bowed. The MOTHER and the BRIDEGROOM rise and they shake hands in silence.*

FATHER. Did the journey take long?

MOTHER. Four hours. *(They sit down.)*

FATHER. You must have come the longest way round. MOTHER. I'm too old to cross the rough ground by the river.

BRIDEGROOM. It makes her giddy. *(Pause.)*

FATHER. A good crop of esparto.

BRIDEGROOM. Oh, very good.

FATHER. In my day this land didn't even produce esparto. I've had to punish it, even make it suffer, so it gives us something useful.

MOTHER. And now it does. Don't worry. I'm not going to ask you for anything.

FATHER *(smiling)*. You are better off than me. Your vineyards are worth a fortune. Each vine-shoot a silver coin. What I'm sorry about is that the estates are . . . you know . . . separate. I like everything together. There's just one thorn in my heart, and that's that little orchard struck between my fields, and they won't sell it to me for all the gold in the world.

BRIDEGROOM. It's always the same.

FATHER. If we could use twenty teams of oxen to bring your vineyards here and put them on the hillside. What a joy it would be!

MOTHER. But why?

FATHER. Mine is hers and yours his. That's why. To see it all together. Together, that would be a thing of beauty! BRIDEGROOM. And it would be less work.

MOTHER. When I die, you can sell that and buy here next to this.

FATHER. Sell, sell! No! Buy, woman, buy everything.

If I'd had sons, I'd have bought the whole of this hill right up to the stream. It's not good land; but with your arms you can make it good, and since no one passes by they don't steal the fruit and you can sleep easy. *(Pause.)*

MOTHER. You know why I've come.

FATHER. Yes.

MOTHER. So?

FATHER. I approve. They've talked it over.

MOTHER. My son has plenty, and he knows how to manage it.

FATHER. My daughter too.

MOTHER. My son's handsome. He's never known a woman. His name's cleaner than a sheet spread in the sun.

FATHER. What can I tell you about my girl? She's breaking up bread at three when the morning star's shining. She never talks too much; she's as soft as wool; she does all kinds of embroidery, and she can cut a piece of string with her teeth.

MOTHER. May God bless their house.

FATHER. May God bless it.

*The servant appears with two trays. One with glasses and the other with sweets.*

MOTHER (to the son). When would you like the wedding to be?

BRIDEGROOM. Next Thursday.

FATHER. The same day as her twenty-second birthday.

MOTHER. Twenty-two. That's what my son would have been if he were still alive. He'd be alive, warm, the true man that he was, if men hadn't invented knives.

FATHER. You mustn't dwell on that.

MOTHER. Every minute. Put your hand on your heart.

FATHER. Thursday then. Agreed?

BRIDEGROOM. Agreed.

FATHER. The bride and groom and we two, we'll go to the church in a carriage. It's a very long way. And the guests in the cars and on the horses they bring with them.

MOTHER. Agreed.

*The servant comes in.*

FATHER. Tell her to come in now. (To the mother.) I'll be very happy if you like her.

*The bride enters. Her hands at her sides in a modest pose, her head bowed.*

MOTHER. Come! Are you happy?

BRIDE. Yes, señora.

FATHER. You mustn't be so serious. After all, she's going to be your mother.

BRIDE. I'm happy. When I say 'yes' it's because I want to.

MOTHER. Of course. (She takes her by the chin.) Look at me.

FATHER. She's like my wife in every way.

MOTHER. Is she? Such a lovely expression! You know what getting married is, child?

BRIDE (solemnly). I do.

MOTHER. A man, children, and as for the rest a wall that's two feet thick.

BRIDEGROOM. Who needs anything else?

MOTHER. Only that they should live. That's all . . . that they should live!

BRIDE. I know my duty.

MOTHER. Some gifts for you.

BRIDE. Thank you.

FATHER. Will you take something?

MOTHER. I'd rather not. (To the bridegroom.) Will you?

BRIDEGROOM. I will. (He takes a sweetmeat. The bride takes another.)

FATHER (to the bridegroom.) Wine?

MOTHER. He doesn't touch it.

FATHER. That's good! (Pause. They are all standing.)

BRIDEGROOM (to the bride.) I'll come tomorrow.

BRIDE. At what time?

BRIDEGROOM. At five.

BRIDE. I'll expect you.

BRIDE. When I leave your side I feel a great emptiness and a kind of lump in my throat.

BRIDE. When you are my husband you won't have it any more.

BRIDEGROOM. That's what I keep telling myself.

MOTHER. Let's go then. The sun doesn't wait. *(To the FATHER.)* Are we agreed on everything?

FATHER. Agreed.

MOTHER *(to the SERVANT)*. Goodbye, woman.

SERVANT. God go with both of you.

*The MOTHER kisses the BRIDE and they begin to leave quietly.*

MOTHER *(at the door)*. Goodbye, daughter.

*The BRIDE replies with a gesture.*

FATHER. I'll come outside with you.

*They go out.*

SERVANT. I'm bursting to see the presents.

BRIDE *(harshly)*. Stop it!

SERVANT. Child! Show them to me!

BRIDE. I don't want to.

SERVANT. Just the stockings then. They say they're very fancy. Woman!

BRIDE. I said no.

SERVANT. For God's sake! Alright. It's as if you have no wish to get married.

BRIDE *(biting her hand in anger)*. Oh!

SERVANT. Child, child! What's the matter? Are you sorry to be giving up this queen's life? Don't think of bitter things. There's no reason. None. Let's see the presents. *(She takes the box.)*

BRIDE *(gripping her by the wrists)*. Let go.

SERVANT. Woman!

BRIDE. Let go, I said.

SERVANT. You're stronger than a man.

BRIDE. Haven't I done a man's work? I wish I was one.

SERVANT. Don't talk like that!

BRIDE. Shut up, I said. Let's talk about something else.

*The light begins to fade. A long pause.*

SERVANT. Did you hear a horse last night?

BRIDE. What time?

SERVANT. Three o'clock.

BRIDE. Probably a horse strayed from the herd.

SERVANT. No. It had a rider.

BRIDE. How do you know?

SERVANT. Because I saw him. He was standing by your window. It gave me a start.

BRIDE. Probably my young man. He's been here sometimes at that time.

SERVANT. No.

BRIDE. You saw him?

SERVANT. Yes.

BRIDE. Who was it?

SERVANT. It was Leonardo.

BRIDE *(forcefully)*. That's a lie! A lie! Why should he come here?

SERVANT. He was here.

BRIDE. Be quiet! Damn your tongue.

*The sound of a horse is heard.*

SERVANT *(at the window)*. Look! Come here! Was it him?

BRIDE. Yes, it was.

*Quick curtain.*

# Act Two

## Scene One

*Entrance to the BRIDE's house. A large door in the background. Night. The BRIDE enters dressed in a white ruffled petticoat with lots of lace and embroidered edgings, and a white bodice. Her arms are bare. The SERVANT is similarly dressed.*

SERVANT. I'll finish combing your hair out here.

BRIDE. No one can stay inside there in this heat.

SERVANT. In these lands it doesn't get cool even at dawn.

*The BRIDE sits down on a low chair and looks at herself in a small hand-mirror. The SERVANT combs her hair.*

BRIDE. My mother came from a place where there were lots of trees. From a fertile land.

SERVANT. That's why she was full of joy.

BRIDE. She wasted away here.

SERVANT. Her fate.

BRIDE. Like we're all wasting away. The walls throw the heat out at us. Oh! Don't pull so hard.

SERVANT. It's to arrange this strand of hair better. I want it to come down over your forehead. *(The BRIDE looks at herself in the mirror.)* You do look beautiful *(She kisses her with feeling.)*

BRIDE *(solemnly)*. Just comb my hair.

SERVANT *(combing)*. Such a lucky girl . . . to be able to put your arms around a man, to kiss him, to feel his weight!

BRIDE. Be quiet!

SERVANT. But it's best of all when you wake up and you feel him alongside you, and he strokes your shoulders with his breath, like a nightingale's feather.

BRIDE *(forcefully)*. Will you be quiet!

SERVANT. But child! What is marriage? That's what marriage is. Nothing more! Is it the sweetmeats? Is it the bunches of flowers? Of course it's not! It's a shining bed and a man and a woman.

BRIDE. You shouldn't talk about such things.

SERVANT. That's another matter. But there's plenty of pleasure!

BRIDE. Or plenty of bitterness.

SERVANT. I'm going to put the orange-blossom from here to here, so that the wreath will crown your hair.

*(She tries on the sprigs of orange-blossom.)*

BRIDE *(she looks at herself in the mirror)*. Give it to me. *(She takes the orange-blossom, looks at it and lowers her head dejectedly.)*

SERVANT. What's the matter?

BRIDE. Leave me alone!

SERVANT. It's no time to be feeling sad. *(Spiritedly.)* Give me the orange-blossom. *(The BRIDE throws the wreath away.)* Child! Don't tempt fate by throwing the flowers on the floor! Look at me now. Don't you want to get married? Tell me. You can still change your mind. *(She gets up.)*

BRIDE. Dark clouds. A cold wind here inside me.

Doesn't everyone feel it?

SERVANT. Do you love your young man?

BRIDE. I love him.

SERVANT. Yes, yes, of course you do.

BRIDE. But it's a very big step.

SERVANT. It has to be taken.

BRIDE. I've already agreed to take it.

SERVANT. I'll fix the wreath for you.

BRIDE *(she sits down)*. Hurry, they must be almost here.

SERVANT. They'll have been on the road at least two hours.

BRIDE. How far is it from here to the church?  
 SERVANT. Five leagues if you go by the stream. If you  
 take the road it's twice as far.

*The BRIDE gets up and the SERVANT is excited as she  
 observes her.*

Oh let the bride awaken now  
 On this her wedding day.  
 Oh let the rivers of the world  
 Now bear your bridal-crown away.

BRIDE (*smiling*). Come on.  
 SERVANT (*she kisses her with feeling and dances around her.*)

Oh let the bride awaken now  
 To sprig of flowering laurel green.  
 Oh let the bride awaken now  
 And by the laurel trees be seen!

*A loud knocking is heard.*

BRIDE. Open it. It must be the first of the guests. (*She  
 goes out.*)

*The SERVANT opens the door. She is startled.*

SERVANT. You?  
 LEONARDO. Me. Good morning.  
 SERVANT. The very first to arrive!  
 LEONARDO. Haven't I been invited then?  
 SERVANT. Yes.  
 LEONARDO. So I'm here.  
 SERVANT. Where's your wife?  
 LEONARDO. I came on horseback. She's coming by road.  
 SERVANT. Did you meet anyone else?  
 LEONARDO. I rode past them.  
 SERVANT. You'll kill the animal racing him like that.  
 LEONARDO. If he dies, he dies!

*Pause.*

SERVANT. Sit yourself down. There's no one up yet.  
 LEONARDO. Where's the bride?  
 SERVANT. I'm going to dress her this very minute.  
 LEONARDO. She'll be happy I expect! The bride!  
 SERVANT (*changing the subject*). How's the child?  
 LEONARDO. Child?  
 SERVANT. Your little son.  
 LEONARDO (*recalling, as if in a dream*). Ah!  
 SERVANT. Is he coming with them?  
 LEONARDO. No.

*Pause. Voices singing in the distance.*

VOICES. Let the bride awaken now  
 On this her wedding day.  
 LEONARDO. Let the bride awaken now  
 On this her wedding day.

SERVANT. It's the guests. Still a long way off.  
 LEONARDO (*getting up*). I suppose the bride will be  
 wearing a big wreath of flowers? It shouldn't be so big.  
 Something smaller would suit her better. Did the  
 bridegroom bring the orange-blossom so she can wear  
 it on her heart?

BRIDE (*she appears still in petticoats and with the wreath of flowers  
 in place*). He brought it.

SERVANT (*strongly*). Don't come out like that.

BRIDE. What's the matter? (*Seriously*.) Why do you want  
 to know if they brought the orange-blossom? What are  
 you hinting at?

LEONARDO. What would I be hinting at? (*Moving closer.*)  
 You, you know me, you know I'm not hinting. Tell me.  
 What was I to you? Open up your memory, refresh it.  
 But two oxen and a broken-down shack are almost  
 nothing. That's the thorn.

BRIDE. Why have you come?

LEONARDO. To see your wedding.

BRIDE. I saw yours too!

LEONARDO. You fixed that, you made it with your own two hands. They can kill me, but they can't spit on me. Now silver, shine as it may, can often spit.

BRIDE. That's a lie.

LEONARDO. I don't want to speak out. I'm a man of honour and I don't want all these hills to have to listen to my complaints.

BRIDE. Mine would be louder.

SERVANT. This argument mustn't go on. You mustn't talk about what's gone. (*The servant looks anxiously towards the doors.*)

BRIDE. She's right. I shouldn't even be talking to you. But it makes my blood boil that you should come to watch me and spy on my wedding and make insinuations about the orange-blossom. Go and wait for your wife outside.

LEONARDO. Can't we talk, you and me?

SERVANT (*angrily*). No: you can't talk.

LEONARDO. From the day of my wedding I've thought night and day about whose fault it was, and every time I think I find another fault that eats the old one up, but it's always someone's fault!

BRIDE. A man with a horse knows many things and can do a lot to take advantage of a girl abandoned in a desert. But I've got my pride. Which is why I'm getting married. And I'll shut myself away with my husband, and I'll love him above everything.

LEONARDO. Pride will get you nowhere! (*He approaches her.*)

BRIDE. Don't come near me!

LEONARDO. To keep quiet and burn is the greatest punishment we can heap upon ourselves. What use was pride to me and not seeing you and leaving you awake night after night? No use! It only brought the fire down

on top of me! You think that time heals and walls conceal, and it's not true, not true! When the roots of things go deep, no one can pull them up!

BRIDE (*trembling*). I can't hear you. I can't hear your voice. It's as if I'd drunk a bottle of anise and fallen asleep on a bedspread of roses. And it drags me along, and I know that I'm drowning, but I still go on.

SERVANT (*seizing LEONARDO by the lapels*). You should leave now!

LEONARDO. It's the last time I'm going to speak to her. There's nothing to be afraid of.

BRIDE. And I know I'm mad, and I know that my heart's purified from holding out, and here I am, soothed by the sound of his voice, by the sight of his arms moving.

LEONARDO. I won't be at peace with myself if I don't tell you all this. I got married. You get married now!

SERVANT (*to LEONARDO*). She will!

VOICES (*singing nearer*).

Oh let the bride awaken now

On this her wedding day!

BRIDE. Let the bride awaken!

*She runs out to her room.*

SERVANT. The guests are here. (*To LEONARDO.*) Don't you go near her again.

LEONARDO. Don't worry.

*He goes out stage-left. It starts to get light.*

FIRST GIRL (*entering*).

Let the bride awaken now

On this her wedding day;

Begin the dance, let flowers now

Your balconies array.

VOICES. Let the bride awaken!

SERVANT (*whipping up enthusiasm*).

Let the bride awaken  
To the bright display  
Of love's rich green bouquet.  
May she awaken now

To trunk and flowering bough  
Of laurel on her wedding day.

SECOND GIRL (*entering*).

Let her awaken.

Her long hair covers her throat.  
White as snow is her petticoat.  
Leather and silver on her feet.

Head adorned by jasmine sweet.

SERVANT. Oh, shepherd-girl,

The moon appears above.

FIRST GIRL. Oh, handsome lad,

Leave your hat in the olive grove.

FIRST YOUTH (*enters, holding aloft his hat*).

Let the bride awaken

To welcome the wedding-guests.

Through distant fields they move ahead.

Trays of dahlias are their gifts,

Loaves of consecrated bread.

VOICES. May the bride awaken!

SECOND GIRL. The bride

Puts on her crown of flowers.

The groom

Secures it with golden ribbons.

SERVANT. By the grape-fruit tree

The bride awake shall be.

THIRD GIRL (*entering*).

By the orange-grove

Spoon and cloth, his gifts of love.

*Three guests enter.*

FIRST YOUTH. Sweet dove, awaken!

The dawn scrubs bright

The shadowy bells of night.

GUEST. Bride, oh fair white bride,

Today a maiden she.

Tomorrow a wife shall be.

FIRST GIRL. Come down, dark girl,

Trail behind your silken train.

GUEST. Come down, little dark one,

For morning dew's like icy rain.

FIRST YOUTH. Awaken, bride, awaken.

Orange-blossom the breeze shall stain.

SERVANT. A tree I shall embroider,

Adorned with ribbons of darkest red.

On every one a child, and this:

'Long life to them when they are wed.'

VOICES. Let the bride awaken!

FIRST YOUTH. On this her wedding day!

GUEST. On this your wedding day!

How handsome you shall be.

True flower of the mountain,

Wife of a captain worthy.

FATHER (*entering*). Wife of a true captain,

The bridegroom takes her with him.

He comes to claim his treasure,

Accompanied by oxen.

THIRD GIRL. The bridegroom

Is a golden flower.

With every step

Carnations shower.

SERVANT. Oh, lucky child!

SECOND YOUTH. Let the bride awaken.

SERVANT. Oh, lovely bride!

FIRST GIRL. The wedding

From every window calls.

SECOND GIRL. Let the bride appear.

FIRST GIRL. Let the bells ring,

Let the bells shout!

FIRST YOUTH. She comes! The bride is here.

SERVANT. Like a great bull, the wedding  
Begins to stir.

*The BRIDE appears. She wears a black dress in the style of 1900, with a bustle and a long train of pleated gauze and heavy lace. On her hair, which falls across her forehead, she wears a wreath of orange-blossom. The sound of guitars. The GIRLS kiss the BRIDE.*

THIRD GIRL. What perfume did you put on your hair?

BRIDE (*laughing*). None.

SECOND GIRL (*looking at her dress*). The material's wonderful!

FIRST YOUTH. Here's the bridegroom!

BRIDEGROOM. Welcome!

FIRST GIRL (*placing a flower behind his ear*).

The bridegroom

Is a golden flower.

SECOND GIRL. His eyes communicate

His joy to ours.

*The BRIDEGROOM goes over to the BRIDE.*

BRIDE. Why did you put those shoes on?

BRIDEGROOM. They look more cheerful than the black ones.

LEONARDO'S WIFE (*entering and kissing the BRIDE*).

Good health!

*Everyone chatters excitedly.*

LEONARDO (*entering like someone performing a duty*).

On your wedding day

This crown you shall wear.

WIFE. So the fields will be gladdened

With the dew of your hair.

MOTHER (*to the FATHER*). Are they here too?

FATHER. They are family. Today's a day for forgiveness.

MOTHER. I'll put up with it but I shan't forgive.

BRIDEGROOM. With the crown it's a joy to look at you!

BRIDE. Let's get to the church quickly.

BRIDEGROOM. Why the hurry?

BRIDE. I want to be your wife and be alone with you and not hear any other voice but yours.

BRIDEGROOM. That's what I want!

BRIDE. And to see only your eyes. And to have you hold me so tight that, even if my mother were to call me, my dead mother, I couldn't free myself from you.

BRIDEGROOM. My arms are strong. I'm going to hold you for forty years without stopping.

BRIDE (*dramatically, taking his arms*). For ever!

FATHER. Let's go quickly! Bring the horses and the carts!

The sun has risen.

MOTHER. Drive carefully. Let's hope nothing goes wrong.

*The great door opens back-stage. They begin to leave.*

SERVANT (*crying*). When you leave your home,

Oh maiden white,

Remember you leave,

A star shining bright.

FIRST GIRL. Clean your body, clean your dress.

Leaving home, bride to be blessed.

*They continue leaving.*

SECOND GIRL. Leaving your home

For the church's blessing!

SERVANT. The breeze in sand

bright flowers leaves!

THIRD GIRL. Oh, white young girl!

SERVANT. Dark breeze the lace  
Of her mantilla weaves.

*They leave. Guitars, castanets and tambourines are heard.*  
LEONARDO *and his wife are left alone.*

WIFE. Let's go.

LEONARDO. Where to?

WIFE. To the church. But you aren't going on horseback.

You are coming with me.

LEONARDO. In the cart?

WIFE. How else?

LEONARDO. I'm not the kind of man to go by cart.

WIFE. And I'm not the kind of woman to go to a wedding  
without her husband. I can't put up with it any  
more!

LEONARDO. Neither can I!

WIFE. Why are you looking at me like that? A thorn in  
each eye!

LEONARDO. Let's go.

WIFE. I don't know what's happening. But I think and  
I don't want to think. One thing I do know. I've already  
been thrown aside. But I've got a child. And another  
one coming. It's the way things are. My mother's fate was  
the same. But I won't be moved from here. (*Voices off.*)  
VOICES. When you leave your home

For the church's blessing,  
Remember you leave

Like a bright star shining!

WIFE (*weeping*). Remember you leave,

A bright star shining

That's how I left my house too. The whole world  
was mine.

LEONARDO (*getting up*). Let's go.

WIFE. But with me!

LEONARDO. Yes. (*Pause.*) Come on then! (*They go out.*)

VOICES. When you leave your home  
For the church's blessing,  
Remember you leave  
Like a bright star shining.

*Slow curtain.*

### Scene Two

*Outside the BRIDE'S cave. Interplay of grey, white, and cold blues.  
Large prickly pears. Dark and silver tones. Background of plains  
the colour of biscuit, and everything hard as if it were a landscape  
in popular ceramic.*

SERVANT (*arranging glasses and trays on a table*).

Turning,

The wheel was turning

And the water was flowing;

For the wedding-night's ...ing.

Let the branches now part,

And the moon shine bright

On her balcony white.

(*Loudly.*) Put out the tablecloths.

(*In a poetic voice.*) Singing,

Bride and groom singing,

And the water was flowing;

For the wedding-night's coming.

See the frost's cold brightness.

Let the almond's bitterness

Be honey's sweetness.

(*Loudly.*) Get the wine ready.

(*In a poetic voice.*) Lovely girl,  
Oh, loveliest of all.

See the water flowing,  
For your wedding-night's coming.

Pull your skirts in tight,  
Hide beneath your husband's wing  
And never leave him.

For your husband's a dove  
Whose breast is burning,

As the fields are waiting  
For fresh blood running.

Turning,  
The wheel was turning

And the water was flowing.  
Your wedding-night's coming

And the water's gleaming.

MOTHER (*entering*). At last!

FATHER. Are we the first?

SERVANT. No. It's a while since Leonardo got here with his wife. They drove like demons. The wife was dead with fright. They made the journey as if they'd come on horseback.

FATHER. That one looks for trouble. He hasn't got good blood.

MOTHER. What blood could he have? The blood of his entire family. It comes from his great-grandfather, who started the killing, and it spreads through the whole breed, all of them knife-handlers and smiling hypocrites.

FATHER. Let's leave it!

SERVANT. How can she leave it?

MOTHER. It hurts to the ends of my veins. On the face of every one of them I can only see the hand that killed what was mine. Do you see me? Do I seem mad to you? Well I am mad from not being able to shout what my heart demands. There's a scream here in my heart that's

always rising up, and I have to force it down again and hide it in these shawls. They've taken my dead ones from me and I have to be silent. And because of that people criticize. (*She removes her shawl*)

FATHER. Today's no day to remember those things.

MOTHER. When I start to talk, I have to speak out. And today even more. Because today I'm left alone in my house.

FATHER. In the hope of having company.

MOTHER. That is my hope: grandchildren. (*They sit*)

FATHER. I want them to have many. This land needs arms that are not paid for. You have to wage a constant battle with the weeds, with the thistles, with the stones that come up from who knows where. And these arms must belong to the owners, so that they can punish and master, so that they can make the seed flourish. Many sons are needed.

MOTHER. And some daughters! Men are like the wind. In the nature of things they have to handle weapons.

Girls never go into the street.

FATHER (*happily*). I think they'll have both.

MOTHER. My son will cover her well. He's of good seed.

His father could have had many sons with me.

FATHER. What I'd like is that this should happen in a single day. That straight away they should have two or three boys.

MOTHER. But it's not like that. It takes a long time. That's why it's so terrible to see your blood spilt on the ground. A fountain that spurts for a minute and has cost us years. When I reached my son, he was lying in the middle of the road. I wet my hands with his blood and I licked them with my tongue. Because it was mine. You don't know what that means. I'd put the earth soaked by it in a monstrosity of glass and topaz.

FATHER. There's something to hope for now. My

daughter's wide-hipped and your son's strong.

MOTHER. So I'm hoping. *(They rise.)*

FATHER. Get the trays of wheat ready.

SERVANT. They are ready.

LEONARDO'S WIFE *(entering)*. Good luck for the future!

MOTHER. Thank you.

LEONARDO. Is there going to be a celebration?

FATHER. A small one. The people can't stay for long.

SERVANT. Here they are!

*The GUESTS enter in happy groups. The BRIDAL COUPLE enter arm in arm. LEONARDO leaves.*

BRIDEGROOM. There was never a wedding with so many people.

BRIDE *(darkly)*. Never.

FATHER. It was magnificent.

MOTHER. Whole branches of families were there.

BRIDEGROOM. People who never went out of the house.

MOTHER. Your father sowed the seed. Now you reap the harvest.

BRIDEGROOM. There were cousins of mine I didn't even know.

MOTHER. All the people from the coast.

BRIDEGROOM *(happily)*. They were scared of the horses.

*(They talk.)*

MOTHER *(to the BRIDE)*. What are you thinking?

BRIDE. Nothing.

MOTHER. Your blessings weigh heavily. *(Guitars are heard.)*

BRIDE. Like lead.

MOTHER *(strongly)*. But they shouldn't. You should be as light as a dove.

BRIDE. Are you staying here tonight?

MOTHER. No. My house is empty.

BRIDE. You ought to stay!

FATHER *(to the MOTHER)*. Look at the dance they are forming. Dances from the seashore right over there.

LEONARDO *enters and sits down. His WIFE is behind him, standing stiffly.*

MOTHER. They are my husband's cousins. As hard as stones when it comes to dancing.

FATHER. It's a joy to see them. What a change for this house! *(He leaves.)*

BRIDEGROOM *(to the BRIDE)*. Did you like the orange-blossom?

BRIDE *(looking at him fixedly)*. Yes.

BRIDEGROOM. It's all made of wax. It'll last for ever. I'd like you to have worn them all over your dress.

BRIDE. There's no need for that.

LEONARDO *goes off to the right.*

FIRST GIRL. We'll take your pins out.

BRIDE *(to the BRIDEGROOM)*. I'll be back in a minute.

WIFE. I hope you'll be happy with my cousin!

BRIDEGROOM. I'm sure I will.

WIFE. The two of you here; never going out, building a home. I wish I lived as far away as this.

BRIDEGROOM. Why don't you buy land? The mountain's cheap and it's better for bringing up children.

WIFE. We've got no money. And the way we are going!

BRIDEGROOM. Your husband's a good worker.

WIFE. Yes, but he likes to fly around too much. From one thing to another. He's not a steady person.

SERVANT. Aren't you having anything? I'll wrap some wine-cakes for your mother. She really likes them.

BRIDEGROOM. Give her three dozen.

WIFE. No, no. Half a dozen will be quite enough.

BRIDEGROOM. It's a special day.

WIFE *(to the SERVANT)*. Where's Leonardo?

SERVANT. I haven't seen him.

BRIDEGROOM. He must be with the guests.

WIFE. I'll go and see. (*She leaves.*)

SERVANT. That's beautiful.

BRIDEGROOM. Aren't you dancing?

SERVANT. There's no one will dance with me.

*Two girls pass across the background; during the entire scene the background will be a lively interplay of figures.*

BRIDEGROOM (*happy*). That's because they don't understand. Lively old women like you dance better than young girls.

SERVANT. Are you trying to flirt with me, boy? What a family you are! Men amongst men! When I was a child I saw your grandfather. What a man! As if a mountain was getting married!

BRIDEGROOM. I'm not as big as that.

SERVANT. But the same twinkle in your eyes. Where's the girl?

BRIDEGROOM. Taking off her head-dress.

SERVANT. Look! For the middle of the night, since you won't be sleeping, I've prepared some ham, and some big glasses of old wine. In the bottom part of the cupboard. Just in case you need it.

BRIDEGROOM. I don't eat in the middle of the night.

SERVANT (*teasing*). If you don't, your wife then. (*She goes out.*)

FIRST YOUTH (*entering*). You've got to have a drink with us.

BRIDEGROOM. I'm waiting for my wife.

SECOND YOUTH. You'll have her in the early hours.

FIRST YOUTH. When it's best!

SECOND YOUTH. Only for a minute!

BRIDEGROOM. Alright.

*They leave. Sounds of great excitement. The BRIDE appears. From the opposite side two GIRLS run to meet her.*

FIRST GIRL. Who did you give the first pin to? Me or her?

BRIDE. I don't remember.

FIRST GIRL. You gave it to me here.

SECOND GIRL. You gave it to me, in front of the altar. BRIDE (*uneasy, with a sense of great inner conflict*). I don't know.

FIRST GIRL. I wish you'd . . .

BRIDE (*interrupting*). And I don't care. I've got lots of things on my mind.

SECOND GIRL. I'm sorry.

*LEONARDO crosses the back-stage.*

BRIDE (*she sees LEONARDO*). And it's a difficult time!

FIRST GIRL. Well, we don't know!

BRIDE. You'll know when your time comes. It's a difficult step to take.

FIRST GIRL. Are you angry?

BRIDE. No. I'm sorry.

SECOND GIRL. What for? But the two pins are for getting married, right?

BRIDE. Both of them.

FIRST GIRL. We'll see which one of us gets married first.

BRIDE. Are you so anxious?

SECOND GIRL (*covily*). Yes.

BRIDE. But why?

FIRST GIRL. Well . . . (*Embracing the second girl.*)

*They run away. The BRIDEGROOM enters slowly and embraces the BRIDE from behind.*

BRIDE (*very startled*). Don't.

BRIDEGROOM. Are you frightened of me?

BRIDE. Oh! It's you!

BRIDEGROOM. Who else? (*Pause.*) Me or your father.

BRIDE. Yes.

BRIDEGROOM. Though your father would have hugged you more gently.

BRIDE (*glomily*). Yes.

BRIDEGROOM. Because he's old. (*He embraces her strongly and a bit roughly.*)

BRIDE (*cutly*). Stop it!

BRIDEGROOM. Why? (*He releases her.*)

BRIDE. Well . . . the guests. They can see us.

*The SERVANT crosses back-stage again, without looking at the BRIDE and BRIDEGROOM.*

BRIDEGROOM. So? We've taken our vows.

BRIDE. Yes, but leave me be . . . Now.

BRIDEGROOM. What's the matter? It's as if you are frightened.

BRIDE. It's nothing. Don't go.

LEONARDO'S WIFE *enters.*

WIFE. I don't mean to interrupt . . .

BRIDE. What is it?

WIFE. Did my husband come through here?

BRIDEGROOM. No.

WIFE. It's just that I can't find him, and the horse isn't in the stable.

BRIDEGROOM (*happily*). He's probably gone for a ride.

*The WIFE goes out, disturbed. The SERVANT enters.*

SERVANT. Aren't you pleased with all these good wishes?

BRIDEGROOM. I want it to be over and done with. My wife's a bit tired.

SERVANT. What's the matter, child?

BRIDE. It's as if someone's struck me on the head!

SERVANT. A bride from these mountains has to be strong.

(*To the BRIDEGROOM.*) You are the only one who can cure her, since she's yours. (*She runs out.*)

BRIDEGROOM (*embracing her*). Let's go and dance for a bit.

(*He kisses her.*)

BRIDE (*disturbed*). No. I want to lie down on the bed.

BRIDEGROOM. I'll come with you.

BRIDE. No! Not with all these people here! What would they say? Let me rest for a moment.

BRIDEGROOM. Whatever you want. But don't be like this tonight!

BRIDE (*at the door*). I'll be better tonight.

BRIDEGROOM. I hope you will.

*The MOTHER enters.*

MOTHER. Son.

BRIDEGROOM. Where've you been?

MOTHER. In the middle of all that noise. Are you happy?

BRIDEGROOM. Yes.

MOTHER. Where's your wife?

BRIDEGROOM. Having a bit of a rest. A bad day for brides!

MOTHER. A bad day? The only good one. For me it was like an inheritance.

*The SERVANT enters and goes towards the BRIDE'S room.*

The breaking-up of soil, the planting of new trees!

BRIDEGROOM. Are you thinking of going?

MOTHER. Yes. I must be at home.

BRIDEGROOM. You'll be alone.

MOTHER. No. My head's full of things and of men and fights.

BRIDEGROOM. But fights that aren't fights any more.

*The SERVANT enters quickly; she runs off via the back-stage area.*

MOTHER. As long as you live, you struggle.

BRIDEGROOM. I'll always do what you tell me.

MOTHER. Try to be loving towards your wife, and if you find her uppity or stand-offish, give her a hug that hurts her a bit, a strong embrace, a bite, and then a gentle kiss. Not to annoy her, just to make her feel that you are the man, the master, the one who gives the orders. That's what I learned from your father. And because

you don't have him, I must be the one to teach you how to be strong.

BRIDEGROOM. I'll always do what you want me to.

FATHER (*entering*). Where's my daughter?

BRIDEGROOM. She's inside.

FIRST GIRL. Let's have the bride and groom - we are going to do the round dance.

FIRST YOUTH (*to the BRIDEGROOM*). You are going to lead.

FATHER (*entering*). She isn't there.

BRIDEGROOM. No?

FATHER. She must have gone up to the balcony.

BRIDEGROOM. I'll go and see! (*He goes out.*)

*A lot of noise and guitars.*

FIRST GIRL. They've started! (*She leaves.*)

BRIDEGROOM (*entering*). She's not there.

MOTHER (*uneasily*). No?

FATHER. Where can she be?

SERVANT (*entering*). The girl, where is she?

MOTHER (*sombrely*). We don't know.

*The BRIDEGROOM goes out. Three GUESTS enter.*

FATHER (*dramatically*). But isn't she at the dance?

SERVANT. She's not at the dance.

FATHER (*strongly*). There's a crowd of people there.

Look!

SERVANT. I've looked already.

FATHER (*darkly*). Well, where is she?

BRIDEGROOM (*entering*). No sign of her. Nowhere.

MOTHER (*to the FATHER*). What is this? Where is your daughter?

LEONARDO'S WIFE *enters*.

WIFE. They've run away! They've run away! Her and Leonardo. On horseback! Arms around one another!

Like a flash of lightning!

FATHER. It's not true! Not my daughter!

MOTHER. Yes. Your daughter! A plant from a wicked mother, and him, him too, him! But now she's my son's wife.

BRIDEGROOM (*entering*). We'll go after them! Who's got a horse?

MOTHER. Who's got a horse? Now! Who's got a horse?

I'll give him everything I have. My eyes. Even my tongue . . .

VOICE. I'll go!

MOTHER (*to her son*). Go! After them! (*He goes out with two young men.*) No. Don't go! Those people kill quickly and well . . . But yes! Go on! I'll follow.

FATHER. It can't be her. Perhaps she's thrown herself into the water-tank.

MOTHER. Only decent and clean girls throw themselves into the water. Not that one! But now she's my son's wife. Two sides. Now there are two sides here. (*They all enter.*) My family and yours. All of you must go. Shake the dust from your shoes. Let's go and help my son. (*The people split into two groups.*) He's got plenty of family: his cousins from the coast and all those from inland. Go out from here! Search all the roads. The hour of blood has come again. Two sides. You on yours, me on mine. After them! Get after them!

*Curtain.*

## Act Three

### Scene One

*A forest. It is night. Great moist tree trunks. A gloomy atmosphere. Two violins can be heard. Three WOODCUTTERS appear.*

FIRST WOODCUTTER. Have they found them?  
SECOND WOODCUTTER. No. But they are looking for them everywhere.

THIRD WOODCUTTER. They'll find them soon.

SECOND WOODCUTTER. Shhh!

THIRD WOODCUTTER. What?

SECOND WOODCUTTER. They seem to be coming near on all the roads at once.

FIRST WOODCUTTER. When the moon rises they'll see them.

SECOND WOODCUTTER. They should leave them alone.

FIRST WOODCUTTER. The world's big. Everyone can live in it.

THIRD WOODCUTTER. You have to follow your instinct.

They were right to run away.

FIRST WOODCUTTER. They were deceiving each other.

In the end the blood was strongest.

THIRD WOODCUTTER. The blood!

FIRST WOODCUTTER. You have to follow the blood's path.

SECOND WOODCUTTER. But blood that sees the light, the earth drinks it.

FIRST WOODCUTTER. What of it? Better to be a bloodless

corpse than alive and your blood putrid.

THIRD WOODCUTTER. Be quiet.

FIRST WOODCUTTER. Why? Can you hear something?

THIRD WOODCUTTER. I can hear the crickets, the frogs, the night lying in wait.

FIRST WOODCUTTER. But no sound of the horse.

THIRD WOODCUTTER. No.

FIRST WOODCUTTER. Now he'll be loving her.

SECOND WOODCUTTER. Her body for him, his body for her.

THIRD WOODCUTTER. They'll find them and they'll kill them.

FIRST WOODCUTTER. But they'll have mixed their blood by then. They'll be like two empty pitchers, like two dry streams.

SECOND WOODCUTTER. There are lots of clouds. Maybe the moon won't come out.

THIRD WOODCUTTER. Moon or no moon, the bridegroom will find them. I saw him leave. Like a raging star. His

face the colour of ash. He contained the fate of his family. FIRST WOODCUTTER. His family of dead men in the middle of the street.

SECOND WOODCUTTER. Yes.

THIRD WOODCUTTER. Do you think they can break through the circle?

SECOND WOODCUTTER. It's hard. There are knives and shotguns for ten leagues around.

THIRD WOODCUTTER. He has a good horse.

SECOND WOODCUTTER. But he's got a woman with him.

FIRST WOODCUTTER. We are close now.

SECOND WOODCUTTER. A tree with forty branches. We'll soon have it cut.

THIRD WOODCUTTER. The moon's coming out now. Let's hurry.

*To the left, a patch of light.*

FIRST WOODCUTTER. Oh rising moon!

Moon on the great leaves

SECOND WOODCUTTER. Fill the blood with jasmine!

FIRST WOODCUTTER. Oh lonely moon!

Moon on the green leaves!

SECOND WOODCUTTER. Silver on the bride's face!

THIRD WOODCUTTER. Oh evil moon!

Leave for their love a shadowy branch . . .

FIRST WOODCUTTER. Oh sad moon!

Leave for their love a branch in shadow!

*They leave. In the light stage-left the MOON enters. The*

*MOON is a young woodcutter with a white face. The stage takes on an intense blue light.*

MOON. Round swan on the river,

Eye of the cathedrals,

False dawn amongst the leaves

Am I; they shall not escape!

Who is hiding? Who is sobbing

In the thick brush of the valley?

The moon places a knife

Abandoned in the sky,

That is a leaden ambush

And longs to be the pain of blood.

Let me come in! I come frozen

From walls and windows!

Open up roofs and hearts

Where I can warm myself!

I am cold! My ashes

Of dreaming metal

Seek the crest of fire

Through mountains and through streets.

But the snow bears me

On its back of jasper,

And water drowns me

Cold and hard in pools.

And so tonight there'll be

Red blood to fill my cheeks,

And the rushes forming clusters

At the wide feet of the wind.

Let there be no shadow, no hidden corner

To which they can escape!

For I want to enter a breast

Where I can warm myself!

A heart for me!

Warm!, that will spill

Over the mountains of my breast;

Let me come in, oh, let me in!

*(To the branches.)* I don't want shadows. My rays

Must enter everywhere,

And let there be among dark trunks

A murmur of gleaming light,

So that tonight there'll be

Red blood to fill my cheeks,

And the rushes forming clusters

At the wide feet of the wind.

Who is hiding? Come out, I say!

No! They shan't get away!

For I shall make the horse shine

With fever bright as diamond.

*The MOON disappears amongst the tree trunks and the stage becomes dark. An old BEGGAR WOMAN appears completely covered in thin dark-green cloth. Her feet are bare. Her face can hardly be seen amongst the folds. She is Death.*

BEGGAR WOMAN. The moon goes, and they come near.

From here they shan't move. The river's murmur

Shall drown with the whisper of the trees

The torn flight of their screams.

It shall be here, and soon. I'm tired.

They're opening the coffins, and white linen  
waits, spread on bedroom floors,  
For the weight of bodies with torn throats.

No bird shall awaken, and the breeze,  
Gathering their cries in her skirt,  
Shall fly with them over black tree-tops  
Or bury them in soft slime.

*(Impatient.)* That moon! That moon!

*The moon appears. The intense blue light returns.*

MOON. Now they come near.

Some through the ravine, others by the river.

I shall light up the stones. What do you need?

BEGGAR WOMAN. Nothing.

MOON. The wind is starting to blow hard, and double-  
edged.

BEGGAR WOMAN.

Light up the waistcoat, open the buttons,

For then the knives will know their path.

MOON. But let them die slowly. And let the blood

Place between my fingers its soft whistle.

See how my ashen valleys are awakening

With longing for this fountain and its trembling rush.

BEGGAR WOMAN. We mustn't let them get beyond the

stream. Quiet!

MOON. There they come! *(He leaves. The stage is dark.)*

BEGGAR WOMAN.

Quickly! Lots of light! Do you hear me?

They can't escape!

*The BRIDEGROOM and the FIRST YOUTH appear. The  
BEGGAR WOMAN sits and covers her face with her cloak.*

BRIDEGROOM. This way.

FIRST YOUTH. You won't find them.

BRIDEGROOM *(forcefully)*. I will find them.

FIRST YOUTH. I think they've gone by some other route.  
BRIDEGROOM. No. I heard the sound of galloping a  
moment ago.

FIRST YOUTH. It must have been another horse.

BRIDEGROOM *(intensely)*. Listen. There's only one horse  
in the whole world, and it's this one. Understand? If you  
come with me, come with me, but don't talk.

FIRST YOUTH. I wanted to . . .

BRIDEGROOM. Be quiet. I'm certain I'll find them here.

You see this arm? Well it's not my arm. It's my  
brother's arm and my father's and my whole dead  
family's. And it's got such strength, it could tear this  
tree from its roots if it wanted to. Let's go quickly. I can  
feel the teeth of all my loved ones piercing me here so  
I can't breathe.

BEGGAR WOMAN *(moaning)*. Oh!

FIRST YOUTH. Did you hear that?

BRIDEGROOM. Go that way and circle around.

FIRST YOUTH. This is a hunt.

BRIDEGROOM. A hunt. The greatest hunt of all.

*The FIRST YOUTH goes. The BRIDEGROOM moves quickly  
stage-left and stumbles over the BEGGAR WOMAN.*

BEGGAR WOMAN. Oh!

BRIDEGROOM. What do you want?

BEGGAR WOMAN. I'm cold.

BRIDEGROOM. Where are you going?

BEGGAR WOMAN *(always pleading like a beggar)*. There . . .  
it's a long way.

BRIDEGROOM. Where have you come from?

BEGGAR WOMAN. There . . . it's a long way.

BRIDEGROOM. Did you see a man and a woman on  
horseback, galloping?

BEGGAR WOMAN *(awakening)*. Wait . . . *(She looks at him.)*  
Such a good-looking boy if you were asleep!

BRIDEGROOM. Tell me. Answer. Did you see them?  
 BEGGAR WOMAN. Wait . . . Such broad shoulders! Why  
 don't you like resting on them instead of walking on  
 feet that are so small?

BRIDEGROOM (*shaking her*). I asked you if you saw them?  
 Have they been this way?

BEGGAR WOMAN (*strongly*). No. They haven't. But they  
 are coming from the hill. Can't you hear them?

BRIDEGROOM. No.

BEGGAR WOMAN. Don't you know the path?

BRIDEGROOM. I'll take it in any case.

BEGGAR WOMAN. I'll come with you. I know this land.

BRIDEGROOM (*impatient*). Let's go. Which way?

BEGGAR WOMAN (*strongly*). That way!

*They leave quickly. In the distance two victims which represent  
 the forest. The WOODCUTTERS return. They carry axes on  
 their shoulders. They move slowly amongst the tree trunks.*

FIRST WOODCUTTER. Oh rising death!

Death on the great leaves.

SECOND WOODCUTTER. Don't open the gush of blood!

FIRST WOODCUTTER. Oh, lonely death!

Death on the dry leaves!

THIRD WOODCUTTER. Don't cover the wedding with  
 flowers!

SECOND WOODCUTTER. Oh sad death!

Leave for their love a green branch.

FIRST WOODCUTTER. Oh terrible death!

Leave for their love a green branch!

*They exit as they are speaking. LEONARDO and the BRIDE  
 appear.*

LEONARDO. Quiet!

BRIDE. I'll go on my own from here.

You leave me! I want you to turn back.

LEONARDO. I said be quiet!

BRIDE. *With your teeth,*

*With your hands, any way you can,*

*Tear the metal of this chain*

*From my pure throat,*

*And leave me locked away*

*Here in my house of earth.*

*And if you don't want to kill me*

*As you'd kill a tiny viper,*

*Put the barrel of your gun*

*In these bride's hands of mine.*

*Oh, what sorrow, what fire*

*Sweeps upward through my head!*

*What splinters of glass are struck in my tongue!*

LEONARDO. *We've taken the step; quiet!*

*They are close behind us*

*And I'm taking you with me.*

BRIDE. *It will have to be by force!*

LEONARDO. *By force? Who was it went*

*Down the stairs first?*

BRIDE. *I did.*

LEONARDO. *Who was it put*

*A fresh bridle on the horse?*

BRIDE. *I did. It's true.*

LEONARDO. *Which hands*

*Strapped the spurs to my boots?*

BRIDE. *These hands, that are yours,*

*That when they see you want*

*To break the blue branches*

*And the whisper of your veins.*

*I love you! I love you! Leave me!*

*For if I could kill you,*

*I'd place a shroud over you*

*Edged with violet.*

*Oh, what sorrow, what fire*

*Sweeps upward through my head!*

LEONARDO.

What splinters of glass are stuck in my tongue!  
 Because I wanted to forget  
 And I put a wall of stone  
 Between your house and mine.  
 It's the truth. Don't you remember?  
 And when I saw you from far away  
 I threw sand in my eyes.  
 But I'd get on the horse  
 And the horse would go to your door.  
 And then the silver wedding-pins  
 Turned my red blood black,  
 And our dream began to fill  
 My flesh with poisonous weeds.  
 Oh, I'm not the one at fault.  
 The fault belongs to the earth  
 And that scent that comes  
 From your breasts and your hair.  
 BRIDE. Oh, there's no reason! I don't want  
 Your blood or your table,  
 And there's not a minute of the day  
 That I don't want to be with you,  
 Because you drag me and I come,  
 And you tell me to go back  
 And I follow you through the air  
 Like a blade of grass.  
 I've left a good man  
 And all his family  
 In the middle of my wedding,  
 And wearing my bride's crown.  
 The punishment will fall on you,  
 And I don't want it to happen.  
 Leave me here! You go!  
 No one will defend you.

LEONARDO. Birds of early morning

Are waking in the trees.  
 The night is slowly dying  
 On the sharp edge of the stone.  
 Let's go to a dark corner  
 Where I can always love you  
 For to me people don't matter,  
 Nor the poison they pour on us.

*He embraces her strongly.*

BRIDE. And I will sleep at your feet  
 And watch over your dreams.

Naked, looking at the fields,  
 (*Powerfully.*) As if I were a bitch.  
 Because that's what I am! Oh, I look at you  
 And your beauty burns me.

LEONARDO. Flame is fired by flame.  
 And the same small flame  
 Can kill two ears of grain together.  
 Come on!

*He pulls her.*

BRIDE. Where are you taking me?  
 LEONARDO. To a place where they can't go,  
 These men who are all around us.

Where I can look at you!  
 BRIDE (*sarcastically*). Take me from fair to fair,  
 An insult to decent women,  
 So that people can see me  
 With my wedding sheets displayed  
 On the breeze, like banners.

LEONARDO. I want to leave you too,  
 If I thought as I ought to think.  
 But I go where you go.  
 And you too. Take a step. See.

Nails of moonlight join us,  
My waist and your hips.

*The whole scene is very strong, full of a great sensuality.*

BRIDE. Listen!

LEONARDO. Someone's coming.

BRIDE.

Go quickly!

It's right that I should die here,

My feet deep in the water

And thorns stuck in my head.

And let the leaves weep for me,

A woman lost and virgin.

LEONARDO. Be quiet! They are coming up.

BRIDE.

Go!

LEONARDO. Quiet! Don't let them hear us.

You go first! Come on! Listen!

*The BRIDE hesitates.*

BRIDE. Both of us!

LEONARDO (*embracing her*). Whatever you want!

If they separate us, it will be

Because I am dead.

BRIDE. I will be dead too.

*They leave embracing each other.*

*The MOON appears slowly. The stage takes on a strong blue light. The two violins are heard. Suddenly two long, piercing screams and the music of the violins stops. With the second scream the BEGGAR WOMAN appears and stands with her back to the audience. She opens her cloak and stands centre-stage like a great bird with huge wings. The MOON stops. The curtain comes down in total silence.*

### Scene Two

*A white room with arches and thick walls. To the right and left white stairs. At the back a great arch and a wall of the same colour. The floor must also be a dazzling white. This simple room should have the monumental quality of a church. There must not be any grey, or shadow, anything that creates perspective.*

*Two GIRLS dressed in dark blue are winding a skein of red wool.*

FIRST GIRL. Oh, wool, oh wool,

What will you make?

SECOND GIRL. A dress soft as jasmine,

Cloth paper-thin.

Begin it at four.

At ten finishing.

A thread of my wool's

A chain for your feet.

A knot that chokes,

The bride's bitter wreath.

LITTLE GIRL (*singing*). Did you see the wedding?

FIRST GIRL. No.

LITTLE GIRL. I couldn't go!

What can have happened

Where the vine-shoots grow?

What can have happened

In the olive grove now?

What has happened?

No one's come home

Did you see the wedding?

SECOND GIRL. We've told you: no.

LITTLE GIRL (*leaving*). And I couldn't go!

SECOND GIRL. Oh wool, oh wool,

Of what will you sing?

FIRST GIRL. Of wounds like wax,

And myrtle's ache.

Of day's long sleep

And nights awake.

LITTLE GIRL (*at the door*).

The wool's caught  
On a stone like a knife.  
The blue mountains  
Give it new life.  
It runs, runs, runs,  
By destiny led,  
To cut with a knife  
And take away bread.

*She leaves.*

SECOND GIRL. Oh wool, oh wool,

What will you say?

FIRST GIRL. The lover's dumb,  
The young man red.  
On the silent shore  
I saw them spread.

*She stops and gazes at the wool.*

LITTLE GIRL (*appearing at the door*). Run, run, run.

Bring the wool here.  
Covered in mud  
I feel them come near.  
Their bodies stiff  
And the sheets marble-clear.

*She leaves. Leonardo's wife and MOTHER-IN-LAW appear.*

FIRST GIRL. Are they coming?

MOTHER-IN-LAW (*harshly*). We don't know.

SECOND GIRL. What can you tell us about the wedding?

FIRST GIRL. Tell me.

MOTHER-IN-LAW (*curtly*). Nothing.

WIFE. I want to go back to know all of it.

MOTHER-IN-LAW (*strongly*). You, to your house.

Brave and alone in your house.  
To grow old and weep.

But the door always shut.

Never a soul. Dead or alive.

We'll nail up the windows.

And let the rains and the nights

Fall on the bitter weeds.

WIFE. What could have happened?

MOTHER-IN-LAW.

*It doesn't matter.*

Cover your face with a veil.

Your children are your children,

There is nothing else. Over your bed

Place a cross of ash

Where once his pillow was.

*They leave.*

BEGGAR WOMAN (*at the door*). A piece of bread, little girls.

LITTLE GIRL.

Go away!

*The girls huddle together.*

BEGGAR WOMAN. Why?

LITTLE GIRL. Because you whine. Go away!

FIRST GIRL. Child!

BEGGAR WOMAN.

I could have asked for your eyes. A cloud

Of birds is following me. Would you like one?

LITTLE GIRL. I want to go home!

SECOND GIRL (*to the BEGGAR WOMAN*). Pay no attention!

FIRST GIRL. Did you come by the path along the stream?

BEGGAR WOMAN. I did.

FIRST GIRL (*timidly*). Can I ask you something?

BEGGAR WOMAN.

I saw them; they'll be here soon: two rushing streams

Still at last amongst the great stones,

Two men at the horse's feet,

Dead in the beauty of the night.

(*With pleasure.*) Dead, yes, dead!

FIRST GIRL. Be quiet, old woman, be quiet!  
BEGGAR WOMAN.

Their eyes broken flowers, and their teeth  
Two fistfuls of frozen snow.

Both of them fell, and the bride comes back,

Her skirt and her hair stained with their blood,

Covered by blankets both of them come,

Borne on the shoulders of tall young men.

That's how it was; no more, no less. Fitting.

Over the golden flower, dirty sand.

*She goes. The GIRLS incline their heads and begin to  
leave rhythmically.*

FIRST GIRL. Dirty sand.

SECOND GIRL. Over the golden flower.

LITTLE GIRL. Over the golden flower.

They are bringing the dead from the stream.

Dark-skinned the one,

Dark-skinned the other.

Oh, a nightingale's shadow flies and weeps

Over the golden flower!

*She leaves. The stage is empty. The MOTHER appears with a*

*NEIGHBOUR. The NEIGHBOUR is weeping.*

MOTHER. Be quiet.

NEIGHBOUR. I can't.

MOTHER. I said be quiet. (*At the door.*) Is anyone there?

(*She puts her hands to her forehead.*) My son should have

answered. But my son's an armful of withered flowers

now. My son's a fading voice beyond the mountains.

(*Angrily, to the NEIGHBOUR.*) Won't you be quiet?

I don't want weeping in this house. Your tears are tears

that come from your eyes, that's all. But mine will

come, when I'm all alone, from the soles of my feet,  
from my roots, and they'll burn hotter than blood.

NEIGHBOUR. Come to my house. Don't stay here.

MOTHER. Here. Here's where I want to be. At peace. All  
of them are dead now. At midnight I'll sleep, I'll sleep

and not be afraid of a gun or a knife. Other mothers will

go to their windows, lashed by the rain, to see the face

of their sons. Not me. From my dream I'll fashion a

dove of cold marble that will bear camellias of frost to

the graveyard. But no, it's not a graveyard, not a

graveyard: a bed of earth, a bed that shelters them and

rocks them to sleep in the sky.

*A WOMAN enters, dressed in black. She goes to the right and  
kneels.*

(*To the NEIGHBOUR.*) Take your hands from your face.  
We have to face terrible days. I want to see no one. The  
earth and me. My grief and me. And these four walls.

Oh! Oh!

*She sits, overcome.*

NEIGHBOUR. Have pity on yourself.

MOTHER (*smoothing her hair back*). I have to be calm. (*She*

*sits.*) Because the neighbours will come and I don't want

them to see me so poor. So poor! A woman without a

single son she can hold to her hips.

*The BRIDE enters. She comes without the orange-blossom and  
wearing a black shawl.*

NEIGHBOUR (*angrily, seeing the BRIDE*). Where are you  
going?

BRIDE. I'm coming here.

MOTHER (*to the NEIGHBOUR*). Who is it?

NEIGHBOUR. Don't you know her?

MOTHER. That's why I'm asking who she is. Because

I mustn't know her, so I shan't sink my teeth into her

neck. Serpent!

*She moves towards the BRIDE threateningly; she stops.*

(*To the NEIGHBOUR.*) You see her? There, weeping, and me calm, without tearing her eyes out. I don't understand myself. Is it because I didn't love my son? But what about his name? Where is his name?

*She strikes the BRIDE who falls to the ground.*

NEIGHBOUR. In the name of God! (*She tries to separate them.*)

BRIDE (*to the NEIGHBOUR*). Leave her. I came so that she could kill me, so that they could bear me away with them. (*To the MOTHER.*) But not with their hands; with iron hooks, with a sickle, and with a force that will break it on my bones. Leave her! I want her to know that I'm clean, that even though I'm mad they can bury me and not a single man will have looked at himself in the whiteness of my breasts.

MOTHER. Be quiet, be quiet! What does that matter to me?

BRIDE. Because I went off with the other one! I went! (*In anguish.*) You would have gone too. I was a woman burning, full of pain inside and out, and your son was a tiny drop of water that I hoped would give me children, land, health; but the other one was a dark river, full of branches, that brought to me the sound of its reeds and its soft song. And I was going with your son, who was like a child of cold water, and the other one sent hundreds of birds that blocked my path and left frost on the wounds of this poor, withered woman, this girl caressed by fire. I didn't want to, listen to me! I didn't want to! Your son was my ambition and I haven't deceived him, but the other one's arm dragged me like a wave from the sea, like the butt of a mule, and would always have dragged me, always, always, even if I'd been an old woman and all the sons of your son had tried to hold me down by my hair!

*A NEIGHBOUR enters.*

MOTHER. She's not to blame! Nor me! (*Sarcastically.*) So who's to blame? A weak, delicate, restless woman who throws away a crown of orange-blossom to look for a piece of bed warmed by another woman!

BRIDE. Be quiet, be quiet! Take your revenge on me! Here I am! See how soft my throat is, less effort for you than cutting a dahlia in your garden. But no, not that! I'm pure, as pure as a new-born child. And strong enough to prove it to you. Light the fire. We'll put our hands in it: you for your son; me for my body. You'll be the first to take them out.

*Another NEIGHBOUR enters.*

MOTHER. What does your honour matter to me? What does your death matter to me? What does anything matter to me? Blessed be the wheat, for my sons lie beneath it. Blessed be the rain, for it washes the faces of the dead. Blessed be God, for He lays us side by side so we can rest.

*Another NEIGHBOUR enters.*

BRIDE. Let me weep with you.

MOTHER. Weep. But by the door.

*The LITTLE GIRL enters. The BRIDE remains by the door.*

*The MOTHER, centre-stage.*

*WIFE (entering, moving stage-left).*

He was a handsome horseman,

Now a frozen heap of snow.

He rode to fairs and mountains

And the arms of women.

Now the dark moss of night

Forms a crown upon his brow.

MOTHER. Sunflower for your mother,

Mirror of the earth.

Let them place on your breast  
A cross of bitter oleander;

A sheet to cover you  
Of shining silk,

And let the water form its weeping  
Between your still hands.

WIFE. Oh, four young men

Come with tired shoulders!

BRIDE. Oh, four handsome boys

Bear death on high.

MOTHER. Neighbours.

LITTLE GIRL (*at the door*). They are bringing them now.

MOTHER. It's the same.

The cross, the cross.

WOMEN. Sweet nails,

Sweet cross,

Sweet name

of Jesus.

BRIDE. Let the cross protect the living and the dead.

MOTHER. Neighbours: with a knife,

With a small knife,

On a day appointed, between two and three,

The two men killed each other for love.

With a knife,

With a small knife

That barely fits the hand,

But that slides in clean

Through startled flesh

And stops at the place

Where trembles, enmeshed,

The dark root of a scream.

BRIDE. And this is a knife,

A small knife

That barely fits the hand;

Fish without scales or river,

So that on a day appointed, between two and three,  
With this knife

Two men are left stiff

And lips turned yellow.

MOTHER. That barely fits the hand,

But that slides in clean

Through startled flesh

And stops there, at the place

Where trembles enmeshed

The dark root of a scream.

*The neighbours are kneeling and weeping.*

*Curtain.*