

In birth I am his equal; for my mother,  
As I shall prove, was married to Count Albert,  
My noble father, though for reasons tedious  
Here to be stated, still their secret nuptials  
Were unacknowledg'd, and on me hath fallen  
A cruel stigma which degrades my fortunes.  
But were I—O forgive th' aspiring thought!—  
But were I Orra's lord, I should break forth  
Like the unclouded sun, by all acknowledg'd  
As ranking with the highest in the land.

Orra. Do what thou wilt when thou art Orra's  
lord;

But being as thou art, retire and leave me:  
I choose to be alone. (*Very proudly.*)

Rud. Then be it so.  
Thy pleasure, mighty dame, I will not balk.  
This night, to-morrow's night, and every night,  
Shalt thou in solitude be left; if absence  
Of human beings can secure it for thee.

[*Pauses and looks on her, while she seems struck  
and disturbed.*]

It wears already on the midnight hour;  
Good night!

[*Pauses again, she still more disturbed.*]  
Perhaps I understood too hastily  
Commands you may retract.

Orra (*recovering her state*). Leave me, I say;  
that part of my commands  
I never can retract.

Rud. You are obey'd. [*Exit.*]  
Orra (*paces up and down hastily for some time,  
then stops short, and after remaining a little  
while in a thoughtful posture*). Can spirit from  
the tomb, or fiend from hell,

More hateful, more malignant be than man—  
Than villanous man? Although to look on such,  
Yea, even the very thought of looking on them,  
Makes natural blood to curdle in the veins,  
And loosen'd limbs to shake,  
There are who have endur'd the visitation  
Of supernatural beings.—O forefend it!  
I would close couch me to my deadliest foe  
Rather than for a moment bear alone  
The horrors of the sight.

Who's there? who's there? [*Looking round.*]  
Heard I not voices near? That door ajar  
Sends forth a cheerful light. Perhaps my women,  
Who now prepare my chamber. Grant it be!

[*Exit, running hastily to a door from which a  
light is seen.*]

## SCENE III.

A chamber, with a small bed or couch in it. Enter  
RUDIGERE and CATHRINA, wrangling together.

Rud. I say begone, and occupy the chamber  
I have appointed for thee: here I'm fix'd,  
And here I pass the night.

Cath. Thou saidst my chamber

Should be adjoining that which Orra holds?  
I know thy wicked thoughts; they meditate  
Some dev'lish scheme; but think not I'll abet it.

Rud. Thou wilt not!—angry, restive, simple  
fool!

Dost thou stop short and say, "I'll go no further?"  
Thou, whom concealed shame hath bound so fast,—  
My tool,—my instrument?—Fulfil thy charge  
To the full bent of thy commission, else  
Thee, and thy bantling too, I'll from me cast  
To want and infamy.

Cath. O, shameless man!  
Thou art the son of a degraded mother  
As low as I am, yet thou hast no pity.

Rud. Ay, and dost thou reproach my bastardy  
To make more base the man who conquer'd thee,  
With all thy virtue, rigid and demure?  
Who would have thought less than a sovereign  
prince

Could e'er have compass'd such achievement?  
Mean

As he may be, thou'st given thyself a master,  
And must obey him.—Dost thou yet resist?  
Thou know'st my meaning.

[*Tearing open his vest in vehemence of action.*]  
Cath. Under thy vest a dagger!—Ah! too well,  
I know thy meaning, cruel, ruthless man!

Rud. Have I discovered it?—I thought not  
of it:

The vehemence of gesture hath betray'd me.  
I keep it not for thee, but for myself;  
A refuge from disgrace. Here is another:  
He who with high, but dangerous fortune grapples,  
Should he be foil'd, looks but to friends like these.

[*Pulling out two daggers from his vest.*]  
This steel is strong to give a vig'rous thrust;  
The other on its venom'd point hath that  
Which, in the feeblest hand, gives death as certain,  
As though a giant smote the destin'd prey.

Cath. Thou desprate man! so arm'd against  
thyself!

Rud. Ay; and against myself with such resolves,  
Consider well how I shall deal with those  
Who may withstand my will or mar my purpose.  
Thinkst thou I'll feebly—

Cath. O be pacified.

I will begone: I am a humbled wretch  
On whom thou tramplest with a tyrant's cruelty.

[*Exit.*]  
Rud. (*looks after her with a malignant laugh, and  
then goes to the door of an adjoining chamber,  
to the lock of which he applies his ear*). All  
still within.—I'm tired and heavy grown:

I'll lay me down to rest. She is secure:  
No one can pass me here to gain her chamber.  
If she hold parley now with any thing,  
It must in truth be ghost or sprite.—Heigh ho!  
I'm tir'd, and will to bed.

[*Lays himself on the couch and falls asleep.*]

*The cry of hounds is then heard without at  
a distance, with the sound of a horn; and  
presently ORRA enters, bursting from the door  
of the adjoining chamber, in great alarm.*

Orra. Cathrina! sleepest thou? Awake! awake!  
[*Running up to the couch and starting back on  
seeing RUDIGERE.*]

That hateful viper here!  
Is this my nightly guard? Detested wretch!  
I will steal back again.

[*Walks softly on tiptoe to the door of her cham-  
ber, when the cry of hounds, &c. is again  
heard without, nearer than before.*]

O no! I dare not.  
Though sleeping, and most hateful when awake,  
Still he is natural life and may be rous'd.

[*Listening again.*]  
'Tis nearer now: that dismal thrilling blast!  
I must awake him.

[*Approaching the couch and shrinking back again.*]

O no! no, no!  
Upon his face he wears a horrid smile  
That speaks bad thoughts.

[*Rud. speaks in his sleep.*]  
He mutters too my name.—

I dare not do it. [*Listening again.*]  
The dreadful sound is now upon the wind,  
Sullen and low, as if it wound its way  
Into the cavern'd earth that swallow'd it.  
I will abide in patient silence here;  
Though hateful and asleep, I feel me still  
Near something of my kind.

[*Crosses her arms, and leans in a cowering  
posture over the back of a chair at a distance  
from the couch; when presently the horn is  
heard without, louder than before, and she  
starts up.*]

O it returns! as though the yawning earth  
Had given it up again, near to the walls.  
The horribly mingled din! 'tis nearer still:  
'Tis close at hand: 'tis at the very gate!

[*Running up to the couch.*]  
Were he a mard'rer, clenching in his hands  
The bloody knife, I must awake him.—No!  
That face of dark and subtle wickedness!  
I dare not do it. [*Listening again.*] Ay; 'tis at  
the gate—  
Within the gate.—

What rushing blast is that  
Shaking the doors? Some awful visitation  
Dread entrance makes! O mighty God of Heav'n!  
A sound ascends the stairs.

Ho, Rudigere!  
Awake, awake! Ho! wake thee, Rudigere!  
Rud. (*waking*). What cry is that so terribly  
strong?—Ha! Orra!

What is the matter? [*hear it?*]  
Orra. It is within the walls. Didst thou not  
Rud. What? The loud voice that called me?

Orra. No, it was mine.  
Rud. It sounded in my ears  
With more than human strength.

Orra. Did it so sound?  
There is around us, in this midnight air,  
A power surpassing nature. List, I pray:  
Although more distant now, dost thou not hear  
The yell of hounds; the spectre-huntsman's horn?

Rud. I hear, indeed, a strangely mingled sound:  
The wind is howling round the battlements.  
But rest secure where safety is, sweet Orra!  
Within these arms, nor man nor fiend shall harm thee.  
[*Approaching her with a softened winning voice,  
while she pushes him off with abhorrence.*]

Orra. Vile reptile! touch me not.  
Rud. Ah! Orra! thou art warp'd by prejudice,  
And taught to think me base; but in my veins  
Lives noble blood, which I will justify.

Orra. But in thy heart, false traitor! what lives  
there?

Rud. Alas! thy angel-faultlessness conceives not  
The strong temptations of a soul impasion'd  
Beyond control of reason.—At thy feet—

[*Kneeling.*]

O spurn me not!

*Enter several Servants, alarmed.*  
Rud. What, all these fools upon us! Staring  
knaves,

What brings ye here at this untimely hour?  
1st serv. We have all heard it—'twas the yell  
of hounds  
And clatt'ring steeds, and the shrill horn between.

Rud. Out on such folly!  
2d serv. In very truth it pass'd close to the  
walls;

Did not your honour hear it?  
Rud. Ha! sayst thou so? thou art not wont to  
join

In idle tales.—I'll to the battlements  
And watch it there: it may return again.

[*Exeunt severally, RUDIGERE followed by ser-  
vants, and ORRA into her own chamber.*]

## SCENE IV.

*The Outlaws' cave. Enter THEOBALD.*  
Theo. (*looking round*). Here is a place in which  
some traces are

Of late inhabitants. In yonder nook  
The embers faintly gleam, and on the walls  
Hang spears and ancient arms: I must be right.  
A figure through the gloom moves towards me.  
Ho! there! Who'er you are: Holla! good friend!

*Enter an Outlaw.*

Out. A stranger! Who art thou, who art thus  
bold,  
To hail us here unbidden?