

The Falcon

BY ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

The Count Federigo Degli Alberighi. Filippo, *Count's foster-brother*.
The lady Giovanna. Elisabetta, *the Count's nurse*.

THE FALCON

SCENE.--*An Italian Cottage. Castle and Mountains seen through Window.*

Elisabetta discovered seated on stool in window darning. The Count with Falcon on his hand comes down through the door at back. A withered wreath on the wall.

ELISABETTA. So, my lord, the Lady Giovanna, who hath been away so long, came back last night with her son to the castle.

COUNT. Hear that, my bird! Art thou not jealous of her? My princess of the cloud, my plumed purveyor, My far-eyed queen of the winds-- thou that canst soar Beyond the morning lark, and howsoe'er Thy quarry wind and wheel, swoop down upon him Eagle-like, lightning-like--strike, make his feathers Glance in mid heaven. [*Crosses to chair*. I would thou hadst a mate! Thy breed will die with thee, and mine with me: I am as lone and loveless as thyself. [*Sits in chair*. Giovanna here! Ay, ruffle thyself--*be* jealous! Thou should'st be jealous of her. Tho' I bred thee The full-train'd marvel of all falconry, And love thee and thou me, yet if Giovanna Be here again--No, no! Buss me, my bird! The stately widow has no heart for me. Thou art the last friend left me upon earth-- No, no again to that. [*Rises and turns*. My good old nurse, I had forgotten thou wast sitting there.

ELISABETTA. Ay, and forgotten thy foster-brother too.

COUNT. Bird-babble for my falcon! Let it pass. What art thou doing there?

ELISABETTA. Darning your lordship. We cannot flaunt it in new feathers now: Nay, if we *will* buy diamond necklaces To please our lady, we must darn, my lord. This old thing here (*points to necklace round her neck*), they are but blue beads--my Piero, God rest his honest soul, he bought 'em for me, Ay, but he knew I meant to marry him. How couldst thou do it, my son? How couldst thou do it?

COUNT. She saw it at a dance, upon a neck Less lovely than her own, and long'd for it.

ELISABETTA. She told thee as much?

COUNT. No, no--a friend of hers.

ELISABETTA. Shame on her that she took it at thy hands, She rich enough to have bought it for herself!

COUNT. She would have robb'd me then of a great pleasure.

ELISABETTA. But hath she yet return'd thy love?

COUNT. Not yet!

ELISABETTA. She should return thy necklace then.

COUNT. Ay, if She knew the giver; but I bound the seller To silence, and I left it privily At Florence, in her palace.

ELISABETTA. And sold thine own To buy it for her. She not know? She knows There's none such other----

COUNT. Madman anywhere. Speak freely, tho' to call a madman mad Will hardly help to make him sane again.

Enter FILIPPO.

FILIPPO. Ah, the women, the women! Ah, Monna Giovanna, you here again! you that have the face of an angel and the heart of a--that's too positive! You that have a score of lovers and have not a heart for any of them-- that's positive-negative: you that have *not* the head of a toad, and *not* a heart like the jewel in it--that's too negative; you that have a cheek like a peach and a heart like the stone in it--that's positive again--that's better!

ELISABETTA. Sh--sh--Filippo!

FILIPPO (*turns half round*). Here has our master been a-glorifying and a-velveting and a-silking himself, and a-peacocking and a-spreading to catch her eye for a dozen year, till he hasn't an eye left in his own tail to flourish among the peahens, and all along o' you, Monna Giovanna, all along o' you!

ELISABETTA. Sh--sh--Filippo! Can't you hear that you are saying behind his back what you see you are saying afore his face?

COUNT. Let him--he never spares me to my face!

FILIPPO. No, my lord, I never spare your lordship to your lordship's face, nor behind your lordship's back, nor to right, nor to left, nor to round about and back to your lordship's face again, for I'm honest, your lordship.

COUNT. Come, come, Filippo, what is there in the larder?
[ELISABETTA *crosses to fireplace and puts on wood.*]

FILIPPO. Shelves and hooks, shelves and hooks, and when I see the shelves I am like to hang myself on the hooks.

COUNT. No bread?

FILIPPO. Half a breakfast for a rat!

COUNT, Milk?

FILIPPO. Three laps for a cat!

COUNT. Cheese?

FILIPPO. A supper for twelve mites.

COUNT. Eggs?

FILIPPO. One, but addled.

COUNT. No bird?

FILIPPO. Half a tit and a hern's bill.

COUNT. Let be thy jokes and thy jerks, man! Anything or nothing?

FILIPPO. Well, my lord, if all-but-nothing be anything, and one plate of dried prunes be all-but-nothing, then there is anything in your lordship's larder at your lordship's service, if your lordship care to call for it.

COUNT. Good mother, happy was the prodigal son, For he return'd to the rich father; I But add my poverty to thine. And all Thro' following of my fancy. Pray thee make Thy slender meal out of those scraps and shreds Filippo spoke of. As for him and me, There sprouts a salad in the garden still. (*To the Falcon?*) Why didst thou miss thy quarry yester-even? To-day, my beauty, thou must dash us down Our dinner from the skies. Away, Filippo! [*Exit, followed by FILIPPO.*]

ELISABETTA. I knew it would come to this. She has beggared him. I always knew it would come to this! (*Goes up to table as if to resume darning, and looks out of window.*) Why, as I live, there is Monna Giovanna coming down the hill from the castle. Stops and stares at our cottage. Ay, ay! stare at it: it's all you have left us. Shame upon you! She beautiful! sleek as a miller's mouse! Meal enough, meat enough, well fed; but beautiful--bah! Nay, see, why she turns down the path through our little vineyard, and I sneezed three times this morning. Coming to visit my lord, for the first time in her life too! Why, bless the saints! I'll be bound to confess her love to him at last. I forgive her, I forgive her! I knew it would come to this--I always knew it must come to this! (*Going up to door during latter part of speech and opens it.*) Come in, Madonna, come in. (*Retires to front of*

table and curtseys as the LADY GIOVANNA enters, then moves chair towards the hearth.) Nay, let me place this chair for your ladyship.

[LADY GIOVANNA *moves slowly down stage, then crosses to chair, looking about her, bows as she sees the Madonna over fireplace, then sits in chair.*

LADY GIOVANNA. Can I speak with the Count?

ELISABETTA. Ay, my lady, but won't you speak with the old woman first, and tell her all about it and make her happy? for I've been on my knees every day for these half-dozen years in hope that the saints would send us this blessed morning; and he always took you so kindly, he always took the world so kindly. When he was a little one, and I put the bitters on my breast to wean him, he made a wry mouth at it, but he took it so kindly, and your ladyship has given him bitters enough in this world, and he never made a wry mouth at you, he always took you so kindly-- which is more than I did, my lady, more than I did--and he so handsome--and bless your sweet face, you look as beautiful this morning as the very Madonna her own self--and better late than never-- but come when they will--then or now--it's all for the best, come when they will--they are made by the blessed saints--these marriages. [*Raises her hands.*

LADY GIOVANNA. Marriages? I shall never marry again!

ELISABETTA (*rises and turns*). Shame on her then!

LADY GIOVANNA. Where is the Count?

ELISABETTA. Just gone To fly his falcon.

LADY GIOVANNA. Call him back and say I come to breakfast with him.

ELISABETTA. Holy mother! To breakfast! Oh sweet saints! one plate of prunes! Well, Madam, I will give your message to him. [*Exit.*

LADY GIOVANNA. His falcon, and I come to ask for his falcon, The pleasure of his eyes--boast of his hand-- Pride of his heart--the solace of his hours-- His one companion here--nay, I have heard That, thro' his late magnificence of living And this last costly gift to mine own self, [*Shows diamond necklace.* He hath become so beggar'd, that his falcon Ev'n wins his dinner for him in the field. That must be talk, not truth, but truth or talk, How can I ask for his falcon? [*Rises and moves as she speaks.* O my sick boy! My daily fading Florio, it is thou Hath set me this hard task, for when I say What can I do--what can I get for thee? He answers, 'Get the Count to give me his falcon, And that will make me well.' Yet if I ask, He loves me, and he knows I know he loves me! Will he not pray me to return his love-- To marry him?-- (*pause*)--I can never marry him. His grandsire struck my grandsire in a brawl At Florence, and my grandsire stabb'd him there. The feud between our houses is the bar I cannot cross; I dare not brave my brother, Break with my kin. My brother hates him, scorns The noblest-natured man alive, and I-- Who have that reverence for him that I scarce Dare beg him to receive his diamonds back-- How can I, dare I, ask him for his falcon? [*Puts diamonds in her casket.*

Re-enter COUNT *and* FILIPPO. COUNT *turns to* FILIPPO.

COUNT. Do what I said; I cannot do it myself.

FILIPPO. Why then, my lord, we are pauper'd out and out.

COUNT. Do what I said! [*Advances and bows low.* Welcome to this poor cottage, my dear lady.

LADY GIOVANNA. And welcome turns a cottage to a palace.

COUNT. 'Tis long since we have met!

LADY GIOVANNA. To make amends I come this day to break my fast with you.

COUNT.

I am much honour'd--yes-- [*Turns to* FILIPPO. Do what I told thee. Must I do it myself?

FILIPPO. I will, I will. (*Sighs.*) Poor fellow! [*Exit.*

COUNT. Lady, you bring your light into my cottage Who never deign'd to shine into my palace. My palace wanting you was but a cottage; My cottage, while you grace it, is a palace.

LADY GIOVANNA. In cottage or in palace, being still Beyond your fortunes, you are still the king Of courtesy and liberality.

COUNT. I trust I still maintain my courtesy; My liberality perforce is dead Thro' lack of means of giving.

LADY GIOVANNA. Yet I come To ask a gift. [*Moves toward him a little.*

COUNT. It will be hard, I fear, To find one shock upon the field when all The harvest has been carried.

LADY GIOVANNA. But my boy-- (*Aside.*) No, no! not yet--I cannot!

COUNT. Ay, how is he, That bright inheritor of your eyes--your boy?

LADY GIOVANNA. Alas, my Lord Federigo, he hath fallen Into a sickness, and it troubles me.

COUNT. Sick! is it so? why, when he came last year To see me hawking, he was well enough: And then I taught him all our hawking-phrases.

LADY GIOVANNA. Oh yes, and once you let him fly your falcon.

COUNT. How charm'd he was! what wonder?--A gallant boy, A noble bird, each perfect of the breed.

LADY GIOVANNA (*sinks in chair*). What do you rate her at?

COUNT. My bird? a hundred Gold pieces once were offer'd by the Duke. I had no heart to part with her for money.

LADY GIOVANNA. No, not for money. [COUNT *turns away and sighs*. Wherefore do you sigh?

COUNT. I have lost a friend of late.

LADY GIOVANNA. I could sigh with you For fear of losing more than friend, a son; And if he leave me--all the rest of life-- That wither'd wreath were of more worth to me. [*Looking at wreath on wall*].

COUNT. That wither'd wreath is of more worth to me Than all the blossom, all the leaf of this New-wakening year. [*Goes and takes down wreath*].

LADY GIOVANNA. And yet I never saw The land so rich in blossom as this year.

COUNT (*holding wreath toward her*). Was not the year when this was gather'd richer?

LADY GIOVANNA.

How long ago was that?

COUNT. Alas, ten summers! A lady that was beautiful as day Sat by me at a rustic festival With other beauties on a mountain meadow, And she was the most beautiful of all; Then but fifteen, and still as beautiful. The mountain flowers grew thickly round about. I made a wreath with some of these; I ask'd A ribbon from her hair to bind it with; I whisper'd, Let me crown you Queen of Beauty, And softly placed the chaplet on her head. A colour, which has colour'd all my life, Flush'd in her face; then I was call'd away; And presently all rose, and so departed. Ah! she had thrown my chaplet on the grass, And there I found it. [*Lets his hands fall, holding wreath despondingly*].

LADY GIOVANNA (*after pause*). How long since do you say?

COUNT. That was the very year before you married.

LADY GIOVANNA. When I was married you were at the wars.

COUNT. Had she not thrown my chaplet on the grass, It may be I had never seen the wars. [*Replaces wreath whence he had taken it.*]

LADY GIOVANNA. Ah, but, my lord, there ran a rumour then That you were kill'd in battle. I can tell you True tears that year were shed for you in Florence.

COUNT. It might have been as well for me. Unhappily I was but wounded by the enemy there And then imprison'd.

LADY GIOVANNA. Happily, however, I see you quite recover'd of your wound.

COUNT. No, no, not quite, Madonna, not yet, not yet.

Re-enter FILIPPO.

FILIPPO. My lord, a word with you.

COUNT. Pray, pardon me!

[*LADY GIOVANNA crosses, and passes behind chair and takes down wreath; then goes to chair by table.*]

COUNT (*to* FILIPPO). What is it, Filippo?

FILIPPO. Spoons, your lordship.

COUNT. Spoons!

FILIPPO. Yes, my lord, for wasn't my lady born with a golden spoon in her ladyship's mouth, and we haven't never so much as a silver one for the golden lips of her ladyship.

COUNT. Have we not half a score of silver spoons?

FILIPPO. Half o' one, my lord!

COUNT. How half of one?

FILIPPO. I trod upon him even now, my lord, in my hurry, and broke him.

COUNT. And the other nine?

FILIPPO. Sold! but shall I not mount with your lordship's leave to her ladyship's castle, in your lordship's and her ladyship's name, and confer with her ladyship's seneschal, and so descend again with some of her ladyship's own appurtenances?

COUNT. Why--no, man. Only see your cloth be clean.

[*Exit* FILIPPO.]

LADY GIOVANNA. Ay, ay, this faded ribbon was the mode In Florence ten years back. What's here? a scroll Pinned to the wreath. My lord, you have said so much Of this poor wreath that I was bold enough To take it down, if but to guess what flowers Had made it; and I find a written scroll That seems to run in rhymings. Might I read?

COUNT.

Ay, if you will.

LADY GIOVANNA. It should be if you can. (*Reads.*) 'Dead mountain.' Nay, for who could trace a hand So wild and staggering?

COUNT. This was penn'd, Madonna, Close to the grating on a winter morn In the perpetual twilight of a prison, When he that made it, having his right hand Lamed in the battle, wrote it with his left.

LADY GIOVANNA. O heavens! the very letters seem to shake With cold, with pain perhaps, poor prisoner! Well, Tell me the words--or better--for I see There goes a musical score along with them, Repeat them to their music.

COUNT. You can touch No chord in me that would not answer you In music.

LADY GIOVANNA. That is musically said.

[COUNT *takes guitar*. LADY GIOVANNA *sits listening with wreath in her hand, and quietly removes scroll and places it on table at the end of the song*.

COUNT (*sings, playing guitar*).

'Dead mountain flowers, dead mountain-meadow flowers, Dearer than when you made your mountain gay, Sweeter than any violet of to-day, Richer than all the wide world-wealth of May, To me, tho' all your bloom has died away, You bloom again, dead mountain-meadow flowers.'

Enter ELISABETTA with cloth.

ELISABETTA. A word with you, my lord!

COUNT (*singing*). 'O mountain flowers!'

ELISABETTA. A word, my lord! (*Louder*).

COUNT (*sings*). 'Dead flowers!'

ELISABETTA. A word, my lord! (*Louder*).

COUNT. I pray you pardon me again!

[LADY GIOVANNA *looking at wreath*.

(COUNT *to ELISABETTA*.) What is it?

ELISABETTA. My lord, we have but one piece of earthenware to serve the salad in to my lady, and that cracked!

COUNT. Why then, that flower'd bowl my ancestor Fetch'd from the farthest east--we never use it For fear of breakage--but this day has brought A great occasion. You can take it, nurse!

ELISABETTA. I did take it, my lord, but what with my lady's coming that had so flurried me, and what with the fear of breaking it, I did break it, my lord: it is broken!

COUNT. My one thing left of value in the world! No matter! see your cloth be white as snow!

ELISABETTA (*pointing thro' window*). White? I warrant thee, my son, as the snow yonder on the very tip-top o' the mountain.

COUNT. And yet to speak white truth, my good old mother, I have seen it like the snow on the moraine.

ELISABETTA: How can your lordship say so? There my lord! [*Lays cloth*. O my dear son, be not unkind to me. And one word more. [*Going--returns*.

COUNT (*touching guitar*). Good! let it be but one.

ELISABETTA. Hath she return'd thy love?

COUNT. Not yet!

ELISABETTA. And will she?

COUNT (*looking at LADY GIOVANNA*). I scarce believe it!

ELISABETTA. Shame upon her then! [*Exit*.

COUNT (*sings*).

'Dead mountain flowers'---- Ah well, my nurse has broken The thread of my dead flowers, as she has broken My china bowl. My memory is as dead. [*Goes and replaces guitar*. Strange that the words at home with me so long Should fly like bosom friends when needed most. So by your leave if you would hear the rest, The writing.

LADY GIOVANNA (*holding wreath toward him*). There! my lord, you are a poet, And can you not imagine that the wreath, Set, as you say, so lightly on her head, Fell with her motion as she rose, and she,

A girl, a child, then but fifteen, however Flutter'd or flatter'd by your notice of her, Was yet too bashful to return for it?

COUNT. Was it so indeed? was it so? was it so?

[Leans forward to take wreath, and touches LADY GIOVANNA'S hand, which she withdraws hastily; he places wreath on corner of chair.]

LADY GIOVANNA (*with dignity*). I did not say, my lord, that it was so; I said you might imagine it was so.

Enter FILIPPO with bowl of salad, which he places on table.

FILIPPO. Here's a fine salad for my lady, for tho' we have been a soldier, and ridden by his lordship's side, and seen the red of the battle-field, yet are we now drill-sergeant to his lordship's lettuces, and profess to be great in green things and in garden-stuff.

LADY GIOVANNA. I thank thee, good Filippo. *[Exit FILIPPO.]*

Enter ELISABETTA with bird on a dish which she places on table.

ELISABETTA (*close to table*). Here's a fine fowl for my lady; I had scant time to do him in. I hope he be not underdone, for we be undone in the doing of him.

LADY GIOVANNA. I thank you, my good nurse.

FILIPPO (*re-entering with plate of prunes*). And here are fine fruits for my lady--prunes, my lady, from the tree that my lord himself planted here in the blossom of his boyhood--and so I, Filippo, being, with your ladyship's pardon, and as your ladyship knows, his lordship's own foster-brother, would commend them to your ladyship's most peculiar appreciation. *[Puts plate on table.]*

ELISABETTA. Filippo!

LADY GIOVANNA (*COUNT leads her to table*). Will you not eat with me, my lord?

COUNT. I cannot, Not a morsel, not one morsel. I have broken My fast already. I will pledge you. Wine! Filippo, wine!

[Sits near table; FILIPPO brings flask, fills the COUNT'S goblet, then LADY GIOVANNA'S; ELISABETTA stands at the back of LADY GIOVANNA'S chair.]

COUNT. It is but thin and cold, Not like the vintage blowing round your castle. We lie too deep down in the shadow here. Your ladyship lives higher in the sun.

[They pledge each other and drink.]

LADY GIOVANNA. If I might send you down a flask or two Of that same vintage? There is iron in it. It has been much commended as a medicine. I give it my sick son, and if you be Not quite recover'd of your wound, the wine Might help you. None has ever told me yet The story of your battle and your wound.

FILIPPO (*coming forward*). I can tell you, my lady, I can tell you.

ELISABETTA. Filippo! will you take the word out of your master's own mouth?

FILIPPO. Was it there to take? Put it there, my lord.

COUNT. Giovanna, my dear lady, in this same battle We had been beaten--they were ten to one. The trumpets of the fight had echo'd down, I and Filippo here had done our best, And, having passed unwounded from the field, Were seated sadly at a fountain side, Our horses grazing by us, when a troop, Laden with booty and with a flag of ours Ta'en in the fight----

FILIPPO. Ay, but we fought for it back, And kill'd----

ELISABETTA. Filippo!

COUNT. A troop of horse----

FILIPPO. Five hundred!

COUNT. Say fifty!

FILIPPO. And we kill'd 'em by the score!

ELISABETTA. Filippo!

FILIPPO. Well, well, well! I bite my tongue.

COUNT. We may have left their fifty less by five. However, staying not to count how many, But anger'd at their flaunting of our flag, We mounted, and we dash'd into the heart of 'em. I wore the lady's chaplet round my neck; It served me for a blessed rosary. I am sure that more than one brave fellow owed His death to the charm in it.

ELISABETTA. Hear that, my lady!

COUNT. I cannot tell how long we strove before Our horses fell beneath us; down we went Crush'd, hack'd at, trampled underfoot. The night, As some cold-manner'd friend may strangely do us The truest service, had a touch of frost That help'd to check the flowing of the blood. My last sight ere I swoon'd was one sweet face Crown'd with the wreath. *That* seem'd to come and go. They left us there for dead!

ELISABETTA. Hear that, my lady!

FILIPPO. Ay, and I left two fingers there for dead. See, my lady!
(*Showing his hand.*)

LADY GIOVANNA. I see, Filippo!

FILIPPO. And I have small hope of the gentleman gout in my great toe.

LADY GIOVANNA. And why, Filippo? [*Smiling absently.*]

FILIPPO. I left him there for dead too!

ELISABETTA. She smiles at him--how hard the woman is! My lady,
if your ladyship were not Too proud to look upon the garland, you
Would find it stain'd----

COUNT (*rising*). Silence, Elisabetta!

ELISABETTA. Stain'd with the blood of the best heart that ever Beat
for one woman. [*Points to wreath on chair.*]

LADY GIOVANNA (*rising slowly*). I can eat no more!

COUNT. You have but trifled with our homely salad, But dallied with
a single lettuce-leaf; Not eaten anything.

LADY GIOVANNA. Nay, nay, I cannot. You know, my lord, I told
you I was troubled. My one child Florio lying still so sick, I bound
myself, and by a solemn vow, That I would touch no flesh till he were
well Here, or else well in Heaven, where all is well.

[*ELISABETTA clears table of bird and salad; FILIPPO snatches up
the plate of prunes and holds them to LADY GIOVANNA.*]

FILIPPO. But the prunes, my lady, from the tree that his lordship----

LADY GIOVANNA. Not now, Filippo. My lord Federigo, Can I not
speak with you once more alone?

COUNT. You hear, Filippo? My good fellow, go!

FILIPPO. But the prunes that your lordship----

ELISABETTA. Filippo!

COUNT. Ay, prune our company of thine own and go!

ELISABETTA. Filippo!

FILIPPO (*turning*). Well, well! the women! [*Exit.*]

COUNT. And thou too leave us, my dear nurse, alone.

ELISABETTA (*folding up cloth and going*).

And me too! Ay, the dear nurse will leave you alone; but, for all that, she that has eaten the yolk is scarce like to swallow the shell.

[*Turns and curtseys stiffly to LADY GIOVANNA, then exit. LADY GIOVANNA takes out diamond necklace from casket.*

LADY GIOVANNA. I have anger'd your good nurse; these old-world servants Are all but flesh and blood with those they serve. My lord, I have a present to return you, And afterwards a boon to crave of you.

COUNT. No, my most honour'd and long-worshipt lady, Poor Federigo degli Alberighi Takes nothing in return from you except Return of his affection--can deny Nothing to you that you require of him.

LADY GIOVANNA. Then I require you to take back your diamonds-
- [*Offering necklace*. I doubt not they are yours. No other heart Of such magnificence in courtesy Beats--out of heaven. They seem'd too rich a prize To trust with any messenger. I came In person to return them. [*Count draws back*. If the phrase 'Return' displease you, we will say--exchange them For your--for your----

COUNT (*takes a step toward her and then back*). For mine--and what of mine?

LADY GIOVANNA. Well, shall we say this wreath and your sweet rhymes?

COUNT. But have you ever worn my diamonds?

LADY GIOVANNA. No! For that would seem accepting of your love. I cannot brave my brother--but be sure That I shall never marry again, my lord!

COUNT. Sure?

LADY GIOVANNA. Yes!

COUNT. Is this your brother's order?

LADY GIOVANNA. No! For he would marry me to the richest man In Florence; but I think you know the saying-- 'Better a man without riches, than riches without a man.'

COUNT. A noble saying--and acted on would yield A nobler breed of men and women. Lady, I find you a shrewd bargainer. The wreath That once you wore outvalues twentyfold The diamonds that you never deign'd to wear. But lay them there for a moment!

[*Points to table.* LADY GIOVANNA *places necklace on table.*

And be you Gracious enough to let me know the boon By granting which, if aught be mine to grant, I should be made more happy than I hoped Ever to be again.

LADY GIOVANNA. Then keep your wreath, But you will find me a shrewd bargainer still. I cannot keep your diamonds, for the gift I ask for, to my mind and at this present Outvalues all the jewels upon earth.

COUNT. It should be love that thus outvalues all. You speak like love, and yet you love me not. I have nothing in this world but love for you.

LADY GIOVANNA.

Love? it *is* love, love for my dying boy, Moves me to ask it of you.

COUNT. What? my time? Is it my time? Well, I can give my time To him that is a part of you, your son. Shall I return to the castle with you? Shall I Sit by him, read to him, tell him my tales, Sing him my songs? You know that I can touch The ghittern to some purpose.

LADY GIOVANNA. No, not that! I thank you heartily for that--and you, I doubt not from your nobleness of nature, Will pardon me for asking what I ask.

COUNT. Giovanna, dear Giovanna, I that once The wildest of the random youth of Florence Before I saw you--all my nobleness Of nature, as you deign to call it, draws From you, and from my constancy to you. No more, but speak.

LADY GIOVANNA. I will. You know sick people, More specially sick children, have strange fancies, Strange longings; and to thwart them in their mood May work them grievous harm at times, may even Hasten their end. I would you had a son! It might be easier then for you to make Allowance for a mother--her--who comes To rob you of your one delight on earth. How often has my sick boy yearn'd for this! I have put him off as often; but to-day I dared not--so much weaker, so much worse For last day's journey. I was weeping for him: He gave me his hand: 'I should be well again If the good Count would give me--

COUNT. Give me.

LADY GIOVANNA. His falcon.

COUNT (*starts back*). My falcon!

LADY GIOVANNA. Yes, your falcon, Federigo!

COUNT. Alas, I cannot!

LADY GIOVANNA. Cannot? Even so! I fear'd as much. O this unhappy world! How shall I break it to him? how shall I tell him? The boy may die: more blessed were the rags Of some pale beggar-woman seeking alms For her sick son, if he were like to live, Than all my childless wealth, if mine must die. I was to blame--the love you said you bore me-- My lord, we thank you for your entertainment, [*With a stately curtsey*. And so return--Heaven help him!--to our son. [*Turns-*
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COUNT (*rushes forward*). Stay, stay, I am most unlucky, most unhappy. You never had look'd in on me before, And when you came and dipt your sovereign head Thro' these low doors, you ask'd to eat with me. I had but emptiness to set before you, No not a draught of milk, no not an egg, Nothing but my brave bird, my noble falcon, My

comrade of the house, and of the field. She had to die for it--she died for you. Perhaps I thought with those of old, the nobler The victim was, the more acceptable Might be the sacrifice. I fear you scarce Will thank me for your entertainment now.

LADY GIOVANNA (*returning*). I bear with him no longer.

COUNT. No, Madonna! And he will have to bear with it as he may.

LADY GIOVANNA. I break with him for ever!

COUNT. Yes, Giovanna, But he will keep his love to you for ever!

LADY GIOVANNA. You? you? not you! My brother! my hard brother! O Federigo, Federigo, I love you! Spite of ten thousand brothers, Federigo. [*falls at his feet*.

COUNT (*impetuously*). Why then the dying of my noble bird Hath served me better than her living--then [*Takes diamonds from table*. These diamonds are both yours and mine--have won Their value again--beyond all markets--there I lay them for the first time round your neck. [*Lays necklace round her neck*. And then this chaplet--No more feuds, but peace, Peace and conciliation! I will make Your brother love me. See, I tear away The leaves were darken'd by the battle-- [*Pulls leaves off and throws them down*. --crown you Again with the same crown my Queen of Beauty. [*Places wreath on her head*. Rise--I could almost think that the dead garland Will break once more into the living blossom. Nay, nay, I pray you rise. [*Raises her with both hands*. We two together Will help to heal your son--your son and mine-- We shall do it--we shall do it. [*Embraces her*. The purpose of my being is accomplish'd, And I am happy!

LADY GIOVANNA. And I too, Federigo.

