

La Traviata

The Plot

Act I

A drawing-room at Violetta's mansion in Paris.

Salon in the house of Violetta Valéry, a much admired courtesan in fashionable Parisian society. A sumptuous reception is in progress. Among the last guests to arrive, after gambling at cards in the house of Flora Bervoix, Viscount Gaston de Letorières introduces Violetta to Alfredo Germont, who is a fervent admirer of hers: so deeply in love, confides Gaston, that when she was recently ill he came each day to enquire secretly after her health. Encouraged by his friends, Alfredo improvises a toast to beauty and to the joy of life.

After supper, Violetta has a sudden fit of coughing. Alfredo tenderly declares his love to her. Violetta is surprised and feigns indifference, however, she is perturbed by his confession. In solitude, she ponders over Alfredo's words of love. Accustomed to spend her life among fleeting joys, she resolves not to pursue the foolish illusion of changing her way of life.

Act II

Scene one. Violetta's country house, outside Paris.

In a country near Paris, Violetta and Alfredo are spending an idyllic life. Unexpectedly broken by Annina, the maid, who tells Alfredo she has been to Paris on Violetta's orders, to sell property and pay the expenses of their stay in the country. Alfredo's pride is hurt. He decides to leave and settle these affairs personally. Violetta enters. She is reading a letter from Flora, who invites her friend to a reception. In the meantime a visit is announced. Giorgio Germont, Alfredo's father, introduces himself to Violetta with a contemptuous air, convinced that the woman is being kept by his son. Proudly Violetta shows Germont the deed of sale of her estate. Germont asks her to renounce Alfredo in order not to ruin the happiness of his daughter, whose marriage with a young man 'of good family' is liable to fall unless her brother's scandalous liaison is broken off. Violetta claims the rights of her love, but in the end she yields. She is on the point of writing him a farewell letter when Alfredo himself appears and asks the reason for her strange uneasiness. Violetta answers with a heart-rending cry of love, before hastening away. Later she sends him a note saying that she has decided to return to her former society life and old friends. Alfredo is deeply shaken. Catching sight of Flora's note on the table, he departs at once.

Scene two. Drawing-room at Flora's house in Paris.

In a hall in the house of Flora Bervoix. A masked ball, with a groups of women dressed as gypsies and men dressed as toreadors. Violetta is in attendance on the arm of Baron Douphol, her protector. She is upset on seeing Alfredo. He pretends to take no notice, gambles and wins with shameless luck. Violetta implores Alfredo to leave and tells him that the baron will not let her leave with Alfredo. Confessing his shame at having allowed a woman to squander her fortune for him, he flings at Violetta's feet a purse full of money. Violetta faints. Germont reproaches his son, and drags him away.

Act III

Violetta's bedroom.

Violetta, whose illness is by now beyond hope, is being looked after by the faithful Annina in the bedroom. Doctor Grenvil tries to instil hope into his patient, but confesses to Annina that the end is near. Violetta once again reads the letter received from Germont. He informs her that the baron was wounded in the duel and that he has at last revealed the truth to Alfredo, who is now on his way to visit her to beg forgiveness. Violetta gazes at her pale image in the looking-glass and remembers the happy months spent with her lover.

Annina enters to prepare her for a great emotion, followed at once by Alfredo. Violetta strength fails and she realizes she will soon die. As Germont clasps Violetta to his heart like a daughter, she gives Alfredo a portrait of their happy years, begging him to keep it in memory, and to offer it one day to the young woman who will be his future wife. Suddenly Violetta feels lifted by a mysterious force. But soon she falls back dead in Alfredo's arms.