

# BROKEN HEARTS

*AN ENTIRELY ORIGINAL FAIRY PLAY*

IN THREE ACTS

BY

W. S. GILBERT

*First produced at the Royal Court Theatre, under the management of MR. HARE,  
Thursday 9th December, 1875*

## ***DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.***

PRINCE FLORIAN .....	MR. W. H. KENDAL
MOUSTA ( <i>a deformed Dwarf</i> ).....	MR. ANSON
THE LADY HILDA.....	MISS M. ROBERTSON (MRS. KENDAL)
THE LADY VAVIR ( <i>her Sister</i> ).....	MISS HOLLINGSHEAD
THE LADY MELUSINE .....	MISS PLOWDEN
THE LADY AMANTHIS .....	MISS RORKE

SCENE: THE ISLAND OF BROKEN HEARTS.

*The action of the piece takes place within twenty-four hours.*

Costumes – 1300 - 1850.

# BROKEN HEARTS.

## ACT I

SCENE: *A tropical landscape. In the distance, a calm sea. A natural fountain – a mere thread of water – falls over a rock into a natural basin. An old sun-dial formed of the upper part of a broken pillar, round the shaft of which some creeping flowers are trained, stands on a small mound. The time is within an hour of sunset.*

MOUSTA, *a deformed, ill-favoured dwarf, hump-backed and one-eyed, is discovered seated, reading a small black-letter volume.*

MOUS. (*reads*) “*To move a mountain.*” That will serve me not,  
Unless, indeed, ’twill teach me how to lift  
This cursed mountain from my crippled back!  
“*To make old young.*” Humph! I’m but forty-two –  
But still, I’ll mark that page – the day will come  
When. I shall find it useful. Ha! What’s this?  
“*To make the crooked straight; to heal the halt;  
And clothe unsightly forms with comeliness.*”  
At last! At last!

*Enter VAVIR, who listens in amazement.*

(*Reads*) “*Take scammony and rue,  
With henbane gathered in a fat churchyard –  
Pound in a mortar with three drops of blood,  
Drawn from a serpent’s tail at dead of night.*”  
Yes, yes, that’s plain enough! (*reads*) “*Take pigeon’s egg  
Wrapped in the skin of a beheaded toad,  
And then –*” (*sees VAVIR*) Who’s there?

VAV. (*astonished*) Why, Mousta?

MOUS. Pardon me,

I’m at my book. I did not hear thy step.

VAV. Thy book hath lines both strange and terrible:  
Why Moustas, this is arrant sorcery!  
How camest thou with such a fearful thing?

MOUS. (*whispering*). An unseen spirit brought it to me -Ay,  
Brought it to *me*. An hour or so ago  
I saw a distant boat make for our shores,  
The wind was on her bow – she tacked as though  
Handled by one well-skilled in such small craft.  
Well – on she came – and I awaited her,  
Armed with a boat-hook. When within fair hail,  
“Sheer off!” I cried; “No stranger touches here!”  
But, heedless of my hail, she kept her course,  
And, when within a bow-shot of the beach,  
Down came her sail, and in she ran to shore!

VAV. (*alarmed*) Whom did she carry, Moustas?

*Broken Hearts*

MOUS.

Not a soul!

The boat was tenantless! Some unseen power  
Had guided her! I overhauled the craft  
To find some sign of human agency,  
And found – this book.

VAV. (*shrinking from it*) It is unholy lore!  
Oh, burn it, Mous!

Mous. Burn it? No, not I!  
See what I am – dwarfed, twisted, and deformed!  
I have a fancy to be tall and straight –  
*This volume teaches me to have my will.*  
My only eyeball flashes from its pit  
Like a red snake trapped in a sunken snare –  
I do not like my eye. As I've but one,  
I'd have it large and bright. *This teaches me*  
*To make it so.* My mouth is coarsely cut –  
I like a tempting mouth – a mouth that smiles –  
A mouth that's smiled upon. *This teaches me*  
*To make it so.* I will not burn this book!

*The LADY HILDA has entered during the last line.*

HIL. And what would'st *thou* with beauty?

Mous.

What would I?

Why, lady, look around; the isle is fair:  
Its feathery palms that tower towards the sky,  
Its prattling brooks that trickle to the sea,  
Its hills and dales, its sea and sky – are fair:  
The beasts that dwell upon it, and the birds  
That fly above it – even they are fair:  
And, beyond all, the ladies who have made  
This isle their chosen home are very fair!  
And what am I? Why, lady, look at me!  
I am the one foul blot upon its face.  
I am the one misshapen twisted thing  
In this assemblage of rare loveliness:  
I am the one accursed discord in  
This choir of universal harmony I  
Is this, think you, a proud pre-eminence?  
Or, rather, is it not a red-hot brand  
That stamps its damning impress on one's heart,  
And changes man to devil before his time!  
(*Sadly.*) Ah! you are mocking me!

HIL. (*kindly*). I mock thee not  
We maidens all (save one) have dearly loved,  
And those we loved have died. We, broken hearts,  
Knit by the sympathy of kindred woe,  
Have sought this isle far from the ken of man;

*Broken Hearts*

And having loved, and having lost our loves,  
Stand pledged to love no living thing again.  
Thou art our trusted servant and our friend  
The only man of all the world of men  
Whom we admit upon our virgin shores.  
We know thee, and we trust thee, Mousta – Come,  
This thought might soften harder hearts than thine!

MOUS. (*angrily*) And why choose me alone of all mankind  
To serve you in your island loneliness?  
Because my limbs, though crooked, are strongly framed?  
Bah, there are tall straight men as strong as I.  
Because my heart goes with my fealty?  
Why half *my* wage would buy the heart and soul  
Of twenty well-proportioned servitors.  
Because by reason of my face and form  
I do not count as man? Yes! I'm an ape!  
A crippled, crumpled, devil-faced baboon,  
Who claims a place amid this loveliness  
By title of his sheer deformity!  
Now, monkey though I be, I am a man  
In all but face and form – I've a man's heart,  
A man's desire to love – and to be loved – (*HILDA seems amused.*)  
Ay, you may laugh – but those who seek to laugh  
May find, methinks, more fitting merriment  
In such mad love as deals with sun-dials,  
Trees, rocks, and fountains, and such baby game.  
My love at least is human in its aim.  
It's well you should know this – be on your guard!

[*Exit* MOUSTA.]

HIL. In truth, the love that Mousta laughs at tells  
How strangely ordered is a woman's heart!  
Dost thou remember how, when first we came  
To this fair isle, I said, in thoughtless jest,  
“As woman's heart must love, and we are women,  
So let us choose our loves” – then, looking round,  
“This running fountain shall be mine,” I cried,  
And, kneeling by the brink, then sealed the vow  
As all such vows are sealed 'twixt men and women –  
And thou, poor child, pleased with the jest, replied,  
“I take this dial to be my love for life!”  
Vavir, we little thought that in those words  
We pledged ourselves to an abiding love  
That rivals in its pure intensity  
The love that we had banished from our hearts!  
Yet so it is. We have so dwelt upon  
This idle fancy – keeping it alive  
With songs and sighs and vows of constancy,  
That we have tricked ourselves into a love

*Broken Hearts*

Akin to that which we had all forsworn.  
I love this little fountain as my life!

VAV. To me my dial is more, far more, than life;  
It is the chronicle of the World's life,  
Written by Heaven's own hand. As, rapt in thought,  
I watch its silent solemn shadow creep  
From hour to hour, and so from day to day,  
True as the Sun itself – an awful record  
Of Heaven's most perfect and most glorious order –  
My love is lost in reverential awe.  
Oh I have chosen well in choosing this!  
It is a holy thing, that bears a warrant,  
Sent from the Source of Life, to tell the Earth  
That even Time is hastening to its end!  
What is mere world-love to such love as this?

HIL. And yet *thou* best no cause to shun world-love.  
When my great sorrow came and I withdrew  
To this lone isle with other broken hearts,  
Thou, heart-whole and untouched by love of Man,  
Yet gavest up the world and all it holds  
To bide with me.

VAV. I do not love the world.  
My darling sister found her sorrow there –  
The world is naught to me. This tiny isle,  
But half a league in girth holds all *I* love.  
*My* world is where thou art – there let me stay  
For the few months that yet remain to me!  
I think my time on earth will be but brief.

HIL. Hush, hush, Vavir. I will not hear these things;

VAV. My life has been a very happy life,  
So free from pain and sorrow of its own  
That, but that I have shared my sister's grief,  
I had not known what pain and sorrow are –  
Yet even this calm rest – this changeless peace,  
Saps my poor fragile fabric day by day,  
And the first shaft that sorrow aims at it,  
May shake its puny structure to the ground!

HIL. Why, what sad silly fancy's this, Vavir?  
Thou hast no pain, my child?

VAV. No pain, indeed;  
But a calm happiness so strangely still,  
It comes not of this world. I am to die  
Ere very long. Pray Heaven I be prepared!

HIL. It's well for me and well for both of us  
I do not share these foolish fantasies!  
Why, silly child, believest thou that Time  
Will see the fruit that ripens on those cheeks,  
And note the dainty banquet of those lips,

*Broken Hearts*

And not preserve such rich and radiant fare,  
For his own feasting in his own good time?  
Trust the old Epicure!

[*Exeunt HILDA and VAVIR together.*]

*Enter FLORIAN. He comes down, looking around him in admiration.*

FLOR. All men who say I'm five-and-twenty, lie.  
I was born but to-day! An hour ago!  
Yes – this must be the World. The distant land  
In which I've passed so many years, and which  
I, in my puppy – blindness, called "The World,"  
Is but its antechamber.

*Enter MOUSTA (with book).*

Born to-day,  
And by a process which is new to me,  
My faculties are scarcely wide awake,  
But if my memory serves me faithfully,  
This twisted thing and I have met before.

MOUS. The ladies are at supper. Now's my time  
To master, undisturbed by curious eyes,  
The ghostly secrets of my spirit book!  
Where was I? Oh! (*reads*) "*Take scammony and rue,  
With henbane gathered –*"

FLOR. (*coming behind and taking book from him*). Pardon me – that's mine.

MOUS. Oh Heaven and Earth – a Man! Thou hardy fool,  
What dost thou on this isle? (*Draws knife.*) Come, answer me.

FLOR. Give me that knife. (*Twists it out of his hand.*)  
That's well! Now, what's your will?

MOUS. Go – get thee hence at once.

FLOR. No, not just yet.

This Paradise – if Rumour tells the truth –  
Is ruled by six fair ladies. I prefer  
To take my sailing orders from *their lips*.

MOUS. Their lips are mine!

FLOR. Then you're a lucky dog!

MOUS. I am their mouthpiece. By their solemn rules  
No man may set his foot upon these shores.  
Those rules thy hardihood hath set at naught.  
How camest thou, and when?

FLOR. I am a Prince,  
Prince Florian of Spain. I landed here  
From yonder boat – about an hour ago.

MOUS. Liar! The boat was empty!

FLOR. No, not quite.  
I was on board.

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MOUS. (*puzzled*) But I was on the beach –

FLOR. I know you were – with boat-hook in your hand  
To thrust her off. You hailed me angrily:  
I had no time to stop and parley then,  
So, in the hope that Fate would furnish me  
With some more fitting opportunity  
To offer you my best apologies,  
I kept her head to land, and jumped ashore.  
Those best apologies I offer now.

MOUS. (*alarmed*) If you'll believe me, sir, I saw you not!

FLOR. I quite believe you, for I have the power  
To make myself invisible at will,  
And, having such a power, you'll see at once  
That force will serve you nothing.

MOUS. (*amazed*) Say you true?

FLOR. Undoubtedly. I've but to wind this veil  
(*producing a grey gauze veil with gold tassels*)  
About my head, and I'm invisible,  
And so remain till I remove it.

MOUS. Why,  
This is a priceless Talisman, indeed!  
Invisible! I'd give one half my life  
To be invisible for half a day!

FLOR. Indeed? And why?

MOUS. There is no living thing  
But seeks a mate – What birds and beasts may do  
Mousta may seek to do – *I want to mate!*  
And whom dye think I want? Some kitchen-wench?  
One-eyed, hump-backed, and twisted like myself?  
I want the purest, fairest form on earth!

FLOR. Upon my word, you aim full high!

MOUS. I do!  
Why not? Suppose I loved a kitchen-wench,  
And told her so?

FLOR. A decent kitchen-wench  
Would soundly box your ears!

MOUS. You're right – She would;  
My Lady can't do more. As I *must* fail  
At least I'll fail for game worth failing for!  
As yet I've breathed no word – were I unseen  
I could take heart of grace and tell my love!

FLOR. (*laughing*) What would you say?

MOUS. Ay, ay, you laugh at me;  
But I've a wily tongue, and I can woo  
Like an Adonis – when I'm in the dark!  
A blind girl loved me once – a fair young girl  
With gentle face and gentle heart – but blind!  
FLOR. I'll swear she was!



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MOUS. (*gently*) Ah, mock her not – she died!

FLOR. Well, peace be with her – Find me some safe spot,  
Where I can pass the night – I'll pay you well.

MOUS. Ha! ha!

FLOR. Why do you laugh?

MOUS. Had I your power

To make myself invisible at will,  
I should take up my quarters in the castle  
Where all the ladies dwell!

FLOR. I'm sure you would,  
Unfortunately I'm a gentleman,  
And so that course is closed to me –

MOUS. Of course!

I did but jest – I beg your pardon, sir.  
(*Aside.*) If I could get that veil for one short hour –

Eh, but I've drugs to lull a man to sleep!

If I can tempt this squeamish popinjay  
To trust himself to me, the thing is done!

(*Aloud.*) I've a poor cottage – it is close at hand,  
Though humble, it is clean and weather-tight:  
It will afford you shelter. Then for food  
I've some dried fish and eggs and oaten bread  
Quite at your service.

FLOR. Good.

MOUS. (*quickly*). But hide yourself,  
Some one approaches!

[FLORIAN covers his head with veil as VAVIR enters with flowers.]

FLOR. (*aside to MOUSTA*). Who is this fair maid?

MOUS. (*aside*) Lady Vavir. She always comes at eve  
To bid "good night" to this old sun-dial!  
Keep your ears open, and I'll warrant you  
Yours eyes will open too! (*Aloud.*) Lady Vavir,  
I bid you fair good night.

VAV. Good night to you. [*Exit MOUSTA.*]

FLOR. In truth a fair young girl!

VAV. Dear sun-dial,  
Dost know what day this is?

FLOR. (*aside*) He ought to know,  
It comes within the radius of his calling!

VAV. A year to-day, and we two were betrothed –  
One happy, happy year!

FLOR. (*aside*) Betrothed, I' faith!  
They're lovers, then!

VAV. I must devise some gift  
To mark this happy day. What shall it be?  
I'll weave a bower of rose and eglantine  
To place above thy head at eventide,  
When the full moon's abroad. No foolish moon

*Broken Hearts*

Shall cast false shadows on thy sleeping face,  
Or make thee mutter incoherent tales  
Of hours long since gone by or yet to come.  
No madcap moon shall mar thy nightly rest,  
Or in the mischief of half-witted glee  
Awake thy sleeping hours before their time.

FLOR. (*aside*) He doesn't answer – the insensate dolt! –  
And yet such words are warm enough to rouse  
A tombstone into life!

VAV. I've brought thee flowers  
To deck thy stem. They live their little life,  
And then they die; but others follow them –  
And thou shalt have thy garland day by day  
While I am here to weave it for thee?

FLOR. (*aside*) Well,  
This is the oddest wooing! On my word,  
A thousand pities that the lady's love  
Should be lopsided! Come, arouse thee, dial –  
Be eloquent with thanks! I've half a mind  
To thank her for thee, in the interests  
Of all true horologes!

VAV. I'm content  
To sit and deck thee, silent though thou art.  
And yet I would thou hadst the gift of speech  
For one brief second – time enough to say,  
“Vavir, I love thee with my whole, whole heart!”

FLOR. (*aloud*) “Vavir, I love thee with my whole, whole heart!”

VAV. (*recoiling, horrified*) Who spake?

FLOR. 'Twas I – thy dial!

VAV. Oh, terrible! What shall I do?

FLOR. Fair lady-have no fear.

VAV. “Fair lady” – It's a man! My sisters, help!

I am betrayed!

FLOR. Have patience for a while –

VAV. Who and what art thou? – speak!

FLOR. (*aside*). What shall I say?

(*Aloud.*) I am a poor, long-suffering, mortal man,  
Whom in the stony substance of thy dial.  
A cruel magician holds incarcerated!

VAV. Oh, marvellous!

FLOR. And very pitiful!

VAV. Aye, pitiful indeed, poor prisoned soul!

(*advancing.*)

FLOR. “There shalt thou lie,” said he, “till some pure maid  
Shall have been constant to thine unseen self  
A twelvemonth and a day.” That maid art thou!

VAV. Alas! poor man, I fain would set thee free.  
Yet I have loved not thee, but this thy tomb!

*Broken Hearts*

FLOR. Thou canst not separate me from my tomb  
Except by loving me. In loving it  
Thou lovest me who am bound up with it;  
And in so loving me - provided that  
Thy love, a twelvemonth old, lasts one day more –  
Thou givest me my freedom and my life!  
If thou hast loved thy dial thou hast loved me.

VAV. Yes, I have loved my dial!

FLOR. But earnestly –  
With a surpassing love?

VAV. I cannot say –  
I am ill-versed in the degrees of love.  
Judge for thyself – When I am weak and ill  
My sisters place my couch beside my dial  
That I may lay my poor thin hand on it:  
It gives me life and strength – I know not why.  
Judge for thyself –  
When the black winter comes my sisters weep  
To see me weep my darling's brief day-life;  
And when the bright, long summer days return  
They join my joy – because with Light comes Hope,  
And Hope is Life – and they would have me live!  
Judge for thyself –  
At dawn of day I seek my dial alone,  
To watch its daily waking into life;  
At set of sun I come to it again,  
To kiss "good night" upon its fading shade:  
Then, with a prayer that I may lay to heart  
The lesson of its silent eloquence,  
I seek my bed. So speeds my little life.  
If this be love, then have I loved indeed!  
Judge for thyself (*Rises.*)

*Enter MELUSINE (a small hand-mirror hangs from her waist).*

MEL. Vavir, the evening dews are falling fast;  
The night air teems with damp. So, come, dear love,  
Return at once with me.

VAV. Oh, Melusine,  
I have a secret. (*Aside to dial.*) May I tell it?

FLOR. (*whispering*). Yes.

MEL. A secret?

VAV. Ay, a wondrous secret, too!  
My sun-dial hath ears to hear withal –  
And eyes to see withal – and a sweet voice,  
A gentle, tender voice to woo withal!

Mel. Oh, marvellous! Oh, fortunate Vavir!  
To woo – and to be woo'd-and, being woo'd,

*Broken Hearts*

To keep her vow intact! I'd give the world

If my loved mirror were endowed with speech!

FLOR. Have then thy wish, fair lady!

MEL. Why, who spake?

VAV. Thy mirror spake!

MEL. Oh, day of wonderment!

Who gave thee speech? Art thou enchanted too?

FLOR. Ay, that in truth I am, as all must be

On whom those eyes are turned so lovingly!

MEL. A very polished mirror!

FLOR. As for that,

We mirrors are as other gallants are –

Teeming with compliment to fair young maids –

But apt to be extremely curt and rude

With old and wrinkled faces. On the whole

We are good gallants as good gallants go!

MEL. And dost thou love me?

FLOR. Love thee, gentle maid?

Have I not laughed with thee, and wept with thee,

And ever framed my face in sympathy

With all the changes of thy varying moods?

Hast thou e'er cast thine eyes upon my face

And found me light of heart when thou wast sad?

Or sad when thou wast light of heart?

MEL. No, no!

Most wonderful!

MEL. And yet not wonderful!

I am but one of many. This fair isle

Teems with poor prisoned souls! There's not a tree –

There's not a rock, a brook, a shrub, a stone,

But holds some captive spirit who awaits

The unsought love that is to set him free!

MEL. (*to VAVIR*). We'll keep this secret safely to ourselves.

If it should get abroad, this little isle

Will barely hold the maidens who will come,

Prepared to pass the spring-time of their lives

In setting free these captives! Come, Vavir,

And we will warn our sisters.

VAV. Fare thee well,

Beloved dial: I go to dream of thee,

Dream thou of me! God send thee Sun. Good night!

[*Exeunt VAVIR and MELUSINE.*]

FLOR. Two maids, at once bewitching – and bewitched!

One loves a mirror – well, that's not so strange,

Though she'll grow angry with it ten years hence!

The other loves a dial – a cold stern fact

That surely marks the deadly flight of time!

Wonders will never cease! let none despair –

*Broken Hearts*

Old Chronos, enemy of womankind,  
Has found a pretty sweetheart, after all!

*Enter LADY HILDA, singing and playing on mandolin.*

Far from sin – far from sorrow  
Let me stay – let me stay!  
From the fear of to-morrow  
Far away – far away!  
I am weary and shaken,  
Let me stay – let me stay,  
Till in death I awaken  
Far away – far away!<sup>1</sup>

*[Towards the close of the song, she sinks on her knees as a ray of moonlight falls on her. FLORIAN has watched her eagerly during the song, with every symptom of the profoundest admiration.*

FLOR. Oh, Heaven enlighten me – is this fair thing  
A soul of Earth – a being, born of woman,  
Conscious of sin and destined to decay?  
Oh, Good and Ill, how share ye such a spoil  
Can this pure form, instinct with Heaven's own light,  
Clothed in the majesty of innocence,  
Have aught in common with the vapid toy  
We break and cast aside? Oh, sordid Earth,  
Praise Heaven that leaves this angel yet unclaimed.  
Oh, heart of mine – oh, wilful, wayward heart,  
Bow down in homage – thou art caught and caged!

*[During these lines HILDA, seated by the fountain, has been playing with its water, and kissing her wet hands.*

HIL. The sun has set – the fierce hot thirsty sun  
Who, like a greedy vampire as he is,  
Drinks my love's life-blood till it pines away,  
And dwindles to a thread. The moon's abroad –  
She is not jealous of my fountain love;  
She sheds her gentle light upon our tryst  
And decks my love with diamonds of her own!

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<sup>1</sup> When this song was published as a ballad in 1888, with music by Edward German, it had a second stanza which Gilbert did not include when he published the script in the Second Series of "Original Plays":

Ah, my heart! It is ailing,  
Let me stay, let me stay,  
From the world and its wailing  
Far away, far away.  
I am weary and shaken,  
Let me stay, let me stay,  
Till in death I awaken,  
Far away, far away,  
Far away.



*Broken Hearts*

FLOR.                               Indeed I have!

HIL. And is thy love akin to mine?

FLOR.                               It is

So near akin that, as it comes of thine,  
And lives on thine, so, without thine, it dies!

HIL. If my poor love  
Hath called thine into life – so is my love  
In duty bound to thine – its kith and kin!

FLOR. But if the rumours of thy Florian's death  
Should prove, as rumours often prove, untrue?  
If he should be alive – loving thee well –  
Eager to tell his love to thee – what then?

HIL. (*sadly*). Thou jealous fount, what untold miracle  
Would bear the tidings to this lonely isle?

FLOR. Say that in wandering through the unknown world  
Chance led Prince Florian to these shores, and he,  
Flushed with the radiance of thy loveliness,  
Stood manifest before thine eyes – what then?

HIL. Oh, Heaven, what then! Joy kills as sorrow kills.  
I dare not think what then! Let it suffice  
That I have given thee all – that I am thine  
For ever and for aye!

*Enter MOUSTA unperceived ; he places himself so that the dial conceals him from, FLORIAN  
and HILDA.*

FLOR.                               “Ever and aye”  
Are fragile flowers that fade before the breath  
Of an old love long lost!

HIL.                               Oh, gentle voice,  
Born of the falling water – have no fear –  
In Heaven's sight I pledge myself to thee –  
What love is in me, that I give to thee –  
What love thou hast to give, I take from thee –  
Kiss thou my hands – (*holding her hands for the water to fall on*)  
– henceforth we twain are one!

ACT II.

SCENE: *same as Act I Time, Sunrise.*

*Enter MOUSTA, cautiously.*

MOUS. Now. I left him sleeping soundly in my hut,  
He did not drink the wine – but still he sleeps.  
(*Producing veil.*) I stole it from his pillow! Here's a prize  
Poor devil that I am – whose only hope  
Of meeting other men on equal terms,

*Broken Hearts*

Lies in his chance of keeping out of sight!  
Ha! someone comes. I'll hide thee carefully.

*[Places it under a stone of dial.*

Some day, maybe, thou'lt do as much for me!

*Enter FLORIAN, angrily.*

FLOR. So here you are: I've sought you everywhere –

MOUS. Ay, I am here. You're early from your bed –

Well, it's no bed for such fine folk as you;

I'm very sorry, but 'twas all I had.

FLOR. The bed was well enough. I have been robbed.

MOUS. Ay, ay? And how was that?

FLOR. There is a thief

Upon this isle.

MOUS. It's very possible.

When people come and go invisibly,

It's hard to say who is or is not here.

What has the villain robbed? a woman's heart?

Two women's hearts? How many women's hearts?

If there's a thief here, it is you or I,

It comes to that. Now, what is it you've lost?

FLOR. My Talisman.

MOUS. Your Talisman? Oh ho!

FLOR. I see no cause for jest.

MOUS. You don't? Observe –

A prince, or someone who so styles himself,

With power to make himself invisible,

Employs that power to gain admission to

An isle where certain maidens dwell – when there

His Talisman is stolen and he stands

Revealed before their eyes – the helpless butt

Of all their ridicule, with naught to say

But "Ladies, pray forgive me – I had thought

To enter unobserved – to wander here

And watch your movements – also unobserved;

And when grown weary of this novel sport

To take my leave of you – still unobserved,

But as I've failed, so pray you pardon me."

And off he goes, his tail between his legs,

Like a well-beaten hound!

FLOR. *(seizing him)*. Misshapen imp,

Have you so little care for such dog-life

As warms your twisted carcass, that you dare

To bandy jests with me?

MOUS. Release me, sir!

Had I your Talisman, do you suppose

I should be here before your eyes? No, no –



*Broken Hearts*

Whoever has the veil is using it.  
There are but six of us, besides myself.  
If one of those is missing, why, be sure  
That one hath taken it. I'll go and see.

[*Exit* MOUSTA.]

FLOR. The imp is right, and yet the Talisman  
Was safe with me last night. But, who comes here!  
Confusion ! 'tis Vavir. I shall be seen!  
Where can I hide myself?

*Enter* VAVIR; *she starts in intense alarm on seeing* FLORIAN.

VAV. Kind Heaven protect me!  
Who art thou, and what dost thou on this isle?

FLOR. Fair maiden, have no fear. I am a knight,  
Sworn on the sacred code of Chivalry,  
To hold all womankind in reverence.  
Listen, and I will tell thee all –

VAV. (*who has recognized his voice, kneels as in adoration.*)

No need!

Thy voice hath told me all! I know thee now!  
Oh, foolish heart, be still, for all is well –  
*He* will not harm thee; this is he whose words,  
Through the still watches of the long, long night,  
Rang like a mighty clarion in mine ears,  
“Vavir, I love thee with my whole whole heart!”  
Thou art the messenger of hope and life,  
For Heaven hath not bestowed this joy on me  
To take me from it. Yes, I am to live!

FLOR. (*raising her*). Why, Heaven forgive me, maiden – can it be  
That thou hast loved this dial of thine with love  
Akin to that which women bear to men?

VAV. Ay, that I have, as I've a soul to save!  
Why, I have sat for hours and clung to it,  
Until I half believed I felt a heart  
Beating within its frame – and as I clung  
Methought I drew both warmth and life from it!  
I wondered then that such a thing could be –  
Oh, my dear love, I do not wonder now! (*Embracing him.*)

FLOR. (*aside*). God help thee, gentle maid! I little thought  
My heedless words, conceived in arrant jest,  
Chimed in so aptly with thy fantasies!  
(*Aloud.*) Be not deceived;  
I am a mortal like thyself, in all  
Except thine innocence! – A sinning man,  
Unworthy of thy love. Be not deceived.

VAV. I know thee, and I love thee as thou art –  
Not as the Spirit of my nightly dreams,

*Broken Hearts*

But as thou art – a man of Life and Death.

FLOR. Hast thou then seen a Spirit in thy dreams?

VAV. I have – the Spirit of the Sun-dial –  
A godlike form of fearful excellence,  
Clad, like the Sun, in golden panoply –  
His head surmounted with a diadem  
That shed eternal rays – and, in his hand,  
A mighty javelin of gold and fire.  
So pictured I the Sun's Ambassador –  
A god to worship – not a man to love! (*Leaning on his breast.*)  
I had not guessed at half my happiness!

FLOR. (*aside*). Now, by my knighthood, I would give ten years –  
To find some way to break the truth to her!

VAV. Time was when I was very glad to die;  
I did not fear what others seem to fear.  
I have heard say that brave, stout-hearted men,  
Whose reckless valour has withstood the test  
Of many a battle-plain, will quail and blanch  
Brought face to face with unexpected death.  
I am a poor weak girl, whose fluttering heart  
Quakes at the rustle of a leaf, and yet  
*I* did not fear to die – I prayed to die!  
But now thou hast so bound me to the earth,  
Thou, oh my first, my last, my only love,  
I dare not think of death! Oh, let me live,  
My life is in thine hands – Oh, let me live!

FLOR. Yes, thou shalt live, Vavir, so have no fear.

VAV. Thou wilt not leave me?

FLOR. Only for a while;  
I will return to thee.

VAV. So, hand in hand  
We shall grow old, and die, still hand in hand?

FLOR. Yea, ever hand in hand.

VAV. Oh, gentle Heaven,  
I have more happiness than I can bear! [*Exit VAVIR.*]

FLOR. Poor soul, what shall I say? To tell her now  
Would be to kill her! [*Pauses irresolute, then exit.*]

*Enter MOUSTA, watching them.*

MOUS. Oh, ho! young knight! I'm sorry for Vavir!  
Well, it concerns me not: the girl is fair;  
And traps are set for her because she's fair.  
And she'll fall into them because she's fair.  
Good looks  
Should pay some penalty – that's only fair

*Broken Hearts*

Better he such as I am, after all;  
No one sets traps for me. Ha! who comes here  
The Lady Hilda, parting from Vavir –  
Come forth, my Talisman, the time has come  
To test thy power.

*[Takes veil from behind stone as HILDA enters hurriedly. He winds it about his head.]*

HIL. Oh, Spirit of the Well,  
I've wondrous news! The poor enchanted soul,  
Till now entombed within the sun-dial,  
Hath taken human form!  
Oh, gentle spirit, grant my trembling prayer,  
If thou hast power to quit thy silver stream  
And stand in human form before mine eyes,  
Then by my long and faithful love, I pray  
That thou wilt suffer me to see thy face!

*[MOUSTA hobbles across behind the fountain, and replies as FLORIAN.]*

MOUS. Yes, I *can* take such form, 'but press me not –  
HIL. And wherefore not?

MOUS. I dare not show myself  
Lest all thy love should fade?

HIL. Ah, have no fear,  
My love runs with my life.

MOUS. So women say,  
Who live but once, yet love a dozen times!

HIL. I am not such as they!

MOUS. I know it well –

HIL. Then let me see thy face – but once – but once –  
Then thou shalt hie thee to thy well again  
For ever if thou wilt!

MOUS. That may not be –  
Once seen in human form I must remain  
A man – with more than man's infirmities.  
I am no shapely spirit framed to catch  
A woman's fancy – I am roughly hewn –  
Somewhat uncouth – misshapen, some might say –  
Dost thou not fear to look on me?

HIL. No, no.  
Take thou thy form, whate'er that form may be!

MOUS. But stay –  
Thou hast a serving man – a crumpled wretch –  
One-eyed and lame – but passing honest – say  
That I am such a twisted thing as *he*?  
What then?

HIL. *(tenderly)*. Oh, Spirit of the Well, fear not,  
My love is not a thing of yesterday;

*Broken Hearts*

Nor does it spring from thought of face and form.  
I love thee for thy boundless charity,  
That seeks no recompense – doing good works  
In modest silence from the very love  
Of doing good – bestowing life and strength  
On high and low, on rich and poor alike;  
Embracing in thy vast philosophy,  
All creeds, all nations, and all ranks of men!  
Holding thyself to be no higher than  
The meanest wretch who claims thy charity,  
Yet holding none to be of such account  
As to deserve thine homage. Just to all,  
Lovely in all thy modest deeds of good,  
Excelling type of godliest charity,  
Show thyself in whatever form thou wilt,  
Oh, Spirit of the Well,  
And I perforce must love thee!

MOUS. Be it so!

Thou *shalt* behold me as I am. But first,  
Ere I do that which cannot be undone,  
Give me a solemn token that shall serve  
As evidence of troth twixt thee and me.

HIL. Dost thou still doubt me then?

MOUS. I doubt myself –

I doubt my rugged form, my rough-hewn face,  
My crumpled limbs! – See, lady, I exchange  
My immortality for Life and Death,  
My demi-godhead for the state of Man –  
Man, undersized and crippled, and accurst!  
All this I do for thee – Let me be sure  
That when I've done all this, thou wilt not cry,  
“Away, distorted thing,  
“My love is not for such a one as thou!”

HIL. Oh, doubting Spirit, take this sacred  
It is a holy relic – and a vow  
Spoken thereon binds her who utters it  
Through life to death. Upon this sacred stone,  
I do repeat my vow of yesternight!  
I am thy bride! (*Throws ring into the fountain.*)

MOUS. (*taking the ring out of the fountain*). Then, lady, have thy will!  
But, bear in mind that modest virtue oft  
Will clothe herself in most unlikely garb –  
Mistrust all prejudice – well-favoured hearts  
May underlie ill-favoured heads. We spurn  
The dirt beneath our feet – but never less  
We grovel in such dirt for diamonds,  
And sometimes find them there! A comely face  
Is but the food of Time – a kindly heart

*Broken Hearts*

Time touches but to soften – think of this,  
And in thy breast some pity may be found,  
For the poor wretch to whom thy troth is given!

[MOUSTA reveals himself. HILDA, whose fears have been gradually aroused during this speech, recoils in horror and amazement at seeing him.]

HIL. Mousta! Oh, Heaven, what have I said and done!  
Was *thine* the voice that spake ?

MOUS. (*abashed*). My lady, yes!

HIL. Oh, cruel, cruel!

MOUS. Lady, pardon me.

I knew not what I did!

HIL. Oh, wretched man!

I pardon thee – thou dost not, canst not know  
How deep a wound thine idle words have riven!  
Oh, heart! my broken heart! (*Sinks on to ground by dial.*)  
My Mousta, shame upon thee for this jest –  
This heartless jest – this scurril mockery!  
When thou wast sick to death I tended thee,  
Through weary days, and weary, weary nights,  
And bathed thy fevered brow, and prayed with thee,  
And soothed thy pain with such poor minstrelsy  
As I am mistress of – I sang to thee,  
And brought thee pleasant books to help thee speed  
The lagging hours of thy recovery.  
Has my heart seemed to thee so stony hard  
That it could bear this deadly blow unbruised?  
Oh, Mousta, shame upon thee for this jest!

MOUS. Jest, Lady Hilda? Nay, I did not jest!  
Why, look at me!

HIL. (*gazing at him*). Oh, Mousta! Can it be  
That thou hast dared – No, no, impossible, –  
It is too terrible!

MOUS. Ay, I *have* dared!

I studied necromancy – and I learnt  
To weave a mighty engine for myself –  
A web that gives invisibility. (*Producing veil.*)  
Shrouded in this, I woo'd thee yesternight!  
Oh, I *can* woo – At least, I've shown thee that!  
A voice rang music in thine ears – 'twas mine!  
Words thrilled thee to the core – *I* spake those words!  
Love filled thy very soul – 'twas *I* that woo'd!  
My very self, stripped of the hideous mask  
In which my soul stands shrouded from the world.  
I'll woo like that all day! But shut thine eyes,  
Or turn thine head away, and I shall make  
As fair a husband as the best of them!

*Broken Hearts*

HIL. Oh, horrible! Go – get thee hence, away –  
Take money – what thou wilt – but get thee hence!  
Oh, madman! madman!

MOUS. Why, what could I do?  
Should I have reasoned with myself, and said,  
“Mousta, when thou wast sick and like to die,  
The Lady Hilda came to thy bedside,  
And sat, and nursed thee day by day – ’twas nothing!  
When writhing at thy very worst, her tears  
Fell on thy face like rain, – a woman’s trick  
When baffled Death was tugging at thy throat,  
Her gentle prayers rose to the gate of Heaven,  
Mingled with the insensate blasphemies  
Of thy delirium – account it naught!  
Go to thy labour – get thy spade and dig,  
And when a foolish sob of gratitude  
Rises unbidden to thy choking throat”  
(They sometimes will – one can’t be sure of them),  
“Swear a big oath and whistle it away,  
Lest it take root and blossom into love!”  
Was *this* my duty, think ye? No, no, no,  
My body’s twisted, lady, not my heart.

HIL. (*with forced calmness*). But say that, bound in duty to the troth  
That thou hast wrung from me, I taught myself  
I will not say to love – to bear with thee –  
How could I hope to live at peace with one  
Armed with so terrible a Talisman?  
A Talisman that vests in him the power,  
To come to me and go from me, unseen,  
And play the truant at his own free will?  
Thou askest more than womankind can grant.

MOUS. (*trembling with excitement*). Oh, lady, lady, give me but thy love,  
And in that gift will lie the surest proof  
That I will not misuse my Talisman!

HIL. It may be so – but Time’s an alchymist,  
Who changes gold to dross. Some day, may be,  
This love of thine will sicken, wane, and die.  
How could I bear this widowhood of soul,  
Knowing that thou hast power to come and go,  
Unseen?

MOUS. (*overjoyed*). Be sure I’ll neither come nor go:  
My place is at thy side. Such love as thine  
Would surely chain the proudest prince on earth,  
And how much more so poor a wretch as I!

HIL. I’ll trust thee not.  
Doubt would lie heavy at my heart, not less  
Because I had no reason for that doubt.  
Give me thy Talisman.

*Broken Hearts*

MOUS. Nay, bear with me.

HIL. Give me thy Talisman.

MOUS. Well, well, 'tis thine.

But bear in mind, the troth that thou hast pledged  
Upon this ring can never be recalled.

HIL. I know it well.

I'll keep my troth. Give me thy Talisman.

MOUS. Lady, 'tis thine. See how I trust in thee.

Do with it as thou wilt – rend it apart,  
And cast it to the winds – its work is done! (*giving it to her.*)  
Behold me now unarmed.

HIL. (*changing her manner*). Unarmed be thou  
As all should be who use a deadly power  
To such foul traitorous ends! I am thy bride! –  
I am thy bride! Make thou the very most  
Of such poor comfort as those words may hold.  
Proclaim thy victory – say to thyself,  
“She is my bride – I wrung an oath from her.  
With miserable lies – she is my bride!  
She saved my wretched life, and in return  
I poison hers – but still she is my bride.  
She shudders at my all-polluting touch –  
She loathes my mean and miserable soul:  
What matters it, so that she be my bride?”  
Oh, purblind fool – thy plot so subtly laid  
Is laid too subtly – and the cunning snare  
That trapped thy bird is laid too cunningly;  
For as it made me thy poor prisoner,  
So shall it hold me from thy deadly grasp  
For ever and for ever! Raise thine head,  
And look upon thy bride for once and all,  
For by the Heaven above, the eye of man  
Shall never rest upon my face again!

[*She covers her face with veil, and exit,*

MOUS. (*furiously*). Fiends tear your throat to rags! – No, no, I rave –  
Hilda – come back to me – I'll be thy slave,  
Thy willing slave once more! I did but jest:  
My jest is dead and gone – come back to me!  
I will release thee from thy plighted troth:  
I love thee – love thee – love thee! Oh, come back,  
And save my soul and body! 'Twas a jest –  
An idle jest. I am thy drudging slave,  
No more than that! I never thought of love –  
'Twas but a jest – 'twas idly done, but well –  
Oh, Lady Hilda – oh, come back to me!

*Enter FLORIAN.*

*Broken Hearts*

FLOR. What is this outcry?  
MOUS. It concerns you not.  
FLOR. Where is the Lady Hilda?  
MOUS. Who shall say?  
FLOR. Why, thou shalt say. As there's a heaven above  
I'll wring a civil answer from thy lips.  
MOUS. Take any answer that may fit your mood,  
And leave me to myself. I'm not in cue  
For more cross-questioning.  
FLOR. Thine impish tongue  
Is set awry to-day.  
MOUS. (*savagely*). It is awry.  
Take care! But stay; when you were seeking for  
Your Talisman, you bade me ascertain,  
If any one were missing. Very well, The Lady Hilda's, missing.  
FLOR. Foolish ape,  
Dost thou infer –  
MOUS. I draw no inference.  
I state the figures – add them for thyself.

*Enter HILDA, still veiled; she gazes in amazement at FLORIAN.*

HIL. (*aside*). Merciful Heaven, restore me if I rave –  
*His form, his face, his voice!*  
FLOR. (*to MOUSTA*). Base liar, know  
That we are plighted lovers, she and I –  
She gave her heart to me but yesternight;  
Why should she hide herself from me to-day  
MOUS. Perhaps excess of joy hath driven her mad!  
FLOR. I'll not believe thy tale. The maid is here,  
And can and shall be found!  
MOUS. Well, go and search.  
And if thou findest her, why, I'm a liar –  
Reward me as thou wilt!  
FLOR. A fit reward  
Will be a yard of steel between thy ribs,  
And thou shalt have it!  
MOUS. Thank you kindly, sir!  
*[Exit MOUSTA; FLORIAN sits dejectedly by fountain.*  
HIL. 'Twas he that spake to me! How can I doubt?  
Are there two such as he? Oh, Heaven, is this  
The senseless herald of a mind unstrung?  
Let me be sure. He spake of me, who long had mourned him dead –  
He told how, shrouded from my gaze last night,  
He gave his love to me. Oh, gentle Heaven,  
Give me more strength to bear this weight of joy!  
*[She advances to reveal herself, when VAVIR enters, and sits lovingly at  
FLORIAN'S feet. HILDA, horrified, veils herself again.*



*Broken Hearts*

VAV. At last I've found thee, Florian – far and near  
I've sought thee, for I'm very strong to-day.  
Why, what a wise physician is this Love!  
For see – my eyes are bright – my face is flushed –  
Flushed with the glow of health. This new-born love  
Gives me a new-born strength. Oh, Florian,  
Place thine arms round me – let me rest on thee;  
I draw my life from thee – my heart – my heart!

FLOR. (*aside.*) Alas, poor maiden – I must tell thee all,  
May Heaven help me break the truth to thee!  
(*Aloud.*) Dear little lady, yield not up thine heart  
Too readily. The world is set with traps  
And hidden pitfalls. Keep thy gentle heart  
For one who, by his pure and godly life,  
Hath given thee proof of his right worthiness.

VAV. (*surprised.*) Why speakest thou in parable? Behold,  
Have I not loved thee for a long, long year?

FLOR. What proof hast thou that I indeed am he  
Whom thou hast loved so long?

VAV. I have thy word,  
And had I not thy word, I have my heart  
To tell me whom to seek and whom to shun.

FLOR. Mistrust that little heart. It is not framed  
To guide thee of itself. Like virgin gold  
Untainted by alloy, it is too pure  
For this rough-ready world of work-a-day!  
I have a tale to tell. There was a knight  
Who, as he journeyed, met a gentle maid,  
With whom he, light of heart and light of tongue,  
Conversed in playful strain. The maid was fair,  
And he, in jest, spake loving words to her,  
Believing that she knew them to be feigned. (*At this point it begins to dawn upon VAVIR that*

*FLORIAN is referring to her.*)

She, pure as Faith – having no thought of guile  
Tender and trustful in her innocence –  
Believed the madcap knight's unworthy words,  
And nursed them in her heart. He, smit with shame,  
For he was plighted to her sister whom (VAVIR, *finding her fears confirmed, rises, shrinking*  
*from FLORIAN, expressing extreme pain. He rises after her*)

He loved with an exceeding love, essayed,  
With clumsy hint and far-fetched parable,  
To break the truth to her. At length – at length,  
By very slow degrees – light came to her!  
Shall I go on ?

VAV. (*faintly.*) No need – I know the rest!  
The maiden died – she pardoned him, and died! (VAVIR *during the ensuing lines shows*  
*symptoms of fainting.*)

FLOR. (*passionately.*) No, no – Vavir – she lived – the maiden lived!

*Broken Hearts*

He was not worth a tear – she loved him well,  
But still she lived, Vavir – but still she lived!  
If only for the gentle sister whom  
She loved so tenderly, and for whose sake  
She, in the blushing day-break of her life,  
Had yielded up the world. Oh, say she lived!

[VAVIR falls senseless in FLORIAN'S arms. HILDA, who has been listening eagerly to the latter part of FLORIAN'S tale, kneels, praying, as the act drop falls.

ACT III.

SCENE: *Same as Act I About half an hour before Sunset.*

VAVIR discovered sleeping at foot of Sun-dial. MELUSINE is kneeling. AMANTHIS is standing, leaning on dial. VAVIR'S head rests on pillows, and a cloak envelopes her.

AM. How peacefully she sleeps! Oh, Melusine,  
Can it be that this solemn death-like calm  
Is but the silent herald of the end?

MEL. As she has lived, so will our darling die –  
Gently and peacefully. This tranquil sleep  
May change to tranquil death, and give no sign.  
So will she pass away!

AM. But see – she wakes:  
Would Heaven that we had fairer news for thee,  
My poor Vavir!

VAV. (*awaking, and very feebly*). Thy face is very sad –  
Are there no tidings of my sister?

MEL. None!

VAV. Dear Melusine, keep not the truth from me!  
Some fearful evil has befallen her –  
Tell me the truth. See, I am stronger now.

MEL. Nay, calm thyself, Vavir – save only that  
She has been sought, and has not yet been found,  
We have no truth to tell

VAV. How speeds the day?

AM. Thy dial points to eight.

VAV. One little hour,  
And then my Sun will set, Farewell, oh Sun!  
How gloriously he dies!

MEL. The sun will sink,  
To rest throughout the night, as we shall rest,  
But not to die.

VAV. To die as we should die:  
The night is given to the world that she  
May mourn her widowhood. *He* knows no night,  
But journeys calmly on his heavenly path

*Broken Hearts*

Wrapt in eternal light – in all, a type  
Of the excelling life we try to live –  
Of the all-glorious death we hope to die!

MEL. See, Vavir, see upon the Beacon-hill,  
Mousta, returning from his weary search –

VAV. Is he alone?

MEL. Alas, my darling, yes!  
But still perchance he brings some news to us:  
I'll go and meet him. Stay thou here, Vavir,  
And I will bring thee tidings.

VAV. Be it so –

Be quick, be quick, dear Melusine – and then (*to both*)  
Go, seek Prince Florian – and say to him  
That I would fain have speech with him alone,  
If he will deign to grant me audience.

[*Exeunt MELUSINE and AMANTHIS,*

Another hour – and then, my Sun will set!  
Oh, Hilda – oh, my sister – come to me!

*HILDA enters, veiled.*

The loving day is drawing to a close:  
I dare not face the cold, black night alone!  
I want thine arms around me, and thy face  
Pressed once again on mine, before I die.  
Oh, Hilda – oh, my sister – come to me!

HIL. (*unveiling, and kneeling*). Vavir! Fear nothing, I am here, my child.

VAV. (*embracing her*). Hilda! My sister! Heaven is merciful!  
And thou art safe and well?

HIL. Yes, safe and well.

VAV. Where hast thou been? Throughout the long, long day  
My weeping sisters have been seeking thee.

HIL. No matter now, Vavir. When thou art strong  
I'll tell thee all.

VAV. But I have news for thee,  
Rare news, dear sister! Dry those gentle eyes;  
The mighty sorrow that bath bowed thy heart  
Is at an end! Thy prince – thy Florian,  
Whom thou hast loved so tenderly – he lives!  
Hilda, my sister, he is seeking thee!  
Here, on this island, he is seeking thee!  
Hilda, he loves thee; for he told me so!

HIL. I know he loves me.

VAV. Thou hast seen him then?

HIL. I know he loves me; ay, even more,  
Vavir, I know the secret of thy heart –  
Poor broken heart!

VAV. Oh! sister, pardon me.

*Broken Hearts*

I did not seek his love – nor knew I then  
That he had loved thee – Sister, pardon me,  
For I have suffered very bitterly!

HIL. Vavir, I have a prayer to make to thee.  
Vavir, thou lovest him: thy little life,  
More precious to us all than all the world,  
Lies in his hands – he is thy life to thee,  
And pitying Heaven hath led him to our shores  
To save thee for us. Take no thought for me,  
For I have wrestled with this love of mine  
And vanquished it – it lies beneath my feet! (*With an assumed gaiety.*)  
Remember, thou and I have but one heart,  
And so that it is happy – what care we  
Whose bosom it may beat in – thine or mine?  
(Nay, but thou shalt not speak!) I'll keep away.  
His eyes shall never rest on me again;  
He will forget me, then, and wondrous soon!  
Men's hearts are in their eyes – this love of theirs  
Must have its daily food or it will die:  
I'll keep away – so take him to thine heart,  
And tell him – tell him – that I spake in jest,  
That I had plucked his image from my heart  
And cast it from me twelve long months ago.  
Say that my heart is cold and dead to him.  
Say that – say that – (*HILDA breaks down, and sobs in VAVIR'S lap.*)

VAV. Oh, sister, weep no more  
Thy prince hath chosen, and hath chosen well.  
Of what account is such a life as mine?  
Why, it is ebbing fast! Grieve not for me.  
And yet I fain would live a little while,  
To see thy face once more alight with joy,  
As in the old, old days!

HIL. So shalt thou live  
To see my joy at thine own happiness.  
Vavir, he will be sorry for a while.  
Be kind to him – he will forget me then.  
Remember, all my love for him is dead.  
Kiss me, my child. Kiss me again. Farewell!

[*HILDA pauses, looking at VAVIR for a moment, then covers her face with the veil, and exit.*]

VAV. Oh loving heart – sweet, gentle sister-heart –  
To bid me blight the outset of thy life  
That I may count the time that's left to me  
By days instead of hours! Come back to me –  
I have no time to love – the end is near!

*Enter MELUSINE, followed by FLORIAN.*

*Broken Hearts*

FLOR. Obedient to thy summons I am here.  
Yet I am very loth to look upon  
The misery my heedlessness hath caused.

VAV. (*leaning on MELUSINE, with an effort to appear cheerful*).  
Sir Florian, my pain is at an end.  
The blow was heavy: for I am not strong,  
And jests are new to me. Forgive me, sir.  
My brain is filled with foolish fantasies  
That carry me beyond my reasoning self.  
I pray your pardon. Think no more of me,  
Save as the subject of a merry tale –  
How a mad maiden loved a sun-dial,  
And very dearly, too! I have some news  
To give you comfort. Hilda has been here.  
She is alive and well.

FLOR. Then Heaven be thanked!

VAV. But stay – you met her as you came?

MEL. No, no.

We saw no sign of her.

VAV. It's very strange.  
She left me but a minute since, and took  
The path by which you came. Go, seek her, sir;  
Be very sure she waits you close at hand.  
Come, Melusine. Farewell, Sir Florian;  
Deal gently with me when you tell the tale!

[*Exit VAVIR, supported by MELUSINE. She shows by her change of expression that the effort to appear cheerful has caused her great suffering.*]

FLOR. She took that path – and yet I saw her not!  
There's but one clue to this strange mystery:  
She has the Talisman! By what strange means  
It found its way into her spotless hands  
I've yet to learn!

*MOUSTA has entered during this speech.*

MOUS. Let me assist you, sir,  
I stole it from your pillow as you slept,  
And used it for my ends. I took your place  
Beside the fountain, and I woo'd her there.  
And there she pledged herself to be my wife –  
And, as a token, gave this ring to me! (*Showing ring.*)

FLOR. Why, miserable ape, hast thou then lost  
The mere life-seeking instinct that inspires  
The very meanest of thy fellow-beasts,  
That thou hast come to say these things to *me*?

MOUS. I have! I say these things to you, because  
I want to die! I tried to kill myself –  
But I'm no hero, and my courage failed.

*Broken Hearts*

*(Furiously.)* She's gone from you for ever – and I come  
To mock the bitter blighting of your life –  
To chuckle at the aching misery  
That eats your heart away! I come to spit  
My hate upon you – If my toad's mouth held  
The venom of a toad, I would spit that!  
Come – have I said enough? Then draw thy sword  
And make an end of me – I am prepared!

FLOR. *(drawing sword)*. I needed no assurance, yea or nay,  
That some foul planning of thy leper-heart  
Had worked this devilry! Thou lovest her?  
*Thou* lovest her? Is there no blasphemy  
That devils shrink from? Hast thou seen thyself?

*(Seizing MOUSTA and holding his head over the pool.)*

Look in the fountain – bend thy cursed head!  
Look at it – dog-face! *(MOUSTA struggles.)* Shrink not back appalled –  
It will not harm thee, coward – look at it!  
What do we do with such a thing as *that*  
When it dares claim a common right with Man?  
We crush it underfoot – we stamp it down,  
Lest other reptiles take their cue from it,  
And say, “If he is human, so are we!” *(Flinging him on ground.)*

MOUS. *(crouching on ground)*. Spare me your tongue!  
I well know what I am,  
And what I've done. My life is forfeited.  
Strike at the heart! Be quick – I am prepared!

FLOR. Hast thou no prayer to utter?

MOUS. No, not I.  
Curse you, be quick, I say! Yet stay – one word.  
Before you pass your sword between my ribs,  
Look at yourself, sir knight, then look at me!  
You, comely, straight-limbed, fair of face and form –  
(I say not this to court your favour, sir –  
The Devil take your favour!) I, a dwarf,  
Crooked, humpbacked, and one-eyed – so foul a thing  
That I am fain to quote my love for women  
To prove that I have kinship with mankind.  
Well, we are deadly rivals, you and I.  
Do we start fair, d'ye think? Are you and I  
So nicely matched in all that wins a woman  
That I should hold myself in honour bound  
By laws of courtesy? But one word more,  
And I have done. Had I those shapely limbs,  
That fair, smooth face, those two great, god-like eyes  
(May lightning blast them, as it blasted mine!),  
Believe me, sir, I'd use no Talismans!  
Now kill me – I'm prepared. I only ask  
One boon of you – strike surely, and be quick!

*Broken Hearts*

FLOR. (*Pauses for a moment - then sheathes his sword.*)

Go, take thy life, I'll none of it! With one  
Whom Heaven hath so defaced, let Heaven deal.  
I will not sit in judgment on thy sin!  
My wrath has faded – when I look upon  
The seal that Heaven hath set upon thy brow,  
Why, I could find it in my heart to ask  
Thy pardon for the fury of my words!  
Go, take thy life, make fairer use of it.

MOUS. (*much moved*). I thank you, sir – not for my blighted life,  
But for the pitying words in which you grant it. (*With emotion.*)  
You've moved me very deeply.  
(*Places the ring that HILDA gave him on FLORIAN'S finger - then kisses his hand.*)

Curse the tears.

I am not used to weep, my lord, – but then  
I am not used to gentleness from men. [*Exit MOUSTA.*]

FLOR. Unhappy creature, go thy ways in peace.  
Thou hast atoned. Oh, Hilda, come to me!  
If thou art here – if thou canst hear my words,  
Then by the love that thou hast borne to me,  
By all the tears that thou hast shed for me,  
By all the hope thou hast held out to me,  
I do implore thee to reveal thyself!

*Enter HILDA, veiled.*

Fear nothing, for I have the holy ring  
On which thine oath was given. By cunning fraud  
That oath was wrung from thee. Fear nothing now.

HIL. (*unveiling*). Sir Florian, I am here!

FLOR. (*passionately*). Oh, Hilda, mine

My only love! Safe in my arms at last!  
Why didst thou hide thyself away from me?

HIL. (*hurriedly*). I hid myself to save my sister's life;  
To save her life I now reveal myself.

FLOR. How fares Vavir?

HIL. Alas! her little life is ebbing fast  
From heart-wounds of thy making! Florian,  
I have no time to lose on empty forms –  
I have no words to waste on idle speech –  
My poor sick sister loves thee! Much misled  
By thy light words, she placed full faith in thee:  
And she is dying for her faith. Oh, sir,  
There is but one physician in the world  
Who, under Heaven, can save my darling's life,  
Go to her now. If thou hast loved me, sir,  
Be merciful, and save this life for me!

FLOR. Hilda, be just. How can I do this thing?

*Broken Hearts*

Can I command my heart, or deal with it  
As I can deal with life or limb? By Heaven,  
I would lay down my life to save Vavir,  
But not my love!

HIL. I do not ask thy life!  
I have a life to yield, if such a price  
Could save my sister. Oh, forgive me, sir;  
My weight of grief hath maddened me; and yet  
I ask for no one-sided sacrifice.  
What is thy loss to mine? For three long years  
This love of thee tinged my devoted life  
With such blank woe – such utter misery –  
That I was fain – hope being dead to me –  
To sit apart, and wait the far-off end.  
Then, when the end seemed yet too far away,  
The bright, blue Heaven shone through the lowering clouds,  
For he whom I had mourned as dead, came back,  
To claim my love and crown it with his own!  
At last, at last, I hold thee by the hand! (*Taking FLORIAN by both hands.*)  
At last I have thy love, oh, love of mine!  
Thou art my very own – at last – at last!  
Well, then, Sir Florian, I yield thee up! (*Releasing him.*)  
To save her life I tear this new-born joy  
Out of my very heart: for her I crush  
My only hope on earth! If I can yield  
The love of three long years to save her life  
Canst thou not yield thy love of yesterday?

FLOR. The task is very bitter. Yesternight  
I learnt that thou whom I so blindly love  
Had blindly loved me years ago – to-day  
Thou bidd'st me take this love of mine elsewhere

HIL. Art thou so sure that I *have* loved thee long?  
I loved one Florian – a stainless knight,  
Brave as the very Truth – and, being brave,  
Tender and merciful as brave men are;  
Whose champion heart was sworn in chivalry  
To save all women, sorrowing and oppressed;  
Nor did he hold that woman to be banned  
Whose sorrow came of her great love for him!  
Tell me – art thou the Florian that I loved?

FLOR. If not that stainless Florian – yet one  
Who would be such as he. (*Taking her by both hands.*)  
I have thy love –  
I who have lived a loveless life till now.  
Well, then, I yield thee up! (*Releasing her.*) If words of mine  
Can save thy sister, I will speak those words!

HIL. I knew it! Florian, I was sure of thee!  
God bless thee, Florian; thou hast saved her life! (*Kissing his forehead.*)



*Broken Hearts*

*(Passionately.)* Oh, how I love thee! *(With hurried emphasis.)* Go to her at once –  
Go to her quickly, ere it be too late!

FLOR. Thy sister comes this way. *(Aside.)* Alas! Vavir,  
There is more Heaven than Earth in that pale face!

*Enter VAVIR, very pale and weak, supported by MELUSINE and AMANTHIS.  
FLORIAN receives her in his arms and they lay her gently on the ground. HILDA  
rushes to her, as they place her on the ground, near the sun-dial. FLORIAN  
kneels by her, and takes her hand.*

HIL. Vavir, my love – my gentle sister. See,  
He loves thee – Florian loves thee! He is here  
To tell thee this – to call thee back to life.  
Come at his call! The earth is bright for thee.  
See how he loves thee. Oh, Vavir, come back!

VAV. *(very faintly)*. It is too late – too late! I feel the hand  
Of Death upon my heart. So let it be.  
My day is spent – my tale is nearly told!

HIL. Vavir – Vavir!  
Have pity on us! Gentle little soul,  
Fly not to thine appointed Heaven – not yet –  
Not yet – not yet! Eternity is thine;  
Spare but a few brief years to us on Earth,  
And still Eternity remains to thee!  
He loves thee – Florian loves thee well! Oh, Death,  
Are there no hoary men and aged women  
Weeping for thee to come and comfort them?  
Oh, Death – oh, Death – leave me this little flower!  
Take thou the fruit, but pass the blossom by!

VAV. *(very feebly)*. Weep not: the bitterness of death is past.  
Kiss me, my sister. Florian, think of me –  
I loved thee very much! Be good to her.  
Dear sister, place my hand upon my dial.  
Weep not for me; I have no pain indeed.  
Kiss me again; my sun has set. Good night!  
Good night!

*VAVIR dies; HILDA falling senseless on her body.*

CURTAIN.