

DON CARLO
Giuseppe Verdi

Synopsis

In the forest at Fontainebleau, Don Carlo meets Elisabetta de Valois, his betrothed by previous arrangement. They fall in love, but then receive word that Elisabetta's father has decided she will marry Philip II of Spain, Carlo's father, instead.

At the San Yuste monastery, Carlo tells his friend Rodrigo, Marquis of Posa, about his hopeless love for Elisabetta. Rodrigo says that by taking up the Flemish cause, he might forget his personal troubles. They also vow eternal friendship. The King grows suspicious about the feelings of Carlo and Elisabetta for each other, and he asks Rodrigo to watch them.

Carlo receives an anonymous invitation to meet a veiled woman; he goes to meet her, expecting Elisabetta, but it turns out it is Princess Eboli, who is in love with him. Realizing who it is Carlo is in love with, she plots revenge. The Flemish cause erupts during the auto-da-fé ceremony, at which heretics are to be burned. Carlo and Flemish deputies ask for the end of persecution in Flanders, but Philip orders their arrest. Carlo threatens him with a sword, but is disarmed by Rodrigo.

At the instigation of the Grand Inquisitor, Philip agrees to put his son to death and hand over Rodrigo as a heretic. Elisabetta reports that her jewel casket had been stolen, but Philip produces it and makes her open it in his presence, revealing a portrait of Carlo inside. Left alone, the Queen is joined by Eboli, who confesses it was she who stole the casket, adding that she was also the King's mistress. She vows to enter a convent.

Meanwhile, the imprisoned Carlo is visited by Rodrigo in his cell. He has implicated himself as the leader of the Flemish rebels in hopes the King will set Carlo free. Suddenly, Rodrigo is shot; before dying, he tells Carlo Elisabetta will meet him the next day at the monastery of San Yuste.

At the monastery, Elisabetta and Carlo meet and say their final farewells. Philip and the Grand Inquisitor steal in and they set upon the pair. A figure of Charles V appears at the entrance to his tomb and takes Carlo with him to safety.