

IL GIURAMENTO

Saverio Mercadanti

1st Act

The palace of Elaisa

A celebration is taking place in the gardens. Viscardo, supposedly the lover of Elaisa, confesses his love for another woman. Manfredo, who also loves Elaisa, comes looking for her. He suspects a rival.

Elaisa appears. She sees first Viscardo, then Manfredo, who has noticed her smile. Elaisa tells him how she hopes to find a mysterious woman, who ten years before had saved her father. She has been looking for her ever since: she will recognize her from a certain jewel.

Viscardo confides in his friend Brunoro and shows him a portrait of Bianca, whom he secretly loves. Brunoro, who had also once loved Bianca (in vain), now sees a chance to take revenge. He promises Viscardo to arrange a meeting with Elaisa.

Viscardo leaves, Elaisa comes in and Brunoro informs her of Viscardo's betrayal of her. Bianca's room in Manfredo's palace.

Bianca sadly recalls her native land. The real reason for her sorrow is a lover she left behind there.

Bianca confides in Isaura. She had been forced to leave Catania 5 years before without a chance to inform her beloved Viscardo.

Bianca plays on her harp the song she used to sing with Viscardo.

Brunoro conducts Viscardo to the room. He places a sheet on the table and goes. Bianca stops playing: Viscardo sings from outside, then appears. (Love duet.) Bianca finds Brunoro's sheet and reads "spotted love is avenged". The lovers recognize the trap: Viscardo hides himself and Bianca pretends to be asleep.

Elaisa comes in and reveals herself to Bianca: she is her rival and will punish her. Bianca pleads for mercy, but in vain.

Viscardo appears from his hiding place. He asks Elaisa to punish him but to respect Bianca, who is innocent. Elaisa is not moved, but Bianca has heard her name and knows that her rival is the daughter of the man she saved in Catania. She shows her the jewel. Manfredo appears with his guards. Elaisa tells him that she and Viscardo rushed into the palace to prevent two conspirators from an attempt on his life.

Manfredo suspects an attack by the army of Agrigento and prepares to defend the city.

2nd Act

A place near Manfredo's palace

Soldiers are returning from the victory over Agrigento; the people of Syracuse come for the celebration.

Viscardo, who has vindicated himself with Brunoro, is trying to meet Bianca.

Women come from the palace, saying that Bianca is dead. Viscardo is desperate, and now wants only to punish the person responsible.

The family graveyard near Manfredo's palace

Manfredo has sentenced Bianca to death as a punishment: she has already been locked in the tomb, though still alive. The rumours of her death are intended to cover up what is really happening, but Manfredo has his doubts.

Officers appear, asking Manfredo to lead the army against Agrigento. He goes with them. Elaisa, in whom Manfredo has confided, opens the tomb with a key.

Bianca appears. Elaisa tells her of her plan. She has persuaded Manfredo to kill Bianca by poison. She gives her a strong narcotic, that will simulate death and allow her to later escape and join Viscardo.

Manfredo comes. He tries to force Bianca to tell him the name of her lover. She resists, and he obliges her to drink the poison. She seems to obey - but it is the narcotic. Manfredo goes, exulting because his honour is vindicated.

3rd Act

Elaisa's room in her palace

It is night. Bianca is lying on the bed, still under the effect of the narcotic. Elaisa reflects about the sacrifice she is making.

Viscardo rushes into the room. He has heard from Isaura how Elaisa persuaded Manfredo to kill his wife by poison, and now comes with a dagger in his hand. Elaisa reminds him of his love for her: Viscardo says that Bianca had always been his one and only beloved. Elaisa, desperate, lets him believe that she really poisoned Bianca: Viscardo stabs her.

Bianca awakens and Viscardo finally learns the truth, but it is too late! Elaisa says she prefers to go to Heaven, blesses the lovers, and dies in Viscardo's arms.