

The Gadfly



The Gadfly

dramatization of Ethel Voynich's novel

by Christian Lanciai (2009)

The characters:

Monsignore Lorenzo Montanelli, bishop, later cardinal

Arthur Burton, later Felice Rivarez, 'The Gadfly'

Gemma, really Jennifer Warren, later married Bolla

Giovanni Bolla

Thomas Burton, Arthur's half brother

Julia, his wife

Father Cardi

three policemen

the chief of police

Enrico, prison guard

The conspirators:

Grassini

Fabrizi

Lega

Riccardo

Galli

Succone

Sandro Martini

Domenichino

Zita, gipsy

a prison chaplain

pilgrims, public and soldiers

The action is in Tuscany 1833 and 1846.

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Act I scene 1. In the library of Pisa.

Montanelli You can't imagine how happy I am over our days together up in the mountains, where we were at large in peace with the consummate virginity of the boundless beauty and freedom of nature.

Arthur You are obsessed with virginity, padre.

Montanelli That's what you live for in church. That's what the church is: a virgin, that in no way must be sullied or violated. Absolute purity is the absolute ideal, and you can't find it among men, only in the free purity of nature and in church.

Arthur Still people associate with idealisms that sometimes are just as pure and above all as equally striving for freedom as that of the church.

Montanelli Your political engagement scares me.

Arthur It's harmless, father, for it must prevail. What business do the Austrians have in Italy? Napoleon may have been a tyrant and conceited idiot, but at least he defeated the Austrians and forced the power of Habsburg into bankruptcy. We still have the last Austrians to drive out of Italy.

Montanelli Do you believe then that Italy could ever be free, this political chaos of petty states that all strive in different directions?

Arthur Already Dante envisioned a united Italy. It will work, if you just cleanse it from intruders and tyrants and create a federation, where all states mind their own business but are part of a union embraced by all.

Montanelli Like the united states of America?

Arthur Exactly.

Montanelli The problem is, that the united states of America were constituted out of nothing and were created at once, while Italy is burdened by civil wars since two thousand years.

Arthur Nothing is impossible for an idealist.

Montanelli I know you have good friends over there. Do you love her?

Arthur (taken by surprise) How do you know?

Montanelli It shows by far, my son. Your eyes are glittering. You are incandescent. You shine. You beam of goodness. Your love can't be concealed, no love can, and I know with whom you associate. But isn't she rather young?

Arthur She is mature enough for her age.

Montanelli Is she even seventeen yet?

Arthur She was recently.

Montanelli At seventeen you aren't even grown up.

Arthur But we are of the same blood, she and I, of the same Celtic origin of Irish ancestors, who maybe were the very ones who built and populated the ancient Celtic villages with rows of stones and everything that we found up in the mountains. The Celts are more ancient than the Germans and had a higher culture that was peaceful in contrast to the Germans, and they travelled widely and were

enterprising and had contacts with the oldest Indian civilizations. The same sacred symbols for success, perfection and accomplishment that have existed in the Indian culture since prehistoric times were also used by the Celts, the enigmatic swastika, which represents man's eternal concurrence with nature. She and I are of this people, and we fight for the same cause here in Italy.

Montanelli You are then a romantic couple of adventure.

Arthur Yes, we are.

Montanelli But haven't you got rivals? She is after all adored by everyone and so beautiful that everyone must desire her.

Arthur (darkens) I only have one rival.

Montanelli That Bolla?

Arthur Yes.

Montanelli How do you relate to him? Have you allowed jealousy to take over your senses, or have you resigned?

Arthur It's for her to choose. If she prefers him I have nothing more to say.

Montanelli Most fair ladies find a sport in playing out their cavaliers against each other to weigh them to each other to see which one has the most suitable weight.

Arthur I refuse to fight over a woman. No love is worth it. It's beastly. I am no beast, and my love for her is too pure to accept being debased by vulgar competition.

Montanelli It gives me pleasure, my son, that you with the detachment of reason have risen above the self-torture of the lusts.

Arthur Have you never been in love yourself, padre?

Montanelli We have all been young.

Arthur You admit that you are human.

Montanelli Our humanity is our mortal limitation and our excuse and salvation for all our weaknesses, which only increase as long as we live until we die, usually by their finally overcoming us.

Arthur I am also very happy about our days up in the mountains, and it grieves me that you have to leave.

Montanelli I don't have to accept.

Arthur What do you mean?

Montanelli If I choose to remain here, it would mean that I decline the offer.

Arthur Why would you do that?

Montanelli I am worried about you, Arthur. You are waging your life on an unreliable card that could be your ruin, since you don't know your enemies. I don't want anything to happen to you.

Arthur I can't give up my calling, just as you can't.

Montanelli I know, but your calling is more hazardous. The church is safe. Politics are not.

Arthur If the cause is good and just it must prevail.

Montanelli But it might claim many casualties.

Arthur I am not afraid.

Montanelli I am for your sake.

Arthur Go, father. You can't refuse an episcopate. You must not miss such a chance for my sake.

Montanelli You are closest to me in the world, my son. I have followed you all the way as your teacher and guardian angel, for your mother's sake, whom I never can forget.

Arthur No one of us can. You don't have to lose me just for becoming a bishop.

Montanelli I sense a danger which I can't deduce or identify but which I fear will strike, if I leave you for Rome.

Arthur It's all right, father. Go with my blessing. We'll meet again when you come back.

Montanelli You are so ignorant and careless about life. One single word, my son, and I will stay here.

Arthur Go, father. Or I could never forgive you if you don't.

Montanelli Your word is my law. At least I succeeded in one thing. I made a good Catholic out of you.

Arthur Yes, you did, father. Thanks to your example, it is my second ideal, without which I would hardly dare to wage on the first with any confidence. But with God in my hand and the church for my ground, I feel that we must prevail.

Montanelli I can only wish you the best of luck, even in the adversities that must come, for you are vulnerable in fighting alone against an established world order.

Arthur By peaceful means. That's why it can't reach us.

Montanelli No weapon is more dangerous than the Word.

Arthur That's why we use it as the only efficient one.

Montanelli You are still young and have a long way to go. I have no doubts about your ultimate victory, but it could cost you dearly, and not everyone can afford the price.

Arthur My determination can afford anything.

Montanelli That's how it always sounds in the beginning, before the first bills have cost you more than you believed you had.

Arthur Don't be a pessimist, padre. Go to Rome and accept your bishopric.

Montanelli Then I must beg to entrust you in safe hands. – Monsignore Cardi, this is my disciple since many years, and my confidence in him is complete. He could help you keep order in the library – his sense of order is exemplary.

Cardi Of course, padre. I am grateful for all help and support I can get, since I am new here.

Montanelli Then I am satisfied. – You can go on as usual, Arthur, although I am gone, with your studies and researches. And I will soon be back.

Arthur And then I hope we can return to the mountains.

Montanelli I hope so too. (*embraces him*) Farewell, my son, and don't do anything foolish, rash or imprudent.

Arthur There is no risk, father.

Montanelli (*pats him and leaves*)

Cardi I already have a small problem here with which you perhaps could help me. There are a number of new books recently arrived...

Arthur I shall be delighted, padre. (*is taken care of by Cardi*)

Scene 2.

Gemma I am glad you got the job, Giovanni.

Giovanni Someone has to do it.

Gemma But what an honour to do it with your life at risk!

Giovanni It's for a good cause. Your friend Arthur would have managed it just as well as I.

Gemma Are you envious of him because he is your countryman?

Giovanni I don't know where you stand, Gemma. We love you both but respect you too much to wish to fight about it. We are both too good to fight over a woman, since we share the same political idealism, which you also share. But who is it you love among us, if anyone?

Gemma You are both dear to me.

Giovanni That is no answer.

Gemma Here he is. – Welcome, Arthur! We have very much work to do.

Arthur As if I didn't know. That's why I am here. Congratulations to the promotion and responsibility, Giovanni.

Giovanni The question is if it hadn't been safer with you, since you have a protector of such high a rank in the church.

Arthur He has gone to Rome.

Giovanni To be a bishop. He will no doubt continue rising to monsignore and cardinal. It's just such a protector within the church that we would need.

Arthur I can't ask more of him than his friendship.

Giovanni But it appears to stretch far and through all life, as it has done so far.

Arthur Our cause is so good that the church can't do anything else than protect us, as far as it is able to.

Gemma It feels good to have you with it on our side. Nothing can happen to us as long as Montanelli protects you. That's how it feels.

Giovanni I just tried to reach Gemma to get her to admit which one of us she is in love with.

Gemma Do I have to choose? Can't I have both of you?

Giovanni Then it will only be a matter of friendship.

Gemma Let it last the longer and all your life. Who could think of love and family planning and relationship intrigues at all when we have such an important work to do?

Arthur Can you make it alone, Giovanni? You know that I would help you with anything.

Giovanni We have some faithful collaborators. With them we can manage anything.

Arthur The only difficult part should be the printing, which has to be clandestine.

Giovanni Our printing press is safe. The rest will then be easy. All we have to look out for is spies and informers.

Arthur Are you suspecting anyone?

Giovanni No.

Gemma No.

Giovanni All we do that is against the law is our self-willed application of the freedom of printing and expression. Our purpose and quest is thereby so innocent and sacred in its urge of freedom that only idiots could have anything against it.

Arthur And the distribution and the pamphlets? It's vital that it is carried through well enough.

Gemma We have thought of everything, Arthur. We take no risks. Everything is well planned in advance. The authorities will not wake up until the distribution is finished.

Arthur What do you delegate to me?

Giovanni The best thing you could do for us, Arthur, is to make sure of bishop Montanelli's protection when he comes back.

Arthur Is that all?

Gemma It would be more worth than anything else.

Arthur He is no politician.

Giovanni He could be.

Arthur Never openly.

Giovanni Power is greatest in secret.

Gemma And most efficient.

Giovanni And safest. And most reliable.

Arthur I'll see what I can do.

Gemma He is like a father to you. You could make him do anything.

Arthur I never wished to tempt him.

Gemma That's exactly why you could bring him to anything.

Arthur Until I tempt him.

Giovanni We are counting on you, Arthur.

Arthur You can safely do that at all times.

Giovanni Come, Gemma. We have much to do.

Gemma See you later, Arthur. (*leaves with Giovanni*)

Arthur Thus he will work with her all night, while I am only regarded as a useful guardian angel, since I enjoy so much respect by my close association with the most venerated and beloved priest in the province. Shall I then discard her as unreachable? He may have her, but I may only love her by my longing. Montanelli said something about the self-torture of the lusts. Is that what I experience now by my irrefutable jealousy, which tears me apart? Can my soul endure this and survive?

That is the question. If only father were here, so that he could hear my confession!
But he did leave me another confessor in his place...

Scene 3.

Cardi My son, open your heart. You are worried. Let the sorrows out. Don't let them consume you. Let me liberate you from them as your confessor.

Arthur I haven't sinned, father, but I suffer from all the temptations of St. Anthony by the harassments of selfish jealousy.

Cardi So you are unhappily in love?

Arthur And I am not the only suitor for the only right one.

Cardi It could happen to anyone and especially young ones. Tell me what has happened.

Arthur We all take part in an underground movement to liberate ourselves from the Austrians.

Cardi 'New Italy'?

Arthur Yes. He got the responsibility for printing the new revolutionary pamphlets, which he owes to organize the distribution of. That means that they will work intimately together through whole nights, maybe for a whole week. But I am the one who loves her! He can't love her as much as I! He is an Italian, while both of us are Celts!

Cardi Is it about signorina Jennifer, the only English person here besides you?

Arthur Yes.

Cardi And who is the third part?

Arthur Giovanni Bolla.

Cardi I have heard about him. A brave and energetic nobleman, a romantic type who no woman could resist, while you are a more reflective nature with deeper and more dangerous feelings... I understand the dilemma. Could you do anything about it?

Arthur No, and that's the worst of it all.

Cardi Then you are saved, my son. Keep your self-control, and no evil will ever get the better of you. Self-control is everything, and without it you are lost. All priests and monks and nuns who choose to live in celibacy know that. Nothing is more sacred than the virginity of the soul, which only can be maintained by self-control. You are free from sin, my son. Keep yourself pure, and you will manage, and you will be able to avoid all problems.

Arthur And does that solve the problem – to do nothing?

Cardi It keeps you detached and protects you from it. Let time solve it, and it will solve itself, and then you don't have to do it.

Arthur So I don't even have to stop loving her?

Cardi Least of all. Love prevails and conquers everything, if only it endures.

Arthur And if he takes her?

Cardi That will be his problem.

Arthur You make it sound so simple, father.

Cardi It's always unnecessary to complicate things. Everything is actually extremely simple and especially life, and it is when we complicate it for nothing that it gets difficult and unmanageable and is felt heavy and insufferable. Life doesn't have to be difficult. Just stick to basic facts, and life will never become more difficult than what it is in its basic and light simplicity. If you just keep on loving faithfully enough and in purity, she will one day come to you, for real love is the only irresistible one.

Arthur Thanks for your comfort, father.

Cardi You owe me no thanks. That's what we confessors are here for.

(Arthur rises and leaves.)

The poor blue-eyed greenhorn. If he only knew what he has made himself guilty of.

Scene 4. Arthur's bedroom.

Arthur is lying in bed when there are hard knocks on the door, which is burst open, and three policemen barge in.

Arthur (hardly awake) What is the matter? A nightmare or reality or both?

Police 1 In the name of the law! Arthur Burton!

Arthur Yes?

Police 1 You have to come with us.

Arthur What is it about?

Police 2 As if you didn't know. Just get dressed and cooperate.

(enter Thomas and Julia Burton in nightgowns and bedclothes)

Thomas What is this all about?

Julia (shrilly) What have you done, Arthur?

Arthur It must be some misunderstanding.

Police 2 That's what they always say. Come along now.

Arthur Can't we settle the matter here and have it cleared up at once?

Police 1 It will take time, if we know the matter right.

Police 3 There are round-ups all over town. It's an extensive mess.

Julia (shrilly) I knew it all the time that you would put us into trouble by doing something stupid!

Thomas Quiet, Julia! I am sure he hasn't done anything, and they only want to know what he knows. They have probably seen his name in some suspicious paper. That's usually the case. We must get in touch with bishop Montanelli. Be certain, Arthur, that this will soon be over with.

Arthur I always could trust you, Thomas. I swear that I have nothing on my conscience. Please let the bishop know at once that I have been taken away.

Police 1 We hope we will soon be able to release you, but it depends on how well you cooperate.

Arthur I never refused cooperation with anyone.
Police 2 That's the spirit. Come on now.
Thomas We will get in touch with the British embassy about this!
Police 1 Do that. They can do nothing. Arthur Burton is not accused, only suspected. It's just a formality for security in general – a matter of routine.
Arthur I hope so.
Thomas We sincerely hope so. (*The policemen march out with Arthur.*)
Julia Do you really think he could have done something?
Thomas Certainly not. We will get in touch with Montanelli at once.

Act II scene 1.

Police chief (when the policemen bring Arthur) Good. Put him here. Let's try to get this unpleasantness out of the way at once. The better you cooperate, the sooner you will be set free, signor Burton.
Arthur What do you want of me?
Chief We want to know all about your association with 'New Italy'.
Arthur What's that?
Chief Don't pretend to be stupid. Surely you read articles. Or haven't you read the articles about 'New Italy' that you cut out and collected in your room?
Arthur I collect everything that interests me.
Chief And would 'New Italy' then not interest you, although you collect information about it?
Arthur Do you mean the revolutionary movement of Giuseppe Mazzini?
Chief Right on. We hardly mean anything else.
Arthur That subject is of interest to everyone.
Chief But what is your association with its organization?
Arthur Nothing.
Chief Nothing? Doesn't the name of Giovanni Bolla tell you something?
Arthur Nothing.
Chief Nor Francesco Neri?
Arthur No.
Chief Carlo Bini?
Arthur No.
Chief Still some of these seem to know you very well. We have a few letters here that could be of interest to you. In a confiscated communication by Giovanni Bella he mentions you as a participant in the most dangerous secret society of Italy as a member of an 'English family of rich ship-builders'. That could hardly be anyone but you, could it?
Arthur (grows pale) Has he denounced me? In that case it must be to set me up for trouble. We are in love with the same girl.

Chief If only that were all. Here is a letter written by yourself to Francesco Neri. (*shows it*) Do you deny it?

Arthur (pales) It must be a forgery.

Chief And here is another to Carlo Bini. We have several letters by you to well known revolutionaries. Are they all forgeries then?

Arthur Yes!

Chief You refuse to admit any communion with 'New Italy', although we have so many compromising letters by yourself on the subject?

Arthur Yes!

Chief I understand you. You are all the same. None of you wants to betray his friends. You are all arrested as suspects, and all your papers have been confiscated. There is any amount of overwhelming evidence. You have no chance. You are blue-eyed greenhorns who have allowed yourselves to be seduced by a foolish idealism to undermine our society. It's called subversive activity. We will keep you all in custody until you confess or until any of you betrays the others. It always happens sooner or later. He will then be set free while all the others will get hard prison sentences. We can't tempt you with a speedy liberation?

Arthur I have nothing to say.

Chief So you refuse to cooperate. I am sorry, but then we must keep you. Consider your situation in loneliness until you melt or give in to your despair and the hopelessness of the darkness of your isolation. No one can stand it at length. You have no chance, signor Burton. You must cooperate sooner or later.

Arthur I have nothing to say.

Chief (angry) Take him away! (*to a policeman*) Has his family got in touch with bishop Montanelli?

Police 1 They promised to do so at once.

Chief We might have information about what Arthur Burton knows that way. See what you can do.

Police 1 We will contact the church at once.

Chief Dismiss! (*The police leaves.*)

(*alone*) 'New Italy'. As if there ever could be anything else than the old hopeless Italy, that we always had to bear with!

Scene 2.

Montanelli But he is innocent!

Cardi We all know that. But the police won't let him go.

Montanelli We must get him out, for the sake of his family. Don't you know anything about what he is charged with?

Cardi He is not charged with anything, just suspected for dealing with 'New Italy'.

Montanelli Do you know how deep it goes?

Cardi His engagement in it is thorough. He mentioned to me before he was arrested that he felt jealous about a certain Giovanni Bolla having the responsibility for the printing and distribution of the pamphlets of the movement instead of him.

Montanelli Jealous? Why jealous?

Cardi His girl would then cooperate more with Bolla than with him.

Montanelli I see. His sweetheart the beautiful Gemma. They are like brother and sister. Of course he turned jealous. But then he is free, while Bolla was responsible.

Cardi Yes.

Montanelli The case is clear. We only have to inform the police.

Cardi We would be wise in being discreet about it, so that no one is compromised.

Montanelli What are you afraid of?

Cardi The church shouldn't know anything about 'New Italy' since the church is really behind it.

Montanelli This is just a matter of getting Arthur out, nothing else.

Cardi Absolutely, your excellency.

Montanelli And it's in the interest of the police to keep all information sources unknown.

Cardi Then your ward will be soon be free.

Scene 3. Arthur's cell in prison.

Arthur They try to trick me by any means. They must have tried to make Bolla betray his own by making him believe that they have betrayed him. They will make us believe that we all are each other's traitors, while no one of us is, since we know that none of us could betray another. And thus we are kept locked up, to rot which only will make our hatred and bitterness thrive, turning us into enemies against all humankind. All we did was to make a move for freedom, and for that we are robbed of all freedom. What's the logic in that? It's rather some kind of distorted absurd comedy. (*A key in the lock, and the door is opened wide.*) What's this?

Enrico I am sorry, Arthur, but you are free.

Arthur Free? Why? And why are you sorry?

Enrico I *am* sorry.

Arthur Why?

Enrico You appear to have betrayed your friends.

Arthur That's the last thing I have done.

Enrico Someone has, and only you are set free.

Arthur I don't understand this. I have not disclosed any name, and I have denied any association with the organization.

Enrico You haven't said a word to anyone?

Arthur No.

Enrico Not even in confession?

Arthur In confession? Good lord... (*begins to understand*) Who has been charged? Has anyone been sentenced?

Enrico Bolla has been charged with being responsible for the printing of the pamphlets.

Arthur No!

Enrico Did you really fall for that simple trick? Were you so incautious that you thought you could trust the obligation of silence and seal of confession?

Arthur I didn't consider... Poor Bolla! Poor Gemma!

Enrico Poor Arthur. You will be more unhappy than any of the punished. Go to hell, poor devil, and try to live with it if you can.

Arthur That damned priest! He broke his obligation of silence! Woe me that I ever trusted the church! (*rushes out in despair*)

Enrico That is probably why there is a so called obligation of silence, so that it could be violated. Whoever believes himself to be able to trust anyone is in mortal danger. I had better never go to confession again. Well, one at least is free, but he will flap for the rest of his life without any wings.

Scene 4.

Arthur on the run, meets Gemma.

Gemma Arthur!

Arthur (*stops*) Gemma!

Gemma I heard that you were released. I am so happy for your sake.

Arthur Did you hear why I was released?

Gemma I heard some rumours that I could not believe.

Arthur What did you hear?

Gemma That you had denounced Giovanni.

Arthur It is true.

Gemma What?

Arthur There is no excuse, Gemma. I am guilty. You have the right to judge me. Judge me fairly. I will accept any punishment you'll think I deserve.

Gemma But I don't understand... How could you?

Arthur I trusted the wrong persons. I trusted the church. The church has betrayed me.

Gemma Montanelli?

Arthur No, he went away. His replacement.

Gemma You betrayed Giovanni by confession, and the priest broke the seal of confession?

Arthur Yes.

Gemma Then you have no church any more.

Arthur No.

Gemma And Montanelli?

Arthur He knows nothing about it.

Gemma Then he is innocent and Giovanni the victim and you an unwilling Judas who had the wool pulled over your eyes by the high priests. What do you intend to do?

Arthur You tell me what to do.

Gemma I can never see you again, Arthur. Never come before my eyes again.

Arthur It's fair.

Gemma Go! (*turns away and runs off with her hand to her mouth, in despair*)

Arthur It is fair. You'll never need to see me again. As if that could cure my love. Could a longing for love be harder bled and not thereby just be multiplied a thousand times? *Gemma! Gemma! Forgive me! No! Never forgive me!* (*falls down on his knees, crying bitterly*)

Scene 5. The Burton home.

Thomas We must speak with him.

Julia We can't have him here. He has shamed us. He has shamed the entire family. He has shamed his name.

Thomas He is still a human being.

Julia Is he? Our name was respected here. Now it is only talk about the Burtons in connection with Arthur's business with bandits and violators, gipsies and lawless people, subversive revolutionaries and disgrace in prison.

Thomas He has been released.

Julia Only because of the pathetic bishop's intervention. He will neither get any honour by that.

Thomas He is one of the highest respected men of the country and famous for his tolerance and mildness.

Julia That goat! (*A door. They fall silent and listen.*)

Thomas It could be Arthur. (*enter Arthur, pale, worn and torn.*)

Are you coming directly out of jail?

Arthur I am sorry I had no time to get properly dressed.

Julia Arthur, you are finished here. You have dishonoured the entire family, as if it wasn't enough that you were a black sheep and a bastard from the start.

Thomas Julia!

Julia There is no point in mincing matters.

Thomas We have to talk business, Arthur.

Arthur I can very well understand that I can't live here any longer.

Thomas The bishop has sent you a greeting. (*delivers a small letter*)

Arthur (*reads it*) He regrets that he couldn't be present at my release. Any answer?

Julia I have been sitting on this letter for many years, but there is no reason any more to keep it from you. You are finished here, and you might as well accept it. (*gives him an old letter*)

Thomas Julia!

Julia Let him read it. It's after all his own mother who wrote it.

Arthur (reads it) Yes, it is. What pleasure, Julia, do you receive by seeing me learning that my mother betrayed her husband with a catholic priest? Is it your fondness for amusement that brings you to this when you already know that I am finished as a man?

Julia There couldn't have been a better occasion. We want to get rid of you for good at last. We are tired of supporting you out of sheer pity and mercy.

Arthur I never asked for that pity. I accepted you as friends and relatives but now realize that I have lost both. I thought I still had my foster father Montanelli left, who here appears to be my illegitimate father. You couldn't do me any greater harm. Let me therefore just get out and vanish. (*walks out and vanishes*)

Thomas You were too hard on him, Julia.

Julia He will get over it. At best we don't have to see him any more. And that goat of a lusty bishop will probably not stop protecting him.

Thomas Sometimes I just don't understand you, Julia. (*leaves*)

Scene 6.

Montanelli Is that all you have found of him?

Police 1 I am sorry, your excellency, but we have dragged the entire river and all the harbour. The river and the tide must have brought him out to sea.

Montanelli Just a hat, but unmistakably his. And this sad letter of farewell, that pierces my heart like a spear. "I believed in you, as I believed in God, but your church has betrayed me, and you have been lying to me all my life. All that you built up for me has been destroyed in one single blow by the revelation of the mendacity of you and the church. It is beyond repair. Search for my body in the Bersena." The most bitter thinkable farewell by suicide! No one wanted this to happen! How could everything go so horribly wrong? What did you do to him?

Police 1 Nothing. We only questioned him, and when we learned how matters stood, we released him.

Gemma Padre Montanelli! Is it true? Has he drowned himself?

Montanelli It doesn't look any better, Gemma. His hat was found floating in the stream, and a bitter letter of farewell confirms the case.

Gemma It is all my fault! I forbade him to ever again show himself to me!

Montanelli It is no one's fault, Gemma. No one has more absolute responsibility for his life than a suicide. He releases everyone else from any responsibility by taking on all responsibility himself by force. We are thereby bereft of all accountability for his life by force and feel it as very brutal, but he might now at last be wholly free.

Gemma No, he has cheated us like we cheated him. He will be back. I feel it and am sure of it.

Montanelli Don't fool yourself, Gemma.

Gemma Who is fooling whom? He has been cheated of his life and will take revenge.

Montanelli He is dead, Gemma.

Gemma Even if he is, I will never accept it.

(enter police 2 with urgent message for police 1.)

police 1 What!

Montanelli What has happened?

Police 1 Giovanni Bolla has escaped! I must leave at once! *(the policemen leave)*

Montanelli There is your life, Gemma. Giovanni Bolla lives, and he loves you. You can carry on abroad.

Gemma You are right, padre. We still have much to do. *(hurries on)*

Montanelli (alone) My son! My beloved son! I could never tell you that you were my son, and I was only allowed to guide you on the condition that I never met your mother again! It's not just your own life that you have killed. Suddenly it feels as if I had lost my own, and I will spend the rest of my life vainly trying to regain it. There is nothing else for me to live for. *(leaves in sadness)*

Act III scene 1. Thirteen years later.

The conspirators have a meeting.

Grassini What do you suggest, gentlemen?

Fabrizi We must act *(hits the table)* now!

Lega My opinion exactly. But how?

Fabrizi We must take the opportunity! It will never turn up again!

Lega How?

Riccardo By a petition to the archduke. We must insist on freedom of the press and urge him to it. He can't refuse us after the pope's initiative.

Lega And if he still does?

Fabrizi We must take the law into our own hands! We must enforce the freedom of the press! We simply print pamphlets demanding freedom of the press, and woe betide those who then dare to prosecute us! They will get all Italy against them! Then we can go on with further demands of increased liberty.

Grassini The risk is that it will make every Jesuit and every Gregorian and every sanfredist in all Italy our enemies. Then the reaction rolls on, and we'll have to wait another ten years.

Galli Who cares? Drive on! Everything at once! Everything or nothing!

Lega That's how you challenge destiny.

Grassini We are still at the same point as thirteen years ago! Then there were also bold initiatives to print challenging pamphlets. They were printed and distributed, and everyone went to prison. Now we start all over again.

Riccardo After all, we are not subversive. Our demands are not more than reasonable.

Lega What is reasonable?

Riccardo Freedom of conscience. Freedom of the press. Freedom of expression. Freedom of belief and faith. Freedom.

Galli Fair enough.

Fabrizi But is it enough?

Succoni What does signora Bolla have to say?

Gemma Printing pamphlets is not enough. They must contain something. They must have effect. We must blunt the edge of the Jesuits and the catholic fanatics by showing them how ridiculous they are. Satire and irony and humour should be our prime weapons. That will call people to attention.

Galli Thus speaks the widow of Giovanni Bolla.

Gemma He knew the recipe and was about to practise it when tuberculosis took his life.

Fabrizi We are sorry, signora Bolla, – but I think we have just the man we need.

Several Who?

Fabrizi Felice Rivarez. He is here in the country now, and I have invited him.

Lega A sarcastic despiser of men with a murky past, an adventurer with no sense of prudence and manners and an unpleasant type. He is very controversial.

Fabrizi But a brilliant stylist. He knows a number of languages and writes fluently in Italian, English and all Latin languages. He is sleek as an eel and has been through much.

Riccardo Where does he come from?

Favrizi Brazil. He knows all South America and has experience of all its revolutions. He has taken part in all of them.

Galli We must avail ourselves of him and use him! He is just the right person to settle matters with the pope.

Gemma What's his style? Does he have any?

Lega He is thoroughly poisonous, and he is not afraid of anything, which doesn't make it any better. He has no scruples at all, appears arrogant but acts like a gentleman and has a gipsy girl for his sweetheart. (*A doorbell.*)

Fabrizi That must be our man. (*rises to open*)

Lega His code name is the Gadfly.

Gemma The Gadfly! (*enter Gadfly in the same moment.*)

Rivarez (*with a slight limp, uses a cane*) I must be expected since you are talking about me. What can I do for you? (*He is simply but elegantly dressed in a white jacket and hat with a red necktie and dark glasses, so that no one can see his eyes. He is very dark and appears as if he was constantly on his guard.*)

Fabrizi Yes, we were just talking about you. We have very high expectations of you, since you are our man to redeem us from the clerical censure. You are most welcome. This is doctor Riccardo, you already know our dramatist Lega, this is Galli who is always suffering from gall fever, and then we have Succone and finally Grassini.

Rivarez And a lady, I see.

Fabrizi Gemma Bolla, our muse.

Rivarez Widow of Giovanni Bolla?

Fabrizi Exactly.

Rivarez (*politely saluting Gemma and kissing her hand*) I am sorry. He was a brilliant pamphleteer. Is it a long time ago?

Gemma Ten years. How did you know him?

Rivarez Only by reputation. I admired his democratic work, like I admire Mazzini's.

Gemma Why don't you remove your glasses? It is evening time, and there is no blinding sunlight. I am sure you will see better without. Or are you afraid of people looking into your eyes?

Rivarez The tropical sun has taken a severe strain on my eyes, and I have grown to shun the light, I am simply over-sensitive to light. Pardon me that I must protect them.

Gemma Then I will hope to see your beautiful eyes some other time.

Rivarez I promise you, they are not worth seeing, only seeing with.

Grassini To the point!

Rivarez I understand you wished to use me as an author of subversive pamphlets and preferably directly against the church? Nothing could be easier for me.

Fabrizi Then we had better get started at once, or what, gentlemen?

Rivarez I have prepared some sketches here. (*opens a portfolio and shows the conspirators some examples.*)

Gemma (*aside*) He seems somehow strangely familiar. Could I have met him before? Impossible. He had never seen Giovanni. But there is something about him, as if I had dreamt of him...

Rivarez (*while the gentlemen eagerly discuss his sketches*) Could she have suspected something? Could she have recognized me? No, it's impossible. Thirteen years is a long time, and I promised never to show myself to her, so I just have to be very careful about not showing her my eyes. And now at last I am home again and can settle with cardinal Montanelli! It will be my life's most interesting sport to torture both him to death and his sanctimonious church...

Grassini This will be perfect, Rivarez! With such a good start of the freedom of the press we will get an entire avalanche ravaging all Italy!

Rivarez I sincerely hope so. Just let me know if you need some more.

Galli We shall always need that indeed! We never had enough ammunition!

Fabrizi With your superior brilliance, the revolution will be unavoidable!

Rivarez Then it's just to go on with our work, gentlemen.

Lega May I add, that we are expecting his eminence the cardinal Montanelli of Brisighella here shortly. He would be an interesting acquaintance for you to make, since we target the church so sharply, since he is maybe its most impeccable servant.

Rivarez No one is impeccable. The church holds the world record at hiding secrets. No mistresses? No bribes? Just you wait. The entire church is a lie.

Lega Perhaps you are not aware that the new pope Pius IX has introduced his papacy with an amnesty for all political prisoners, which has caused furore all over

Italy. He has made himself the most popular pope ever from the very start, with an acclaim from all parties. It is not political to target such a pope sharply.

Rivarez Nothing is sharper than the truth, and it must be told, with freedom of the press or without. He may be better than most priests, which is no defence for the church, which only consists of rotten lies and corruption. Therefore it must be gone from politics. Already Dante was clear about that.

Fabrizi He is right!

Rivarez If you still wish to shoot sharply and start armed rebellions against obsolete local autocracies, that stand in the way of a united Italy, we could help you with that as well.

Lega One thing at a time.

Galli No, everything at once!

Lega We don't want chaos. We only want order.

Grassini It's unnecessary to risk everything on foolhardiness, Galli. Let us take one battle at a time and that slowly and securely, so that we never will have to back down any more.

Lega That's reasonable.

Rivarez Signor Galli is just enthusiastic about the revolution. I am sure we will be able to accommodate all your interests in good time.

Martini Signora, didn't you know his eminence long ago? What do you think about him?

Gemma No one has anything against him. No one could have anything to charge him with. He is liberal and open and well known for his goodness and mildness. He is a human priest and an ornament to his church, whatever you may think about the church.

Rivarez Also a golden head could stand on clay feet, which the whole church does in all its golden glamour. He is after all part of the church. There is no reason for sparing him.

Gemma You must meet him.

Rivarez I am looking forward to it. (*Gemma suddenly pales.*)

Martini Signora Gemma is not very well. (*takes care of her*)

Grassini We are finished anyway. What about adjournment? We could continue tomorrow.

Fabrizi Enough of proposals. Come with me, signor Rivarez. You stay with me.

Rivarez No, I stay with the gipsies.

Fabrizi As you wish. (*The gentlemen break it up. Rivarez watches Gemma.*)

Martini It is nothing. It will pass.

Rivarez She obviously has something in common with the cardinal.

Gemma Why do you think so?

Rivarez Wasn't he once involved in the arrest of your husband?

Gemma No, it was another one.

Rivarez Whom you also knew?

Gemma My husband's best friend and colleague, an English student of philosophy under the protection of the cardinal.

Rivarez What happened to him?

Gemma The church fooled him into betrayal of his own, whereupon he committed suicide.

Martini Don't drag all that up again, Gemma! You are only torturing yourself! You had better leave, signor Gadfly.

Rivarez Pardon my compassion. (*limps away with his stick*)

Gemma Now you were rude, Sandro.

Martini What right does he have to open your wounds?

Gemma They don't need opening. They are constantly bleeding. I can't stop accusing myself for Arthur Burton's death. The same accounts for the cardinal. That's what we both have in common.

Martini How was the cardinal involved?

Gemma Arthur once promised him, that if he ever lost his padre he would commit suicide. The cardinal felt responsible for the priest Cardi's divulging of Arthur's secrets of confession, which was what nailed Giovanni.

Martini The church deceived Arthur, who turned desperate and took his life. Did Giovanni understand the connection?

Gemma Yes. He cried when he said, "It gives me pleasure that he at least was innocent." He showed me an endless compassion. Shortly thereafter we married and moved to England and continued our activity in safety from there. But he couldn't stand the English climate. It affected his lungs, and he died in tuberculosis.

Martini Am I right, that Arthur's body was never found?

Gemma That only made matters worse. His hat was fished out of the stream. That was all.

Martini Yes, I remember. The cardinal, who then had been created bishop, took it very hard, didn't he?

Gemma Yes, he fell very ill and was close to death. Since then he is only half a man but the more human.

Martini Shouldn't we show such a man some mercy?

Gemma Say that to the Gadfly.

Martini Was that why you paled and almost fainted, for the sake of the Gadfly's relentlessness?

Gemma No, it was something else.

Martini What then?

Gemma I suddenly got the thought that the Gadfly had come as Arthur's revenger, that Arthur had taken position in the Gadfly to come back and punish us. I am scared to death of seeing that man's eyes, Sandro. I am grateful that he wears dark glasses.

Martini Yes, there is something very odd about him. Come, let's go home. (*helps Gemma up, and they leave.*)



Scene 2.

Zita You are working on your death, Felice. You sacrifice yourself for nothing. Does life then mean nothing to you? Is my love of you nothing to you?

Rivarez (without glasses) How could it have any meaning for an old miserable fiasco like me, crippled and good for nothing but subversive criminality?

Zita That's what makes you so romantic. Your unhappy destiny, which I never learned anything about, makes you irresistible.

Rivarez I don't care about anything, Zita. I have nothing to live for, but I have a matter unsettled with certain high authorities. That's all I have to do in life, to drag them down to perdition even if it also has to be my own.

Zita You are fanatic. You are mad. You suffer from fixed ideas. You are stuck in an irrational hatred for nothing. Why are you persecuting that poor cardinal so mercilessly in your writings? What has he done to you? Even Grassini means that there is no reason for not leaving such a good priest alone in peace. He belongs after all to the few stainless ones in the church and is leading a great charity work. People already regard him as a saint.

Rivarez That's just why I must meet him.

Zita And expose yourself to the spies of the police? You are wanted, Felice! Everyone knows that you are dealing with the smugglers in the mountains and the

terrorists of Romagna! You are the most dangerous man in Tuscany! And you want to confront the cardinal in the midst of a thousands pilgrims, just because he is coming here!

Rivarez Domenichino has furnished me with a perfect disguise. Or else I would not do it. I will appear as an old remorseful pilgrim who once in fury killed his own son and in despair gave himself over to justice. He existed for real. He got into trouble in Ancona but was helped to Venice by some of us, where he in gratitude gave us his documents and passport. Even the police will themselves protect me as the old repentant pilgrim.

Zita What a theatre! And all for the sake of this old cardinal! Why do you love him so?

Rivarez Love? I am obsessed with hatred of him and only want to tear down everything that he represents!

Zita Can't you see then that this is love? No hatred is stronger than love. Only one lost in love once and for all and for the rest of his life could hate that much. What has he done to you to ruin you so utterly? Does he even know you? Does he know who you are?

Rivarez He knows me by my writings against him and the church.

Zita Is then all his charity work just lies and hypocrisy? How could such a good man be corrupt? You are alone in the entire world of your hatred of him, while everyone else loves him! Your love must be the greatest of all!

Rivarez You are right. It was.

Zita Come to your senses, Felice. You have a life to live. You have me to love. Stop risking your life for politics. It isn't worth it. It is not worth that a single life is sacrificed for it, and still everyone is willing to do it. I can't get it. Is it the irresistible suck of power and its resulting satanic dependence? *That* is what is rotten and corrupt, and not the cardinal!

Rivarez I must settle with him, Zita.

Zita What compels you?

Rivarez He gave me my life only to take it away from me, which I can't forgive him.

Zita You are like all the others. You can't see that revenge only will lead to more revenge, that violence only will lead to more violence, that the struggle against corruption and the abuse of power only will lead to more corruption and abuse of power! Let the devils who abuse their positions perish alone in their corruption and rot! That's all they deserve!

Rivarez And no one will punish them for misleading the masses and abusing the people and consuming the world as parasites?

Zita The cardinal is not among them!

Rivarez The cardinal is part of the church that leads them.

Zita (embraces him) Stay, Felice. Don't sacrifice yourself for a godless cause. Devote yourself to something constructive instead, like love.

Rivarez I must get clear of my destiny first.

Zita You sound like Christ in the orchard. What was he sacrificed for? Has the sinners of the world sinned less or stopped sinning for that? Has humanity become any better? Only by exceptions in that case, like the cardinal.

Rivarez I must go, Zita. I will come back later. (*separates from her with mildness and leaves.*)

Zita (*furious*) Idiot! Idiot! Idiot! It's that other woman, with whom he is collaborating. No, it's that cardinal. What the hell is their business with him? (*sits down in desperation, since she can't understand anything.*)

Scene 3. By the cathedral.

Pilgrim 1 Bless you, your eminence!

2 The helper of the poor!

(*enter the cardinal who is surrounded by poor pilgrims in front of the cathedral.*)

Montanelli Blessed are the poor, for their riches are the greater in heaven.

(*blesses them. Observes Rivarez masked as an old long- and white-haired tattered pilgrim*)

My friend, you are not pressing on like all the others. What can I do for you?

Rivarez Give me back my son.

Montanelli Have you lost your son?

Rivarez I murdered him myself.

Police 1 (*interfering*) Disperse, good people! Make room for the cardinal! – He is totally harmless, your eminence. His papers are in order. It's true what he says. He killed his son by mistake as he mistook him for someone else, blamed himself for it and has served his punishment at the galleys. Since then he has only applied himself to pilgrimages as a constant penitent who never can get enough penitence.

Montanelli Poor man! So you killed your son my mistake?

Rivarez No, it was on purpose, but I only realized afterwards that it was my only son. Didn't also God kill his only son? Was it a mistake or on purpose? What did he sacrifice him for? I know that God all since that day must have regretted it bitterly, like St. Peter his denial and Judas his treason.

Montanelli You would have made a good preacher, old man. You have much to teach us, who has spent such a long life on the most difficult and longest of all pilgrimages – the vain longing for atonement.

Rivarez You sound as if you were in a similar situation.

Montanelli My son, I have also seen much and heard much by the holy seal of confession and believe myself to know something about man, and that much I know, that no one is damned, not even a father who kills his only son, especially not if it was against his own will. But I know that the wound must hurt and be incurable.

Rivarez How can you know that? Do you have such a wound yourself?

Montanelli We have much in common, old man. Even I am well familiar with suffering, or else I wouldn't be able to love. Life is love, but love is suffering, and the

worse the suffering, the stronger the love. That's what Christ tried to teach us. Life is only suffering, but suffering is always meaningful, for suffering is only love.

Rivarez So you advocate self-torture for life?

Montanelli You could express it that way. That's why I gave my life to the church, for the church is only love and compassion.

Ricarez I wish you could have spoken to me like that while I was young. Then I would have been more fit to welcome my sufferings.

Montanelli We suffer until we die but will never be fully educated in the purifying lesson of suffering and the compassion of suffering love.

Rivarez Would you be able to forgive me for having murdered my son?

Montanelli Definitely, yes. You are forgiven over and over again.

Rivarez Then I must ask a more difficult question. If you by the unfortunate circumstances of destiny were brought to bereave yourself of your own only son, would you then ever be able to forgive yourself?

Montanelli (stricken) Old man, I understand your situation. No, that I would never be able to forgive myself.

Rivarez Then perhaps you will understand why I could never reach forgiveness and atonement with less than that the murderer of his son was justly punished to at last make an end of him. *(The cardinal clutches his brow.)*

Police 1 What is the matter, your eminence? Clear out, there! Make way for the cardinal! He must enter the cathedral! *(He makes way for the cardinal through the throng of pilgrims into the cathedral. Rivarez has disappeared. The pilgrims anxiously continue to try to reach the cardinal.)*

Scene 4. The conspirators.

Grassani Shall we really let him go through with it? He is risking his life for our sake!

Fabrizi I am afraid he wants it himself.

Riccardo What urges him on? Is he self-destructive? I can't understand his motive.

Galli Devotion to the holy cause! He knows we are right! Without such dedicated persons we would never get anywhere.

Lega Don't talk rubbish, Galli. We don't know his motive, but I suspect some outrageous injustice in his shadowy past.

Gemma He is rushing headlong to his own destruction.

Domenichino You should have seen him today among the pilgrims at the cathedral! He made a stunning performance! He got the cardinal's attention only to himself for an endless hour! The cardinal would only have guessed that he was blessing his own worst adversary!

Fabrizi I was there. I saw it. His life's interest seems to be some kind of a sport to challenge destiny and constantly drive the excitement of the risks to further extremes.

Domenichino Here he is now.

Fabrizi Congratulations to today's performance, Rivarez.

Domenichino You really pulled the wool over the cardinal's eyes and made him feel sorry for your old pilgrim, who only pulled his legs!

Riccardo What did you actually say to each other? It appeared like an extensive conversation.

Fabrizi Finally you appeared to somehow put him off. Everyone noticed that he was affected. What did you tell him?

Rivarez I just showed him a few glimpses of the abyss of his own heart's unfathomable lifelong lies.

Gemma It was a foul thing to do to expose the cardinal to covert scorn. How you must have despised him when he so credulously took your role play for serious! What a heartless man you must be!

Martini Gemma!

Rivarez She is right. I am heartless. Well, shall we go through the last preparations for the operation? Everything is ready. The smugglers are waiting with the English weapons on the other side of the border.

Grassani Do you really want to risk taking the responsibility for the operation alone?

Rivarez You saw it for yourselves today. No one suspected my role play. I can move freely everywhere without even risking being recognized.

Gemma Masquerade! Everything is just a masquerade! Remove those dark glasses at last then and tell us who you really are! Look into our eyes, so that we can meet yours! What's driving you? Why do you wish the cardinal harm? Why do you want to throw the country into a civil war with all weapons aimed at the church?

Rivarez You don't want to, Gemma.

Gemma What do I not want?

Rivarez Look into my eyes.

Gemma I demand it.

Rivarez (*takes off his glasses*) Help yourself.

Gemma (*aside*) I knew it! His blue eyes!

Martini What is it, Gemma?

Gemma (*collects herself*) Let me speak alone with the Gadfly.

(*The gentlemen look at each other and agree to let her have her way.*)

Grassini We are in the next room. Call us when you are ready.

(*The gentlemen leave, Martini last, looking worried at Gemma.*)

Rivarez You can't pull out now, Gemma. There is too much at stake. We have managed this far without complications. All we have to do is to let it roll on. Trust me. I know what I am doing.

Gemma That is what I must doubt since I don't know who you are.

Rivarez My identity means nothing. It doesn't exist. It is buried alive for good by myself since thirteen years. I do what I must do. Don't stop me by your female second thoughts and weakness for sentimentality.

Gemma I don't know what you have been through, but I cried out most part of thirteen years of my life for my life's only mistake, when I exiled a man out of my

life whom I loved for a crime which he later proved to have been innocent of. Then he had openly committed suicide.

Rivarez It's now that counts, Gemma.

Gemma I sought comfort in his best friend who understood me, and we were happily married for ten years, until we lost our only child and he died in tuberculosis. I don't want to cry any more, signor Rivarez.

Rivarez You don't have to, if we concentrate on our work. We still have much to do, organisations, coordinations, formalities, everything must be perfect already in the planning if it will be sure to succeed.

Gemma I don't understand you.

Rivarez You don't need to. All you need is to cooperate.

Gemma I only loved two men in all my life, and I lost them both, but I will never be rid of my love of them. I can't love you, Gadfly, as long as you persecute the cardinal. Can't you make it up with him? He wishes you no harm. He has even expressed some admiration for your ingenious ways of using your language to make your points. You just strike at him, and he only blesses you. Why do you keep on doing this?

Rivarez The church is indefensible. He is the church. He is here. We are here. That's all.

Gemma Is that all?

Rivarez We have a work to do. Let us do it, with or without the cardinal. Can I ask the others to come back in again?

Gemma I only ask you for one thing.

Rivarez Well?

Gemma Visit the cardinal. Try to make it up with him, with mask or without. The only thing I can't bear about you is that you allow also your soul to wear a mask.

Rivarez I have no soul.

Gemma Yes, you do, but you suppress it and smother it.

Rivarez (sighs) Very well, I will look up the cardinal. I will probably find him in the cathedral. But I can't promise that it will lead to anything.

Gemma Have a word with him. Let me have that hope.

Rivarez I will have a word with him. (*He questioningly indicates the closed door.*)

Gemma I am satisfied. Let in the wolves.

(Rivarez gets up and opens the doors.)

Rivarez All clear, gentlemen. We can go on.

Scene 5. In the cathedral.

The cardinal kneeling by the altar, like one penitent.

Montanelli My son, my beloved son! How could everything go so wrong? No one wanted it, and a stupid political trifle turned into an unsurveyable human disaster. If only I could forgive myself! But there are constantly new reminders turning up of

the mortal wound, ripping it up again to prove again and again that it never can heal! What horribly importuning providence made this old pilgrim place himself in my way? And his eyes! They were like Arthur's own! Arthur! Arthur! My beloved son! (*cries bitterly but in silence*)

Arthur (gliding out of the shadows in the disguise of the old pilgrim) Could it really still be that bad after all these years? He grieves for me! As if I died yesterday! And Gemma! How could she guess that he would be here in this condition when she sent me here? Is it providence, that at any price would force me to reconciliation and forgiveness, with a cardinal representing all the worst lies in life, who begot me in sin by seducing another's wife, who gave me my life only to with all his church betray it by the worst conceivable betrayal, the supreme blasphemy, the betrayal of a secret entrusted under the sacred seal of confession? No, I can't forgive him. Not yet. Our moment hasn't arrived yet. We shall meet again and finally reach a settlement – but not yet. Not today, in a godforsaken, sanctimonious cathedral...

Montanelli (raises his head in renewed prayer) If only I could forgive myself, but I can't. I must not. This mortal sin will pursue me all my life and become my death, but I could never forgive myself, neither as a priest and even less as a man.

Arthur (aside like before) And still forgiveness is available here. The table is laid for a reconciliation. Undo your disguise and expose your naked soul to him, and ask him of forgiveness, you despicable gadfly, for all your wicked articles against him! Undress your pride! Fall on your knees to the truth of suffering like your repentant cardinal and false father! No, it will not work. I long for the reconciliation and to give forgiveness, but I don't have the power nor the right to forgive, for it lies with destiny. Only destiny could reconcile us, for we are its prisoners, and we are nothing against that supreme power; and I have no soul to be able to take it by the horns to dare such an initiative. It was not my body that committed suicide and disappeared in the stream thirteen years ago but the more my soul, that I intentionally rid myself of and which remains lost beyond any possibility of salvation.

And still I can't refrain myself... I promised Gemma to speak with him...

(*aloud*) Padre!

Montanelli (hearkens instantly) Arthur! I hear your voice! You answer my prayer! I hear you! What bliss to feel your presence... (*rises hastily and distraught and looks all around him in confusion*) Or was it just a ghost? A chimera? A hallucination? The delusional deceit of wishful thinking? The church is empty. I am getting old and can't trust my own senses any more...

Rivarez (steps forth within sight of him) Pardon me, your eminence, it was not my intention to disturb you in your prayer...

Montanelli Oh, the old pilgrim! Then it was someone after all! No, my friend, you are to pardon me. I was so immersed in the inner world of my wayward wanderings of thought in my prayers, that your appearance comes like a most needful recall to reality...

Rivarez No, you must forgive me. I found the cathedral open and entered in the hope of finding a priest who could bless me in spite of all...

Montanelli You have my blessing thousandfold. Like me you are a severely tried man.

Rivarez I hope my case today did not shock you. Many observed that you backed off.

Montanelli Alas, it certainly wasn't your fault. Pray for me, my friend, for my soul could be more lost than yours.

Rivarez How come?

Montanelli Perhaps I need your blessing more than you need mine. Are you heading for Rome?

Rivarez I am always on a pilgrimage.

Montanelli Next time you receive the holy communion, then pray for a broken heart, that is sorely pressed by a sentence of eternity.

Rivarez Who am I to pray for you, a famished ruin of a man, crippled with broken limbs and a malefactor with lives on his conscience, who more than most made himself deserving of capital punishment and condemnation?

Montanelli You believe this is a cardinal, but all he is, is just a broken heart. My naked soul crawls in the dust for you, my friend. Pray for me. You can do it. No one else can.

Rivarez I can't even receive the communion. I am afraid you have found the wrong person, your eminence.

Montanelli Thus will I then remain alone and isolated in the prison of the abyss of my pain. Go, my good man. I am afraid there is nothing you can do for me. (*sinks back into his prayers*)

Rivarez I am sorry, your eminence. Some other time, perhaps... (*retires*)

(*aside*) It's your last chance. It's now or never. He is ready. You just have to dare...
– Your eminence!

Montanelli (*disturbed, raises his head*) Yes?

Arthur Who did you think I was when I disturbed you?

Montanelli (*tired*) Alas, no one in particular. Just a lost soul like all the others. Thank you, my friend, for disturbing me. (*aside*) I just wish it had been for real.

Arthur (*definitely retiring*) The moment is lost. Next time... (*leaves*)

(*The cardinal remains without further movement in his prayers.*)

Act IV scene 1.

Martini Doesn't he realize how dangerous it is?

Gemma That's why he wants to do it.

Martini To sacrifice himself? We can't afford losing him!

Gemma Don't you think I have tried to persuade him?

Martini What makes him so stubbornly determined on his own destruction?

Gemma Ask him. You will only get nonchalance for an answer. He is just consistent.

Martini Consistently self-destructive?

Gemma Consistently self-willed and determined. He has so far succeeded with everything, Sandro. He has planned and organised the entire operation, the smugglers in Tuscany, the revolutionaries in Romagna, the contrabands in the Appennines, the weapon providers in England and the distributors in the Church State. The deliveries have worked thanks to our efforts, and now only the last bit remains. And then Domenichino gets caught in Florence. No one else than he can do the job there.

Martini And you follow him.

Gemma Someone has to follow him.

Martini And you worked by his side for weeks!

Gemma That's also why we have got everything done.

Martini I don't like it.

Gemma Here he is himself. Speak with him. Martini doesn't want you to go, Felice.

Rivarez Let me speak with him. I know what he is afraid of. (*takes a seat, Gemma leaves*) Well, Sandro. What is the problem?

Martini You love her.

Rivarez Who says so?

Martini I can see it on your eyes. Only with her you take off your glasses. And I know your gipsy mistress has left you.

Rivarez She was just a gipsy. She fell for the first second best man. Like all weak women she couldn't bear being alone. I was too much absent. That was before Gemma decided to work with me. But you need not worry.

Martini About what?

Rivarez I don't desire her. She has nothing to fear of me. We leave each other in peace. You need not be jealous.

Martini It's not that. Let me go instead of you, Rivarez.

Rivarez It's out of the question.

Martini Why?

Rivarez You are more important than I. You are still young and healthy. I am getting too old and tired. I am no youth any more. You are. Also I am liable by these attacks of infection. My health is not always reliable. Yours will hold. Stay, for the sake of Gemma. I assure you, that whatever happens, she will not get caught.

Martini It's bad enough if you do. That would endanger the entire enterprise.

Rivarez Only I can carry it through. That's how simple it is.

Martini You will not bring Gemma the whole way, I hope?

Rivarez Of course not. She will only help me across the mountains. There I leave her in safe hands and go down the last bit alone. She will be safe with the smugglers.

Martini You seem to be a gentleman after all.

Rivarez No villain is just entirely a villain.

Martini Another problem. Gemma doesn't want you to go either.

Rivarez That's her problem.

Martini She is more in love with you than with me.

Rivarez Do you think so? She has told me that both the men she loved have died and even her only child. What woman could love any more after such ordeals?

Martini She does.

Rivarez The more important then not to disappoint her. If I die, that means, that you must not.

Martini And Domenichino?

Rivarez He is done for. There is nothing we can do for him.

Martini We have resources to liberate anyone who gets into trouble.

Rivarez Let's leave it to when it happens.

Gemma (returns) Well, did you succeed?

Martini No. He is hopelessly steadfast and determined to die.

Gemma To die?

Rivarez We must all die sooner or later. If you don't risk your life now and then, you can never feel that you are really alive.

Gemma I will come with you.

Rivarez I must leave you half way.

Gemma Leave us alone, Sandro. (*Martini obeys at once.*)

You never told me the result of your meeting with the cardinal.

Rivarez We shall meet again.

Gemma Where?

Rivarez Up there.

Gemma In heaven?

Rivarez No, in the mountains.

Gemma So you did speak?

Rivarez Yes. But he was in a bad shape. He first took me for a ghost.

Gemma So did I.

Rivarez Unfortunately I am not a ghost. You must keep your ghosts to yourselves.

Gemma What did he say?

Rivarez Nothing in particular. I wore my pilgrim's costume, and he only recognized me as the pilgrim of this morning.

Gemma So you masked yourself again.

Rivarez It was best that way, Gemma. He is an old tortured soul who keeps torturing himself with old ghosts, that he never can get rid of, no matter how dead they are. I don't want to worsen his sufferings. The Gadfly will not persecute him any more.

Gemma Did you promise him that?

Rivarez I promised it to myself.

Gemma At least something.

Rivarez That was the least I could do for him.

Gemma When will you see each other again?

Rivarez When I die, if not sooner.

Gemma Always scornful and deprecatory, detached and inaccessible. When will you at last grow up to become a man, Gadfly?

Rivarez When I lose my wings.
Gemma What does that mean?
Rivarez (*under his voice*) When it is too late.
Gemma You talk in riddles.
Rivarez Be glad for that. I promise you, Gemma, that I will one day tell you everything that I must for the time keep secret until this is over. Spare me by allowing me to spare you until further. Don't ask any more questions. We have a task to perform.
Gemma I have supported you in everything while longing for the day when "all this" would be over. Will that day ever come?
Rivarez It will come.
Gemma At least you don't make me give up.
Rivarez Will you let me walk all the line?
Gemma (*resigns*) Since you insist.
Rivarez That's all I ask of you. (*takes her around the neck*)
Gemma (*leaning on to him*) The closer I get to you, the more you glide away from me.
Rivarez I am just a gadfly.
Gemma With wings.
Rivarez Yes, until further.
Gemma I never wanted a third man, but I do want you.
Rivarez Why?
Gemma You remind me of both of them. You are like them.
Rivarez You must have loved them very much.
Gemma One more than the other.
Rivarez Try to trust me, even if it is impossible.
Gemma I will try, even if it never will work. But I never give up.
Martini (*enter, suddenly*) Well, are you ready?
Rivarez We are going. Gemma has given in.
Martini It's about time. We can't wait any longer. (*They all break up.*)

Scene 2.

Grassini But how did it happen? How could it happen? Didn't we take all safety precautions?
Galli Who betrayed him? Someone must have done it! Everybody else got away!
Martini He made sure himself that all the others would get away. He was in perfect control all the way except in the last minute.
Fabrizi What happened? Take it all from the beginning.
Lega Every detail could be important, since someone must have snapped.
Martini This is what I heard from Michele, who was there himself. They were just about to leave the village, when they had an anonymous warning that troops were on their way. Who squealed to whom we shall never know, which is just as

well. It could have been anyone who said a word by mistake or caught something by accident. Anyway, the Gadfly immediately saw there were spies in the market who were surrounding it to shut it off. Perfectly safe and calm, the Gadfly gave instructions to everyone how to retreat. If there would be an emergency they would fire at the horses of the troops but never at any man. The Gadfly was famous for his accuracy of aim and rightness of judgement. Everyone had guns. They others got on their horses, and the Gadfly was the last one to reach his own. At that moment the cardinal comes out of the church. He immediately gets the whole situation, but then the horses of the soldiers are heard coming. It's a matter of seconds. "Leave at once!" the Gadfly cries out and pulls his gun to have it ready. He hits two of the soldiers' horses and the colonel in his hip. The attack stops short, and the Gadfly can still save himself. Then the cardinal comes straight at him and gets in the way between his pistol and the horse. If then the Gadfly had fired or just wounded the cardinal, he would have got away. But he lowered his gun. He couldn't shoot the cardinal. At once the soldiers were over him and got him down. A soldier stamped the gun out of his hand. A horse also rode over him. We don't know yet how much damages he got, but there was blood indeed, and he had to be helped up to his feet by the soldiers, who put a snare round his throat tied to a horse. Thus he was brought to prison. The cardinal watched it all. The Gadfly had time to look him in his eyes and said: "I congratulate you, signor cardinal," with a smile.

Fabrizi Did the cardinal answer anything?

Martini No. He just looked at him. He had demonstrated a coolness without equal. It certainly was his day.

Galli And the others?

Martini They got away to safety every one of them. They were probably not even recognized.

Riccardo And Gemma?

Martini She waited in the next village. She had been sent in advance for safety's sake. No one has seen her in this operation. No one can accuse her. The Gadfly made sure of that.

Riccardo (to Gemma) What did you think when everyone arrived except Felice?

Martini Leave her alone. She is not herself.

Gemma We must liberate him.

Galli Of course. And we have resources. All we need is to send him a file. If he just can file his way out of the window gratings, we can do the rest.

Lega There is the unanswered question of his damages.

Fabrizi No matter how damaged he is, he can always work for freedom. He is tougher and more stubborn than anyone else.

Gemma We must make everything ready for him and be ready to receive him when he is out.

Grassini How much time have we got?

Riccardo He was lucky to get caught in Brisighella, where the cardinal's influence is what counts everywhere. He tolerates no torture, no abuse of any prisoner and no

summary court-martial. To him a fair trial is the only acceptable course of action for all prisoners, and such a formality in Brisighella could be postponed forever. So we have plenty of time.

Fabrizi Then we can prepare everything to the smallest detail. We can't fail. How does it sound, signora Bolla?

Gemma That's all I ask for.

Grassini Let's move on then. We need a careful description of the entire castle with all its roads and passages.

Galli I am sure we could get several of the guards over to our side. Many soldiers sympathize with our movement.

Fabrizi We must work on them and make sure of them. Then it's just to secretly inform the Gadfly when the right guard could leave the right gates open.

Riccardo In brief, we can't fail.

Lega So far we have only failed by the human factor. That's probably the only thing we have to look out for.

Martini It is always unpredictable.

Lega Yes, it is.

Grassini Therefore we had better just ignore it as far as possible. Let's get to work, gentlemen! (*They start breaking up. Martini takes a seat by Gemma to support her.*)

Scene 3.

Police 1 (the same policeman as in act II scene 1 but older) You have no chance, signor Rivarez. You are done for. We know everything about you. You are wanted since months for contraband, homicide, machinations, calumny, illegal weapons, gun-running and for leading conspiracies. A legal trial could but bring you sentences for all of it. The only thing you can hope for is extenuating circumstances, if you cooperate with us.

Rivarez Don't be ridiculous. You must be able to understand at least, that such a man as I impossibly could cooperate with any authorities.

Police I warn you. We could constantly make life worse for you here.

Rivarez I am used to it.

Police We could put you in isolation for an unlimited length of time.

Rivarez Don't you think I have been through all this before?

Police We could keep you out of access to any facilities until you rot.

Rivarez No force could compel liberty to compromise with herself. And how could you make my existence here even worse? You already keep me forged in handcuffs without any motion, so that my wounds are infected. You do nothing about my dysentery, which only gets worse. You use the waiting time for my trial as an excuse to punish me for that you can't shorten the process by court martial. You stamped my hand out of joint and allowed your horses to trample me down. And

you think in your narrow minds that you could eke out my torture? Allow me to smile at your absurd vanity and childishness.

Montanelli (*has discreetly entered unseen and stood for a while listening*) Let me speak with him.

Police Your eminence. (*rises and leaves his chair by the desk over to him*)

Rivarez Signor cardinal! You were the only one missing!

Montanelli My friend, I wish you no harm. I respect you for your atheism, for the god that you don't believe in, I don't believe in either. I really just wanted to ask you one single question.

Rivarez How exciting.

Montanelli Did I ever do anything personal against you that could motivate you to your implacable hatred against me and the church, so ardently expressed in your blasphemous writings and political machinations against the Church State?

Rivarez No.

Montanelli Why are you then persecuting me?

Rivarez Because you are a priest and the highest representative of the church here where I happen to be. Already Dante elucidated on the impropriety of the church in politics. I and many more and a constantly greater number wish to have the Church State removed as the chief obstacle for the unification of Italy.

Montanelli Is that all?

Rivarez That's all that's relevant.

Montanelli You get the impression from your polemic writings and their direct attacks on me that you have seen me as a red rag to add to the vehemence of your machinations.

Rivarez You stand for the church.

Montanelli Your bitter implacability indicates some unforgivable injustice in a remote past that provided a hot bed for an unquenchable hatred. Am I right?

Rivarez As an atheist I am without a soul your eminence. I am not personal and can therefore never accept a personal God. I am an impersonal instrument of destiny who sees and desires what is right and acts accordingly. That is all.

Montanelli Do you think it's right to smuggle foreign weapons to ignorant bandits who unavoidably will use them to murder innocents?

Rivarez No one representing the absurd Church State is innocent.

Montanelli But with your experience you must be aware of, that violence only begets more violence, and that the first and most victims of any war are innocents, especially women, old people and children?

Rivarez Wasn't it the church herself that launched the rule, that the end justifies the means?

Montanelli We know that you are a murderer although you can't be sentenced here for crimes in other states. At most you could be sentenced for armed resistance, when you were arrested, since your contraband traffic can't be defined or proved. I am willing to overlook your written machinations against the Church State, no matter how much damage they have caused, for the sake of my church, which after

all basically stands for love, humanity and compassion. I am willing to help you in your escape, if you will then just leave me and this country in peace.

Rivarez You are serious, your eminence.

Montanelli Of course I am serious.

Rivarez Spare yourself, your eminence. Don't turn into a criminal's collaborator. How would it look for your eminent position as one of the highest and most respected favourites of the pope and the church? Others could help me escape. Don't worry about that, signor cardinal.

Montanelli Your health is broken. You have no physical strength left. You need help and not just to escape.

Rivarez Why do you want to help me? Is it just to placate your own bad conscience?

Montanelli What have you to do with my conscience?

Rivarez (imitates himself) "Who did you think I was when I disturbed you?"

Montanelli (more than shocked) The pilgrim! You have stolen into me just to the more cruelly be able to mock me! Does then your impertinence have no human limits?

Rivarez Signor cardinal, in love and war everything is allowed.

Montanelli How could *you* speak of love who are making war on all humanity?

Rivarez I have nothing more to say to you.

Montanelli And I have nothing more to say to *you*. We had better break off this conversation. I hope I shall never have to see you again. For the future I can't answer any more for your security, your life or how you are being treated. Signor commandant! (*Police 1 returns*) Bring the prisoner back to his cell. You are right. He is definitely a hopeless case.

Police 1 (takes Rivarez roughly under the arm) Come on now.

Rivarez (rising) Thanks for your offer, signor cardinal, even if it was as hopeless as my own case. (*is taken out*)

Montanelli (lowers his head down over the desk in his arms with his hands clasped)

How could he? How could he? What have I done to him? What could I possibly have done to him?

Scene 4.

Fabrizi How could it fail? What went wrong this time? Does anybody know?

Martini We know exactly. We have friends in there, you know. Everything worked perfectly except himself. He fell at the finishing line.

Riccardo Can we have a complete account?

Martini (lowers his eyes) It was the Cricket who had the watch. He knows everything. The Gadfly got his files, and he filed on his gratings night after night. He succeeded in getting out with his tied sheets, found the gallery and came all the way to the open gate. (*pause*)

Galli Well?

Martini There he passed out and was found unconscious a few hours later.

Riccardo (upset) How is it possible?

Martini The Cricket has told us, that the prisoner is intentionally kept chronically imprisoned without any exercise. He has been kept in handcuffs, that have chafed his wrists to bleeding and led to infections. The cardinal has bandaged him himself and insisted on removal of the handcuffs. But he is still kept without any possibility of exercise and had very little to eat if anything at all. The prison food there is terrible. He must have been extremely weakened for the night of his escape. It's a miracle that he at all managed to file through the eight bars of the gratings and to get as far as to the gate.

Grassini Why is he treated so badly although the cardinal insists on the contrary?

Martini The commandant is the uncle of the soldier whom the Gadfly wounded almost mortally. He will have life damages.

Fabrizi Revenge, that means, base premeditated infernal revenge.

Grassini What do we do now?

Martini We can do nothing before the feast of Corpus Christi. Then we can mobilize considerable numbers of wild bunches to storm the castle and set him free by force.

Fabrizi Rebellion, that is. It will cost blood.

Galli Yes, it will.

Martini Until then we can only hope that the commandant will not get his demand through of a court martial. Only the cardinal stands in his way for that.

Riccardo (cautiously) How is signora Bolla taking it?

Martini (sighs) She sits chronically terror-stricken, passive and benumbed, almost apathetic, doesn't want to eat anything, is pale and emaciated by inexpressible inner pain and sleeplessness.

Galli We'll have to keep still until Corpus Christi and then fire off everything at once.

Riccardo No one was closer to him than she. They have been working close to each other for weeks.

Martini I know. But he never touched her. She has got to know him as little as everybody else. And he is still alive.

Fabrizi Yes, he is still alive.

Scene 5.

Police Your eminence, I must insist on court-martial.

Montanelli It's out of the question.

Police It's a matter of saving lives.

Montanelli Save? For you it's only a matter of executing him!

Police The feast of the Corpus Christi is the greatest festivity of the year up here, then people gather from all of the county, and then anything could happen. We fear an attack on the castle during the worst exuberance of the festivities. In that case, we can't hold the castle, and there must be a number of casualties.

Montanelli You have information from reliable sources that mobs are gathered just to liberate the atheist?

Police Yes.

Montanelli I know how partial you are. Your own nephew was maimed for life by him. Can you swear on the holy cross that it must mean the death of many if he lives until the Corpus Christi?

Police I am a believer, your eminence. I am not an atheist like the Gadfly.

Montanelli (offers him his Rosicrucian cross) Swear then on the holy cross with a binding kiss that you do not with calculation present the matter as worse than it is.

Police (kissing the cross) I swear.

Montanelli Then I believe you. You will have my answer tomorrow. How is the prisoner?

Police He keeps still.

Montanelli What do you mean?

Police After his effort to escape we have made sure that he will not try again.

Montanelli What do you mean? He collapsed in high fever almost mortally ill after a night of superhuman exertions without any physical strength and with his hands swollen of infections, and you mean you need extraordinary measures to keep him still? What have you done to him?

Police Don't worry, your eminence. He lives.

Montanelli Is that all? You keep him alive but nothing more?

Police He has been lying still for five days.

Montanelli (rises) I must see him at once.

Police Let's first make him somewhat presentable.

Montanelli (hard) No! I want to see just now what you have done with him!

(The cardinal insists, and the police must obey somewhat awkwardly.)

Act V scene 1. In the cell.

Rivarez is lying on his bench, when the cardinal, the commandant and a prison guard enter.

Montanelli What have you done to him!

Police (embarrassed) For the sake of security...

Montanelli Liberate him at once!

Police (to the guards) Remove the straps.

Guard (fumbles with the straps) They are too tight.

Montanelli A knife! At once!

Police (to another soldier) Get a knife for his eminence.

Rivarez (wakes) Ah, your eminence. You haven't forgotten me. As I told you: I hardly expected any princely treatment here.

Montanelli This is way over all limits of human decency. *(The soldier brings a knife.*

Montanelli immediately cuts the straps.)

Rivarez Ah, a liberty as good as any! (*massages his wrists and starts slowly and gradually to stretch his limbs*)

Montanelli How long has this been going on?

Police Since the attempted escape.

Montanelli But that's an entire week!

Police We couldn't take any risks...

Montanelli (*immediately sits down by the prisoner*) Signor Rivarez, I had no idea of this. No crimes can justify such an outrageous treatment of a prisoner.

Rivarez Say that again to the commandant.

Montanelli (*hard, to the police*) Get out! I want to speak alone with the prisoner!

Police (*embarrassed, to the soldier and guard*) Come. (*They leave.*)

Rivarez You fail in executing me again and again. I almost thought that the passive mistreatment of me went on with your good memory after my imprudence last time. They have tried to starve me to death with bad food, break my health by lack of exercise, make me give up by chaining me to my bed and constantly tried to get a court-martial against me.

Montanelli I consistently resisted the last. All the other measures I did not know of. If I had known, I would have interfered.

Rivarez You hardly have any power over the soldiers, your eminence?

Montanelli No, I haven't, but this is my own bishopric, and my influence counts when there is reason to apply it.

Rivarez You were almost too late this time. If you wait even longer next time the risk is that you will have more blood on your conscience.

Montanelli What do you mean?

Rivarez Do you imagine that I don't know? The commandant wants me court-martialled at any price and disposed of before Corpus Christi, or else the festivities could lead to uproar and bloodletting for my sake. Only you can prevent his court-martial. You face the dilemma of either allowing the sacrifice of innocents for me, a damned agitator and atheist, or to let me die, just a worthless gadfly. The choice should be simple enough. Do you even have a choice?

Montanelli I am an old man, my son, and just as you say, I face this atrocious dilemma. I think though that the commandant is exaggerating. No one else professes that there will be any kind of uprising on Corpus Christi.

Rivarez But if there will be? Will you then save a malefactor to let the soldiers of your church be sacrificed? What would the pope have to say about that?

Montanelli The dilemma is yours. I refer the issue to you to let you make the decision. Earlier I offered you your life in freedom, and in spite of your unheard of impertinence I can't retract the offer. If you choose to be saved and eventually see others being sacrificed for you, I give you that licence. But try to put yourself in my situation. If you choose to sacrifice yourself, to allow the commandant his court-martial, so that you at least would be a martyr for the cause of your liberty, then you have that choice.

Rivarez You try to make it easy for yourself, your eminence.

Montanelli What do you mean?

Ricarez To avoid having to make that decision yourself, you transport it to me. That is cowardice, your eminence. But that's how Christianity works. Instead of accepting the responsibility yourself for your life, morals and destiny, the Christian takes refuge with his God or Jesus and absconds his responsibility, transferring it to an imaginary higher authority, for which there is not even the slightest trace of any warrant that it at all exists. It is childish, it is pitiable, it is indefensible, and above all it is irresponsible and puerile in its pathetic effort to escape reality. You will not get away, your eminence. You must make the decision about life and death for me and for others entirely by yourself.

Montanelli I can't make such a decision. I am a priest. I am only responsible for souls, not for life and death.

Ricarez And in this case you can't refer the responsibility to God, so instead you refer it to me. Don't you think I have been through this before? Don't you think that I know you? All your ecclesiasticism is just weakness and indecision and disorientation.

Montanelli You speak to me in a strange voice and authority, as if you always had known me. You already did so in church.

Rivarez Your eminence, do you remember long ago, if you were indecisive whether you would go to Rome or not to receive your bishopric? Already then, you tried to transfer the responsibility to me. "Just one word, my son, and I will stay here."

Montanelli (like struck by lightning) It is not true! (*covers his eyes*) Anything but not this! (*rises, terrified, goes to the prison aperture, looks out, stares in terror back at Arthur*) Those blue eyes, your mother's very blue eyes! How could I close my sight to their piercing sharpness, that always penetrated down to the bottom of my soul? How could I fail to recognize you? After all these years! And so totally changed! Everything is irrerecognizable except the eyes – your ways, the jargon, your disfigurement, the conceit, the extensive mask disguising everything, the grotesque attitude, the implacable blasphemous scorn, I only saw the mask, I didn't see you, and still I sensed all the time a human being behind all the distortions, a heart under all the hostile misanthropy, a soul buried alive... You have come back, Arthur. You are alive, my son.

Arthur I only drowned my soul, but it always cost me everything except my life. And finally, when you at last recognize me, even that is almost gone from me...

Montanelli (embraces him) How could such a noble soul fare so ill? I have brooded over that every day and night since then. I could never stop tormenting myself by your case, Arthur. You were my only ideal student. What twisted you to such a contrary in anarchistic bitterness without limits in such an inhuman implacability?

Arthur Your church betrayed me, father. It tricked me into betraying my best friends. It made me a traitor to my own by the most godless treason, when your replacement broke the seal of my confession.

Montanelli Was it Cardi?

Arthur Yes.

Montanelli I remember. It was my fault. I made him do it to save you.

Arthur It cast me down to hell, father. I have been damned since then. There was no one that I put so much faith in as you and the church, for you were the church for me, and you were the best in the world. And by using confessional secrets politically the entire church fell for me, and I could only hold you responsible.

Montanelli My son, this is too much. You are shaking. You are ill. You have been exposed to maltreatment and abuse. None of us can endure this. The shock is too strong for both of us. Let us go to rest and try to recover until tomorrow.

Arthur It's now or never, padre. We only have this moment of eternity. It's the moment of truth. We are facing the possibility to determine our destiny ourselves. We stand at trial here and now. Don't miss the opportunity, father, for our salvation.

Montanelli What do you want?

Arthur You transferred to me the decision to have me dead or alive. The decision is yours, padre. I am in your hands, and your destiny is mine. I present to you my way of escape and offer you the salvation of your soul.

Montanelli What are you talking about?

Arthur My friends will save me. Everything is already planned, and it will be an easy match on the Corpus Christi day. If you give your help and support we could even avoid bloodshed. Come with us and join us in liberty.

Montanelli I am a priest, Arthur. I can't abandon the church.

Arthur Then you must give me over to be court-martialled.

Montanelli No!

Arthur You have to choose. Life or death? Life for both of us or death for both of us? Let go of your church, and life begins new! I will take care of you. We will take care of you. All you need to do is to denounce all your lies and disappear.

Montanelli I will gladly do everything I can to help you escape, but I can't let down the church.

Arthur Then you must relinquish me.

Montanelli Don't torture me, my son! I just got you back, and then you just can't threaten me by disappearing into death again!

Arthur I give you a chance to save yourself from your lies. I can't view Christianity as anything else than just one great universal world deceit. Jesus may have lived and suffered and all that, but his intention was lost from the start by those who established his church, who then established its lies as dogmas, its creed as a schismatic seal on its absurdity, its terror propaganda as mental slavery and its inquisition as a terrorist regime for the extirpation of man's natural right to at least free thinking. Leave it all and become a human being! Acknowledge your son, and don't be as cruel and inhuman as that absurd monster of your superstition who let his only begotten son be sacrificed and crucified!

Montanelli I can't think clearly. I am an old man...

Arthur And we are youth and life! We are the future! You can't defend death against life!

Montanelli My son, you are too radical. There must be a middle way.

Arthur No, there is no middle way! Either you denounce the lie or become its victim with only misfortune for a result!

Montanelli Give me time to think...

Arthur No, father! Now or never! Life or death! Freedom or thralldom! The truth or the lie!

Montanelli (rises staggering) This is to much.

Arthur You are staggering.

Montanelli You say that your liberation already is determined, and that your followers will storm the castle on the day of the Corpus Christi, and that only your execution could prevent it?

Arthur Yes!

Montanelli Then the commandant was right.

Arthur What do you decide?

Montanelli I decide nothing. I have to think it over. You must give me the possibility to find a bloodless middle way.

Arthur Don't you think that I myself have tried to find bloodless compromises? I am at constant war against the lie, father, and that war must be relentless and without compromises. I can't back down from the truth, father. Then I would betray it, like your church betrayed me. I have lost everything except the idealism of my basic uncompromising love of the truth.

Montanelli Spare me, my son. I can't take any more for the moment. (*totters out of the cell*)

Arthur Padre! Padre! (*The cardinal escapes.*)

Don't fail me one more time! (*bursts out crying in despair*)

Scene 2.

Fabrizi The court martial has taken place.

Riccardo With the cardinal's blessing?

Fabrizi The cardinal has locked himself up and is out of communication. The commandant has taken the opportunity to carry out the court-martial on his own.

Lega Then all hope is lost.

Martini When will the execution be?

Fabrizi Tomorrow.

Galli Aren't they somewhat hasty? Court-martial today and execution tomorrow. How long was the trial?

Fabrizi Twenty minutes.

Galli No defence was naturally allowed, and no witnesses except for the prosecution?

Fabrizi Of course.

Martini I still have time to speak with some of the soldiers. There is still hope.

Riccardo And signora Bolla?

Fabrizi We haven't heard the last of the Gadfly yet.

Scene 3. The execution courtyard of the castle.

The soldiers march in with the prisoner. The commandant (police 1) is in command.

Rivarez Remember, signor commandant: no blindfold!

Police 1 Place the prisoner in position! (*Rivarez is placed with his back to the wall. The six soldiers of the squad make ready to fire.*)

Rivarez What a splendid day for an execution!

Police 1 Shut up! Make ready!

Rivarez Take careful aim now! The commandant will be sorry of you miss!

Police 1 The prisoner is quiet! Aim!

Rivarez See you on the other side, boys!

Police 1 Fire!

(All shoot – beside. Rivarez looks around in surprise.)

Rivarez (*finally*) What a miss!

Police (*flushed red*) What is this? Can't you take aim? Are you playing tricks with me, you cowards? Have you been lured?

Rivarez Let me handle it, signor commandant. Obviously you don't have the knack for this sort of thing. Look here, comrades, try it once more. Take up your guns, and let's try it again from the beginning, so that we quickly could get out of the awkwardness of this embarrassing situation...

A priest (*turns up*) Good heavens, I am almost too late. (*hurries up to Rivarez*) It is still not too late, my son! It is never too late to regret your sins... (*lifts his crucifix*)

Rivarez Who has let this clown on stage? You are ruining the performance, clown!

Priest But consider then, my poor friend, what a disastrous thing it would be to die without absolution and the last rites! Mind, that you will meet your maker the next moment, and it's vital that you make ready and are pure enough to meet him...

Rivarez Get out of the way, you poor idiot, so that the soldiers can aim! Or do you wish to share my grave with me?

Police You are in the way, padre.

Priest Good lord! (*crosses himself*)

Rivarez Don't swear like that, padre. That's something you'll do better in church.

Police Get at last that priest out of the way! (*lower*) This is a downright farce!

Rivarez That's what I mean, colonel, so you had better leave it to me. Level now, comrades, be calm and safe, and don't aim at your commandant or the priest but straight at me, so that I at last may die. That's after all the intention, isn't it?

Police This is unacceptable! (*roars*) Fire!

(The six soldiers fire, some miss, others almost hit the target.)

a soldier I can't! (*throws away his gun. Rivarez sinks down. The priest rushes forth.*)

Police Is he dead?

Priest Not quite.

Police But this is unendurable. (*Hard knocks on the gate. A soldier rushes to open.*)

Priest Give yourself a chance for the eternal life, my son. Kiss the cross, and you are saved.

Soldier 2 (on edge) Signor colonel, it's the cardinal!

Police Don't let him in, for all the world!

Soldier 2 Too late.

Montanelli (forces his way in) What is this? Have you forced a court-martial and execution without my permission and authority, colonel?

Police You gave me no choice. You were not accessible, and tomorrow is the Corpus Christi.

Montanelli (ignores him, rushes up to Rivarez) My son! Is he dead?

Priest Not quite yet.

Montanelli Can he be saved? My son! This was the last thing I wanted!

Rivarez (dying, wakes a little) Padre, is your God satisfied now? (*dies*)

Montanelli No! (*breaks down*)

Police Get the cardinal away from here!

Montanelli No! (*wants to embrace Rivarez and gets bloody all over*)

Police Help him away, soldiers!

(*Some of the soldiers hurries to help up the cardinal, who is on the point of collapse, and try to bring him away.*)

Get for God's sake that bloody corpse away from here!

(*Two soldiers remove the body of Rivarez and drops it down an already dug out pit.*)

Now at least there will be no riot tomorrow!

(*Three soldiers have managed to bring out the cardinal with the priest, and the others also vanish, the commandant leaving as the last one, clapping the dust off his hands.*)

Scene 4. In the cathedral.

Montanelli (ascending the pulpit to preach) My friends, for my sermon of the Corpus Christi I have to touch on an event which moved all of us yesterday, when the well known atheist and revolutionary Felice Rivarez was executed without my knowledge after a summary court-martial which was carried out in spite of my protests, which doubtlessly made the Felice Rivarez, well known to all of us, into a martyr for his cause, which bodes ill for the present order and definitely heralds a new one. No one knew who this Felice Rivarez was except me. He was actually an Englishman by the name of Arthur Burton from a well known family of shipbuilders active in Livorno since several decades.

In order to be able to pronounce peace for the martyr's memory, I have to start with making him right. He was right in his political stand against the church, in which he claimed that the church has nothing to do with politics. Already Dante took the same stand. He was right in denouncing all the varieties of the church in the form of established superstition, inquisition and the pretension of infallibility. He was right

in his view that the Church State has no justification for its political existence. He was right...

A member (rising among the audience) The priest is mad!

Montanelli He was right...

Another (in the same way) We don't want to hear this. (*marches out*)

More and more The cardinal is distracted! He must be sick! He has gone crazy!

Montanelli (suddenly clasps his front) My son! My son! Why have you abandoned me!

(*several priests hurry to his side, among them the prison chaplain, help the cardinal away from the pulpit, take care of him and lead him away, his knees fail him, but they get him out...*)

Gemma (to Martini, both at the side of the audience) It has gone far when even the church makes the atheist right.

Martini We have only started, Gemma. (*disappears with Gemma*)

*Orthodox Maundy Thursday in Athens, 15.4.2009,
translated 29.7-3.8.2020.)*

Post Script

Ethel Voynich's one important novel is from 1897 and found its major audience in Russia, where it was made into two films 1955 and 1980, the second 3 hours long. She was an Irishwoman, born in 1864 but moved to England to later move on to New York in 1920 – she died in 1960 at the age of 96. She was married to a Polish revolutionary and associated with the main leading underground activists of her age, one of them being Sidney Reilly, the "ace of spies", who almost succeeded in derailing the Russian revolution and have Lenin disposed of by the assassination attempt 1921 by the Jewess Fanny Kaplan, who made the mistake of starting a discussion with Lenin before shooting him. The novel is historical about the Italian *Risorgimento* period, the revolutionary movement led by Giuseppe Mazzini among others, which later led to the unification of Italy and the dissolution of the Church State. The "Gadfly" was a signature and pseudonym for a brilliant radical pamphleteer, so the story could have some background in reality, which ought to be interesting to research. The small town Brisighella close to the border of Romagna above Faenza is quite real, and we have included a photo of it.

No matter what kind of stand you take to the subject and the story, no matter what you may think of its political arguments, you have to admit that it is a bloody good story that is both extremely dramatic, human, romantic and pathetic. It is important to bear in mind, that Ethel Voynich, the author, was Irish and Catholic, and the main subject of the story is the protagonist's conflict with the church, due to a betrayal of the seal of confession – you couldn't commit a worse crime in the Catholic church as a priest than to break the holy obligation of silence of the confession. This is what the protagonist is subject to, which leads to his lifelong hopeless self-destructive almost suicidal revolutionary activity.

Gothenburg, August 5th, 2020.