



# *Ravenswood*

drama in five acts after Walter Scott

by Christian Lanciai (2001)  
(translated 2020)

*Dramatis personae:*

Lord Allan Ravenswood  
his wife  
Edgar, their son  
a priest  
a presbyter  
lords and nobles of the Church  
Sir William Ashton  
Lady Margaret, his wife  
Lucy, his daughter  
Henry, his son

Old Alice  
Caleb, servant to Edgar  
Marquess of Arundel  
Heir of Blackguard  
Craigengelt, con man  
An innkeeper  
a gravedigger  
a chamber maid

The action is in Scotland around 1700.

Copyright © Christian Lanciai 2001

Act I scene 1.

*Old Ravenswood* My son, I am dying, and it's no fault of mine. You should know...

*Wife* Don't start that again, your eternal rant of revenge and injustice...

*Ravenswood* Just let me then speak out of hell before I die!

*Wife* But it's just repetitions, my dearest. We have heard it before a thousand times...

*Ravenswood* You don't even know what I am going to say.

*Wife* My husband, consider that you are dying! I don't want you to work yourself up to madness and die unblessed in anger and then perhaps never reach any peace even in your grave...

*Ravenswood* Nonsense, old woman! Listen to me, my son. Listen carefully now. I lost the last process, and therefore I exploded by harm, and that's why I am lying here infernally dying! But it's not my fault! It was that villain Ashton, who robbed us of all our property, all your inheritance, our family honour, all our great past! That upstart! That impostor! That trickster! That rotten twister of the law!

*Wife* Don't work yourself up. I told you...

*Ravenswood* Hold your tongue, old whimpering lady! You can complain enough after I am dead! Just let me die in peace first, and then you can go wailing. Edgar learn to know the truth!

*Wife* But he already knows all about it!

*Ravenswood* No, he doesn't. He knows nothing. He doesn't know how that false jesuit Ashton cheated us out of our castle and bribed all our judges and lawyers just because he was greedy of our glory and wealth and jealous of our title and wished to assume it all himself by means of his money, that he had sucked out with the blood of innocent people like mine own!

*Wife* Calm down!

*Ravenswood* No! No I can't and I won't calm down, not until I am dead! Don't try to impede me, wife! You have had license to do so all our lives as long as we were married, but now it's not possible any more, because I am dying, and I wish to be free by death! That bloody William Ashton and his leech of a wife, that devil's witch

Margaret, who runs everything in that family and always kept William under her slipper, is to blame for all the unspeakable misfortunes of our family! He and no one else and the witch behind him! You are the last offspring of our tribe, my son! Only you can restore our family honour by revenge, revenge, and more revenge!

*Edgar* Father! (*wants to get closer to him*)

*Wife* It's over. He is dead.

*Edgar* No, it's never over! (*embracing his dead father*) What a terrible will you leave for me, father, the one and only word of revenge! Such a command is worse than any curse!

*Wife* Forget it, my son. He wasn't sober.

*Edgar* How could I ever forget it? To command me to forget my father's last dying words is to brand them on my front forever! No, mother, my father lives on by me, and I have duties towards him that will be fulfilled, even if it has to cost my life.

*Wife* We have still something left to live on. We are not completely ruined. Let us survive and leave the Ashtons in peace.

*Edgar* You shall live in peace, mother, as long as you live. But the least I can do is to watch the Ashtons and follow their every step and mistake and strike without hesitating if I get the least rightful reason to reckon with them.

*Wife* Yes, my son, watch them, but never let anger govern your hand. You are only safe as long as you are governed by reason alone.

*Edgar* Let us now bury the last baron of Ravenswood, for I fear that title will never be mine.

*Wife* It's yours already.

*Edgar* No, mother. William Ashton has paid the justice of the peace to assume it.

## Scene 2. The funeral at church.

Many noblemen are present with their swords and dressed up solemnly.

Ravenswood's coffin is carried in procession through the church  
towards the priest by the altar.

Then suddenly another priest enters from the back to swiftly advance  
towards the coffin and the presbytery.

*Presbyter* The funeral must be interrupted! This is not legal!

*Priest (by the altar)* Who dares to interrupt a sacred funeral?

*Presbyter* Justice herself! Lord Allan Ravenswood is to be buried according to Scottish law and not English!

*Priest* But in his last days he requested for himself an Anglican funeral.

*Presbyter* But the law says no!

*A lord (steps forth)* Sir William Ashton is behind this. He has asked the justice of peace to stop the funeral for formal reasons.

*Another* Is it Lord Allan or his enemies who are to decide on Lord Allan's funeral? (*draws his sword*)

*Many (draw their swords and advance against the presbyter)* Lord Allan! Lord Allan!

*Presbyter* Yes, I give in, but only to this demonstration of force! And Lord Allan's descendants will one day regret their obstruction of justice here! (*hurries out*)

*Edgar* Proceed with the ceremony, father.

*Priest* This interruption has completely robbed me of my breath. Conflicts in church is the last thing I want to experience. Let's make it brief.

*Edgar (climbs the pulpet and addresses the whole congregation)* Friends and relatives! I call you all as witnesses! You have seen yourselves how Sir William Ashton, after having robbed my father of his title and property, not even has hesitated to try to sabotage the departed's funeral. He has trampled on my father's body! I thank you all for feeling the same harm as I for that offence. Without your swords my father would have been desecrated by the so called justice. I call you all as witnesses and beg you to remember this.

*Most of them* Hear! Hear!

*Edgar* Now you can go on, father. The service was broken to ruin the solemnity of the sorrow but instead to be replaced by the glowing outrage of our hearts. But the poverty and dishonour of our family caused by a corrupted lawyer will never be forgotten but one day rightfully avenged. (*climbs down. The priest opens his book of prayers. Everybody puts his sword away. The ceremony continues.*)

### Scene 3.

*Lucy* The power of beauty is the greatest but also the most confusing,  
but in conflicts and war the only sensible thing is to remain still,  
but a danger is also in the fragrantly tempting beneficial wine,  
and when in company of listeners you had better hold back your words.

There is no song more false than flattering words  
and no seduction more fatal than the shining gold.

If you just manage to keep your eye, your hand and your heart completely clean,  
your life will be calm and safe and relieved of pain.

*Ashton* Here you walk around, philosophising as usual in virgin solitude.  
Well, can you show me at last where that old hag Alice governs?

*Lucy* She lives in solitude in great simplicity in a ramshackle hut but is still  
wiser and more powerful than anyone with influence.

*Ashton* More powerful than me?

*Lucy* Your power is only formal, father, of mundane things, but old Alice can  
look into the future and into the souls of men.

*Ashton* Then she probably cannot see mine, for I have no soul.

*Lucy* You talk nonsense, father. Everyone has a soul and even you.

*Ashton* Can you define it? Can you prove it? Can anyone see it and touch it? Is  
it in the stomach, in the head or in the heart? No coroner expert has ever discovered  
the soul.

*Lucy* If you can't see or feel your own soul, Alice probably will, and then it's about time that you at last get acquainted with her. Here is now her hut.

*Ashton* A disgraceful hovel indeed.

*Alice (comes out)* Lucy Ashton! And Sir William Ashton himself! Yes, I heard voices, but I never thought Sir William himself would come to me.

*Ashton* Old Alice, my daughter has spoken well of you to me and was eager to bring me here.

*Alice* Why?

*Ashton* She wanted me to see how you lived so that I could understand how well your house needed repairs.

*Alice* I haven't complained.

*Ashton* How long have you lived here?

*Alice* I have been living here for sixty years. During most of that time the land belonged to the Ravenswood domain.

*Ashton* Yes. I know. I bought it of him.

*Alice* And you live in Ravenswood's castle.

*Ashton* Yes.

*Alice* And it doesn't give you any second thoughts?

*Ashton* Why should it? I bought the property legally with lands and houses.

*Alice* But the name of the castle is still Ravenswood.

*Ashton* Yes.

*Alice* And there are still living members of that family.

*Ashton* The late last baron of Ravenswood has left one single son, I think.

*Alice* Yes, young Edgar. I nursed him.

*Ashton* Mistress Alice, I would like to help you. You were among the most faithful servants to the Ravenswoods, but during my time here you have been living in misery. Allow me to repair your house.

*Alice* William Ashton, don't push the matter any further.

*Ashton* Are you so ungrateful?

*Alice* I only talk about important matters. You have driven the house of Ravenswood too far into the abyss of desperation, but it is not a tribe to trifle with. Someone could in just one blow take revenge on your entire family.

*Ashton* Are you warning me?

*Alice* Yes. You are hard in your legal justice but as limited as you are hard and can never see that also others can sometimes be right. And if they are denied the right of justice they could take the law into their own hands with means of weapons.

*Ashton* Are you accusing me?

*Alice* No, I am only warning you. Try to reconcile yourself with the Ravenswood family with diplomatic methods. That might be the only way for you to avoid retaliation.

*Ashton (insulted)* For what? For having followed the law?

*Alice* You know what I mean.

*Ashton* No, I don't know what you mean at all.

Alice            You just don't want to know it then. You suppress it.

Ashton          Come, Lucy, I have heard enough.

Alice            You deny your soul and your humanity with it.

Ashton          She is demented.

Alice            I just wanted to warn you.

Ashton          Thanks for a warning I didn't ask for. I will repair your miserable hovel, but you can thank my daughter for that.

Alice            She is a righteous girl and an indispensable treasure in her goodness, for she has a soul, and she is aware of it. But she is a vulnerable vessel.

Ashton          Lucy, let's go.

Lucy             Thanks, old Alice, for receiving us.

Alice            I always receive whoever comes.

Ashton          Goodbye, old Alice. *(leaves and drags Lucy along)*

Lucy             What scared you of her, father?

Ashton          I was not scared of her. She is just a whimsical old hag.

Lucy             But she is wise.

Ashton          To warn me of dangers that don't exist?

Lucy             How do you know they don't exist?

Ashton          Edgar Ravenswood has no cause against me, but I have a case against him.

Lucy             How?

Ashton          He carried through his father's funeral with an Anglican priest spiting the law and with violence!

Lucy             Has then a family no right to decide on funerals of their own members?

Ashton          Not if the law has anything to say against it!

Lucy             I don't understand your intolerance, father.

Ashton          No, because you don't know the law, but it's the same, for I don't understand your old Alice with her weird prophecies of misfortune.

Lucy             She only wishes everyone well.

Ashton          I am not so sure of that.

*(They reach a small pavilion.)*

Lucy             Go on, father, and let me linger here.

Ashton *(jokingly)* To continue your philosophical ponderings or to have a secret meeting with a cavalier?

Lucy             Perhaps both.

Ashton          My daughter, I obey. Just don't stay out in the forest during the night. *(leaves)*

Lucy             Old Alice has been blind for twenty years but still sees longer and better than everyone else. Above all she sees what no one else can see, but my father can't understand or accept that. If he ignores her warnings, then I must take them the more seriously. Here he comes. *(Edgar appears.)*

Edgar            My love!

Lucy             Edgar! Each time I wait for you I doubt in despair that you will come, but every time you take me by surprise again!

*Edgar* I only live for you. I have nothing else.

*Lucy* I at last brought my father to visit old Alice, and I think I can make him positively inclined to you

*Edgar* I think so too. I just fear my own disbelief, that someone shall betray us, a treason behind the curtains, an infidelity somewhere.

*Lucy* As long as you have me we are both safe.

*Edgar* Yes, I almost believe you, for our first meeting was miraculous indeed.

*Lucy* You saved my life.

*Edgar* Perhaps not, but it looked bad when the bull pursued you across the fields and your father tried to get in between as an even better target.

*Lucy* He still talks about your mastershot even today.

*Edgar* I didn't know then who you were. But you were lucky that I am a skilful hunter who always hits his target.

*Lucy* My father still doesn't know who you were.

*Edgar* Let it remain so. The less he knows about me, the better.

*Lucy* But one day you must recognize each other and be reconciled.

*Edgar* That could only happen with your help.

*Lucy* I will do all the best I can.

*Edgar* As long as you are still here in this country for me to love, I will stay, even if it will accelerate the destruction of my family. I have nothing to live for in Scotland except you. If you were not here, I would at once go on a ship to the continent and join the French service.

*Lucy* I see it as my life's sacred mission to accomplish a lasting reconciliation between our families.

*Edgar* You guide me in life like the lighthouse in the night makes a ship find the right way.

*Lucy* I think we can succeed with everything.

*Edgar* As long as you think so I am with you.

*Lucy* My love! Now I must leave. Same time, same place next time?

*Edgar* If nothing happens.

*Lucy* Next time I will bring you and father really close to each other.

*Edgar* I am yours, Lucy, and I believe in you.

*Lucy* Ditto, ditto!

*Edgar* Farewell! (*leaves*)

*Lucy* A dark cloud hangs on his brow which constantly warns about impending bad weather. If only I could keep it off at a safe distance!

Act II scene 1.

Inside the castle of Wolf's Crag. A greater dining hall with obvious traces of destruction: nothing has been cleaned up after a great devastating party.

*Edgar (enters, distraught, throws himself down by the table, takes a cup, takes a bottle, tries to pour himself a glass, but the bottle is empty.)*

Caleb! Are all the bottles empty? *(No answer.)*

No wine. The direst questions are always left without answers. The only important questions are those which never get an answer. Like this one: what is more important – your duty or your love? Your health and well-being or your duty? To obey your father's last command and his life's last wish or the inner voice of your own heart and conscience? But can revenge ever become a duty? This tears my heart asunder, that I have fallen in love with the daughter of the man who intentionally ruined my entire family. Shall I then love the daughter and at the same time plan a righteous revenge and premeditated murder on the father of my beloved? It doesn't make sense! No matter how I ponder the problem it only gets worse and more complicated. Caleb! Where are you? And why is there no wine?

*Caleb (enters, frightened)* My lord, I haven't had time yet to clean up after your father's funeral party.

*Edgar* You say that as if my father himself was the one who partied the most after his death, but it wasn't his party! It was all his parasites and relatives that devoured the last of what we owned, as if they hadn't ruined us enough already! We are ruined, Caleb, completely bankrupt! And you haven't even any wine left!

*Caleb* We might still find some fragments left in the cellar.

*Edgar* Hurry then, and bring it up! If there is a single bottle left, it's no use saving it!

*Caleb (to himself)* It is all consumed, and the entire family has died out except a last self-destructive remnant. Pity about such a brave and talented young man! *(leaves)*

*(bangings at the gate)*

*Edgar* Is it fate itself coming to my door? Perhaps it's an answer to the question tearing my soul apart. In that case I welcome it. *(goes to open)*

*(Thunder and lightning as he opens to William Ashton.)*

*Ashton* The master of Ravenswood? I am Sir William Ashton. My daughter and I were suddenly surprised by bad weather when we saw your castle at some distance. May we come in?

*Edgar (opens the gate wide)* Welcome, Sir William. It's an honour to receive you. Unfortunately we don't have much to offer. As you see, our last guests made a clean house and haven't washed up the dishes.

*Ashton* Your father's funeral feast, I presume?

*Edgar* Yes. They finished the last bottle.

*Ashton* May I present my daughter, Lucy Ashton.

*Lucy* But father, we have already met Edgar Ravenswood. Don't you recognize him?

*Ashton* By ny non-existent soul, isn't it our saviour from the raving bull! Now I recognize you! What a happy coincidence that it happened to be you!

*Edgar* I say the same, for that gave me the opportunity to meet your daughter.

*Ashton* I actually thought the master of Ravenswood had already gone abroad, where I heard he had intended to go to make his fortune.

*Edgar* I am prepared to go abroad at any time. Agents at the French court are ready to present me to the king at any time.

*Ashton* I am sure you would make a perfect officer.

*(Meanwhile Caled has returned with a bottle.)*

*Caleb* There was one last bottle left.

*Edgar* That's enough. Let's open it and empty it and drink to the welfare of our families. We need more cheerful tunes here after my father's death. Come in, I pray, and take a seat by the table of leftovers from Allan Ravenswood's funeral feast. The memories are still vivid there by all the empty bottles, but we still have one left to slaughter. Please sit down, make yourselves at home, enjoy the company of all the consumed forgotten drinks, and let us all be merry.

*Ashton* There is a gloom hanging over your festive speech, which is not entirely convincing.

*Lucy* He has just lost and buried his father. You can't expect any genuine joy at such a post mortem mood.

*Ashton* Can you lodge us here for the night? I am afraid that the terrible thunderstorm out there compels us to apply for your protection.

*Edgar* We have rooms enough indeed. What we lack is comfort.

*Ashton* We'll survive well enough. Don't think that we came here to enjoy your non-existent affluence. We are here in more important matters. I have long wished to meet you face to face, Edgar Ravenswood.

*Edgar* Let's hear what's on your mind.

*Ashton* There is an old Christian saying, that you should never let the sun descend on your anger. Are you familiar with it?

*Edgar* Are you angry with me?

*Ashton* No, but you are angry with me.

*Edgar* Why should I be? I don't know you, and I saved yours and your daughter's life just by coincidence.

*Ashton* Neither I nor she has been able to forget it.

*Edgar* What is your point?

*Ashton* I wish to reach a settlement. I know that your father hated me all his life and the more so the longer he lived, because he was compelled by his bad economy to sell Ravenswood to me. He is even known to have cursed me on his death bed, and that curse they say he gave you for an inheritance. Lord Ravenswood, I don't wish to live with an undeserved curse on my head.

*Edgar* And how was it undeserved? By cheating my father of his money all his life?

*Ashton* What was between me and your father is buried with him. That's not the issue here. What concerns us now is what is between you and my daughter.

*Edgar* Has she told you anything?

*Lucy* Edgar, I am the one who desires a reconciliation between our families, and I am behind father's initiative to reach it.

*Ashton* I have reached the conclusion that both our families could only benefit from a union between you and my daughter. Above all our families would be reconciled. I have nothing against it, and my daughter has nothing against it. Do you have anything against it?

*Edgar* This suggestion comes rather suddenly and unexpectedly. Of course I have nothing against it, but shouldn't we take it easy and be careful?

*Ashton* I was just hoping for words of that kind from you. Your family is generally known to anticipate otherwise and rather take the law into your own hands than wait for the slow process of the law. Precisely that has brought your family to misfortune, and it pleases me to hear that you are set on a different course of proceedings.

*Caleb* What about the wine?

*Edgar* Some wine, Sir William?

*Ashton* Yes, why not? (*Caleb serves.*) We actually almost have something to celebrate.

*Edgar* What are we celebrating, Sir William?

*Ashton* Listen to me, my good young lord. I want the best for everyone, and I think I know what is best for all, and that's what I want to do. I want a complete reconciliation. I want to ban all your thoughts of revenge forever. And it's best for yourself that you agree to my proposition.

*Edgar* Why?

*Ashton* Your father did not fulfill his last process.

*Edgar* You mean, that you have still demands on my family after having already bereft us of everything?

*Ashton* I am not saying any more. The process does not have to go any further. Instead of carrying through the process I offer you my daughter, with her own voluntary consent, in an engagement.

*Edgar* So you are exercising extortion to make me accept Lucy in marriage.

*Ashton* How dramatic you are. You insist on seeing everything in the bleakest colours. Extortion. Well, look at it as an extortion but positively. You will be a member of my own house, which was your own and carries your own name, and Lucy and you are like made for each other. I can only see a happy marriage as the only consequence of our intrigue.

*Edgar* You surprise me, Sir William. Here we sit in the wreckage after my father's ruined life, which you brought about, among the ruins of the party which relatives and friends made the most of just to consume the last of what remained of my unhappy family's resources, and then you demand of me by extortion that I should accept your only daughter in marriage and take part of all your property, you recompense my family with an entirely new ship, and this gift you force upon me under threats, that if I don't accept it you will bereave me of the last thing I have left.

*Ashton* You see everything so drastically.

*Edgar* And you see everything so casually that you don't realize the dimensions of what you offer us. You offer me a beautiful wife and a complete redress of my family under the threat of consequences if I decline this incredible offer which, you must excuse me, I find too good to be true.

*Ashton* So the matter is settled. You are engaged.

*Edgar* Are we?

*Lucy* Edgar, father is actually serious about it.

*Edgar* Still I fear some invisible threat under the surface, which maybe not even Sir William is quite aware of. Are you aware, Sir William, that I could any time take a ship to France and there enter the service of the French king? The least deception, and I will vanish.

*Ashton* I knew about this and took it into my calculations but found it worth trying to keep you here for the sake of Lucy, because she loves you.

*Edgar* Her feelings are not unanswered, and she knows it.

*Ashton* So we have not one blot in the protocol.

*Edgar* Still I reserve for myself the right, as a sort of insurance, to at the least sign of any deceit disappear.

*Ashton* We will take this into consideration, well aware of the danger and be the more eager to arrange everything for the best between you and Lucy.

*Lucy (embraces him)* Thank you, father!

*Ashton* You are my only daughter. I could never oppose you in anything. What opened my eyes was that you brought me to old Alice.

*Edgar* Have you been to old Alice?

*Lucy* Yes, I have for years sought her company, for she is wiser than anyone else.

*Edgar* My old nurse! How is she?

*Lucy* As blind and clairvoyant as ever.

*Edgar* I must visit her.

*Lucy* Let's do it together. Father has promised to repair her ramshackle hut.

*Edgar* There seems to be some goodness in you, Sir William, in spite of all the harm you did to my father.

*Ashton* I just wish to settle everything in order. So you accept the engagement?

*Edgar and Lucy (looking at each other)* Yes.

*Ashton* Then it's settled. All we needed was a drop of good old wine, and that was all on your own credit, Lord Edgar.

*Edgar* No, it was old Caleb who fished it up.

*Ashton* It was a good wine anyway, and that's the main thing. Had it been whisky we would already have a party and planned the wedding. That's the best medicine which always helps against everything and most of all against the darkness of the soul: some small potion every day, and you can just sleep well all your life and feel the better for it, for the good and pleasure of everyone around you. I wish you all the best, dearest youths. *(raises his glass)*

*Edgar* Let's then at the same time wish the best for both of our families and a final end to all the tragedies that have been.

*Lucy* Cheers!

*(They drink to each other's health and laugh.)*

*Caleb* There is more.

*Edgar* Save it for tomorrow, Caleb. At the moment it can't get any better than as it is.

*(The mood is the best possible, and they continue keeping up the relaxed good cheer, while Caleb leads the old cook to bring in the dinner.)*

*Caleb* Quickly, Mysie! Now it's time!

*(The dinner is brought in and served.)*

## Scene 2.

*Alice* Twenty years of darkness is nothing to what you have seen during the years. The petty people go like blind and see nothing through life. Sometimes they wake up when they suddenly see their efforts of vanity brusquely result in perfectly logical misfortunes and disasters, which they in their blindness swear themselves innocent of and thus in convulsive obstinacy stick to their blindness and immediately start building up for the preparation of new misfortunes and disasters. Alas, you poor humans, you would all have been wiser if you had been born blind! – But I hear some steps approaching. It's Lucy but this time not in the company of the blindly faltering father. The footsteps of this cavalier are more determined and firm – a man who will not flinch. He can only be a Ravenswood.

*(enter Lucy and Edgar)*

Lucy, do you dare to bring a Ravenswood here?

*Lucy* No one can fool you, old Alice. It's the young lord of Ravenswood himself, whom you nursed when he was a small child.

*Alice* The young master Edgar?

*Edgar* Yes, myself, dear foster-mother.

*Alice (on her guard)* How dare you come here with an Ashton for a company? You can't be a Ravenswood. Let me feel you. *(feels his face)* Yes, it's the hard front almost like of steel and the sharp features of just forwardness. I do recognize these furrows, the deep hollow cheeks and the sharp angle of the cheekbone. You are my nursling, Edgar of Ravenswood, – but how can you stand so close to an Ashton?

*Lucy* That's why we have come here, to reveal to you that we are engaged.

*Alice* Engaged?

*Lucy* Yes, engaged.

*Alice* And you almost sound happy about it, poor guiltless child! You are laughing at your own misfortune!

*Lucy (to Edgar)* Remember that she is old and not completely rational.

*Alice* Answer me, lord of Ravenswood! What are you doing here on your enemy's property and with his own child for a company? I demand an answer of your responsibility!

*Edgar* It is as we have told you.

*Alice* Your ancestors were unreconcilable, but they were honest in their enmity. They never tried by the sneaking deceit of false humility to get at their enemies. What connects you with Lucy Ashton? Just don't tell me it is true that you actually joined in blindness to follow a destiny together.

*Lucy* It's actually true, old Alice. Father has himself confirmed and approved of our immediate engagement.

*Alice (gives up all hope)* Then God help you both!

*Edgar* Old Alice, we came here in the intention and belief that we could bring you some joy by telling our news, but we seem to only have accomplished the opposite.

*Alice* Lucy, leave us. I wish to speak alone with the young lord here.

*Lucy* Yes, Alice. As always, I obey you. (*leaves*)

*Edgar (when Lucy is gone)* What do you mean, foster-mother, by trying to darken our happiness from the beginning?

*Alice* You mean to say that Sir William Ashton himself has approved of the engagement? On what terms?

*Edgar* He has not stated any terms.

*Alice* Out with it! He must have said something! An experienced lawyer does not embark on anything without being certain of getting roundly rewarded by the double.

*Edgar* He said that my father's last process would be cancelled as a final sign of confirmation that our families would be reconciled forever.

*Alice* And you bought it?

*Edgar* What do you mean, mother Alice?

*Alice* Don't you know that your father-in-law to be by manipulating the law and justice system during all your life and your father's has defrauded you of all your property and all that wealth in lands and farmsteads once owned by your family?

*Edgar* Of course I know about it, but I will get it all back and even Lucy herself, perhaps the best wife you could get.

*Alice* Edgar, I am blind, but I have the sight and eyes of the soul, and they can see far more than the human eye, for my ears are no less than extended invisible hypersensitive antennae. I hear everything and see everything by my ears. Your father was so infamously and infernally cheated by William Ashton's slyness, that he died of mortification, grief and anger when he far too late became aware of how it all had been worked out. By his extensive knowledge of the law, William Ashton has bribed judges, wangled and taken over everything by foul play. But Allan Ravenswood did not give up, and when he died the process was not yet completed. You are the one to take it on and carry it to fulfilment to at last expose William

Ashton's manipulations with the law. Letters have been sent to you from the House of Lords which William Ashton has succeeded in putting into his own pocket and which therefore never have reached you.

*Edgar* How does mother Alice know all this?

*Alice* I have ears. Servants have eyes, and they talk. Old Alice hears everything that is essential.

*Edgar* Do you mean that Sir William gives me Lucy as a bribe to make me halt and cancel the process and thus give up my rights?

*Alice* Instead, you become part of his family, his robberies are made legal, you will be a loyal and obedient lackey, and William Ashton will get away with everything he has done.

*Edgar* Mother Alice, this truth is far worse than all the curses my father made.

*Alice* Forgive me, my son, but I had to open your eyes.

*Edgar* Lucy! Poor girl! She knows nothing!

*Alice* What are your plans now?

*Edgar* I have no choice. I have to leave the country, join foreign service and get detached from everything.

*Alice* That sounds sensible, because if you remain here Lucy must become your bride, you will be William Ashton's son-in-law and accomplice, or break your engagement, which would break Lucy's heart, for she loves you.

*Edgar* I know. Above all I must consider the situation of the poor innocent Lucy.

*Alice* Leave the country. Maybe something happens while you are away to motivate your return.

*Edgar* I will keep in touch with everyone by letters.

*Alice* Edgar Ravenswood, you are the last member of your tribe. Do what is right, and your family will survive.

*Edgar* Thanks, mother Alice, for your words. That will be the only thing I will do now as long as I live. But now I must leave at once and arrange my journey. My first duty is the escape from home.

*Alice* Farewell, my son. I will try to make the bed soft for Lucy in your absence.

*Edgar* I know, mother Alice, that you always were the most faithful and loyal servant in the Ravenswood family. Now, hurry on, Edgar, away and run!

*(hurries away)*

*Alice* Poor boy! In all kindness he opened the door to an unknown guest and invited him to stay the night without understanding before it was too late that the guest was dire misfortune and disaster in person.

Scene 3. At the pavilion.

*Lucy* What might Alice have had to tell my lover that was so secret? It must have been terrible things, horrible family secrets no doubt, which could affect family destinies for hundreds of years. Only Alice knows all about such things. But here is Edgar. He seems quite distressed and in a great hurry.

*Edgar (enters, in a hurry)* Lucy? You here?

*Lucy* I have been waiting for you. Have you forgotten that you were to escort me through the forest back to Ravenswood?

*Edgar (to himself)* This is terrible. What shall I do? – Lucy, I am in a great hurry.

*Lucy* Yes, it shows. What have you learned?

*Edgar (can't control himself, rushes forth and grasps her hands)* Lucy, my love, I am lost.

*Lucy* But what has happened?

*Edgar* I have to leave Scotland at once.

*Lucy* But why?

*Edgar* In order not to cause us even greater harm.

*Lucy* But how could you possibly harm us?

*Edgar* Because I am the master of Ravenswood while you are the only daughter of Sir William Ashton.

*Lucy* Is it that old preposterous family feud haunting you again?

*Edgar* I can't explain the details.

*Lucy* But you must go away?

*Edgar* Yes, hopelessly.

*Lucy* And what about our wonderful engagement?

*Edgar* My love, I can't marry you. It was just a wonderful dream that was too good and beautiful and wonderful to be realized.

*Lucy* But what is then the impediment?

*Edgar* I can't explain it.

*Lucy* So you simply leave me here just like that?

*Edgar* Lucy, I am very sorry, but I have no choice.

*Lucy* But you will stay in touch with me? Please write me letters at least!

*Edgar* I can't promise that letters will get through from the war I in that case will be obliged to write from, but I will write to you, whether my letters will reach you or not.

*Lucy* Now I recognize you again. Look here. (*brings out a golden coin which she breaks*) Not our engagement, but the one and only united heart that we were is now broken. I will keep my half and never let it go. The other half is yours. (*gives him half the coin*)

*Edgar* You give me yourself.

*Lucy* Yes, I do.

*Edgar* O generous and divinely generous heart! If only you were free from your own family!

*Lucy* Yours is my only family now forever. I never want to be anything less than a Ravenswood.

*Edgar* Your tenderness and love make a sharp contrast to all the centuries of hatred that burned between our families. My revenge against your father was predestined, but for your sake I was fully prepared to bury it and forget all about it. But no history can be completely counted out and suppressed and least of all any family history. We have often revenged ourselves on the Ashtons when the hour struck to full maturity and the limits of patience and pain were busted, and still the intrigues of the Ashton family have continued to ruin us and wronged us in outrageously gross injustice. Then you enter my life, the only righteous branch of the Ashton tree, to join the last surviving lord of the Ravenswoods in his own ramshackle house. And we can't marry each other, no matter how true and uniquely lovely in its sincerity and truth our love is proven to be.

*Lucy* I don't know what forces you abroad and don't wish to be informed about it either, since it can only be of evil nature. But bide your time, young Ravenswood, as all Ravenswoods always have done, and when the right moment has come it's time for you to return to cleansweep the house of all ghosts and crooks. And until that day you have my word that I shall be here waiting for you. This half broken heart (*holds up the coin*) shall be the lasting and obvious evidence of my endurance.

*Edgar* And I think by my soul that I believe in you. With the same faith I shall stick to my part of our broken heart. And you can rely on, that I shall often write to you, every day even, if my conscience demands it. Even if you don't get my letters they will painfully resound in all the universe.

*Lucy (embracing him)* My love, we belong only to each other and never to another.

*Edgar* I share your faith and trust.

*Lucy (looking at him)* Then we are agreed. I am yours. Only death can break my oath.

*Edgar* I shall live for you and only for you, until I get back.

*Lucy* You will come back.

*Edgar* I will come back.

*Lucy* Only those words can make me accept our divorce. I am nobody and have no soul except that part of me that henceforth shall live in you.

*Edgar* My lovely angel, we will never get through or be finished with this so very mutual love.

*(Suddenly the sound of a bowstring, an arrow whizzes by and hits the tree above them, and a raven is hit and falls down dead to them.)*

*Lucy (cries out)*

*Edgar* What is this? A dead raven! Who dares to shoot down sacred ravens in the Ravenswood forest? (*Henry, Lucy's brother, peeps out from the bushes.*)

*Henry* Sorry to disturb you, but it was too tempting. The raven was sitting so near to you, and I couldn't resist testing my precision of aim.

*Edgar (to Lucy)* Who is this? Do you know him?

*Lucy* My younger brother Henry.

Edgar Don't you know that all ravens are under the protection of the clan of Ravenswood? And you dare to shoot down a raven in front of a Ravenswood's face!

Henry Forgive me. I didn't know who you were.

Lucy How long have you been lurking in the bushes, Henry?

Henry Only for a moment. It was the raven that attracted my interest, not you.

Edgar Well then, Henry Ashton, since you are here you can escort your sister back to Ravenswood, so I don't have to do it.

Henry I don't mind if you do it.

Edgar But I do.

Lucy Edgar Ravenswood is in a hurry.

Henry I understand. Our mother would never accept your relationship anyway.

Lucy What do you mean?

Henry I know what mother thinks. She wants us only to marry upwards, not downwards.

Lucy Is then Ravenswood a step down from the Ashtons?

Henry The Ashtons are rich and want to be richer. The Ravenswoods are poor.

Edgar And are getting poorer.

Lucy But the Ravenswoods are ancient nobility. We are not even petty nobility.

Edgar But your mother is a Douglas.

Lucy Yes, and she never forgets it.

Edgar Farewell, Lucy. I will stick to my word.

Lucy And I will stick to mine.

Edgar That's all I ask for.

Henry (*offering her his arm*) So, sister, to the castle?

Lucy Yes, to the Ravenswood castle. (*They leave.*)

(*When Ravenswood leaves in one direction and Henry and Lucy are heading in the other, Sir William Ashton suddenly enters and meets Edgar surprisingly just as he is leaving.*)

Edgar Sir William!

Ashton I was just hoping to meet you! Splendid! And there is Lucy and Henry! (*questioning*) In different directions?

Edgar I must ask you not to try to stop me, Sir William.

Ashton How very proper then that I arrived just in time to do so! You can't guess who just arrived at the Ravenswood Castle to be my guest – your cousin the Marquess of Arundel!

Edgar (*surprised*) Arundel!

Ashton (*taking him friendly by the shoulder*) We have common political interests, my dear son-in-law to be, and as you well know your cousin the marquess is the leading fighter for your cause and carries the banner for our party. You just have to come and meet him! There couldn't be a more suitable occasion. (*to Lucy and Henry*) Are you also coming, children?

Lucy Of course, father.

*Ashton* Then we shall all go home together as the one happy family we almost are already. (*takes care of them all with fatherly good will and leads them out. Edgar is rather confused.*)

Act III scene 1.

The great hall in Ravenswood. A great congregation of noble people.

*Edgar* What am I doing here in this flashing company of only gaiety and flair? I am worse than an outsider, for I am both lord and even poor, the worst possible combination, and a lover at that, a hopeless, doomed, despairing lover, whose only hope is to get away from his love, which is too good to be true; for all devilish parasites appear to have flocked to it, like moths to the light, and from sheer ignorance weave a spider's web of political intrigue around it, completely unaware of it of course, like all political destruction always is. But I love her, and the more so the more certain I become of never being able to gain her.

*Arundel* My dear cousin, here you are! I really hoped to see you here. Sir William Ashton has discreetly let me know that your families at last are on the course of reconciliation and in the best possible way by means of sacred marriage. Could it be better? You will even have your family's old properties back in that way.

*Edgar* It's too good to be true.

*Arundel* What do you mean, cousin?

*Edgar* Something isn't right. There is an opposition missing in the parliament.

*Arundel* Sir William himself stands whole-heartedly for our party. He welcomes you into his family just to see his family allied with a nobler one than his own. Your initial position couldn't be better, my dear lord Ravenswood.

*Edgar* I know, and that's what frightens me.

*Arundel* Don't you love her? But she is a most amiable and endearing virgin.

*Edgar* We really do love each other.

*Arundel* That settles it. Then it's all clear.

*Edgar* No, it's not.

*Arundel* You are probably just melancholy by nature.

*Edgar* If it only were that simple.

*Ashton* My Marquess of Arundel and my Lord of Ravenswood, you are my two most honoured guests in this house today. You can't imagine how it pleases me to see the two of you here together.

*Edgar* Does it favour your political plans, Sir William? And is your daughter part of your political plans?

*Ashton* My friend, has someone here insulted both you and me by backbiting, since you have suspicions?

*Arundel* He is just melancholy by nature, Sir William.

*Ashton* Melancholy is no sin, but suspicion is.

*Arundel* That's what I mean. (*takes Edgar aside*)

*Ashton (to himself)* Does he suspect anything? Does he know anything? My plans must not be thwarted now! *(a servant wants his attention)* Yes, what is it?

*(The servant whispers. Ashton gets pale and upset.)*

*Ashton* Not now! It must not be true!

*Servant* She is already here.

*Ashton* Too late! Then the crisis cannot be averted.

*(The doors open and lady Ashton enters.)*

*Margaret Ashton* William, how excellently convenient that I would arrive just now! I couldn't have arrived in a better moment!

*Ashton* My wife, I thought you were in London.

*Margaret* I was until I decided to come home.

*Ashton* Why such a hurry to get home?

*Margaret* Because I have some good news which I just couldn't delay a moment with breaking to the world.

*Ashton* What then?

*Margaret* My husband, I have found the best possible party for our daughter.

*Ashton (alarmed)* Who then?

*Margaret* The honourable heir of Blackguard, one of the best parties of Scotland, considering what considerable fortune he will bring into the family in which he marries.

*Ashton* That scoundrel! That impostor! That outrageous snob!

*Margaret* Don't be stupid now, dear. He has money.

*Ashton* My dearest, Lucy is already betrothed to another.

*Margaret* I know. A poor gloomy nobleman without money. And for such a bad party you go and throw away your only daughter. As soon as I heard about it I decided to do something about it.

*Ashton* And that's what you think you have done?

*Margaret* My friend, I always get what I want. You know that.

*Ashton* Does then your daughter's wishes about her marriage mean nothing?

*Margaret* She is just a stupid goose who doesn't know what's best for her. All parents are to decide for their children's marriage. Or else it will only go wrong.

*Ashton* You don't know what you are doing.

*Margaret* I know all too well what I am doing, but you are blind. But there's the noble lord of Ravenswood! How excellent that he is here. Then I can explain to him myself how little his presence is needed here. Lord Edgar Ravenswood!

*Ashton* She is really set on arranging a disaster.

*Edgar* Yes, Mylady?

*Margaret* How very convenient that you are here! You if anyone is engaged in the welfare of our daughter Lucy. I can give you the happy news that her future now is settled and secured by the fact that my husband and I unanimously have decided to accept the proposal by the heir of Blackguard.

*Edgar* I understand, mylady. And the fact that she is already betrothed to another does not concern you as her mother?

*Margaret* Naturally a mother must forbear with her daughter's temporary infatuations. But when it comes to serious business she can never say no.

*Edgar (looks around, watches Sir William who turns down his look, finally turns to Arundel)* My cousin, are you aware of what kind of people you are associating with? *(walks straight out)*

*Ashton (tries to for the sake of appearances to repair the damage)* My wife, it is not very proper to insult our guests.

*Margaret* I haven't insulted anyone. Those who leave without saying goodbye provide the insults.

*Ashton* I can never accept Blackguard for my son-in-law.

*Margaret* Then you act against the future and happiness of your own daughter.

*Ashton* You don't know what you are doing.

*Margaret* On the contrary, my friend. I am saving you in your blindness from walking straight out a precipice.

*Arundel* Madam, you have trampled into sensitive affairs concerning you and your husband.

*Margaret* Not at all. I am only thinking of my daughter's happiness.

*Arundel* Are you sure? Aren't you anticipating her happiness for your own benefit?

*Margaret* Stick to your own affairs, Sir, and don't meddle in our private concerns.

*Arundel* Madam, if you commit a mistake for which your own entire family will suffer, I am not prepared to overlook it. *(leaves)*

*Margaret* What does he mean? Who does he think he is?

*Ashton* The leader of the most important party for the future of Scotland, and that's what he is.

*Margaret* But what does that have to do with our daughter?

*Ashton* He wished to do something good for our family. You might have ruined that chance.

*Margaret* And where is Lucy? Why isn't she here?

*Ashton* She left for her room the moment you showed up. *(leaves)*

*Margaret* Doesn't anyone here understand that we have no other choice but the best for our family?

## Scene 2. A tavern.

*Craigengelt* You ruffian, what intrigues are you up to now?

*Blackguard* Just you wait, and you'll hear the most smashing so far.

*Craigengelt* I am waiting.

*Blackguard* Do you recall our failed effort to enlist Edgar Ravenwood to the French army?

*Craigengelt* Yes, he got second thoughts when he fell in love with some dame.

*Blackguard* Whereupon he discarded us with insulting arrogance. I can never forgive that kind of thing.

*Craigengelt* You take your business too seriously. You can enlist any fools for cannon fodder for the French king and get paid for it, but just because a Ravenswood doesn't walk into the trap it's his fault and not yours.

*Blackguard* The girl he fell in love with was the daughter of Sir William Ashton, the keeper of the seal, one of the leading law-perversers of Scotland.

*Craigengelt* And?

*Blackguard* I ventured an impasse. I guessed that the connection would not be liked by the old lady Ashton, who is born a Douglas, so I let her know one thing and another by way of rumours, so she was properly prepared and would follow my line.

*Craigengelt* And?

*Blackguard* Just passing, I let it reach her ears that I could have some interest in the poor girl Lucy.

*Craigengelt* And?

*Blackguard* You keep repeating yourself. Let me tell the whole story. I also let her understand that I expected a great inheritance.

*Craigengelt* So she swallowed the bait.

*Blackguard* With everything in it. I now have both the ladies at my mercy.

*Craigengelt* Is it for your own sake or just to have a revenge on Ravenswood?

*Blackguard* Both of course. Who can refuse the Ashton properties, which they cheated out of the generous house of Ravenswood?

*(Enter Arundel who takes a seat by another table.)*

*Craigengelt* So you have the mother on your side. Well, what about the bride and her father? What if they say no?

*Blackguard* They can't say no if the mother says yes. She is a Douglas.

*Craigengelt* I doubt the enterprise, my fellow.

*Blackguard* Shall we make a bet?

*Craigengelt* If you don't get her I will have all my debts cancelled.

*Blackguard* And what if I get her? What will you then pay me with? You are as poor as the church rat Ravenswood.

*Craigengelt* Something tells me that you will not have her and that something will go wrong.

*Blackguard* I will have her all right, you can be sure. I don't care what happens after the wedding as long as I get her dowry. The rest means nothing. Her love and feelings she may keep, as long as I get her money. *(They continue discussing when suddenly Ravenswood enters.)*

*Arundel* Cousin! I have been waiting for you!

*Edgar* Pardon my late arrival. I met some ghosts on the way.

*Arundel* Alive or dead?

*Edgar* Both. Old Alice, my nurse as a child, has died, and I had to arrange her funeral.

*Arundel* I am sorry.

*Edgar* She was just an old blind and useless woman, the oldest servant of the Ravenswoods, who the new proprietor of Ravenswood allowed to live in misery in a shackle falling apart, which finally buried her alive. Sir William promised to repair it for her, but he is a man who gladly gives promises but rarely keeps them.

*Arundel* Forget Lucy, Edgar.

*Edgar* How could I?

*Arundel* She may be a rare pearl in her family, but the entire rest of that family is rotten. Forget her and carry on your process against them instead. You have everything to gain from that. I will back you up.

*Edgar* It would break her heart, if I coldly ventured a process against her corrupt father. I know how corrupt he is. I have his fate in my hands, but for her sake I cannot touch him.

*Arundel* Leave it then to me instead. I am actually the head of the clan.

*Edgar* No, cousin, I am. I am the only Ravenswood alive, and therefore I am the head of the clan.

*Arundel* But you have no resources. I have everything. I am like an uncle to you. Trust me.

*Edgar* No, cousin, no one has anyone to trust in life except himself. If you put your trust in others you lose yourself. Leave my destiny to me, and let me spare the fate of Lucy and her family on my own responsibility.

*Blackguard* But it is he himself. (*rising*) Who dares to take my beloved's sacred name in his mouth?

*Arundel* Who is that absurd fool?

*Edgar* The heir of Blackguard, a dunce.

*Blackguard* Who are you calling a dunce, you preposterous scarecrow?

*Craigengelt* Don't start a fight with him, Buck. He is too noble for you.

*Blackguard* He has insulted me, on my honour!

*Edgar* And how did I succeed in insulting you, who have no honour?

*Blackguard* By taking into your dirty mouth the most sacred name I know, namely my becoming bride!

*Edgar (rising slowly)* Is this a nightmare, or am I dreaming wide awake?

*Arundel* Come, cousin. They are just fuddled.

*Blackguard* Fuddled, you swine! What are you then, you false peacock in borrowed feathers?

*Arundel* He just doesn't carry his liquor very well. Let him be.

*Edgar* If you want a duel, come back when you are sober.

*Blackguard* You haughty peasant! Draw your sword and defend yourself, if you aren't yellow!

*Craigengelt* Sharpen your sword, Buck, until you get sober.

*Blackguard* I am sober by the devil!

*Craigengelt* Yes, even the devil would believe it.

*Arundel (wants to bring out Edgar)* Come now, before it gets worse.

*Gravedigger (enters)* If you desire it, lord Ravenswood, I could also play for you at old Alice's funeral.

*Edgar* Don't think about it, old man. Just bury her.

*Gravedigger* But I assure you that I am good at the violin.

*Blackguard* Go and get buried yourself, you pathetic old fool. We have enough fools around here already.

*Gravedigger* Perhaps you would prefer to have me play at *your* funeral?

*Blackguard* I am not dead yet, you nitwit.

*Gravedigger* No, not yet, but you stand in line.

*Blackguard* Who let in that imbecile maniac here into this poultry-house?

*Innkeeper* Give him something to drink and he will be happy.

*Blackguard* Here you are then, you drunkard, for your health!

*(throws the contents of a beer-jug in his face)*

*Gravedigger (wipes his face)* Now I know I will not play at your funeral. Your funeral will be without music, and no one will even play any litany for you, because no one will grieve for you. You will die alone.

*Blackguard* Shut up, damn it, you cursed croaker!

*Gravedigger* I just wanted to play for you at your funeral, but you declined. But everyone will play at Miss Lucy's funeral, for she is first in line, and her dirge will be the most sorrowful.

*Edgar* What are you saying, you poor gravedigger?

*Gravedigger* I wish you no harm, lord Ravenswood, for your grave will never be dug.

*Arundel* The man is a prophet.

*Craigengelt* Come, Buck, let's go.

*Blackguard* What about the duel then?

*Craigengelt* Next time.

*Edgar* I am at your service, mister heir of Blackguard, if you are serious even when you are sober.

*Gravedigger* Sobriety is a sickly condition which fortunately will pass, if you only come to your senses.

*Arundel* That man is wiser than he himself is aware of.

*Blackguard* I will fight you, gentlemen, one at a time! Just form a line, and I will take you all on at once!

*Arundel* Is this man the desired son-in-law of Lady Ashton?

*Craigengelt* That's what he thinks, but I believe there will be some objections.

*Blackguard* Not from Lady Ashton!

*Arundel* The man is balmy. He owns nothing and believes himself to take over the Ashton properties.

*Blackguard* Yes, for I am more clever than the fool Ravenswood, who let go of them!

*Edgar* I have heard enough. Let's leave.

*Gravedigger* It seems as if the house of Ashton will get the son-in-law they deserve.

*Blackguard* And that's me! *(to the gravedigger)* Shut up, you!

*Gravedigger* I believe you will shut your mouth before any gravedigger.  
*Arundel* That man is the wisest man in Scotland.  
*Gravedigger* Thank you, Sir. I will gladly play on your funeral.  
*Arundel* Thank you, but it is not needed at the moment.  
*Gravedigger* Postpone it as long as you can but not any longer.  
*Graigengelt* You are finished, Buck.  
*Blackguard* Nonsense! I haven't even started!  
*Craigengelt* Come now! (*succeeds in finally getting him out and follows him*)  
*Arundel* That's the end of today's entertainment.  
*Edgar* If that man marries Lucy he will be her death.  
*Arundel* No risk, cousin. Only lady Ashton wants him, and she hasn't even met him yet.  
*Edgar* Then I hope she will see him before the wedding.  
*Arundel* Do you still want to marry her?  
*Edgar* You mean Lucy?  
*Arundel* Yes.  
*Edgar* Something tells me, that Lucy will outgeneral everyone including myself.  
*Arundel* You love her.  
*Edgar* Yes, and it will be the misfortune of all of us. (*to the gravedigger*) Would you play on our wedding, gravedigger?  
*Gravedigger* I usually play only at funerals.  
*Edgar* Our wedding will be better than any funeral. You are invited as a guest of honour, my friend.  
*Gravedigger* It's not always a gravedigger is invited for a wedding. I thank you for the honour.  
*Edgar* Don't forget it. Come, cousin, let's go. (*leaves with Arundel*)  
*Gravedigger* There you see how useful you are. In the end everyone wants you, for no one wants to dig his own grave, although that's what everyone is doing all his life.  
*Innkeeper* Here you are, my friend. (*offers him a drink*)  
*Gravedigger* Another must thank you. We are colleagues, you and I, for we are the most indispensable of all: the gravedigger and the bartender.  
*Innkeeper* And we always remain when everyone else has gone home.  
*Gravedigger* Yes, since someone has to clean up after all the bodies.  
*(They drink together.)*

### Scene 3.

*Ashton* But Margaret, you can't be serious.  
*Margaret* The matter is settled, and there is nothing to discuss.  
*Ashton* You can't do this to me. Can't you see that you are implementing my destruction?

*Margaret* The destruction comes from Ravenswood. You should never have had anything to do with that family. All evil comes from there, and you not only take over their properties but even invite that last spawn of vermin to be Lucy's husband, so that he the more thoroughly could revenge himself on our entire family. What are you really thinking of, William? You were lucky that I returned home in time to save you and the family.

*Ashton* You don't understand anything. The Marquess of Arundel is Ravenswood's cousin, and his party is now ruling Scotland. After your humiliation of Ravenswood I am no longer worth a rotten apple in the eyes of the marquess. He will drop me like a damaged potato, I will lose my position and employment, all thanks to your short-sightedness.

*Margaret* I know more than you. Ravenswood is on his way abroad. He will stay away long enough for us to choose a worthy husband for our daughter in peace and quiet. Ravenswood will probably never come back any more.

*Ashton* But he and our daughter were such a faithful couple, and they loved each other. Everything indicates that they still do and intend to remain faithful. I have had a letter from him in which he ensures us of his good wishes for Lucy, to whom he now formally proposes.

*Margaret* I also had a letter from him, which I have answered.

*Ashton* What have you written?

*Margaret* I have tried to take him out of all his delusions by explaining that there is nothing for him to get here and that Lucy will have a husband who is worthy of her. Also Lucy had a letter from him. It's finished now. She will get no more.

*Ashton* Will you keep her watched and isolated?

*Margaret* Of course.

*Ashton* What do you think she will think about that?

*Margaret* She doesn't need to know.

*Ashton* Don't you think she will understand what we do to her?

*Margaret* I am glad that you finally are saying 'we'! That means that you agree to our plan. It is all up to us how we handle this business. Lucy will obey her parents.

*Ashton* I hope you are right.

*Margaret* I am always right.

#### Act IV scene 1.

*Lucy* Loneliness is the mother of virtue, I was always lonesome, but I was never more lonely than in the company of these people, who only consider me a piece of merchandise to arbitrarily make sales with. My lover is gone and sends no word, but I fear that my guards intercept all my mail and also make certain that nothing I write will reach any addressee. I warned my Edgar against writing to me and tried to hint at my situation of hopeless restriction, but I fear it only added fuel

to the tender flame of his noble love. But here comes the superior force. I just hope there will be no more talk about suitors and marriage again.

*(Enter Ashton and lady Margaret.)*

*Ashton* My daughter, you have a visitor.

*Lucy* Is it that Blackguard idiot again?

*Margaret* He is a faithful and sincere man who only wishes you well.

*Lucy* I thank you. Doesn't he know that I am engaged since of old?

*Margaret* Alas, my daughter, how many times do we have to go through all that again? Ravenswood has forgotten you, and he has another flame now when he enjoys life to a maximum in France.

*Lucy* How do you know this for certain?

*Margaret* Trustworthy witnesses have confirmed his indulgences as a rake.

*Lucy* What trustworthy witnesses? Drunks and braggarts like Blackguard himself and Craigengelt, his intimate drinking companion?

*Ashton* Don't take that attitude to your mother. The good Blackguard is now here to woo you for serious. It would be wise of you to be on good standing with him.

*Lucy* I will be on good standing with him.

*Ashton* Good girl.

*Margaret* Or else she would be no daughter of ours. She knows well to do the right thing, or else she would not be *my* daughter.

*Ashton* Shall we let in the eager and faithful suitor?

*Margaret* I think Lucy is prepared well enough.

*Ashton (to a servant)* Show the good Blackguard in.

*Lucy (to herself)* Even if he would be the best in the world and among suitors the most prudent, he would still be like a flea in comparison with my lover.

*Margaret* What was that, my daughter?

*Lucy* Nothing.

*Margaret* Look to it now that you honour your family by greeting this unbeatable suitor positively. We can't afford to have a game with such high bets botched.

*Lucy* Least of all if I am the wages.

*Margaret* Exactly, my daughter.

*Ashton (enters with Blackguard)* Welcome, my dearest friend! My daughter has been waiting for you with some eagerness.

*Blackguard* Not as eagerly as I have longed for her.

*Ashton* Yes, I leave you two turtle-doves alone in your intimacy. I presume you have some private concerns together to discuss. *(leaves)*

*Margaret* Since my daughter is rather young and inexperienced, I hope, Mr Blackguard, that you excuse me that I remain for her sake according to her own wish?

*Blackguard* We have no secrets, do we, Lucy?

*Lucy* The word is yours, Mr Blackguard. I just listen.

*Margaret* You must provide an answer, though.

*Lucy* Only to questions.  
*Margaret* Of course.  
*Lucy* And I suppose Mr Blackguard has only one single question?  
*Blackguard* The most important of all.  
*Lucy* We are waiting with excitement.  
*Blackguard* Well, Miss Lucy Ashton, I wish to marry you.  
*Lucy* That was no question.  
*Blackguard* That was no answer.  
*Lucy* I will answer as I please.  
*Margaret* Please be somewhat obliging to your suitor, Lucy. He only makes some effort at some courtesy.  
*Lucy* You can't just take me and deliver me to the altar as some kind of merchandise, Mr Blackguard.  
*Blackguard* What else do you want?  
*Lucy* Love, for instance.  
*Blackguard* Love will come later.  
*Margaret* Mr Blackguard has presented his question, Lucy, and you must answer.  
*Lucy* Isn't my answer already well known to the entire world?  
*Margaret (to Blackguard)* So her answer is yes.  
*Lucy* No, mother, I haven't answered yes. But all Scotland knows that I am engaged to Lord Edgar Ravenswood. As long as he lives, and as long as I live, there is no other love for me.  
*Margaret (coldly)* All the world knows that the ruined profligate Ravenswood is more than eager in indulging in wanton women abroad and has already broken a number of new engagements there.  
*Blackguard* Ravenswood will never come back, Miss Lucy. He has forgotten you.  
*Lucy* How do you know?  
*Blackguard* Has he ever written a single letter to you?  
*Lucy* He knows that if he writes the letters will never reach me but be intercepted on the way.  
*Blackguard* Who has given you such a fancy?  
*Lucy* I know it.  
*Margaret* You speak against better knowledge, my daughter.  
*Blackguard* And haven't you yourself written countless letters to him which he has just ignored and left unanswered?  
*Margaret* She writes to him almost every day.  
*Blackguard* There you are.  
*Lucy* I fear that my letters don't get through.  
*Blackguard* And why wouldn't they get through?  
*Lucy* I fear they are being intercepted on the way.  
*Margaret* But you are paranoid, my daughter.  
*Lucy* I am afraid that I am not.

*Margaret* So it's settled then. From now on we will start preparing the wedding festivities.

*Blackguard* I knew that she would say yes! There is no better match in all Scotland than me!

*Margaret* We are well aware of that, and we are grateful for your generous offer, especially now as my husband no longer is the Keeper of the Seal of Scotland.

*Blackguard* What do you mean, madam? Has he lost his job?

*Margaret* Only temporarily.

*Blackguard* I hope so indeed.

*Margaret (rising)* It brings me great joy that we have reached such a mutual and congenial understanding, which my daughter is especially happy about. We are very grateful, Sir.

*Blackguard* I just hope I didn't go too far.

*Margaret* No risk, or is there, Lucy?

*Lucy* Not yet.

*Margaret (to Lucy)* That pleases me. *(to Blackguard)* There you are. She is content. Shall we leave? I am sure Lucy has much to consider.

*Blackguard (rising)* Then it only remains to go through some details with Sir William.

*Margaret* I am sure you will reach an agreement. *(shows the way out)* After you, my becoming son-in-law.

*Blackguard* See you, Lucy. *(leaves)*

*Lucy (alone)* And you don't know what is expecting you, if you enforce your will. But I know what is expecting me. The only thing I have in life now is lamentations and nightmares day and night, until Edgar returns, if he ever does return. Or else I am dead.

## Scene 2.

*Edgar* One year without a word with only formal letters that undoubtedly were dictated by her mother. Have they put her in a nunnery? My love, if only I had a sign that you at all had received or read at least one of my hundreds of letters! But there is only silence or formalism. It is inhuman. I must return home, for this uncertainty is unendurable. Perhaps she is already given away in marriage to that Blackguard knave, but then I should have had some notice of it. I fear a suffering worse than death. I seem to feel her slowly languish in a virgin cage with all her freedom cut off by cruel parents, who only think of their own advantage and couldn't care less about their daughter's life. But I don't know if that is just my own imagination or if my terrible misgivings could be true. I must have a clearance. It's just to go back home, and may the whole world with my career just go to blazes!

Scene 3.

*Ashton* We must make her come to a decision.

*Margaret* Calm down, William. Time is working for us. In just a few days, time has run out for her respite.

*Ashton* But she refuses to give up that miserable Ravenswood! She clings to him as if he were the only man in the world!

*Margaret* She must wake up to the reality one day that there are other men than he.

*Ashton* And that witch you employed to cure her pthisis only made her health and matters worse!

*Margaret* Be grateful for that. It was a part in the strategy to break her resistance, and the drugs of that hag were more than efficient. After that I could make her agree to anything.

*Ashton* What agreement did you make her accept?

*Margaret* Her argument was always that she impossibly could break her engagement with Ravenswood without his consent. Well, I gave her a respite. If Ravenswood never gave a word for an answer to all her letters before the day of St. Jude, she would agree to the contract. She is probably already rather convinced of Ravenswood's infidelity.

*Ashton* Do you still have Ravenswood's letters?

*Margaret* Not one of them. I destroyed them all immediately after the first perusal.

*Ashton* It's almost dishonest.

*Margaret* Nothing that is done for the best of the family can be dishonest. You should know that as an experienced lawyer.

*Ashton* We must go through with the marriage. Or else I am ruined.

*Margaret* I know, but the important thing is to not let the bridegroom know until after the wedding.

*Ashton* As soon as the contract is signed we are on the safe side.

*Margaret* Here he is now, our beloved son-in-law. Welcome, dearest Blackguard!

*Blackguard* I came to visit my bride. How is she?

*Margaret* She is a bit indisposed but will be sure to have recovered tomorrow.

*Blackguard* Has she recovered from her severe illness?

*Margaret* Yes, thanks to the old wise Ailsie Gourlay and her heavy drugs, our daughter has survived her difficult crisis of the nerves.

*Ashton* But it was Ailsie's drugs that broke her down and wrecked her.

*Margaret* Quiet, William. That was another matter. Hard illnesses demand hard medicines, and Ailsie did what she had to do until you kicked her out. That is why our daughter's recovery has been delayed.

*Blackguard* I just hope she will be well for the wedding.

*Margaret* For her wedding she will be standing on her legs. We warrant that.

*Blackguard* And what about the troublesome process against Ravenswood?

*Margaret* If only his cousin the Marquess of Arundel hadn't brought it up again, Ravenswood could have become our son-in-law. Now when revenge on us is the only thing he can think of it is impossible. It is certainly that process that has brought down Lucy to despair.

*Blackguard* I hope there is nothing to it that that process would ruin you, Sir William.

*Margaret* Of course not. You shouldn't listen to vague rumours.

*Blackguard* Such as that Ravenswood has engaged another abroad?

*Margaret* That's no vague rumour. Everyone is talking about it.

*Blackguard* Another rumour says he is on his way here.

*Ashton* Impossible.

*Blackguard* I hope so. ( *rubs his hands*) Well, then all we have left are the formalities. When can we sign the marriage contract?

*Margaret* On the day of St. Jude.

*Blackguard* That is in four days.

*Margaret* Everything will be cleared until then.

*Blackguard* Also the bride?

*Margaret* She especially.

*Blackguard* That's good. The sooner we get it over with, the better. If Ravenswood is on his way here we have to have all the papers ready before he turns up and embarks on new processes and scandals.

*Ashton* My view exactly.

*Margaret* It pleases me that we are all agreed. Thereby our security is perfect.

*Blackguard* Just remember, that I must have a living bride and not a ghost. Or else there will be no deal.

*Margaret* Of course, dearest son-in-law. We will keep you informed. But there is hardly any need for you to see her before the wedding.

*Blackguard* I trust that you keep your word and have all the papers in order.

*Margaret* Of course. You may go now. (*Blackguard bows and leaves.*)

*Ashton* I am sure we'll make it, old girl. A few days more, and his assets will be ours.

*Margaret* And both Lucy and we will be rid of Ravenswood.

*Ashton* Everything will be resolved thanks to your wisdom.

*Margaret* Thanks, my friend.

#### Act V scene 1.

*Lucy* Dress me up for a bride, but do it carefully, for I might break. These Brussels laces in this blinding satin of whiteness is like an armour of ice on my heart, which feels as if I would never more be free of it, as a more poisonous and lethal mantle than the Nessus cloak that was given to Hercules. I am already dead, for I am celebrating my wedding but not with the one I love and was honestly engaged with, but with a base opportunist procurer.

*Maid* You have never been more beautiful, Miss. The frosty paleness of your cheeks rhyme perfectly with the virgin purity of your whiteness.

*Lucy* I feel like a snow queen without a heart in a living coffin.

*Margaret (enters)* Aren't you ready yet? The contract must be signed before nine o'clock!

*Lucy* Mother is in a hurry about my execution.

*Margaret* Just see to it that you get ready. The bridegroom is waiting and hasn't got the whole day.

*Maid* You shouldn't rush a wedding, madam. The bridegroom will wait while the bride must have time to get ready.

*Margaret* It's bad luck to wait with decisive life events till after nine in the morning!

*Lucy* Is mother superstitious?

*Margaret* I just follow good old advice.

*Maid* You seem somewhat nervous, madam, as if you were the bride.

*Margaret* I am just impatient. We all waited long for this day.

*Maid* There. Now everything is ready.

*Lucy* Mother, I am ready for your broad-axe. You can let in the guests.

*Margaret* That pleases me, my daughter. So far you have done well.

*(claps her hands)* Let in the priest and the guests!

*(Sir William Ashton comes first with the priest, followed by the bridegroom, Craigenfelt and other guests.)*

*Priest* This wedding was long postponed, Sir William.

*Ashton* All to please the bride. Her whims have put bees in our bonnets far too long.

*Priest* Is the argument with Ravenswood over?

*Ashton* The process has been going on for generations and will be carried on as long as there is any Ravenswood left.

*Priest* They say the last one is abroad.

*Ashton* Yes, he is at war somewhere and is not likely to return.

*Priest* You must understand, Sir William, that since a wedding is a sacred ceremony I must be very careful about everything being carried out in perfect order. If I have understood the matter correctly, the engagement between your daughter and Ravenswood was never broken.

*Margaret (intervenes)* It was broken long ago by Ravenswood's engagement to others abroad.

*Priest* Do you have proof of that?

*Margaret* Every Scotsman who has gone abroad and heard about Ravenswood has spoken of it.

*Priest* So. I thought all the rumours came from you.

*Blackguard* What are we waiting for? The bride is ready, and the documents are just waiting to be signed.

*Margaret (to Lucy)* Here is your great moment, Lucy.



*Blackguard (takes up the pen, dips it and gives it to Lucy)* There, my girl, sign it properly now.

*Henry (while Lucy enforced and quavering signs)* I am glad it never became that revenging angel Ravenswood, sister. Aren't you also?

*Ashton* Quiet, Henry! She is concentrating!

*Blackguard* Just one more signature, Lucy, and it's all done with, so that we then can celebrate our wedding.

*Lucy (holds the pen in the air)* I can't! I can't!

*Margaret (hurries to her side, guides Lucy's hand with the pen to the document)* This is the last thing you have to do. Then you are free from us.

*Edgar('s voice outside)* Let me in! Don't try to stop me!

*Lucy (without having signed)* He is here! He is here! *(drops the pen)*

*(The door flies open and Ravenswood enters. He goes straight up to the document table to examine the signatures and Lucy in mortal silence. He comes directly from a long and hard journey in a red hat and cloak, armed with a sword and two pistols, with his hair dishevelled and makes a rather wild impression.)*

*Margaret (breaks the silence)* By what right do you break in and disturb a family's most private concerns?

*Henry* This is my concern, mother, to deal with. Since his offensive intrusion is a *fait accompli* I must ask him to follow me to a certain place where we can make a satisfactory settlement.

*Blackguard* If anyone here has any right to feel offended by this intrusion it's me. *Craigengelt*, get me my sword, at once!

*Ashton* I am sorry, but you are all second hands in this. This man has during all my life caused my family trouble and misfortunes. If anyone has any right to deal with him, it's me.

*Henry* No, father. You are too old. Leave it to me.

*Blackguard* Let us all take him on one by one!

*Craigengelt* Me too!

*Priest* Calm down! Let's hear what he has to say for his defence.

*Edgar* Patience, gentlemen! One at a time! I will gladly accept your challenges, one after the other in due order, since you all seem equally fed up and indifferent to life as I am. To me it's the same if you murder me or if I take all your lives. I have here a more important issue to present.

*Ashton* Gentlemen, calm down! Sheathe your swords! Let us speak sensibly as fullgrown men!

*Blackguard* May the devil take me if I don't immediately pierce the heart of that chronic disturber of peace once and for all!

*Craigengelt* And I am his second.

*Henry* Father, we can't have him here in the house. He must get out at once. Let me cut short the process with him.

*Priest* This is a holy service, and we are gathered here today to in sacred devotion commit ourselves to a holy sacrament. Where do all these swords, these

angry looks, these flashing lightnings of hatred and all this volcanic lack of self control come from? This was supposed to be a wedding! Down with all your weapons at once!

*Henry* No one must violate my sister's wedding! (*rushes at Edgar with his sword. Blackguard stops him.*)

*Blackguard* Stop! Fair play if I may! I was first!

*Edgar* Quiet! There is time for everything, and I accept all duels at once, but later! First we must conclude this meeting. (*turns to Lucy and produces a letter from his pocket*) Is this by your hand, Lucy Ashton? (*shows it to her*)

*Lucy (faltering, weak)* Yes.

*Edgar* Judge me later! (*holds up the letter in sight of all*) This is a sacred love letter in which Lucy Ashton warrants her fidelity to me as long as she lives. I promised her the same fidelity and have not broken it. And now, Lucy Ashton, (*shows her the marriage contract with the signatures*) is also this by your hand?

*Lucy (can't answer)*

*Ashton* If you wish to present documentary evidence of impediment of marriage, I must ask you to present it to court and not here so ruthlessly in front of my daughter.

*Edgar* Am I not here in my fullest rights? Have I no right to demand a clear answer of the one I have loved? Murder me if you want, all of you here and now, but first I must demand an answer! And only one person has the right to give it, and that's the one I loved faithfully until her marriage. But the bridegroom was not I. Now I want to know whom she has chosen for her bridegroom.

*(All hesitate. None dare speak.)*

*Priest (breaks the silence)* The Lord of Ravenswood is in his fullest rights. He has been abroad for more than a year and not had any information about what has been going on here. So let's then hear from Miss Lucy's own lips, that she dutifully has chosen to obey her parents when they chose a husband for her in the absence of the master of Ravenswood. Let him speak alone with Miss Lucy to have all misunderstandings dispersed and she gets the opportunity to in peace and quiet give a clear answer how she irrevocably has chosen to relinquish him on the ground of his processing against her father and therefore instead followed her father's and mother's will. It's not more than fair.

*Margaret* Never! My daughter is according to the marriage contract an already betrothed bride and shall never before the wedding speak alone with any other alien man! All propriety and convention forbids it! I have no fear of this wild warrior's weapons and will stay as a parting wall between him and my daughter whatever he may say to that with whatever means he may choose.

*Priest* Then stay, my lady, but let for God's sake these two have a talk with each other! I will also stay if you please, and they will probably have no objection against the presence of an ordained clergyman.

*Edgar* Then stay, father, and be our witness to our settlement, and you may also stay, lady Ashton, in the capacity of the mother of the bride. But may all others withdraw from here, so that Lucy at last may speak freely with me.

*Henry (accepts)* We will settle later, Edgar Ravenswood. (*sheathes his sword*)

*Edgar* Whenever you please.

*Blackguard* Our settlement will follow.

*Edgar* Whenever you want.

*Ashton* Lord Ravenswood, I once opened my house to you and placed everything in it at your disposal including my only daughter. You answered with ingratitude, by a process that caused me harm, and by abandoning my daughter by going abroad. All this damage you have now crowned by this shameful behaviour of intruding in the middle of my daughter's marriage with weapons and threats and a humiliation that never can be healed. None of us deserved this. I would ask you to come with me to my room, so that we could talk the whole situation over face to face, and you would then be brought to understand the importance of leaving my daughter, her life and her future in peace.

*Edgar* Tomorrow, Sir William. I stand at everyone's disposal tomorrow. This day I must first be allowed to devote to my own life.

(*Sir William leaves. When he has left, Edgar bars the door behind him.*)

*Edgar* There. Now we are undisturbed. Do you still know me, Lucy? I am still the same, the Ravenswood that for your sake refrained from my justified revenge on your father and his family, who with fraud and deception bereft my father and his family of everything he owned of any worth. I am not responsible for the process which my cousin the marquess of Arundel has started in my name against your father, since I have been abroad and never had anything to do with it. He wanted me to relinquish you for the sake of the process and the honour of my family, but I refused. To get some distance to all this I went abroad, but I never got detached from you and never will, unless you by your own will declare yourself belonging to another man.

*Margaret* Your venomous language is too clear to make any misunderstanding possible. The self-evidence of that my daughter here stands in front of her family's implacable and only enemy is too obvious for her to be able to answer.

*Edgar* I didn't speak to you, lady Ashton, but I am talking only with your daughter and will accept no other answer than from her own mouth. She is a human being who has the right to answer for herself, or hasn't she? Well, Lucy, I am waiting for your answer. As the one which you engaged yourself in this holy engagement with (*produces a necklace from under the collar with the medallion with the half coin*) I have the right to know, if you relinquished this engagement by your own will to undertake another.

*Lucy (incapable of speaking for herself by shock and numbness)* It was my mother...

*Margaret* She speaks the truth. It was I who by reasonable human and legal reasons broke your engagement since it was not suitable for my daughter's or my

family's future, health and welfare. And I had support for my arbitrary course of action from the Bible itself. Read the text, father.

*Priest (opens his Bible)* "If a woman promises herself to a man while a virgin and in her father's house, and the promise comes to the knowledge of her father and he does not object, then the promise has legal force. But if the promise comes to the father's knowledge and he has objections, then her promise is not valid."

*Margaret* God has given you Lucy's answer, lord Ravenswood.

*Edgar* And is it then your serious intention, Lucy, to break your faith and promise and deny your own free will to submit to biblical outdated paragraph stickling to use it for an excuse to scrap the one who loved you?

*Margaret* Listen to him! He dares to make blasphemies!

*Priest (crosses himself)* May God forgive the desecrator!

*Edgar* Don't listen to them, Lucy. It is I who am speaking to you, I, who sacrificed everything for my fidelity to you, who buried my family's honour and glory for your sake, who forsook all my friends who advised me to refrain from my connection with you, and who now has returned to you to hear from your own mouth that you submitted to your family's demand that you use my confidence in you to break and pierce my heart forever.

*Margaret* His melodrama goes too far. Lord Ravenswood, you see for yourself that Lucy is quite incapable of answering you. She has long been ill and to bed for six months under a severe diet of hard medicines which has weakened her to such a degree, that she is more vulnerable than an orchid in winter; and in this situation you enter to assail her with your sharply upsetting emotional spears which you enjoy torturing her heart with. But as she cannot answer in her state of shock in your distressing presence, I must beg to speak for her. You have the answer in your hand. You have the letter in which she by her own hand asks you to break her engagement with you. In addition you also have the marriage contract which she has signed herself with Mr Blackguard. What more do you need for an answer?

*Edgar (examines the document; to the priest:)* And was it without deceit and coercion that this marriage contract was signed?

*Priest* My son, I was myself a witness to that she signed it by her own hand.

*Edgar (watches Lucy)* To hold your silence is to agree. You don't seem to have any objections, Lucy, to what your mother has said. And the signed document is irrefutable evidence. Let me then waste no more of your time. *(tears off his medallion; hard, to Lucy:)* Here is my oath of fidelity broken and returned. You are released from my promises. Marry whatever pimp and robber you please, and I hope you will be more faithful to him than you were to me. May I also ask you to return your half of our oath of fidelity.

*Margaret* Allow me. *(goes to Lucy, cuts of her necklace and gives the half coin to Edgar)* For once I am happy to be at your service.

*Edgar* My lady, it should then please you that all relationship between the souls of me and your daughter is now broken forever. Your constantly more obvious part in this divorce makes me wish, that your evil wishes and even more evil actions

may be your last intrigues against your daughter's future and happiness. If anyone has broken her it is you. And to you, Miss Lucy, I have nothing more to say than that I shall pray to God that you because of your intentional faithlessness and premeditated perjury will not be the object for the whole world of contempt and scorn.

*Margaret* You have shot your last arrow of poison against my daughter's heart and here in our house against our entire family. There is nothing else for you to do here.

*Edgar* I know. I give up Ravenswood and my name and myself forever. (*leaves*)  
(*When he unbolts the door to open it, they are all standing outside: Blackguard, Henry, Sir William, Craigenfelt, and others.*)

*Blackguard* Well, you bastard, when shall we have our duel?

*Henry* Don't forget that I was first!

*Ashton* (*enters, appraises the situation, exchanges eyes with his wife, and at last sees his daughter.*) What I see is a human battlefield.

*Margaret* Lord Ravenswood is finished here.

*Ashton* I sincerely hope so.

*Blackguard* Time and place, lord Ravenswood!

*Edgar* Marry your trollop first, and see if you survive it!

*Henry* Here and now, lord Ravenswood, for this additional insult to my sister!

*Edgar* No one has insulted your sister except your entire infamous family and especially her monstrous weasel of a mother.

*Priest* Lord Edgar, it will only get worse the longer you stay.

*Edgar* Is it my fault that I get detained on the way?

*Gravedigger* (*appears suddenly*) Remember, that I was invited to play at your wedding.

*Edgar* (*gives a short laugh*) Of course, that was the one missing thing! Welcome! Play for the dead! They are all wandering on the path of death but are too blind to notice it and are only grateful and carry on as long as it securely leads them down to perdition! Bring forth your fiddle and play them all into death and down their graves, and then cover them all with earth and dust so that no one of them in their voluntary blindness and madness will ever rise again from the dead!

*Priest* Now he is gone mad.

*Ashton* (*concerning the gravedigger*) Drive that beggar out of here!

*Lucy* No, he is welcome. This is my wedding, and I have the right to decide what guests I wish to have. If I may not choose my bridegroom I must insist on my right to choose gravedigger. Come, dearest gravedigger, and play for me! You buried old Alice, I know that, the wisest person who lived in our domain, and you shall be thanked for that. That was the only benefaction anyone of our family did towards the oldest servant in the house of Ravenswood.

*Gravedigger* I played indeed for her as well, I tell you.

*Lucy* Yes, I am sure.

*Margaret* Lucy, this is a solemn wedding and not a spectacle of fools.

*Lucy* If my wedding doesn't please you, you may leave.

*Margaret* (*shocked*) Lucy!

*Ashton* She will recover. She is just overstrained.  
*Margaret* We must get her to bed. Where is that Ailsie who gave her beneficial drugs?  
*Ashton* Have you forgotten? I drove her away when she almost poisoned our daughter to death.  
*Margaret* It was not my fault.  
*Ashton* That I saved Lucy's life, or that I drove out Ailsie?  
*Craigengelt* If you survive all the other duels, I will be next.  
*Edgar* And if all the others fall? Would you like to join them in their fall, you arch clown, or do you wish to survive?  
*Blackguard* He dares to be presumptuous as well!  
*Priest* This is going wrong! This is going all wrong!  
*(The gravedigger has started playing for Lucy, who piously sits and listens.)*  
*Margaret* Drive out Ravenswood! Get that devil out of our house!  
*Lucy* Our house, mother? Didn't we steal it from Ravenswood?  
*Ashton* What are you saying, you slut? How dare you?  
*Margaret* She is not well.  
*Gravedigger* I will play her back to her health. She was dead but starts awakening now.  
*Henry* We might as well settle here and now, lord Ravenswood. *(draws his sword)*  
*Edgar* As you wish. Here you will even have an audience in the bargain.  
*(They fight)*  
*Ashton* Stop it! Stop it!  
*Priest* This goes beyond my authority. I am gone.  
*Ashton* Thanks for your contributions, father, but they were not quite enough.  
*Priest* I did my best, but the preparations were all your own. Now harvest the fruits of what you have brought forth in your own house. *(succeeds in stealing away)*  
*Henry* There is no priest to give us the last ointment.  
*Edgar* All authorities vanish when they are needed.  
*Lucy* Play some more, gravedigger! Play us all into the dance of death! Make us feel that we are alive at least once before we die! *(gets up and starts dancing to the gravedigger's fiddle)*  
*Margaret* Lucy!  
*Ashton* Nothing can stop her now. It's after all her own wedding.  
*Margaret* It was not intended to go like this.  
*Ashton* Still no one else is responsible for the occasion except yourself.  
*Blackguard* Rest a while, Henry, and let me take over!  
*Henry* That's not fair!  
*Blackguard* I don't care! *(attacks Edgar. Henry lays off completely exhausted.)*  
*Edgar* Craigengelt, make ready to take over when Blackguard is finished!  
*Craigengelt* I'll be delighted! *(pulls his sword and attacks Edgar)*  
*Blackguard* No, he is mine! *(kicks out Craigengelt)*  
*Craigengelt* No hurry. We have the whole night.

Edgar            You have the whole eternity in front of you, if you can wait.

Henry            Eternity can wait. First we must get you down to hell. (*attacks him*)

Edgar            Because I loved your sister, Henry, without ever touching or violating her, like all in your family did?

Lucy (*dances*)    Edgar, our wedding will be on the other side of the grave!

Edgar            I am looking forward to it!

Henry            He is too well practised. He is too difficult. We can't manage him.

Blackguard      Rest, young man. Leave him to me.

Lucy              Save him for me, Edgar. He is my bridegroom, you know.

Edgar            They are just playing with me. I have not the heart to beat them. Where did you learn to fence, babies? Against sheep in the moors or among girls without kilts?

Craigengelt     He is just pulling our legs. It's time to settle the matter. (*attacks Edgar*)

Lucy              Come, Blackguard, and dance with me! Remember, it is our wedding.

Edgar            The bride is calling for her bridegroom. You had better obey her, Buck. I give you leave in the meantime.

Craigengelt     I can manage him alone.

Blackguard (*to the parents, when he sees her dancing*) Is she quite well?

Ashton            There is something wrong with her, but I don't know what.

Margaret        Try to get her to bed. Then she will get normal again.

Lucy              Edgar, they want to see me in bed with my bridegroom!

Edgar            You decide, since you are the bride.

Lucy              No, my mother decides for me, for she decided everything that touches my life. She even decided my words to you in the only letter they allowed to get through to you, and now she commands me to go to bed with my bridegroom.

Edgar (*starts understanding*) My God!

Ashton (*is getting scared*) This is getting less and less a place for us, Margaret. Let's abandon this battlefield before there is an accident.

Margaret        Are you afraid, William, of the consequences of your course of action?

Lucy              Dance with me, bridegroom!

Blackguard      Anything to please you, Lucy. (*dances with her*)

Lucy              How do you want your bed, bridegroom?

Blackguard      Soft and cosy and filled with making love.

Lucy              You will get even more than you ask for.

Craigengelt     Take over, Henry. I can't go on any more.

Edgar            Before you challenged me you should have considered that I was at the battle of Blenheim.

Ashton (*grows pale*) The greatest battle of the duke of Marlborough!

Edgar            But it's too late to back out now. (*attacks Henry*)

Lucy              How do you find your wedding waltz, my noble husband?

Blackguard      You are softer than an angel.

Lucy              It will get even better for you in bed.

Ashton            I don't recognize our daughter, Margaret.

*Margaret* Neither do I.

*Lucy* How many wenches have you had, Buck?

*Blackguard* I don't know. Some number.

*Lucy* But you are my first one.

*Blackguard* I am looking forward to it.

*Lucy* But I think I know how it feels like.

*Blackguard* Do you?

*Lucy* Yes, for I actually already felt it.

*Blackguard* But you are a virgin.

*Lucy* That's what I mean. Virgins are more sensitive than cold hardened veterans. Do you want to know how I feel it?

*Blackguard* You make me curious.

*Lucy* Be my guest. *(sticks a dagger into his lower parts and pulls it up through his belly. The music stops at once.)*

*Blackguard (lets go of her, bleeding like a cribble)* She has murdered me!

*Henry* Sister! *(breaks off fighting and hurries to Lucy)*

*Lucy (laughing hysterically)* He asked for it! He asked for it!

*Edgar* Lucy! *(rushes forth to assist her)*

*Ashton (examines Blackguard)* She has cut through his entire abdomen. He can't survive.

*Blackguard* That witch! She cheated me!

*Henry* It was my knife, and it was well sharpened.

*Edgar (embraces Lucy)* Lucy, how are you?

*Lucy (giggles)* I finally got my bridegroom, but it was the wrong man, for he was only good for the contrary of what he was intended for.

*Craigengelt (hurries to help)* Buck! What has she done to you!

*Blackguard* That witch has destroyed me!

*Edgar (to the parents)* Behold your life's work!

*Lucy* It was not their fault. They did not know what they were doing. They just thought that they would get their bridegroom's money.

*Blackguard* My money? I have no money.

*Ashton* Weren't you the heir of Blackguard?

*Blackguard* An empty title. I was looking forward to the acquisition of all Ravenswood.

*Margaret* Since you are dying anyway, my noble son-in-law, you might as well know, that my husband is ruined by the process of the Marquess of Arundel against us in the name of his cousin Ravenswood.

*Blackguard* You have cheated me!

*Ashton* No, poor fellow, we have all cheated ourselves.

*Edgar (tries to comfort Lucy)* Lucy! Lucy! It's over now!

*Lucy* No, it's not over. It's now it begins. It's only over for my part now.

*Edgar* What are you saying?

*Lucy* They poisoned me, Edgar. They gradually poisoned me by their hatred against you. When their poison wasn't enough to kill my love, they employed the drug mixer Aislie, who was given free hands to poison me for real, until I became weak enough not to be able to make any resistance any more. And then I was married to the most appropriate bridegroom in the world, a ridiculous deceiver, who could fool everyone by his charm. But I knew him as a becoming bride and paid him for the innocence of his vanity. Now I have paid my debt and can get out of here. Tell me, Edgar, was I true to you or not?

*Edgar* My love, everything can still be all right.

*Lucy* After this? After a premeditated murder of my bridegroom?

*Craigengelt* He is dead.

*Ashton* Then close his eyes.

*Lucy* And I will follow him, for I can't take any more. You sacrificed everything for me, Edgar, but I succeeded in sacrificing even more. (*dies*)

*Edgar (with Lucy in his arms)* No, Lucy, no, come back! No! (*bursts out crying*)

*Ashton* Behold your life's work, my consort. Was it worth all the trouble? Are you satisfied now? Were you really always right?

*Henry* Sister! Sister! (*cries by his sister*)

*Craigengelt* On my honour, this was a most exceptional wedding.

*Gravedigger* I knew I would get some work to do here, but I didn't know who was to die.

*Edgar (collects himself, turns to the parents)* Her highest ambition was to have our families reconciled by our love. She died for that mission. Sir William, are you prepared to pardon me?

*Ashton* Pardon you for what, my son? For our own misdeeds?

*Edgar* Henry? Craigengelt? I still owe you satisfaction for your honour.

*Henry* Forget it. Sorrow has completely shattered us.

*Craigengelt* We already have two funerals too many.

*Edgar* Then there is only one matter left. Your hands, gentlemen.

(*offers his hand. Henry accepts it first.*)

*Henry* Never again any strife between our families, lord Ravenswood, and this house we leave in your hands. Isn't it so, father?

*Ashton* Your relative the Marquess of Arundel has actually arranged it that way.

*Edgar* Your hand, Sir William. (*Sir William accepts it.*) Remain residents here with your family as my administrators. I will now go abroad again, for there is nothing more for me to do here but to grieve for my beloved.

*Margaret* Lord Ravenswood, our hearts are as shattered as yours.

*Edgar* Then we at last have something in common, lady Ashton. Your hand, madam. (*She accepts it.*) Craigengelt, will you follow me abroad?

*Craigengelt* Why not? I always followed Blackguard on his fake missions. Now I have no one left to follow but maybe you.

*Edgar* Then we are all reconciled in Lucy's name, as she would have wished, but she never imagined nor did we that it would go thus far that she would give her

life for it. How childish and petty is not all human strife and violence in comparison with the seriousness of true love! If only we could all learn something from it, as we now learned the hard way to tread the road of atonement. Come, my friends. Now it's time to indulge in grieving.

*Ashton* Margaret, you waged your only daughter and lost the whole game. Never gamble with any human life again.

*Margaret* My heart is bleeding, and it is my curse, that it unlike Lucy's can't that easily bleed to death.

*Ashton* Live then with your curse and learn from it.

*Edgar* Come, let's go. Gravedigger, your task will be to cover the bodies.

*Gravedigger* And make them ready for the funeral.

*Craigengelt* The music had a sudden and tragic end.

*Gravedigger* No, my friend. The music never stops. I will play again at the next funeral.

*Craigengelt* You mean wedding?

*Gravedigger* It's the same thing. They both add up equally. There is no difference.

*(exeunt)*

(Ladakh-Dharamsala, August 2001,  
translated January 2020)