

The Life and Death of the Countess Bathory
Sample: Act 1

1.1

1 *[Enter Elizabeth Bathory]*

Elizabeth

2 You potent Winds, Rejoice, attend on me,
 3 And grant my steps conclude in Victory.
 4 The Line of *Bathory's* an oaken Pillar,
 5 Supplied with boundless value from the Earth:
 6 This interwoven Totem's Fruit, but for
 7 A Blossom, might have born a Crown, she may
 8 Have gripp'd a Sword and heralded an Army
 9 Against th'Invasive *Turks*, or held the State
 10 In Awe of the Resplendence of her Reign.
 11 But for a Blossom, might that Fruit bear Fruit.
 12 Yet with that Blossom, she is jamm'd in Store,
 13 This Fruit is bruised for Ambition, squeez'd and gash'd
 14 But for her Nature's Diminution,
 15 For splendid Beauty gifted by her God,
 16 (Th'inviting Pillar that supports her Trophy)
 17 This Fruit is press'd and tread upon to yield
 18 The Vintage of her low Obedience
 19 To wooden Hearts that yield their Kindnesses
 20 As ready as the temper'd Steel yields Mercy.
 21 The Tree is judg'd upon the Fruit it bears,
 22 Then let mine Acts condemn my Forebears Fiends.
 23 My Cunning is denied upon my Sex,
 24 Then let that Sex my Cunning now marry:
 25 My Beauty is esteem'd a thing of Weakness,
 26 Then let that Weakness crush mine Enemies:
 27 My Greatness is eclips'd by th' Marriage Bed,
 28 Then let this Marriage be the Instrument
 29 By which my many Virtues terminate
 30 In mine apothecic Ecstasies.
 31 *Nadasdy*, noble Knight of *Hungary*
 32 Hath bargain'd for this Bride, but I shall wield
 33 My youthful Pulchritude as poachers heft
 34 Their Skewers, pierce the very Heart
 35 Of *Hungary*: th' Poison of my Grace
 36 Will branch as brackish Estuaries out
 37 Into the hungry far Extremities
 38 O'th' Nation, drinking of my gleaming cold
 39 Sov'reignty, and smiling as they perish
 40 Alike the sickly, palid, ancient fools,

41 With Gratitude upon their Lips: Amen.
 42 The prince *Ferenc*, a noble youth, hath won
 43 My Coffers with his Name, and now I'll win
 44 His green Affections as a Huntress wins
 45 The Dear: a stalk, a sudden shot, and Fall.

46 [*A wedding procession with Elizabeth, Ferenc Nadasy, the Priest, George Thurzo, and*
 47 *the King's Emissary, attended by Anna Darvolya, Helena Jo, and Kate and the other*
 48 *servants.*]

Nadasd

49 I thank thee Father for here wedding us,
 50 That I tonight might have her bedded thus.
 51 We here commend our gracious Guests, who see
 52 My merry wedding weeds now melt
 53 As candied Rivers 'neath a Turkish Sun,
 54 Revealing underneath a Knight's Regard:
 55 His poltroon's Pauldrons, giddy Greaves, the plates
 56 That safeguard this delicate shell and all
 57 Its swainish instruments of Locomotion
 58 There underneath, withal it hopes to forge
 59 This humble youth into a Warrior,
 60 For who should dare to pierce the Heart that Love,
 61 What Beast could overpower he whose Gears
 62 Are greas'd with Ardor? arms are bellow'd by
 63 The Fires of's gracious Lady's Eyes? What Fool
 64 Would Fall to any Sword, to any Death,
 65 When knowing such a Love as this awaits?
 66 Not I, my gentle Lords, never *Ferenc*.
 67 My worship Princess, for my Love and Life.

Elizabeth

68 My Lord is kind.

Nadasd

69 My Love is Generous.
 70 Rejoice all! for tomorrow I am gone.
 71 To *Bathory, Nadasdy*, and to Home.

All

72 To *Bathory, Nadasdy*, and to Home!

Nadasd

73 My Lady, we would have a song.

Elizabeth

74 At once.
 75 *Anna*, among thy most slovenly Coven,
 76 Who there is she that holds the pleasing Voice?

Anna

77 'tis *Kate*, good Madam. *Kate*, present yourself
 78 And ply your pleasing pipe for Merriment.

Kate

79 I'm honored, Miss *Anna*.
 80 [song]
 81 *The Fairy Queen did love a Carpenter*
 82 *Though he was mortal poor:*
 83 *The Carpenter did love this Fairy Queen*
 84 *Out of his reach she soar'd.*
 85 *He built a Ladder, sham'd the Clouds*
 86 *That he might sing his love Aloud:*
 87 *Your Majesty you have my Heart Forevermore.*
 88 *The Fairy Queen did love a Carpenter*
 89 *So from her bower leapt:*
 90 *The Carpenter ascended for his Queen,*
 91 *My Love is gone he wept.*
 92 *Each fear'd the other had forgot*
 93 *The Queen fear'd she'd do she knew not:*
 94 *Mine Heart is shatter'd, shall not beat No nevermore.*
 95 *The Fairy Queen did love a Carpenter*
 96 *And of this love she died.*
 97 *The Carpenter there sat upon her Bow'r*
 98 *Awaiting for his Bride.*
 99 *They never met Awake nor'n Dreams*
 100 *But in the Ever After's Extremes*
 101 *We pray they may embrace their Love Forevermore.*

Emissary

102 Young Lord *Ferenc*, *Matthias* highest King
 103 Salutes and offers Sentiment to this
 104 His *David*, that has slain his tens of Thousands,
 105 Repell'd the *Turkish* as the *Philistines*
 106 Were lower'd by that Knight of old.

Nadasd

107 My Friend,
 108 Thy flatteries hath strain'd credulity,
 109 And but our King were any man but he
 110 Whose Bounty is as lib'ral with his Praise
 111 As is the storm cloud with its loving Drops,

112 I might accuseth thee of Affectation.
 113 But as thou art my friend and honor'd Voice
 114 Of he the Highest King *Matthias*, I
 115 Accept Prestige, unknowing of my worth,
 116 Bestow'd as 'tis by wiser men than I.

Emissary

117 Well spoken, honest Count, but leaving these
 118 The flow'rs of Court, I would you knew the Grave
 119 Concern of he your Monarch.

Nadasd

120 Speak it Friend:
 121 You see my beaut'ous Bride there gossips with
 122 Her servants, *Anna* and *Helena Jo*,
 123 This humble knight is thence available.

Emissary

124 You have avail'd yourself before, but 'tis
 125 A puissant Force that waits within the South.

Nadasd

126 I fear it not.

Emissary

127 'tis proper never Knight should fear his Death,
 128 But with this Marriage comes a rich Union,
 129 And's well reported *Bathory* is not
 130 An Ivy clinging to the Buttresses
 131 O'th' high Estate of her Lord, but rather she
 132 More emulates the steely brands of Statesmen,
 133 And runs her House, her people and her Purse
 134 As stoutly as her Table and her Beds.

Nadasd

135 Could I have lov'd a more retiring Lady?

Emissary

136 Your Love, my Lord, is immaterial:
 137 I speak of State, of Rank, of Policy.

Nadasd

138 I prithee Friend reveal thy Thoughts.

Emissary

139 I am indebted Lord,

140 That thou wouldst speak directly. Many Lords,
141 And e'en the King himself is debtor to
142 *Nadasdy's* Wealth, which is Titanic as
143 The Liberality with which he lends.
144 But though God joins you one in Flesh, 'tis known
145 That *Bathory* is not *Nadasdy* in
146 Her Heart.

Nadasd

147 Wilt thou insult her Name?

Emissary

148 Thy wife
149 Is still call'd *Bathory*, a noble name
150 And yet she is thy Wife. There's some would cry
151 She'll force her name upon thee; others claim
152 She's known another's name before.

Nadasd

153 Wilt thou
154 Defame my Wife a wanton Beast?

Emissary

155 I speak
156 Of *Bath'ry's* purse strings, gossip'd to be tighter
157 Than her own Virtue.

Nadasd

158 On our Wedding day!

Servant

159 My Lord, thy Cousin

Nadasd

160 Off thou Swain.

Thurzo

161 Forfend,
162 *Nadasdy*, keep yourself. Bleeds he?

Nadasd

163 Thou Slave,
164 Can'st thou not recognize? nor can'st respect
165 The Office of this Gentleman? that like
166 A snuffling sow in search of slops thou squeal'st
167 At me whilst we would speak of State. Avaunt

168 Into the Cellars, there to wait our Pleasure
169 And thine own Pains.

Servant

170 My lord?

Nadasd

171 Away!

Elizabeth

172 My Prince,
173 What Discord stings our Harmony?

Nadasd

174 Away.

Kate

175 Miss *Anna*, I've fall'n a Tankard.

Anna

176 Thou slattern, begone.

Elizabeth

177 My Love, wouldst thou repel me as a churl?

Nadasd

178 Never.

Elizabeth

179 Thou didst Away this Servant just
180 As thou hath here rebuff'd my Gentleness.

Nadasd

181 I tell you Lady I did not.

Elizabeth

182 My Love,
183 Thou knowest I can be unkind, then why
184 Retreat when I entwine our Loves as one?

Nadasd

185 My Love, that caitiff Swain foreswore thine Heart.

Servant

186 My lord.

Elizabeth

187 And what do common wastrels know of it?
188 My Lord, my Prince, mine Husband, what could others
189 Report of this our Hearts combin'd, that they
190 Should doubt the absolute and Iron nature
191 Of us?

Nadasd

192 The slave shall suffer for his Callumny.

Elizabeth

193 Well do I know this Lord, but let no Envy
194 Disturb the sanctified Felicity
195 Of this our Coupling, no corrupting Stain
196 Nor churlish cry here give false Lie to us.
197 Compose thyself and stand love's Standard Post.

Emissary

198 There speaks a wiser tongue than mine, and beats
199 A kinder Heart than all. My Lady, I
200 Was witness to this Slandering, and beg
201 Your generous forgiveness that I fail'd
202 To speak as passionately on your side
203 As he your noble Count.

Elizabeth

204 Is nothing, Lord.

Emissary

205 And patient bounty. Pray this Bounty will
206 Succeed thine Husband's sorrow'd Absence, Lady.

Elizabeth

207 It shall.

Emissary

208 Receive your blessing of his Majesty.
209 I must away: commend the King's regard
210 To all your honor'd Guests.

Elizabeth

211 I shall, my Lord.

Emissary

212 I fear thee Count, she soon will set her Name
213 Upon the Castle *Csejthe*, name it hers

214 And beggar all of *Hungary* with it.

215 [*Exit Emissary*]

Nadasd

216 You Servants there, take up this Fiend and toss

217 The Tankard in the Dungeon, there to wait

218 A lesson in address unto a Lord.

219 [*Servants exit*]

220 And let us toast again and make us merry.

221 Talk all, rejoice, and gossip of our lives.

Priest

222 The mutt'rings of her willful manning bore

223 Some truth, i'seem. I must report these sights,

224 Lest sinful daughters rise t'unwanted heights.

225 [*Priest Exits*]

Anna

226 *Kate*, sluttish swain, be off to the Chambers with that drunk.

Kate

227 Miss *Anna*.

Anna

228 Be off or be it worse for you.

229 [*Kate exits*]

Elizabeth

230 By's Blood these Ceremonies madden me:

231 To pose and sway and ply my Masks enflames

232 The pizzicato trebles of my Spleen,

233 Crescendoing into cascades, staccato

234 Stabs, throbbing up this Pillar to my Crown,

235 That I can scarcely harken to my fair

236 And shallow niceties, I cannot mark

237 The rad'ance of my superficial Smiles

238 Whilst subjugating these mine inner Subjects

239 Unto the terrors of mine holy Beauty:

240 My Bosom halts like nat'ral Beasts, the lithe

241 And stately trunks supporting me now tremble,

242 But I will never let my Façade falter:

243 A Countess is no Dragon.

244 My Prince is well within my Faculty,

245 Yet brutish power doth inspire Awe
 246 In this young, blushing Frame. I sing a spell
 247 T'ensnare this rough Knight though he practices
 248 A harder truth: to brutalize without
 249 Regard to Courtesy or Consequence,
 250 To crush the Rodent underfoot, to rip
 251 The Rose asunder, to dissemble baldly,
 252 T'inhabit a transported God withal
 253 Is to assume the highest Majesty:
 254 The Lion's Might cannot persist without
 255 The Tiger's Envy, and the Mother's Love
 256 Is but t'expose the flesh and beg the Wolf
 257 To bite. Ah Love, you educate your Wife
 258 For Naught: desirest thou to have me bite?
 259 Wherefor the Father leaves us of a sudden?

Thurzo

260 *Ferenc*, I prithee hold thine house in Order
 261 'til thy lamented departure, and there
 262 Unleash thy Spleen upon the *Turks* and not
 263 Thy dinner Guests.

Elizabeth

264 My Prince but struck
 265 A willful Servant, none of Name, and I
 266 Would offer mine apologies to all
 267 On that foul Swine's behalf: would that he could
 268 Here take the lashings of a Whip before
 269 Us all as ample demonstration of
 270 The penitence we owe unto our Friends.

Thurzo

271 *Elizabeth*, good coz, the *Bathories*
 272 And Thurzos have been intertwin'd of old,
 273 And we as children danc'd and play'd as brother
 274 And sister might: will you rebuff my council
 275 And hazard reputation on the Heart?

Elizabeth

276 You are my Cousin, kin, but not my council.
 277 Guard me, as sweetest brothers must, defend
 278 My name and cherish'd virtue as a friend,
 279 But know my Champion has come, and he
 280 Will council, know, command, and love me whole
 281 That all the other, sweetest loves of Earth,
 282 However ancient, must give place to him.

Nadasd

283 Thou light'st the timbres of mine Heart o Love.
 284 Lord *Thurzo*, all assembl'd, be it known
 285 My Wife, my Countess and my Self enjoys
 286 Mine absolute Authority: As I
 287 Am Sword arm to my King, so she is Word
 288 And Sanction to my Will.

Elizabeth

289 Thy Sanction Prince
 290 Delights mine Ears, but it is Shadow lands
 291 Beneath the brilliant Fires of thy Love.

Thurzo

292 I loveth thee entire, cousin, but
 293 Will yield to brilliant passion's Radiance
 294 And let the noble Sun prefer thy charity.

Nadasd

295 Rejoice. Tomorrow we may die. Rejoice!

296 [*Exeunt manet Elizabeth*]

Elizabeth

297 Tomorrow? nay, this very Instant may
 298 Prove Traitor to our Passion's Instruments.
 299 Heart, petrify, and be as hoary Rock,
 300 Befriended but by silt and sand: I fear
 301 I've won Authority with dearest cost,
 302 For I can feel affection growing toward
 303 That Prince whose Passion makes itself a Nurse
 304 Unto my wild Fantasies. The Dog
 305 That serves its mistress still unknowing
 306 Is worthy of Appreciation,
 307 And so I call these tremors for *Ferenc*.
 308 My lord hath yielded Power unto me,
 309 The Strength to let my Wilderness grow free.

310 [*Exits*]

1.2

311 [*Enter Kate, several from Anna Darvolya and Helena Jo*]

Helena Jo

312 A Table with a chipp'd Tankard's like a songbird with a marred tooth, is't not?

Anna

313 A songbird's tooth, i' sooth? What think'st thou *Kate* of *Helena*'s simile?

Kate

314 Please, what fate for *Johnno*?

Helena Jo

315 Methinks *Nadasdy* will beat him worse, I hear the Count is crueller than the Pard to mean
316 men. He is a fair man, though a poor servant.

Anna

317 He'll live, now answer *Kate* to mad *Helena*'s simile?

Kate

318 I know not, Miss *Anna*.

Anna

319 Here's Wisening past the blush of her Youth: I know naught. Is this another *Socrates*? Or
320 is't another *Augustine*?

Helena Jo

321 I feel't, 'tis Socking.

Anna

322 Withhold your hand *Helena Jo*. We educate with Words, th' opsimathy comes hereafter.
323 Why *Jo*, is this a *Socrates* and not an *August*? I know naught, she quoth, I know naught.
324 What mean you *Kate*, that there is not within your head but naught?

Kate

325 Here's naught within mine Head I am sure, Miss *Anna*.

Anna

326 Thou dissemblest still my Dove, for what is Naught? Is't narry or is't naught'ness?
327 Mean'st thou Nothing's in thine Head?

Kate

328 Aye Madam: nothing's in mine Head.

Helena Jo

329 Aye Madam, such a turtle Dove with such a blush would have great nothing in her Head
330 and Mouth and everywhere.

Kate

331 I've nothing in my mouth Miss *Jo*, i' sooth.

Helena Jo

332 Hah! Hear'st thou *Anna*? She's had great nothing in her Mouth, she swears.

Anna

333 You've hit upon't *Helena*. Dear child, you've answered naught with naught, and still you
334 do dissemble. Is there in fact no thing within your skull, or are your thoughts there
335 occupied by noting?

Kate

336 Noting, Madam?

Helena Jo

337 Confess, the whore confess, then hang her up.

Anna

338 Nay, 'twas but a query: *Socrates* approves, 'twas harshest *Xanthippe* alone who'd quell a
339 query.

Helena Jo

340 Then call me *Xanthippe*.

Anna

341 Peace, *Xanthippe*. Note'st thou, *Kate*?

Kate

342 Note?

Anna

343 Hast thou noted?

Kate

344 Noted what, Madam?

Helena Jo

345 There hear? She notest everywhere, if she hath turn'd from whom to what to we wot not.

Anna

346 Thou note'st not what, dear Child: thou notest whom. Hast thou?

Kate

347 Whom?

Anna

348 Any child. Hast thou noted?

Kate

349 Noted thee?

Helena Jo

350 O she is basest in her wanton beastliness to note an aged Matron. Flay her flesh.

Kate

351 I beg you no.

Anna

352 Know what? Know we what?

Kate

353 I beg you flay me not.

Helena Jo

354 Thou art naught: what other way then to flay thee but naught?

Kate

355 Thou'lt not flay me?

Helena Jo

356 Nay we are pure, there's no naughtiness in our flaying you.

Anna

357 The Child has not learned her letters. She is *Socratic*. She is not naught as old *Augustine*,
358 who did surfeit of naughtiness until rejection, only then to turn away as any prideful
359 pisser turns from his own filth. She is *Socratic*, for old *Plato's* teacher said, *I know that I*
360 *know not but nothing, and thus am wise.*

Helena Jo

361 Then here's a very Dervish: here's a very sage of wiseliness.

Kate

362 Nay Madam, I swear I am a fool.

Helena Jo

363 Nay swear not, thou naughty girl, thou'st had enough misdeeding in thy mouth.

Anna

364 Art *August*, *Kate*?

Kate

365 Nay, I know not *August*.

Helena Jo

366 *August* knew naught but naught, and everything was naught when he was done. So she is
367 too.

Kate

368 I do not understand my ladies Please!

Anna

369 We volley with ourselves. There's little sport in Ignorance. To wit: those who lack the
370 knowledge of their Tongues will die the surest. Ah, but the Lady approacheth. *Kate*,
371 naught is naughtiness, and to note is to pierce as with a sharp note, as the C sharp enters
372 thine orifice most offensively.

Kate

373 Melikes the C sharp note, Miss *Anna*.

Helena Jo

374 There hast, she's noted well.

Anna

375 Enough. What wish, my Lady *Nadasdy*?

376 [*Enter Elizabeth*]

Elizabeth

377 What title's this? for *Anna* who has kept
378 Me from mine infancy.

Anna

379 Thine Infancy
380 Is not so far removed hence, my Lady.

Elizabeth

381 Then call me still *Elizabeth*.

Anna

382 Of course.
383 *Elizabeth*, this maid hath broke a Tankard,
384 And Tables that hath busted Tankards are
385 Alike to Songbirds with a broken tooth.

Elizabeth

386 A coarse comparison, as Songbirds have
387 No teeth.

Anna

388 No teeth, my Lady?

Elizabeth

389 None.

Anna

390 Then so.

Kate

391 Mercy!

Elizabeth

392 Hold *Anna*.

Anna

393 Hold *Elizabeth*?

Elizabeth

394 Mine *Anna*, Miss *Darvolya*, I recall
395 Such brutalism from mine Infant days,
396 Where nice misdeeds incited cuffs from you.
397 Tonight I learn 'twas not thy Love of me
398 And mine eternal soul that so demanded
399 Such discipline, but rather like a dam
400 Ill made, thy body was not built to here
401 Withstand th'injustices of this our world,
402 The False and Fine and infinite Untrue
403 Of this our Earth did press against thy Temples,
404 And so to sieve consuming Flames therein,
405 Thou struck thy loving Charge, *Elizabeth*,
406 For 'twas no other thou could'st lay a Hand
407 Unto except to fear a dire Reprisal.
408 But I am far above that Desperation:
409 The Branch of *Bathory* extends so far
410 Above the mean and petty dirt that I
411 Am free t'extend my Claws where'er the Winds
412 Of my tumult'ous blood might terminate.

Anna

413 Would'st thou strike me, *Elizabeth*?

Elizabeth

414 Never,
415 Mine Husband 'n' you have torn my Blinders off,
416 And shown the fertile meadows of that Earth
417 In forms they would withhold: this World was
418 Not made for us, though we are cast upon't,

419 Then we'll do what we will with it and all
420 Its base inhabitants, the duller Nags
421 That labor for th'enrichment of this foul
422 Entrapment that is *Europe*. They'd be Slaves
423 For th' Sake of Father Sky, then let them suffer
424 As Slaves are meant to suffer, let them cry.

Kate

425 Ah! stay your hand, my Lady.

Elizabeth

426 So fair, this foolish Face: then rend her red.

427 [*She abuses the girl*]

Helena Jo

428 She swoons my Lady.

Elizabeth

429 Awake, thou churlish Coarse, awake I say.

Kate

430 My Lady.

Elizabeth

431 Thou art in my Power.

Kate

432 Yes.

Elizabeth

433 Am I not fair?

Kate

434 Yes, my Lady.

Elizabeth

435 Am I
436 Not full of deepest Majesty?

Kate

437 Thou art,
438 Thou art, my Countess: yes, my Liege.

Elizabeth

439 Then swoon,

440 And let thy bleeding stop itself if thou
441 Art so inclin'd to This.
442 *Anna*, refresh her when she wakes.

Anna

443 My Lady.

Elizabeth

444 Then I must to mine Husband's Bed: I am
445 His Bride tonight. Tomorrow he may die.
446 By's Blood, the pleasures of the Marriage Bed
447 Could never hope to top the Ecstacies
448 That I have tasted in this Dungeon:
449 It is the Power of the feral Jaws
450 Upon the throbbing throat of whelps, it is
451 The Thunder Cloud, it is the Only.

452 [*Elizabeth exits*]

Anna

453 Awake, thou muddled wretch, for I'll not watch
454 For thee. *Helena* lift her other side
455 And we will toss her in their Quarters, there
456 To rest as lazy wantons have their wont.

Helena Jo

457 The Countess, is she well?

Anna

458 She's better still.
459 I shiver 'nd feel the shudder of my Bones
460 Relaying 'neath my years: but she is well.
461 There is no Wisdom valued higher, no
462 Gilt Treasure more rever'd than holy Youth.
463 More sure and greater than the World's Wealth
464 Is that most singular Pearl: to love thyself.

465 [*Exeunt*]

For more, please contact Jared McDaris: jared@jaredmcdaris.com