

# **Standing Her Ground**

## **An Opera in Two Acts**

Libretto and Music by

**Randall Shinn**

Randall Shinn  
2508 Farnell Rd  
Fort Collins, CO 80524-1523  
Ph: 970-416-5965  
[rshinn@randallshinn.com](mailto:rshinn@randallshinn.com)

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

Emma Wingate, 24, niece of Henry Wingate	Mezzo-soprano
Diego De La Rosa, 30, doctor	Tenor
Victor Ralston, 27, outlaw	Baritone
Anna Roberts, 18, Mayor's daughter and Diego's niece	Soprano
Henry Wingate, 57, town marshal	Baritone
Bud Jackson, 50, handyman	Baritone
Frank Roberts, 45, mayor	Baritone
Maria Roberts, 40, Frank's wife and Diego's sister	Soprano
Chorus of townspeople	SATB — The chorus could be as small as four singers, with eight or more preferable.

## ORCHESTRA

2 Flutes  
2 Clarinets in B-flat  
Bassoon  
2 Horns in F  
2 Trumpets in C  
Trombone  
**Strings**  
Violins 1  
Violins 2  
Violas  
Violoncellos  
Double basses

Notes: The orchestration emphasizes the strings. All string sections (except the double bass) divide in two in multiple places in the opera. A suggested minimum number is 43221. String sections of 44332 or larger are welcome.

No gunshot sounds are imitated in the orchestration. There are loud chords at those two places. Whether more realistic sound effects are used is up to the stage director.

String octave harmonics on open strings are notated with the traditional small circle. All other harmonics are notated in tablature that indicates the string in roman numerals (for example, IV) and places a small diamond at the point on the string to be touched.

## ACT ONE

### SCENE ONE

*(A ballroom in a grand hotel in a city in the American West, c. 1900. The city's population has expanded rapidly since the arrival of a train depot and the discovery of silver in the nearby mountains. Onstage are well-dressed, upstanding citizens like merchants, bankers, mine owners, ranchers, and their families. The curtain opens on TOWNSPEOPLE waltzing. The clothing and hairstyles reflect the fashions of the late Gilded Age.)*

*(MAYOR FRANK ROBERTS and his daughter ANNA are dancing together. The Mayor's wife, MARIA, is also among those dancing. The dance ends. Marshal HENRY WINGATE has been watching the dancing. )*

**MAYOR:** Whoa. I'm tuckered out.

Maybe waltzes are for you youngsters, Anna.

**ANNA:** Nonsense, Dad. You did fine.

**MARIA:** Just relax, dear.

**HENRY:** You looked great, Mayor

**MAYOR:** Your turn next, Henry.

*(Maria joins her husband and daughter.)*

*(Diego de la Rosa enters.)*

**HENRY:** Diego, you're just in time.

**DIEGO:** Why is that?

**HENRY:** Because you're young and tireless.

**ANNA:** Uncle Diego, you're such a great dancer.

**DIEGO:** And I'll bet you need a partner.

**ANNA:** Yes, I do.

**MAYOR:** Henry, your niece has arrived.

*(EMMA WINGATE enters. She is a stranger to most people at the gathering, and her fashionable dress draws attention. Henry joins her, and they walk to the mayor and his group.) [Note: Emma is not wearing a gun in this scene or the next. Henry is wearing a gun, but his evening coat conceals it.]*

**MAYOR:** Miss Wingate, welcome.

EMMA: Thank you, Mayor.

HENRY: I think you've met everyone.

EMMA: No, not everyone.

*(Emma steps up to Diego.)*

I'm Emma Wingate, Henry's niece.

DIEGO: I'm Diego de la Rosa. I'm delighted to meet you.

EMMA: Likewise.

HENRY: My apologies, Doctor.

Emily, Diego is the finest doctor I've known.

ANNA: My uncle Diego studied medicine in Scotland.

EMMA: In what city?

DIEGO: Edinburgh.

EMMA: How grand! I read their medical school is one of the finest in the world.

DIEGO: It's one of the schools where medicine is a science.

Where's home for you, Miss Wingate?

EMMA: I grew up in Pittsburgh.

Uncle Henry was a marshal there.

DIEGO: Is this your first trip west?

EMMA: My first trip west of Missouri.

Henry wanted to show me his ranch.

And I love it.

DIEGO: It's a handsome piece of land.

EMMA: His view of the mountains is priceless.

Henry has promised to take me riding there.

HENRY: I look forward to that.

*(Waltz music starts. Several townspeople begin dancing.)*

DIEGO: Miss Wingate, would you like to dance?

EMMA: I'd love to.

*(Diego and Emma join the dancing. They dance well together. In less than a minute, the music is interrupted by the beginning of a different waltz. In a moment of magic realism, the stage action and/or lighting change, and Emma emerges as the stage focus.)*

EMMA: We mask what we feel.

Our bodies are all.  
We are children of Eve,  
dancing after the fall.  
I thrill as we circle  
through turn after turn.  
As we turn together,  
the world starts to blur.

Ah, now is the moment  
when we are the center,  
The world spins around us  
for part of an hour.  
Ah, now is the moment  
when we are the center,  
when Heaven surrounds us,  
and Paradise is ours.

We mask our longings,  
conceal our desires,  
then waltz close together,  
our bodies on fire.  
Our faces hide our secrets,  
conceal what we feel—  
Fierce passionate burnings  
we dare not reveal.

Ah, now is the moment  
when we are the center.  
The world spins around us  
for part of an hour;  
Ah, now is the moment  
When we are the center,  
When Heaven surrounds us,  
And Paradise is ours.

*(The stage focus shifts to Diego, who becomes isolated from the other stage action.)*

**DIEGO:** ¡Dios Mio!  
She's left me dazed!  
What spell has she cast?  
Her smile pierced my heart.

She dazzles like the sun  
as it rises at dawn.  
Her radiance transforms this night.  
Her face aglow, confident, and bold—  
a vision of light.

I stand amazed, ensnared,  
and spellbound.  
If I danced with her again,  
would my eyes betray  
how completely I am charmed?  
I am enthralled!

Stop! Stop being a fool.  
Stop dreaming, dreaming a love  
that cannot be.  
She will soon leave,  
Leave without a thought of me.

Still, there's tonight  
and more dancing.  
More moments of joy.  
Tomorrow is a world away.

Stay in this moment. Stay!  
Stay lost in the light of her flame!  
She'll depart,  
but her spell will remain.

*(Normal stage action resumes as Henry walks over to Diego.)*

**DIEGO:** Your niece dances well.

**HENRY:** She's changed so much.

**DIEGO:** How so?

**HENRY:** Her mother was a social climber.  
Growing up, Emma wanted none of that.  
She was a tomboy.  
Kid sister of Luke and John.  
When I took those boys hunting,  
she would tag along.

When she learned to shoot,  
she amazed us all.  
Damnest gifts with guns I have ever seen.  
By age fourteen, she could beat me in shooting contests.  
She could beat anyone.

**DIEGO:** That's hard to believe.

**HENRY:** Oh, it was great! Men couldn't believe  
a girl might outshoot them.  
We made money betting on her.  
But then word spread,  
and only strangers would bet against her.

Sadly, tragedy struck her family.  
While working in Memphis,  
her brothers died of cholera.  
Her parents grew sick with grief  
and died within a year.  
Emma was willed a good-sized fortune.  
But her parents and brothers were gone.  
Feeling lost, she enrolled at Radcliffe College.

**DIEGO:** A wise choice.

**HENRY:** I suppose.  
I too, needed a change,  
so I moved West.

**DIEGO:** We're glad you did.

**HENRY:** Now, when I see her again,  
she's wearing fancy dresses.

**DIEGO:** And she *loves* to dance.  
She's changed.

**HENRY:** But she still likes to hunt.  
So we still share that in common.  
I've promised to take her hunting,

*VICTOR RALSTON, 28, enters. Dressed stylishly, Victor wears a gun underneath his dress coat. He moves directly to Emma.*

**VICTOR:** Ah, there you are!  
I have found you, my Beauty.  
Once again, I am yours.

EMMA: You! Again?!

VICTOR: Since we met on the train,  
I have longed to see you again.

EMMA: I made it clear on the train—  
Your advances are highly unwelcome.

VICTOR: Your fiery response fueled my desire.  
I had to see you again.

EMMA: My response remains the same.  
I've *zero* interest in you!

VICTOR: Your feelings may change.

EMMA: And you are a fool to think that.

*(Emily turns away from Victor. Anna, curious, moves closer, and Victor notices.)*

VICTOR *(to Anna)*: How are you, Princess?

ANNA: I am well, thank you. Will you join our dance?

VICTOR: Thanks for asking. And why not?  
A million stars grace the sky,  
but *none* compare to the sparks in your eyes.

*(Anna relishes a chance to flirt. Diego starts to move, but Henry stops him.)*

ANNA: I have heard sweet words before, kind sir.  
But, go on, amuse me.  
What do you see in my eyes?

VICTOR: Ah, infinity.  
I see all that has yet to happen  
and all that we dream could be,  
but have not yet dared to seek.

ANNA: Are you seeing your dreams or mine?

VICTOR: Oh, my wondrous, charming angel,  
if you dare tell me your dreams,  
then I may dare tell you mine.

*(Victor reaches for Anna, but Emma intervenes.)*

EMMA: Anna, do not trust this man!

*(Henry moves there quickly. Emma moves Anna over near the mayor.)*

VICTOR *(to Emma)*:

I already know what you dream, my Beauty.

**HENRY:** Sir, what is your purpose here?

**VICTOR:** Evening, Marshal Wingate.

Elsewhere, the night is cold.

But here, ladies burn bright with desire,  
and I wish to bathe in their warmth.

**HENRY:** You look familiar,  
but I don't recall your name.

**VICTOR:** We played cards once.  
My name is Victor.

*(Henry opens his coat to expose his gun. Victor does the same.)*

**HENRY:** Victor Ralston.  
There's a poster of you in my office.  
You're wanted for robbing a train  
and killing a guard.

*(Townspeople move away.)*

**HENRY:** Ralston, drop your gun belt.

**VICTOR:** I think not.  
Why would I obey you?

**HENRY:** I am the law.

**VICTOR:** I follow my own laws.  
Back away, old man.  
If you push me to draw, I promise,  
it will be you who dances with death.

*(They draw. Victor is faster, and he shoots Henry once, then again. Henry collapses. Diego moves quickly to attend to Henry.)*

**TOWNSPEOPLE:** Dear God. Not this.  
Marshal Wingate, is he dead?

**EMMA** *(rushing to Henry's side):* Henry!

*(Victor keeps his gun in his hand, waving it around to keep people away from him.)*

**TOWNSPEOPLE:** How still he lies there.  
We fear the worst.  
Our poor marshal! No, no!  
He is our friend.

**VICTOR** (*to Emma*): We'll meet again, my beauty.  
You are my soul mate.  
We belong together.  
I will return to claim you.  
Fate has tied us together.

(*Gun in hand, Victor slips off into the night.*)

**TOWNSPEOPLE**: Is he dying? Is he dead?  
Will such bloodshed never end?  
Why so quick to draw their guns?

**MARIA** (*to Emma*): Come away, dear.

**EMMA**: No, I'm staying.  
Doctor, you must save him!  
I'm here, Henry, right by your side.

**TOWNSPEOPLE**: Sangre de Cristo. Sangre de hombre.  
Misericordia, misericordia.

(*Henry dies. Diego rises.*)

**EMMA**: No! Why have you stopped?

**TOWNSPEOPLE**: Too late, too late.  
Sangre de Cristo. Sangre de hombre.

**DIEGO**: There was nothing I could do.

**EMMA**: You can't just let him die!

**MAYOR** (*to Emma*): He's already passed.

**EMMA**: No! No!

**MAYOR**: You'll meet again. He's with God.  
He'll greet you in Heaven.

**TOWNSPEOPLE**: Gunshots rang out, then silence.  
Night grows cold upon the mountains.

**EMMA**: His life was torn away.  
Now I'm left alone.  
My uncle gone.

**TOWNSPEOPLE**: Men are born into life here passing,  
God grant Marshal Wingate a life everlasting.

## SCENE 2

*(Night. The interior of Henry's house, which Emily has inherited. She is living there now, unsure what she will do next.)*

*The stage reveals the main room of the ranch house. The moon lights the room softly. Emily emerges from the bedroom carrying a light.)*

**EMMA:** Even my sleep is troubled.  
Henry willed me his ranch,  
and I love it here.  
But at night,  
sometimes my dreams are dark.  
My last dream was dreadful!  
Someone was inside the house!  
I told myself to cry for help.  
But no sound left my mouth.

Calm down.  
It was only a dream.  
It felt so real.  
But it was just a dream.

Calm down.  
I know I am alone.

*(Victor emerges from hiding.)*

**VICTOR:** You are never alone, my beauty.

**EMMA:** My God! No!  
You monster!  
How dare you invade my home?!

**VICTOR:** I will dare anything to see you.  
Your face invades my dreams.

**EMMA:** Leave this house!  
I hate you!

**VICTOR:** I will leave.  
But first, I must plead my case.  
I'm sorry your uncle died.

But I had to defend myself.

**EMMA:** You're lying. You shot to kill.

**VICTOR:** He was fast!

I acted by instinct.

**EMMA:** If I had had my gun,  
you would have died there.

**VICTOR:** Perhaps, perhaps not.  
I once heard your uncle boast  
of your skills with guns.  
When he met your train,  
I knew you were that niece,  
now a grown woman.

**EMMA:** You watched me at the station?!

**VICTOR:** I had to.  
Destiny has plans for us.  
Oh, soon my love.  
Soon we'll be as one.  
With time, your heart will soften,  
and as you forgive me,  
you will be drawn to my arms.

**EMMA:** My God! You cannot believe that.

**VICTOR:** I know we belong together, we two.  
We are meant for each other.  
Inside, we are the same.  
We feel the same fervor.  
We're twins of the restless heart.

**EMMA:** You don't have a heart!

**VICTOR:** Oh, but I do have a heart,  
so full, as I look at you.  
We are as one. We are the same—  
we are both plagued by longing.  
And yearning takes its toll;  
it torments our restless souls.

**EMMA:** Don't touch me!

**VICTOR:** Of course not.  
It's too soon.

But be fair, my love.

EMMA: Be fair?

VICTOR: We are bound by fate!

EMMA: Look into my eyes  
and see my hate!

VICTOR: Look into my heart  
and see my adoring eyes.  
And the arms that would enfold you.

EMMA: You're insane.

VICTOR: I *am* insane.  
Insane with desire for you.  
Is it me you fear,  
or who you are?

EMMA: I fear no one.

VICTOR: Neither do I.

EMMA: You should fear me.

VICTOR: I knew you on sight.  
I love danger,  
and you are beauty and danger.

EMMA: I will be your death!

VICTOR: If you had your gun, my beauty,  
would you shoot me now?

EMMA: You would be dead!

VICTOR: Ah, your fire still smolders,  
and I am the air you need to burn.  
I can make you blaze.  
I'll give you time to mourn.  
But sometimes, I will come near  
and breathe you in.  
(*He inhales near her.*)  
Ah!

EMMA (*sarled*): God! No! Leave here now!

VICTOR: I will leave for the moment.  
But I will return for you.

You know I can make you blaze like the sun.

*(Victor exits.)*

*(Emma finds the key, locks the door, and slides a bolt closed.)*

*(Emma exits and returns, her pistol in hand.)*

**EMMA** *(cont'd)*: Tonight I'll sleep with my gun.

He's deranged!

How can he imagine

I would ever swoon in his arms?

He killed my uncle!

This madman hopes to possess me.

But I'll never let him take me.

I would rather die!

There are fates worse than death.

Ah! This anger gives me life.

Rest in peace, Uncle.

I will defend myself.

And I will avenge you.

Now rage inflames me.

The man who killed you lives  
and threatens me.

He will come back.

He will come back for me,

He said he would.

When he dares to come,

I'll kill him.

I will avenge you, Uncle.

I swear he will die!

### SCENE 3

*(The plaza. Day. Bud Jackson holds Mayor Thomas, a knife to his throat. Anna runs into the plaza.)*

**ANNA:** Help! Bud has gone crazy!

**TOWNSPEOPLE:** Do something, someone.  
Do something, or else it soon may be too late!

*(Diego enters.)*

**TOWNSPEOPLE** *(cont'd)*: Doctor, surely you can help.

**DIEGO:** Stay calm! Now then, what happened?

**BUD:** He called me a liar.

**MAYOR:** He is a liar and a thief!

**BUD:** I am not!

**MAYOR:** He stole a sack of flour and took it to his wagon.

**DIEGO:** And your version, Bud?

**BUD:** Had my money in my wagon. I needed it to pay him.

**DIEGO:** Damn, Bud, you're drunk.  
And whiskey makes you loco.  
Turn the mayor loose,  
then we'll sort this out.

**TOWNSPEOPLE:** That makes sense. Turn the mayor loose.

**BUD:** I won't be called a thief!

*(Emma emerges from the crowd and puts a pistol to Bud's head.)*

**EMMA:** You are a thief!  
I was in the store. I saw you take the flour.

**BUD:** No, you got that wrong!  
I told Miss Anna I had to get my money.

**EMMA:** Anna, did he mention money to you?

**ANNA:** No, ma'am. He didn't speak to me.

**BUD:** Damn! I sure thought I did.

**DIEGO:** Bud, you're drunk and confused.

Mayor, what if Bud pays you now?

**EMMA:** Doctor, stay out of this!

**DIEGO:** Don't give me orders, Miss Wingate!

**EMMA:** This man stinks of whisky and deceit. He's lying.

**DIEGO:** You're wrong. You don't know Bud!

He's fine when he's sober. Let me handle this.

**EMMA:** No! There's been enough talk.

*(to Bud)* Now, I'll count to three.

Either let the mayor go,

Or I'll put a bullet in your head. One...

*(Bud lets go of Mayor Thomas.)*

**BUD:** All right! *(moving off)* But I am *not* a thief.

I'll go get my money.

**TOWNSPEOPLE:** Wow. That was close. That was close.

**DIEGO** *(to Emily)*: Have you gone mad?!

**EMMA:** I just saved the mayor's life.

Someone had to do something!

**DIEGO:** I *was* doing something!

I have dealt with Bud before.

If you had been more patient,

I could have calmed him down.

**EMMA:** If I had been more patient,

then the mayor might be dead.

**DIEGO:** You can't just put a gun to someone's head.

You are not the law here.

**EMMA:** Until the town hires a marshal,

no one is the law.

But someone must defend people.

**DIEGO:** You're new here.

You don't know these people!

Bud was Henry's friend.

He did work for Henry.

He's a rowdy drunk.

But he's never killed anyone.

**EMMA:** What if Bud had used that knife?

**DIEGO:** What if your gun had fired?

**EMMA:** I can handle a gun!

**DIEGO:** You're reckless!

**EMMA:** You need someone reckless  
to face a gunman like Ralston!

*(Bud returns, now wearing a gun.)*

**BUD:** Hey, lady! Let's see how fast you are.

*(Bud's hand hovers over his pistol. When Emily turns to face Bud, her gun is already in her hand.)*

**BUD:** Damn! Ain't no way that was fair!

**TOWNSPEOPLE:** Did you see that?

**EMMA** *(calmly)*: Hands up, Bud. Don't force me to shoot.

*(Bud raises his hands.)*

**BUD:** Christ almighty!

**EMMA** *(cont'd)*: Doctor, could you bring me Bud's gun?

*(Diego walks over and takes Bud's gun from its holster. He brings it to Emily.)*

**EMMA** *(to Diego)*: Can I trust Bud when he's sober?

**DIEGO:** You can. Henry did.

**EMMA:** Fine.

*(to Bud)* You can have this back when you're sober.

**BUD:** Lady, you may be fast,  
but Ralston is a killer.

**EMMA:** I can kill a man if I have to!

**TOWNSPEOPLE:** She says she can kill!

**EMMA:** Wake up, people!  
Ralston lurks in the dark.  
He will kill again if we don't stop him.  
Which of you men will help me hunt him down?

*(No one steps forward.)*

**EMMA:** None of you?!  
Then I will face him alone.

*(Emma storms offstage.)*

**MAYOR:** Excitement's over, folks.

Let's get on with our day.

*(The townspeople gradually exit. The mayor goes back into his store. Anna lingers outside.)*

**BUD:** That woman's loco.

**DIEGO:** Bud, what's wrong with you?

You're lucky Miss Wingate didn't kill you.

**BUD:** Miss Wingate?

Is she Marshal Wingate's niece?

**DIEGO:** Yes. She's living alone on Henry's ranch.

It's her ranch now, and she's clearly on edge.

**BUD:** Oh, hell! I'm sorry I riled her up.

Henry was a good friend.

I miss him.

**DIEGO:** We all miss him.

Bud, if Henry were here,

what would he tell you?

**BUD:** Go home, sleep, and sober up.

But I've got money here to pay.

**DIEGO** *(calling out)*: Anna, can you take Bud's money?

**ANNA:** Sure.

*(Anna comes over and takes Bud's money.)*

**BUD:** I'm sorry, Miss Anna.

**ANNA:** I know. You were confused.

**BUD:** I've got to stop drinking.

**ANNA:** I know you've tried.

**BUD:** Miss Anna, I promise. I'll try harder.

**ANNA:** Good for you.

*(Bud exits.)*

**DIEGO** *(exhausted)*: Gracias, Anna.

**ANNA:** De nada.

I should get back to the store.

Are you okay?

*(Diego is upset.)*

**DIEGO:** I need time to calm down.

**ANNA:** Hasta luego...

*(Anna exits.)*

**DIEGO:** Miss Wingate worries me.

She seems out of control—

like a raging wildfire.

And yet, this fiery woman fascinates me.

Emma is an enchantress—

Una encantadora.

Have I fallen under her spell?

Am I already lost?

## ACT TWO

### SCENE 1

*(Diego is outside, watching the street. Bud comes walking down the street.)*

**DIEGO:** Bud, I haven't seen you for weeks.  
How are you?

**BUD:** I'm great, Doc.

**DIEGO:** I see you have your gun back.

**BUD** *(embarrassed):*  
Miss Wingate and I patched things up.  
She's hired me to help fix up her place.  
I'm headed there now.

**DIEGO:** Is she planning to stay here?

**BUD:** She ain't said.  
I hope myself she stays.  
I was wrong about her.  
She's a downright agreeable lady.  
She's even giving me shooting lessons.

**DIEGO:** Shooting lessons?

**BUD:** Oh, goddamn it!  
Doc, forget I told you that.  
It's supposed to be a secret.  
Shoot! Sorry, I'd better go.

*(Bud exits. After a bit, Emma and Anna enter, walking toward the mercantile. Diego hesitates, then calls out.)*

**DIEGO:** Miss Wingate, may I speak with you a moment?

*(Emma and Anna stop.)*

**ANNA:** I'll see you later.

*(Anna heads to the mercantile. Emily walks over to Diego.)*

**DIEGO:** Good morning, Miss Wingate.

**EMMA:** Good morning, Doctor.

**DIEGO:** I haven't seen you for weeks.

**EMMA:** I've been busy at my ranch.

**DIEGO:** Bud told me you've hired him to work for you.

**EMMA:** I have. I judged him too quickly.  
You were right about Bud.  
He's fine when he's sober.

**DIEGO:** Bud let slip you're giving him shooting lessons.  
He felt awful, giving away that secret.

**EMMA:** Can you keep that secret?

**DIEGO:** Of course, but why shooting lessons?

**EMMA (a pause):** Ralston came to my ranch.

**DIEGO (shocked):** He came to your ranch?!

**EMMA:** Yes, a month ago.

**DIEGO:** Did he hurt you?

**EMMA:** No. But he thinks I belong to him.  
He said he'll return to take me with him.  
If I refuse, he'll use force.  
I need someone to watch my back,  
and Bud has gumption.

**DIEGO:** But Bud might get shot!

**EMMA:** Bud knows the danger,  
but he wants to protect me.  
To do that, he is staying sober.  
If Ralston returns,  
together we'll protect each other.

**DIEGO:** But that puts you both in danger.

**EMMA:** Doctor, what would *you* have me do?  
Should I submit to Ralston?  
Just let him take me away?

**DIEGO (vehemently):** No! I would never want that!  
How can you even say that?

*(Diego pauses a moment to calm down.)*

**DIEGO:** I had no idea you were in such danger.

**EMMA:** I can handle myself.

I'll be fine.

*(Diego paces anxiously.)*

**DIEGO** (*decisively*):

Miss Wingate, teach Bud to shoot.

Do what you have to!

But protect each other!

You both have to go on living!

**EMMA:** I've upset you.

I should go.

**DIEGO:** No. Please, stay a moment.

So much has changed in your life

since the night we met

and danced together.

That night, you said you hoped to explore the mountains.

There's a valley that I'd like to show you.

Would you go riding with me this Saturday?

*(Emma takes a moment to absorb the subject change.)*

**EMMA:** Yes, I would love to go riding.

That sounds wonderful,

**DIEGO:** I have a patient coming.

I have to go.

See you Saturday?

**EMMA:** Yes.

**DIEGO:** At nine in the morning?

**EMMA:** That's fine.

**DIEGO:** I'll bring lunch.

**EMMA:** Thank you.

*(Diego heads toward his office. Anna comes out of the mercantile, waves to Diego, and comes over to Emma.)*

**ANNA:** He looks happy.

**EMMA:** He asked me to go riding with him

ANNA: Oh, my Lord!  
Did he say where?

EMMA: Some valley he likes.

ANNA: That valley is special to him.  
He goes there to be alone.

EMMA: Not this time. This time, he wants company.

ANNA: Do you think...?

EMMA: I don't think anything.  
But going riding sounds lovely.  
Now, I need to check on Bud.  
I'll see you later.

*(Emma exits.)*

ANNA: How can she be so calm?  
Uncle Diego just asked her out.  
I'm glad for her,  
but now I wonder:

When will I meet someone  
who excites me?  
Is it hopeless?

*(A passing gentleman tips his hat to EMMA.)*

ANNA: Oh, my! That well-dressed gentleman  
just tipped his hat to me.  
Things are looking up.

Now that the train stops here,  
more strangers are arriving.  
If I worked at the new hotel,  
I might meet more strangers.

But then again,  
everyone needs supplies.  
Maybe soon a handsome stranger  
will walk into our store.  
He will glance my way,  
and I'll say, "Can I help you, sir?"

Then we'd talk, and we'd laugh,  
and that day or the next,  
he might ask me to dinner.  
Dinner at the fancy new hotel.  
That's how it might start,  
how I'd meet a handsome man,  
and we would fall in love.  
That's how it might start.  
My day is looking up!

*(Anna happily heads back to the mercantile.)*

## SCENE 2

*(Night. Diego is in his waiting room, working. His office door opens, and Victor steps in.)*

**VICTOR:** You should lock your door, Doctor.

**DIEGO:** I can see that now.

*(Victor walks around the office.)*

**VICTOR:** Were you expecting someone?

**DIEGO:** Only for emergencies.

Are you injured?

Perhaps a gunshot wound?

**VICTOR** *(amused)*: No. Thanks for your concern.

I just stopped by to talk.

*(Victor looks at some of Diego's medical equipment.)*

You are a brave man.

**DIEGO:** Not really.

**VICTOR:** Oh, but you are.

You tend the wounded,

the sick, and the dying.

You grapple with Death.

You hope you can slow his arrival.

To challenge Death takes courage.

As for me, I am a friend of Death.

If I wish him to visit someone,

I send bullets to speed his arrival.

**DIEGO:** I have seen you do that.

**VICTOR:** An unfortunate incident.  
He should have backed off.  
When I'm pushed, I push back.  
So, I warn you—do not cross me!  
I've seen you with Emma.  
Don't forget, she is mine,  
and soon I will take her away.

**DIEGO:** Perhaps Miss Wingate will choose to stay.

**VICTOR:** Enough!  
Her future is mine to decide.  
Don't dare stand between us.  
Don't make me kill you.  
This town needs a doctor.  
Stay away from Emma. She is mine.

*(Victor hears a sound and indicates Diego should be silent. He moves behind Diego and aims his gun at him.)*

**EMMA** *(from behind the door):*  
Diego? I saw your light on.  
Can I pick up Bud's medicine?

*(The door opens. Emily enters.)*

**EMMA** *(cont'd):* My God!

**VICTOR:** That gun belt suits you,  
but now you must take it off.  
Otherwise, I may shoot the doctor.

**EMMA:** No, don't shoot. I'll do as you say.

*(Emily puts her gun on the floor.)*

**VICTOR:** I name you mine, my beauty.  
You belong to me.

**EMMA:** No! How can you think that?  
I belong to no one but myself!!

**VICTOR:** We belong together.  
It's ordained by the stars.  
You were not born to be a rancher.

A woman with your passion  
would disdain that life.

EMMA: You don't know me.

VICTOR: Oh, I knew you on sight.  
I saw the darkness in your haunting eyes,  
and I dared to dream I had found my mate.  
You thirst for adventure,  
not life on some modest ranch.  
I could give you endless adventures.  
Think of the life you could have.  
You could be a breathtaking phantom—  
An enchantress who vanishes into shadows  
and emerges holding a gun.  
Ah! Soon I will come for you.  
Soon we'll begin our life together.

EMMA: Never!

VICTOR: Do not anger me!  
Defiance must be punished.  
Perhaps I will shoot the doctor.

EMMA: No! Don't you touch him!

VICTOR: Whether he lives or dies is mine to decide.

EMMA: I beg you, don't hurt him.

VICTOR: Do you have feelings for this doctor?

EMMA: He has been a friend.

VICTOR: *Ah*, a friend. I can see that.  
A sensible friend to talk with.  
My fiery beauty, as a gift to you,  
I may let your friend live.  
But, in return, when I come to take you,  
you must do as I say.  
If you dare disobey me,  
your friend will pay the price.  
Doctor, we must exit together,  
I feel safer with you beside me.

*(Victor takes Diego as a hostage as he exits. As soon as they are gone, Emma retrieves her gun. Then she locks the door.)*

**EMMA:** Oh, dear God! No!  
Don't let him hurt Diego!  
What kind of fiend could do that?  
What can I do now?  
This vile man has me trapped.  
There is no escape from this.  
I must never let him hurt Diego,  
But I'll never submit to that madman. Never!

Oh, Diego, I am drawn to you,  
but those feelings put you in danger.  
The sooner I am gone,  
gone from your life,  
the safer you will be.

Only death can end this.  
Let the fury in me rage.  
Ralston must be dealt with.  
Let one of us kill the other,  
or let us both die.

*(There is a knock on the door. Emma draws her gun.)*

**DIEGO** *(from outside the door):* Emma, it's Diego.

**EMMA:** Are you alone?

**DIEGO:** Yes, unlock the door.

*(Emma unlocks the door, then backs away, her gun drawn, still wary. Diego enters.)*

**EMMA** *(putting her gun away):* Did he hurt you?

**DIEGO:** No. But he made more threats.  
And his threats are real.  
He warned me to stay away from you.

*(Emma paces for a moment.)*

**EMMA:** We can't endanger your life.  
We have to stay apart.

**DIEGO:** Emma, you could escape.  
You could go back East.

**EMMA:** You want me to leave?

**DIEGO:** No, I want you to live!

Why not stay away  
until he's dead or in prison?

**EMMA:** No! No! I won't run from him.  
I won't let him control my life.  
Henry left me his ranch.  
And I love living there.  
It's the first place I've lived  
that feels like me.  
This ranch is my stake in the ground.  
I have a right to live there.

**DIEGO:** You do have that right.  
You can choose to stay.  
But if you stay there,  
then you and I must stay apart.

**EMMA:** I know that. I know that!  
I refuse to endanger *your* life.  
But *I* will not run—I will *not*!  
So, goodbye, Diego.

**DIEGO:** We won't be apart for long, I promise.

**EMMA:** No! No. No promises.  
As long as Ralston lives,  
there can be no promises.  
Not even that I will live  
to see the sunrise.  
Goodbye, Diego.

*(Emma turns quickly and leaves. Diego is left in thought.)*

**DIEGO:** No, this is wrong.  
We should not be forced to be apart.  
I have looked in my heart,  
and I know how much I love her.  
Someday soon, we'll walk side by side.  
We'll find a way to be together.  
But until then, we must stay apart!

### SCENE 3

*(The Plaza. Late afternoon. The mercantile has a sign declaring a sale. Some townspeople are onstage.)*

**MAYOR:** Afternoon, Bud.

**BUD:** Afternoon, Mayor. Lovely day for a sale.

*(Emma enters.)*

**MAYOR:** Ah, Miss Wingate, good to see you.

**EMMA:** You as well.

*(Emily turns to Bud.)*

**EMMA** *(cont'd, in confidence)*: No gun today, Bud?

**BUD:** The buckle broke on my gun belt.

My gun's tucked back here.

*(Bud indicates the small of his back.)*

**EMMA:** Good grief!

Let's buy you a gunbelt.

First thing tomorrow.

**BUD:** Yes, Miss, first thing tomorrow.

*(Diego enters.)*

**DIEGO** *(in a formal manner)*:

Good afternoon, Miss Wingate.

**EMMA:** Doctor.

*(Victor steps into view with Anna in his grasp.)*

**ANNA:** Help!

**VICTOR:** Have you lost someone, Mayor?

**TOWNSPEOPLE:** No! Not Anna!

**DIEGO:** Anna!

**EMMA:** How brave! Hiding behind a girl.

**VICTOR:** Look again.

She is clearly a woman.

All of you, lay down your guns.

**MAYOR:** Please! Do as he says.

*(Everyone complies except Bud, who appears unarmed.)*

**EMMA:** Let Anna go.

This is between the two of us.

**VICTOR:** Here's your choice:

Either come with me, Emma,  
or in your place,  
I will take this sweet young woman.

**ANNA:** No! Please!

**EMMA:** You monster!

**MAYOR:** I will kill you if you hurt her.

**VICTOR:** Not you, Mayor. You couldn't.

**EMMA:** You coward!

**VICTOR:** You know I have won, my beauty.

You know you must come.  
My gun is the law you all must obey.

*(Bud staggers forward, seemingly drunk.)*

**BUD:** Goddamn it! Let Miss Anna go!

She ain't done nothing to you.

**VICTOR:** Oh, My God! Now the town drunk speaks.

**BUD:** Even a drunk can spot a varmint.

What you're doin' ain't right.

*(Bud appears to stumble into Emma.)*

**BUD:** Sorry, Miss.

**VICTOR:** You drunken fool.

*(As Bud moves in front of her, Emma pulls his gun from his belt in the back. With the distractions, Anna breaks free from being directly in front of Victor. Emma raises Bud's gun and fires. Victor staggers back, hit in the shoulder. His gun drops, and his gun arm hangs limply, clearly useless. Anna rushes to her parents.)*

**EMMA:** I've got him covered, Bud.

Get his gun.

*(Bud picks up Victor's gun.)*

**VICTOR:** I'm disarmed.

To kill me would be murder.

**EMMA:** Guard him, Bud.

*(Emily lowers her gun.)*

**EMMA** *(to Victor)*: I want you to stand trial and hang.

**VICTOR** *(to Emma)*: I pity you, Emma.  
You could have had a life of adventure.  
I could have made you a legend.  
Now you face a lifetime of drudgery.  
Now you're stuck on a modest ranch  
doing endless, dreary chores.

**DIEGO**: That's enough, you blowhard!  
You've threatened two women I love!

**VICTOR**: You're pathetic, doctor!  
The love of a friend is worthless  
compared to *my* passion!

**DIEGO** *(to the townspeople)*:  
Men, I need two of you to help Bud.

*(Two men step forward.)*

**DIEGO** *(cont'd)*:  
Take Ralston to my office so I can treat his wound.  
Ralston, I'll keep you alive so you can hang!

**VICTOR** *(to Emma)*: I hope we meet again, my beauty.  
I'm sure to escape.

**EMMA**: Bud, if he tries something, shoot him!

**BUD**: I'll do that, Miss Emma.

*(Diego, Bud, and two men exit with Victor as their prisoner.)*

**EMMA**: Are you alright, Anna?

**ANNA**: I'm fine. Just a bit shaken.

**MAYOR**: Thank you, Miss Wingate.  
Everyone, let's have three cheers for Miss Wingate.  
Hip, hip.

**TOWNSPEOPLE**: Hooray!

**MAYOR**: Hip, hip.

**TOWNSPEOPLE**: Hooray!

**MAYOR**: Hip, hip.

**TOWNSPEOPLE:** Hooray!

Now we can live in peace.

Now we are safe.

Now we are safe.

#### SCENE 4

*(Some months later. The mayor is in front of his mercantile. The street in front of the storefronts, as in the previous scene. Late afternoon.)*

**MAYOR:** Bud, how are you?

**BUD:** I'm good. How bout you?

**MAYOR:** I'm fine.

Nice evening out.

**BUD:** Sure is.

**MAYOR:** How's work at Miss Wingate's place?

**BUD:** Busy. She sold her place back East,  
but she kept some furniture.

That's comin' by train.

**MAYOR:** Seems like Miss Wingate and Doc get along now.

**BUD:** No need to hide that.

No need since Ralston got hung.

**MAYOR:** We're all glad that's over.

Look, I see them coming.

Let's give them some privacy.

*(The Mayor and Bud go into the mercantile. Emma and Diego enter. Emma has taken Diego's arm.)*

**EMMA:** I'm sorry things are hectic.

More furniture is arriving tomorrow.

We'll have to postpone our riding day.

**DIEGO:** That's twice you've cancelled.

*(Diego looks disappointed and goes silent.)*

**EMMA:** I'm sorry. I should have planned better.

**DIEGO:** I was hoping for a day together—  
Just the two of us.

**EMMA:** Perhaps we can go next weekend.

*(Diego weighs his options. During the following dialogue, Anna becomes visible, spying on them from the corner of a building.)*

**DIEGO** *(essentially to himself):*

No! I can't wait that long.

I'll do it now!

*(Diego pulls a box from his pocket, opens it, and gets down on one knee.)*

**EMMA:** Oh, my...

**DIEGO:** Emily, I love you so much.

Will you marry me?

**EMMA:** Yes, yes, a thousand times, yes.

*(They embrace. She takes the engagement ring out of the box and puts it on.)*

**EMMA** *(cont'd):* It's beautiful.

*(A pause.)*

You were planning to ask at our special valley, weren't you?

**DIEGO:** Perhaps.

**EMMA:** I love your romantic surprises.

I'm sorry I spoiled this one.

**DIEGO:** You said, "Yes."

I'm happy beyond words..

**EMMA:** I would have said, "Yes,"

any time or place you asked.

I love you.

*(They embrace.)*

**DIEGO:** I love your passion and fire,

**EMMA:** I love how deeply you care.

**DIEGO:** I love the sound of your voice,

**EMMA:** I love the sound of your laugh.

**EMMA/DIEGO:** I love the way you look at me.

I see the love in your eyes.

Now we can show our love.

We can be together.

Now, we can share our love—

I love you.

*(Anna emerges from hiding.)*

**ANNA:** Everyone! Come on out!

It's official. They're engaged!

*(Townspeople emerge from storefronts, alleyways, and other places.)*

**MAYOR:** Congratulations, you two.

**MARIA** *(hugging Diego):*

Oh, I'm so happy for you.

*(to Emma)* For you both.

**MAYOR:** Everyone, Doctor de la Rosa and Miss Wingate are engaged!

Let's plan an engagement party!

*(Waltz music begins!)*

**TOWNSPEOPLE:**

Our planet turns from day to night,  
circling its way around the sun.

As we turn to the light,  
new days dawn, then fade away.

Someday soon, the day that dawns  
will be their wedding day.

Then they will join as one.

They will join as one.

**END OF OPERA**