

Wilhelmine von Bayreuth.

Shall I tell the story?

That's easy.

It's about the King.

It revolves around the King. It is always only about the King.

When kings enter the room. When a King enters the room. When a King.

THE KING. A King.

He. He doesn't even have to think himself. Himself. Or think about what he is like or what he or where or with whom he wants.

The King? He just IS. He is and he is everything and everyone in one person.

The King. He is the only one who really lives. All the others are lived. By him.

In him. By him and in him. The Only One. Who relies only on himself and not on any other power. The only one who doesn't need to learn anything.

A King. Doesn't learn anything. He doesn't need to learn anything. Every moment belongs to him and he takes the moment and does what he likes with it.

A King. He can't learn anything. A King cannot permit himself to learn anything if wants to be a King. Only. The King is a captive too. But he in himself and the others in him.

This King. This King here. His name is Argenore. But in fact. A King doesn't need a name. He is THE King. Whether he is called Hanover or something else. They are the ones who live the others. They are huge, lustful bodies. And their only duty is to procreate.

A King. He has to sire a successor. He has to. To replace him. Without a successor, he doesn't exist. The King. But. And that is the King's open wound. He must die. He will be replaced by his son. That is the King's wound. He too must die and there is nothing that can save him from that. No God. No religion. No priest. No sacrifice. No piety. Nothing can stop the march of time for the King. He will have to die.

But till that time comes. Till then, the King seeks diversion to kill time.

Because. Because he must die. The King. He can't allow himself to think.

Think? That would mean splitting himself into two, and a King is the indivisible King and only and always demands and the demand is to be loved. That is what sustains the King.

The King must be loved. It is not possible to understand or to grasp the King. The King is not even allowed to do that himself. No. All that the King knows is love for him or no love for him, and that is how he will speak. It will be impossible to understand. He is unable to understand anyone when he is not allowed to understand himself.

POWER CAN ONLY BE.

Power does not explain itself. Power does not excuse itself. Power is wielded.

That is why the King stays stupid as King to its rights and wrongs.

This King here. King Argenore. They tell him his realm is threatened. And he. He doesn't ask more. He doesn't try to find out for himself. He follows his advisor's false counsel. And once decided. He believes he is in possession of absolute power, power which is even more absolute because he has NO son.

This King's son was abducted when he was a small child. But then. He rules unchallenged. At his court. He doesn't have to fear anyone there. He thinks enemies are only outside. And against the enemies his advisors tell him of. Against them, he sends Ormondo, the war hero who has just ensured the safety of his realm. Ormondo will go into battle against the renegade Orcan. That suits him. The King without a successor needs to keep such war heroes occupied, so that they do not get the idea that they themselves could be the successor. War heroes. Let them fight each other. Ormondo is to lay the empire at King Argenore's feet, so that Argenore can be secure in the knowledge that he is the King.

Aria Argenore.

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Wilhelmine von Bayreuth.

"The protector god of the realm"

"Of this realm".

How cryptic the King's words are.

No.

The war hero will not be permitted to become a god. It will be the King who decides what the war hero becomes. The King decides that. And the war hero? He is a subordinate. He must bow his head. And Ormondo. Here. He is the stranger who has entered the service of the King to help him achieve victory and glory. He is a general. Not a king's son. He is an upstart, not a prince. He is in love, but his beloved's love will not help him. She. The princess. Palmide. The King will dispose over her just as he disposes over everybody. And if he knew that Ormondo is his son Eumene who was once taken from him? If he knew that Ormondo is the prince who was hidden from himself?

That Ormondo is in reality Palmide's brother and not her lover, but Martesia's false brother? But. He knows nothing of all this. He has not been allowed to know. The King remains ignorant and so. All are ignorant and hopelessly interconnected, at the mercy of each other and themselves and so. The power of destiny will trump the power of the King.

Aria Ormondo.

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Wilhelmine von Bayreuth.

And furthermore. The King remains the most important person.

His daughter. Princess Palmide. She is to be the reward for Prince Leonida's military support.

The prince as a socially acceptable reward for the prince. General Ormondo receives a medal. The prince gets the princess.

The King wants to perpetuate himself, and the prince will need to produce offspring with the princess. The progeny with the right social status are needed so that they can be given away to princes and princesses as a reward for valuable services rendered.

The King's children are his currency.

Except: it is always only the firstborn. The successor. The firstborn. He is the enemy.

But King Argenore doesn't know anything about his firstborn, who stands before him as Ormondo. King Argenore believes he is free. Other kings. They subject their firstborn to regular beatings throughout the palace. They do it in full view of everyone. They drive their firstborn away and recapture them. A cat-and-mouse game. The King and his son, who survived as a child.

The daughter. The King's daughter They must obey. No will of their own can be allowed to show itself. And he says just that. The King. Palmide must marry Leonida. "And I give him this instant to be your bridegroom", the King can say that.

He gives him and takes her and is pleased and threatens her when she is disobedient. It is plain to see. The King doesn't ask anyone's permission. He dictates. He allocates his favours and separates the lovers. Leonida will get Palmide. That is Royal marital policy. The lovers' feelings? Count for nothing. He doesn't even ask them.

Aria Palmide.

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Wilhelmine von Bayreuth.

But who is Martesia? Only Ormondo's false sister? The amorous woman smitten with longing for Leonida? One of the people who enjoy the King's favour? Martesia, who could reveal the secret in the nick of time? Or is it already too late, because it is always too late when only one can decide? When only one calls the shots for all the others?

Or is it the same old story which I already know so well? Unloved? Love never returned? Always an object and never a person?

Is that why Martesia delays the denouement to take revenge? Without knowing it? Does she take revenge maliciously and doesn't even realize it? Is it her unrequited love which distracts her?

Or is it because she succumbs utterly to her love? Because she allows herself to

become the instrument of his desire? Leonida's desire for Palmide?

Poor Martesia.

Praising her beloved to her own perdition? Extolling his virtues to her rival out of love for him?

If the situation were less calamitous, would Martesia come to her senses and reveal the secret?

But she is not the one who decides. She is not in a position to decide anything. She too must obey and lie. This time it is for her beloved, just as she learned it from her father. She lies for him. For love. Just as I know it. Oh. How well I know it!

Aria Martesia.

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Wilhelmine von Bayreuth.

Lying out of love. Lying for love. Maintaining a pretence.

As long as the King exists, that is a necessity. As long as he has command of love, everyone will act as the princess does. He gives the order and the knot is tied. Or ripped apart.

The King knows nothing of free will. He knows nothing of having love for the other.

He. He cannot love. He must be loved. The King. He is created out of the love for him. He gorges on that love. He stuffs that love into himself till he is full. It is what he lives on. He consumes it and can never get enough.

This Being Loved demands ever more. His soldiers must die out of love for him. His court. This love must be visible in every moment. This love. That is adhering to the rules. Sacrificing your life for him. That is love. Everything which is for him, that is love. Everything else is betrayal.

And they know it, those who live at court know that. Those who are allowed to come close to the King. Who form his entourage. The advisors, who become his shadows. Who are his shadows. They suddenly turn up. The courtier. The advisor. The women who advise him. They enfold him with what he takes for love.

That it is all pretence? The King doesn't see it. He can't allow himself to see it. Where would the protestations of love go otherwise. These proofs that he lives on. And every man and every woman. They are all puppets and the courtiers hold the strings and play with them and want to manipulate the King too, a puppet on silken threads. Then they make him dance to their tune and make him believe the silken strings are love.

Leonida is such a puppet and Alcasto the puppet-master. Leonida believes Alcasto that he can help him to win Palmide. But Alcasto desires the princess

for himself. All to himself. And as one of the King's shadows. He is a master of pretence and Leonida believes his lies. But Leonida. The prince. He also believes the King, that he will ensure Palmide's obedience. Those are the rules of the game. It is unthinkable. Palmide wants to love Ormondo. Of her own free will. That is impossible. Not when a King is the one who decides.

Aria Leonida.

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Wilhelmine von Bayreuth.

Lying out of love. Lying for love. For freedom.  
Because. If the King should learn of the love of the lovers for each other. Because. If the King should learn of the love of these lovers. It would cost them everything. It has to cost them everything.  
Everything that does not follow the King's command. That does not spring from his will. He will pass judgement. He must pass judgement. Otherwise the King would not be the King any more.  
Clemency? Oh. He might be taken with a sudden whim and everything is different. And instead of heads rolling everything is hugs and kisses. He might call you to him and embrace you and kiss you, and promise you everything you want. With tears streaming down his face. He might promise you huge sums in a letter if you abandon your plans or your mother's plans. It might even happen that he takes out his hunting horn and plays you a tune and for a moment you are the apple of his eye. And he loves you so much that your entire future seems suffused with happiness.  
In the end. It was always only putting off the betrayal. Breathers in the constant abuse. The sums never transpired. The love. His love locked away again and with a stern look judgement passed on this marriage and not the Prince of Wales my husband and I not the Queen of England. As mother wished it.  
But. He doesn't lie. HE doesn't lie. He has others to do that for him.  
Him? The King? It slips his mind. He doesn't know it any more, because the shadows advise him not to.

Ormondo has no chance in this. He is a professional. A craftsman of war and with no social status. He doesn't understand the rules. Doesn't know how power wants to hold others in orbit around it. And wants to be flattered.  
Palmide suspects the truth. But her belief in love, in love as a form of hope? Future and hope are already one for her. She hopes and believes and wishes and imagines a father. Not a King.

Aria Ormondo.

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Wilhelmine von Bayreuth.

And that is the hour of the courtier. The underling. Here he is called Alcasto. About the King. We know everything about him. We are always there. Even in the bedroom, we are there.

The hour of the courtier. The advisor. We know nothing.

When he is in his favour, he is as powerful as the King. Yes. Even more powerful. This one here. He knows his King's moods. He knows the sudden fancies. The outbursts. The lusts and the fear.

No-one else can be allowed to have that knowledge. Oh. We knew it too. But this knowledge. We had to conceal it. There was nothing we could do. We were defenceless against him. There was nothing we could have done. All of us. If that was what the King wanted. There was nothing to eat. No candles. No sleep. And if we had turned that knowledge into pretence. They would have accused us of being greedy and calculating.

We had to act as if we didn't know the King, our father. A surprise in every moment. As if he had been created anew every day. And that it was new to us that he would belabour our brother's back with a cudgel. We had to pretend that the daily violence was an exception, every day.

The advisors, on the other hand. They. In this case here. His name is Alcasto. He desires Palmide too. He lusts after the princess.

Does he want to overcome the King by possessing the King's daughter? Does he want to de-king the King? Does he want to besmirch the King's honour by taking Palmide by force and set himself up in his place? Is the King threatened by all the coups which Alcasto wants to make him believe come from Ormondo? Are they in fact Alcasto's plans which he imputes to Ormondo?

No. It is not genuine love which motivates Alcasto. He only wants to possess Palmide. But the King. He turns to him. Him, of all people. "I have need of your counsel" says the King, and Alcasto has just the counsel ready which will make his, Alcasto's, wishes come true.

And the King. He listens to Alcasto, because Alcasto assures him of his love. It is the feigned love of the courtier. Love in words. Not lived love. Not the love of children for their father, like ours was. Such as I felt. Oh no.

Does Alcasto want to make himself the King's son, then? His son-in-law? For one night?

He would never get the hand of the princess. Or perhaps after all? Can he force the King to give her to him after the rape? Ah. If the web of intrigues were to come to light! The King's displeasure would spell his death. But the King. This King. He listens to the shadow as if it were his own self speaking. And he only hears the protestations of loyalty. The lies. They are what he wants to hear.

Alcasto's promise to be faithful till death. He has to believe it. It is what gives him sustenance. The King.

Aria Alcasto.

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Wilhelmine von Bayreuth.

That is easy to say. "That he will faithfully shed his blood for you." And he is lying. And the King doesn't know it. Cannot know it. It is his shadow speaking. And doesn't a shadow have to be faithful, since he is a shadow, says the King to himself? And laughs.

But a shadow doesn't have any blood to shed. It doesn't have any blood to "faithfully shed". And the King? Words like this are what he feeds on. Words like this stifle his doubts. When there is upheaval. Among the common people. And discontent spreads. And rumours start to fly.

The rumours are concocted by the advisors at court and then flatter out and mutate and get worse, and before long people are saying the King has killed his heir. The King wanted to kill his heir. And then we have to show ourselves. We must stand at windows. Then the word goes around "The children are all there." We have to appear at court. All the children are alive. We have to stay in our seats after theatre performances. We have to drive through the streets. We have to sit up very straight and wave at the crowds. With bruises on our backs. (The governess knew very well where she could hit me.) The bruises on my back didn't show. We have to perform as ourselves. Against the rumours. And the King. He moans then, He complains.

Argenore. He complains about his daughter's refusal. He bewails his fate, which took his son from him. But then he stipulates a condition for fate: His son. His lost son. Should he ever turn up. He. The King. He wants him to be submissive and condemns Ormondo as lowborn, and yet he is his son.

Aria Argenore.

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Wilhelmine von Bayreuth.

And he tries it.

Alcasto waylays Palmide and pretends to be Ormondo. The devious rascal. But she, in love, cannot be deceived. She defends herself. Alcasto resorts to violence. Just in the nick of time, Ormondo arrives and drives away the would-

be rapist. He is in luck. He stays unrecognized and has taken Ormondo's cloak. Palmide thinks it was Leonida who attacked her.

The lovers are in despair. They must part.

The King. He sends Ormondo back into the war. And, as so often. In fact as it always is. This war has a quite different purpose than the one the King is led to believe. It is Alcasto who needs this war. He can use this war to rid himself of Ormondo and then he has free rein to woo Palmide. So he thinks. It would be even better if Ormondo is killed in this war. And so on. This war is only the first step in a court intrigue because the King's advisor lusts after the princess. The courtier devised it. The King will carry it out. And so on. The King is deaf to the voices of his own kin. The voice of his favourite has drowned them out and tells him what to say and he speaks with it. This voice has become the King's twin voice.

The King trumpets loudly what is whispered in his ear.

But the lovers. They must part. He has to go to war. She is supposed to go into this marriage. Separation for ever threatens.

Aria Ormondo.

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Wilhelmine von Bayreuth.

In the story?

It is still only about the King. About his power. About his decisions. His mandate to order others' lives. Palmide. Is he unable to hear what she has to say? Wouldn't it be the most basic impulse of human kindness to listen to her? Isn't it the right of every creature to determine their life themselves? Does the King really believe that his daughter has no idea how she should live? Does he really believe that a daughter doesn't know who she wants to love?

A daughter knows. Oh. How I loved. My parents. In dutiful obedience. Yes. I loved my mother. I loved my father. I loved my brother. Above all others my brother. Oh. How I wanted to protect him. Would have tried so hard to protect him.

Not to love? Not to love without pretence? Not to love open-heartedly and to confess to it? What use to me is such a pretended life? And yet. How do parents love who are divided? Divided in their plans because of me? And it was always about their plans and never about me. And like Palmide. I was only a packet of meat for them, to be traded. Me against a country and a crown. But then. Father preferred to have tall soldiers. That would have made him laugh. Tall soldiers. Thumping great tall men. That was what made him happy. Then he was even generous. But the shadows. His advisors. They had quite different plans. They made the King mistrust us. Mother planned to give me away to England. Father wanted me for one of his shadows. Abandonment through father against mother's ambition. I was beaten by my mother. My brother by our father. My

blows were really for my father. My brother's were meant for my mother. Our backs were the maps of their wishes.

Aria Palmide.

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Wilhelmine von Bayreuth.

We pray for such consolation. We all pray that fate will reconsider. That the King will change his mind. But. The King. He is so willing to believe what his advisor tells him. Because he thinks it is love. Love for him. Loyalty. Submission.

And a woman's intuition? A sister's foreboding? Both of them are Ormondo's sisters. One by nature. The other out of habit. But sisters. And oh. How sisters can love.

Love for their brother. That is deep and heartfelt. The sincerest kind of love. My brother. Ah. When I just think of him, all my good feelings are marshalled together. If I didn't have my brother, I would have no idea what love is. To save him. To save him from the King. Being forced to look on as he became ever more embittered under the torment. Tormented most of all by the shadows. They were the ones who whispered this hate to the King. Hate for his youth. His softness. His gentleness. His innocence. For his life.

And what if he is sired by the King and born of the Queen? The King. He doesn't want to love this life, that comes from him. This life which was created to succeed him, that is supposed to replace him. Will replace him. This life which reminds him that he is going to die.

And King Argenore? How would he have viewed Ormondo as Eumene? Would he have beaten him like my father thrashed my brother? Would he have chased him through the halls with a cudgel? Would he have driven him to try to escape, just so that he could capture him and bring him back? Would he have threatened him with incarceration? Like all of us. Mother too.

Would Palmide have felt love for him as a brother like mine for my brother? And suffered vicariously with him? Realized that she was surrounded by enemies. Surrounded. That is what life at court is like. Where nobody is what they seem. How all appear to be what they are not. How nobody wears their heart on their sleeve and mother has no inkling what is really going on?

The meetings with my brother. They were as clandestine as the secret trysts of Palmide with Ormondo. Because the King would not come to his senses. Him. The King. He only believes those who feign false love for him. Lies are the preferable truths to the King and everything must be turned on its head, truth must first be flayed bloody before it can disentangle itself from the lies.

Aria Martesia.

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Wilhelmine von Bayreuth.

Artless love. Love that simply jumps up and is there. The kind of love which brings us together.

The King has no knowledge of that.

He can only BE loved. He can't love. He has to grab the love for himself and cram it into his maw. He has to conjure himself up, to convince himself that it really is love. That is the King's labour. He has to constitute himself out of the love for him. Construct himself out of it. And it must tower up to the skies. The love for him must rise ever higher. To overtop the others. And if it doesn't? If his orders are not followed? If he thinks his orders are not being followed? Then he knows that he is not loved and takes revenge. Terrible, annihilating, lethal revenge. Because he asks no questions. He has the false evidence laid before him and passes judgement. But his shadows show him the evidence in such a way that his judgement furthers their purposes and then they praise the King, and he feels great again. And laughs. Even if the corpses lie strewn around him.

Aria Alcasto.

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Wilhelmine von Bayreuth.

That is the problem. Everyone has feelings. That is the King's problem. He needs people who are like him. He wants to be understood. But then again, only his feelings should carry weight and not the others' feelings and then. He is offended. Affronted. But nothing is spoken. Everything remains covert. Everything is hidden under pretence. Nobody is authentic. Only the King. And they envy him for that and take their revenge on him in secret. If Ormondo were still Eumene. He would have had to suffer like my brother suffered. Because of the shadows too. Above all because of this secret revenge of the shadows, which operates in every moment.

The King of my brother. He took his revenge on his son. He took revenge on him every day for the way the world was. From the outset. The son learned to be despised and beaten and can't wait until he can despise and beat in his turn and till then life is only constant suffering and trying to escape only for it to be thwarted. His King didn't even allow him his death. Forced to live on with his eyes riveted on the decapitated corpse of his friend. Forced to live on. Oh. The King is cruel and feeds on it. Feeds himself and the shadows. If there is no love, cruelty also makes great.

Aria Argenore.

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Wilhelmine von Bayreuth.

Love. For him and through him. It is us who make the King. With love. We worship him with love.

He. He blinds himself and rails against his fate. Wants to take them all down with him. As proof of their love. As the shadows advise him to. The shadows. He cultivates them for his own purposes, so that he can send them out against us and wage war on us.

How he smothers my brother. Crushes him to death with his massive body. From the very beginning. How he laughs at him. How he sends him away and then forgives him. And always the cudgel.

He. He takes up the cudgel in order to spare him. Spare. That's what he calls it when he slays him. He calls it sparing him when he sends his envoys to my brother's room to force him back to life. To stop my brother from jumping out of the window to join his friend. To jump down where the headless body of his friend lies and the head, impaled on a pike, no longer responds to his gaze.

Education, he calls it. An education in power. Because military commanders in the field must be able to look on with an unyielding gaze. An education in violence and no mercy. Not towards his child, His daughter. Her life. Her happiness. Only his and his determined purpose. His enforcement. His commandments. Her No. It counts for nothing.

Aria Leonida.

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Wilhelmine von Bayreuth.

Alcasto has achieved all he wanted. He has contrived to make Ormondo the attacker. The one who wants to be the King's successor. Without knowing it, he has made Ormondo into Eumene. But Ormondo. He is overcome by the superior numbers of the palace guard and swears fierce revenge. The conflict has been transmuted into violence. There is war at court. But Alcasto sees himself already in possession of Palmide. But Leonida, too, thinks his desires are about to be fulfilled with Palmide, because Ormondo languishes in chains.

Aria Ormondo.

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Wilhelmine von Bayreuth.

The princess is an object. Goods to be traded. A thing to be bartered in exchange for ambition and desires. The princess. She is the collateral for all his wishes. My mother. She wanted to use me to get England. Father wanted to see mother thwarted. Father's shadows saw to it that such plans were scattered into dust. But letters were exchanged. Diplomatic notes. Reports. Rumours. Dispatches. Only the princess. She stayed unexchanged. The princess. She only has eyes for Ormondo. She only wants to see Ormondo. And so. The catastrophe unfolds.

Aria Leonida.

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Wilhelmine von Bayreuth.

The princess. The King's daughter. All is lost and the whispering begins. There are always whispers at court. Behind closed doors. Behind screens. Covering the words with their hand. A rustling hiss of whispers runs through the corridors. A storm of whispers filling every ear. Her lover in prison. The father boiling with rage. The princess resists. Says she loves him. The daughter her father. He doesn't believe her. He will never believe it. The only proof is obedience. Leniency? No way. Implacability. That is the King's answer. Implacability. That way the King stays the King.

Aria Palmide.

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Wilhelmine von Bayreuth.

The King does not love as we love. He loves love and us in that love. Not the persons. He loves power and not life and is in despair. Love itself is something he does not know. Because he will not live for ever. He won't be able to lock everyone away and intern them and always know what they are thinking. What they are feeling. But. He has to know. He has to know what all of them, every one of them, is thinking and feeling and whether he is loved. That has to be beaten out of the persons. This knowledge. That is why the prisons are so full. Full to bursting. And then the passage of time. He still has the power. But the grave awaits him. It is the despair that he must go down into that grave which drives him berserk. Is that why he wants to send them all there before him? Does he send Palmide there to spy out the way for him? Going ahead, leading her blind father by the hand? When the King rages like this. It is a fight with death that the King is

waging there. Because as King. He is everything which exists. And he is fighting for everything which can exist. And against his challenger. The man who sees himself as his successor. For him, there can only be death. The end. And for his daughter too, who refuses to let go of her own wishes.

That hurts him. Yes. It hurts him, but the only solution for him is more violence. Because fear. He is ordained by God. Why is he himself not God and does not have to die and does not have to fear anything? Oh. How he can pronounce judgement! How he stands there, cold and without shying away. How he goes to mete out slaughter as if he was picking flowers. Stern and unforgiving, he applauds himself.

That is when the King is the King. He sends his own children under the headsman's axe. But first. Argenore commands his daughter to kill her lover. As a test of her love for him. This test. It could save her.

But the princess. The princess belongs to the loving. They save their beloved and not themselves.

Aria Ormondo.

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Aria Martesia.

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Wilhelmine von Bayreuth.

And there is no-one to help her out of her sorry plight. That was the plan. The courtier, Alcasto, wants Palmide. Prince Leonida wants Palmide. Argenore, the King. He wants his kingdom to be secured and his daughter to be obedient. That is why Ormondo must stand there in chains. Palmide loves him and he could take over the kingdom. Then Ormondo would have everything the others covet. And Ormondo overcomes the King's envoy who is supposed to administer the poison to him so that Ormondo's death remains hidden from the people. Because. Riots among the people. That is the last thing the King wants. Upheaval. Insurrection. Withdrawal of affection. The King no longer loved. That is a danger for the court. The mob themselves cast the spell which makes them love the King. But if they stop doing it? Forging their own chains? And if the many then overrun the few and put Ormondo on the throne? That would be revolution. And that is unthinkable. That cannot be. Cannot be allowed to be.

Aria Ormondo.

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Wilhelmine von Bayreuth.

This is the time of the courtier. The advisor. The shadow moves into the light. And Alcasto takes the situation in hand with masterly skill. He needs to stoke the King's anger, to rid himself of Ormondo. But he must also calm the King down in order to be able to possess Palmide alive.

And the King flies into a rage. He wants to kill his daughter. He wants to kill her disobedience. That is his love. The love of the King, who will perish if he is not totally loved. He saves the love of his daughter by killing her. A struggle for all or nothing.

The King calls it disobedience and betrayal. His daughter calls it love and her natural right. If the King were to back down? Would the King still be the King then? If he gave his daughter freedom as her father? Would that be the signal for the masses? If he promised freedom for his daughter, would that mean freedom for all?

And how he roars as he raises the dagger. How he gasps when Alcasto hinders him from stabbing his daughter. How he raves and wishes death for all. As if the death of all rebels would keep him alive. As if the King is everyone else and they all do not love him anymore. Then all the others must die, so that the King can stay alive. And it is Alcasto's job as his shadow to make sure that happens.

The factions are formed and prepare to join battle.

This war. It has been engineered by Alcasto to appear inevitable and no-one calls "Stop!"

Aria Leonida.

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Wilhelmine von Bayreuth.

The King is one of the warring factions. The lovers are the other. The princess. She has to stand aside from the battlefield. But she still has lamenting left to her. Condemned to death by her royal father, she remains the focus of it all. The war. It is about her and her right to love. But the King. He wants to be undaughtered and so remain the King. She wants to be unfathered. For love.

Aria Palmide.

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Wilhelmine von Bayreuth.

And there we have it. Take a good look.  
The courtier rules. The King is oblivious to it.  
Is the King still the King if his shadow's whispers can determine what happens?  
When his courtier's desires are fulfilled. He wants the King's daughter. Lusts  
after the princess. Reaches out his hand to seize the King's treasure. To seize the  
daughter, who should be forgiven and not seized.  
He wants to snatch her away.  
His lustful desire insinuates itself into his King's desire. His lustful fury hides  
itself in the King's outburst of rage and manipulates it to serve his purposes.  
And he stokes it up till it becomes monstrous. Privately he is laughing because  
he is the secret ruler. The King rages to his tune.

Is it not enough for the King's favourite to inveigle the King into such excesses?  
To watch the King as his face grows red and redder and his lusts more  
imperious? Serving the King in times like this? Shouldn't the courtier be  
flattered to follow the King into such baseness? To share the base deeds with the  
King? Wouldn't that be riches enough? Being his informer in the hours when he  
is in rut? Shouldn't the servant be content with what his King desires of him?  
Does he want this King's friendship? Puppet and puppet-master in equal parts?  
Does he want to become his son? The King's son-in-law for one night?

Aria Alcasto.

....

Wilhelmine von Bayreuth.

At that moment he has already killed Ormondo. That is the reason for his  
triumphalism. The rebellion has been put down. The King is fully the King again.  
The challenger no longer lives. Alcasto has disposed of his rival. His plan has  
succeeded. Alcasto has achieved his aim.  
Then Martesia comes on the scene. Martesia, who is supposed to be Ormondo's  
sister and who must now mourn her brother.

Aria Argenore.

...

Wilhelmine von Bayreuth.

But a sister. She loves her brother before he becomes King. Before he steps into  
his inheritance. A sister. She takes care of her brother. Hides him. Builds mazes

out of screens to hide her brother when her father forbids her to visit him.  
Because the father wants to see the son become as coarse as he is. He trains him  
to bawl loud songs. Wants him to learn to bray with the troops. Not play the  
flute. The sister. She endures it with him. How often have I thrown myself at my  
father's feet to tell him how much I loved him. How much he loved him. That  
my brother loves him.

But he. He doesn't believe it. He can't believe it. Can't be allowed to believe it.  
Because the shadows confirm his suspicions. His son, His successor. He shows  
the King his death, they tell him. His death is walking around in his lust to inherit  
the throne. His son is already his death, just as he stands there.

And the father and King. He rains blows on his death. And chases him through  
the halls. Forces him to go hunting. Makes him go on marches. And lays his  
friend. His lover. Lays his friend, headless, before him for him to look at. Puts  
him under guard to force him to live. Does not permit him to put an end to his  
life.

My brother. Only suffering. Hope of peace? Better worlds? A life worth living?  
The King doesn't believe me that I love him. Doesn't believe him that he loves  
him. Tortures us till he sees blood, just because he is the King.

I am obedient and want to be. But I will frame a warning to the King. This King  
here. Here, he is called Argenore. The false sister of his true son will reveal his  
fate to him:

Aria Martesia.

....

Wilhelmine von Bayreuth.

Argenore finds his son Eumene, abducted as an infant, again in the dead  
Ormondo. Martesia has only now remembered the sealed letter from her father,  
who abducted Eumene so long ago and raised him at his court as his own son  
and her brother. But it is too late. She remembers it too late. Much too late.

We live in utter despair.

Nothing

But a legacy of broken fragments.

Love recounted as a passing fancy

Shadows in power

and a choir of whisperings.

Nothing.

Nothing at all accomplished.

Yes. The shadows are slain.

Reap their black reward.

But the father.

But the daughter.

The King.

The princess.

Not even them.  
They find no hand to do it to them.  
To do it for them. To kill them.  
They have to do it themselves.  
Pass judgement on themselves.  
Because a King can only be King.  
Not father.  
And therefore the daughter  
Only princess.

I. I have found my refuge in loving and I rule with music. Disappointment is a just reward for me. That is my allotted part. I stay within my bounds and refuse to be beaten out of myself. I could help my brother and live a pretence instead of loving and thus be more plausible. Because the King. He only understands pretence. He doesn't recognize truth. Doesn't know any love without an ulterior motive. All he knows are calculations and he counts up every morning who is scheming to usurp his power. To take his life. Even when he eats he fears deceit, robbery, and so he eats double and drinks three times as much. The King. He copulates in front of us all. Has us take off his clothes and doesn't send us away. He humiliates mother. Frightens my brother. Frightens the sisters. Makes us ill. "Do you love me?" he calls out in his rages. "Do you love me enough?" and moves into white houses. Because that is power. The false embrace with dagger drawn behind your back. Pure love without a dagger? But that would mean ruling with a pure heart? Powerless and within the laws. No. He prefers the wrong way to the right, and to wallow unrestrained in the wrong way. Power. It can only be admired in blood and in tears. In the prince's back beaten to a bloody pulp. In my lowly marriage. The King is a power addict. And. When we strip off his clothes for the last time. It isn't the heavens which will open. He will go to his grave arrayed in his finery for Hell and he will laugh. He had it. At our expense. With the blood of thousands on his hands, and all men would do the same if they came to power. The laughter of the powerful as the annihilation of the many? I escape into music. Art is my kingdom. Powerless. Into love. But fearless.

Recitative Argenore.

.....

English translation of the spoken text: Phil Marston

