SCENE 2.2:
A CHAMBER IN THE VATICAN.
ENTER CAMILLO AND GIACOMO, IN CONVERSATION.

CAMILLO:
There is an obsolete and doubtful law
By which you might obtain a bare provision
Of food and clothing--

GIACOMO:
Nothing more? Alas!
Bare must be the provision which strict law
Awards, and aged, sullen avarice pays. _5
Why did my father not apprentice me
To some mechanic trade? I should have then
Been trained in no highborn necessities
Which I could meet not by my daily toil.
The eldest son of a rich nobleman _10
Is heir to all his incapacities;
He has wide wants, and narrow powers. If you,
Cardinal Camillo, were reduced at once
From thrice-driven beds of down, and delicate food,
An hundred servants, and six palaces, _15
To that which nature doth indeed require?--

CAMILLO:
Nay, there is reason in your plea; 'twere hard.

GIACOMO:
'Tis hard for a firm man to bear: but I
Have a dear wife, a lady of high birth,
Whose dowry in ill hour I lent my father _20
Without a bond or witness to the deed:
And children, who inherit her fine senses,
The fairest creatures in this breathing world;
And she and they reproach me not. Cardinal,
Do you not think the Pope would interpose 
And stretch authority beyond the law?

CAMILLO:
Though your peculiar case is hard, I know
The Pope will not divert the course of law.
After that impious feast the other night
I spoke with him, and urged him then to check 
Your father's cruel hand; he frowned and said,
'Children are disobedient, and they sting
Their fathers' hearts to madness and despair,
Requiting years of care with contumely.
I pity the Count Cenci from my heart;
His outraged love perhaps awakened hate,
And thus he is exasperated to ill.
In the great war between the old and young
I, who have white hairs and a tottering body,
Will keep at least blameless neutrality.'
(ENTER ORSINO.)
You, my good Lord Orsino, heard those words.

ORSINO:
What words?

GIACOMO:
Alas, repeat them not again!
There then is no redress for me, at least
None but that which I may achieve myself,
Since I am driven to the brink.--But, say,
My innocent sister and my only brother
Are dying underneath my father's eye.
The memorable torturers of this land,
Galeaz Visconti, Borgia, Ezzelin,
Never inflicted on their meanest slave
What these endure; shall they have no protection?

CAMILLO:
Why, if they would petition to the Pope
I see not how he could refuse it--yet
He holds it of most dangerous example
In aught to weaken the paternal power,
Being, as 'twere, the shadow of his own.
I pray you now excuse me. I have business
That will not bear delay.
GIACOMO:
But you, Orsino,
Have the petition: wherefore not present it?

ORSINO:
I have presented it, and backed it with my earnest prayers, and urgent interest;
It was returned unanswered. I doubt not
But that the strange and execrable deeds
Alleged in it--in truth they might well baffle
Any belief--have turned the Pope's displeasure upon the accusers from the criminal:
So I should guess from what Camillo said.

GIACOMO:
My friend, that palace-walking devil Gold
Has whispered silence to his Holiness:
And we are left, as scorpions ringed with fire. What should we do but strike ourselves to death?
For he who is our murderous persecutor
Is shielded by a father's holy name,
Or I would--

(STOPS ABRUPTLY.)

ORSINO:
What? Fear not to speak your thought.
Words are but holy as the deeds they cover: A priest who has forsworn the God he serves;
A judge who makes Truth weep at his decree;
A friend who should weave counsel, as I now,
But as the mantle of some selfish guile;
A father who is all a tyrant seems,
Were the profaner for his sacred name.

NOTE:
_77 makes Truth edition 1821;
makes the truth editions 1819, 1839.

GIACOMO:
Ask me not what I think; the unwilling brain
Feigns often what it would not; and we trust
Imagination with such fantasies
As the tongue dares not fashion into words, 
Which have no words, their horror makes them dim 
To the mind's eye.--My heart denies itself 
To think what you demand.

ORSINO:
But a friend's bosom
Is as the inmost cave of our own mind
Where we sit shut from the wide gaze of day, 
And from the all-communicating air.
You look what I suspected--

GIACOMO:
Spare me now!
I am as one lost in a midnight wood,
Who dares not ask some harmless passenger
The path across the wilderness, lest he, 
As my thoughts are, should be--a murderer.
I know you are my friend, and all I dare
Speak to my soul that will I trust with thee.
But now my heart is heavy, and would take
Lone counsel from a night of sleepless care.
Pardon me, that I say farewell--farewell!
I would that to my own suspected self
I could address a word so full of peace.

ORSINO:
Farewell!--Be your thoughts better or more bold.
(_EXIT GIACOMO.)
I had disposed the Cardinal Camillo
To feed his hope with cold encouragement:
It fortunately serves my close designs
That 'tis a trick of this same family
To analyse their own and other minds.
Such self-anatomy shall teach the will
Dangerous secrets: for it tempts our powers,
Knowing what must be thought, and may be done.
Into the depth of darkest purposes:
So Cenci fell into the pit; even I,
Since Beatrice unveiled me to myself,
And made me shrink from what I cannot shun,
Show a poor figure to my own esteem,
To which I grow half reconciled. I'll do
As little mischief as I can; that thought
Shall fee the accuser conscience.
(AFTER A PAUSE.)
Now what harm
If Cenci should be murdered?--Yet, if murdered,
Wherefore by me? And what if I could take
The profit, yet omit the sin and peril
In such an action? Of all earthly things
I fear a man whose blows outspeed his words _125
And such is Cenci: and while Cenci lives
His daughter's dowry were a secret grave
If a priest wins her.--Oh, fair Beatrice!
Would that I loved thee not, or loving thee,
Could but despise danger and gold and all _130
That frowns between my wish and its effect.
Or smiles beyond it! There is no escape...
Her bright form kneels beside me at the altar,
And follows me to the resort of men,
And fills my slumber with tumultuous dreams, _135
So when I wake my blood seems liquid fire;
And if I strike my damp and dizzy head
My hot palm scorches it: her very name,
But spoken by a stranger, makes my heart
Sicken and pant; and thus unprofitably _140
I clasp the phantom of unfelt delights
Till weak imagination half possesses
The self-created shadow. Yet much longer
Will I not nurse this life of feverous hours:
From the unravelled hopes of Giacomo _145
I must work out my own dear purposes.
I see, as from a tower, the end of all:
Her father dead; her brother bound to me
By a dark secret, surer than the grave;
Her mother scared and unexpostulating _150
From the dread manner of her wish achieved;
And she!--Once more take courage, my faint heart;
What dares a friendless maiden matched with thee?
I have such foresight as assures success:
Some unbeheld divinity doth ever, _155
When dread events are near, stir up men's minds
To black suggestions; and he prospers best,
Not who becomes the instrument of ill,
But who can flatter the dark spirit, that makes
Its empire and its prey of other hearts _160
Till it become his slave...as I will do.

(EXIT.)

END OF ACT 2.