

**LILI ELBE**

An Opera in Two Acts

by Tobias Picker

Libretto by Aryeh Lev Stollman

Dramaturg Lucia Lucas

***LILI ELBE*** is an opera in two acts based on the life of Lili Elbe (1882-1931) one of the first persons to undergo gender affirmation surgery. LILI before transition was known as the acclaimed Danish landscape painter Einar Wegener. Lili was happily married to Gerda Wegener (1886-1940), herself an important artist considered the Danish pioneer of Art D  co and a sought-after portraitist.

## Cast of Characters

LILI ELBE (historically known as Einar Wegener, pre-transition), Baritone

GERDA WEGENER, Wife of Lili, Soprano

ANNA LARSEN BJØRNER, Famous actress and friend of Gerda and Lili,  
ORPHEUS / MOTHER WEGENER / YOUNG WOMAN, Mezzo- Soprano

EURYDICE/ HÉLÈNE ALLATINI, wife of Eric Allatini, friends of Lili and Gerda,  
Mezzo-soprano

CLAUDE LEJEUNE, Fiancé of Lili, Tenor

MARIUS WEGENER, Lili's brother, Baritone

PROFESSOR WARNEKROS, Head of Municipal Women's Clinic in Dresden, Bass

KING CHRISTIAN X / MAJOR FERNANDO PORTA, Gerda's second husband,  
Baritone

DANISH COUNTESS / DAGMAR, sister of Lili / MATRON, Male Soprano

ART CRITIC / ERIC ALLATINI, husband of Hélène Allatini, Baritone

(SATB)

**ACT 1**

**Scene 1. Royal Danish Theatre, November 1925.**

*A new play about Orpheus is premiering by a young Danish playwright. ANNA LARSEN BJØRNER, friend of GERDA and LILI is playing Orpheus, stage right. She calls to Eurydice as she coaxes her back from the underworld.*

ANNA/ORPHEUS

Come with me, Eurydice, Come.

It is a long way.

But step by step,

We shall reach the upper world.

Only what is behind us need be feared.

EURYDICE

If you cannot look at me

as I am,

Leave me here!

ANNA/ORPHEUS

Come with me, Eurydice.

The way is long

from the dead to the living.

But step by step by step,

we will reach the world above.

Eurydice, my love for you has never changed.

I will love you forever.

*The stage scene fades and we see GERDA and LILI in their box seats.*

GERDA *(nudges LILI with her elbow, whispering)*

Einar. You are sleeping!

And Anna is playing so beautifully!

LILI *(whispering back)*

I am not sleeping.

GERDA

You are! Anna will see you!

LILI

She cannot see me

in the dark.

GERDA

She can see in the dark.  
Like a cat.  
Tomorrow when she  
comes to sit for me.  
She will ask,  
“Why did Einar sleep?”

LILI

Well, I prefer Gluck!

TWO WOMEN BEHIND THEM

Shhh!

*(on stage Eurydice pulls away from Orpheus)*

ANNA/ORPHEUS

No!

EURYDICE

I can't!

ANNA/ORPHEUS *(ORPHEUS desperately looks back, EURYDICE vanishes)*

No! No!

**Scene 2. Next morning. Wegener Apartment in Copenhagen.**

*On one side of the stage GERDA is working on her painting of ANNA. LILI is on the other side of the stage painting a still life. They sing of the differences in painting real people versus landscapes.*

GERDA

Bogs and swamps.  
Twisted trees.  
What is the point of painting  
things without life.

LILI

What on earth do you mean?  
Bogs are full of life.  
Trees are living things!

GERDA

I mean one should paint people  
Thinking beings.  
Creatures that love and yearn!  
The countryside does not think.  
The Earth and the trees  
simply cannot love.

LILI  
Painting on a canvas is not alive.  
Paint on a canvas can never breathe.

GERDA  
At least they look alive.

LILI (*looking at the portrait GERDA is painting*)  
Gerda, your Anna is practically done.  
Perhaps soon your paint will say something to me.

GERDA  
Anna has nothing to say to you.  
You slept through her show.

LILI  
Anna's always late.  
Who knows if she'll ever come?

GERDA  
She called to say she can't.  
She's lost all track of time.  
We should buy her a watch.  
I need her finished for my exhibition.

LILI  
But her face is done.  
And most of the rest.  
You do not need her.

GERDA  
I *do* need her.  
I can't imagine everything.  
I have such trouble with legs.  
(*now looking very strangely at LILI*)  
But Anna had an idea!  
Absurd, I told her, but... (perhaps she's right!)  
Sit, Einar, sit.

Sit, Einar.

LILI

Sit and do what?

GERDA

Pretend you are Anna.

Put on my robe. *(she hands her a colorful dressing gown)*

Sit with your legs like this

... with your legs like this!

LILI *(puts on the gown and takes up a pose)*

Just like this?

... with my legs like this?

Give me those lilies.

You must put them in too.

The fragrance of these lilies makes them living things.

*GERDA laughs and hands LILI the lilies and begins to paint. Several moments go by.*

GERDA *(smiling, looking back and forth from her easel to LILI)*

Einar, you are so pretty!

My pretty husband.

Prettier than Anna!

Pretty as those lilies.

The model I have longed for!

And always right before me!

LILI *(tentatively, somewhat baffled)*

Gerda. Will you call me Lili?

GERDA *(now thoughtfully, seriously)*

Yes. I will call you Lili. Lili!

LILI *(spies herself in the across the room)*

Gerda. What do you see when you look at me now?

GERDA

I see a woman.

A beautiful woman.

I see a woman named Lili.

Lili. Lili. *(she puts down her brush)*

Look up. Turn your leg.

Look off to the side.

Very pretty!

Truly very pretty!

Can it be you are still a man?  
You're the model of my dreams!  
I see a woman.  
A beautiful woman.  
I see a woman named Lili.  
Lili. Lili.

LILI  
When you paint me now  
I feel I have always been her.

GERDA  
Yes.  
It's as if you have always been her.

*(she turns to the audience, away from LILI)*  
It is quite uncanny  
and theatrical.  
I have this sudden feeling  
as if the gods had begun  
to play games  
and *changed* me into Orpheus  
and made of Einar my *wife*.  
*(she looks at the floor)*  
Look, I've let the paint fall from my brush.  
Oh, I want to paint her again and again.

*(she turns back now to LILI)*  
Don't stop, my dear.  
Lili, turn your head.  
Look up to the sky.  
Very pretty!  
Truly very pretty!  
Can it be that you are still a man?  
You're the model of my dreams.  
If the gods have made you a woman  
I still love you all the same.

(A violinist moves slowly across the stage eventually joining the on stage string quartet)



**Scene 3. A Few Evenings Later. Ole Haslund Gallerie**

*The opening of GERDA's portrait exhibition. GERDA and ANNA are there talking with members of the elegant crowd. People are admiring the work. LILI is nowhere to be seen.*

GERDA

Anna, your Orpheus was breathtaking!  
I was quite convinced you were a handsome man.  
Is that young playwright here?  
Of course, I don't believe the rumors  
about you two.  
He's far too young for you!

ANNA

Thank you, darling.  
But we're not here to talk about  
what's too young for me.  
We are here to admire your work.  
Though it seems I am the centerpiece.

GERDA

You will always be the center of attention.  
That's how it should always be.  
You are larger than life!  
Anna! Larger than life!

ANNA *(almost sadly)*

That's just silly.  
That's just silly, Gerda.  
No one can be larger than life.  
There is nothing larger than life.  
No matter how big you paint it.  
*(she walks toward her portrait and tentatively stretches out her hand).*

GERDA

Careful! Don't touch! The paint is still a bit wet.

ANNA

Gerda, those are not my legs!

GERDA

I used Einar's legs instead.

ANNA  
What?

GERDA  
I used Einar's legs instead.  
It was *your* idea  
to use his instead.

ANNA  
Well, I was only joking,  
but they are nicer than mine!

ART CRITIC (*interrupting*)  
Where is your famous husband?  
The great painter of our Danish landscapes.

GERDA  
He is not himself tonight.

ART CRITIC  
Let's hope he recovers soon.

GERDA  
It's the dampness in the air.  
Copenhagen is always cold and dreary!

ART CRITIC  
(*looks around to ANNA's portrait*)  
Your portrait of Anna Larsen is very interesting.  
It's good for an artist's wife to have a hobby.

GERDA (*bristling as she move away*)  
How kind of you to say.

(*At the other side of the gallery an elegant woman appears. Everyone turns. Men come up to LILI and try talking to her as she shyly covers her face with a fan.*)

ANNA (*whispering to GERDA*)  
Who is that?  
(*she looks back at her own portrait*)  
Those legs are familiar.  
Goodness!  
Is it Einar?  
Is it really Einar?

GERDA (*whispering back*)

It could not be.

ANNA

It *is* Einar.

It is!

What a wonderful game.

GERDA

If anybody asks

let's just say it's

Einar's sister from Vejle.

ANNA and GERDA (*conspiratorially*)

Einar's sister from Vejle.

Lili. Lili.

GERDA

Einar's pretty sister!

We have waited so long for her visit.

You will finally get to meet her.

Lili.

ANNA

Lili.

She is elegant and so refined  
as you have often told me.

GERDA

We have waited so long for her to visit.

ANNA

for her visit

ANNA and GERDA

The paragon of womanhood.

We are so happy she's here.

We have waited so long for her.

Everyone's favorite and ours.

So graceful, gracious and kind.

Yes, a little shy just standing there.

(*they call out to her across the room*)

Lili! Lili!

ANNA, GERDA, CHORUS

The paragon of womanhood.

We are so happy she's here.

We have waited so long for her.  
Everyone's favorite and ours.  
So graceful, gracious and kind.  
Yes, a little shy just standing there.  
*(they call out to her across the room)*

GEDRA and ANNA  
Lili! Darling Lili!  
We are over here!  
Come! Come!

*LILI breaks through the circle of men surrounding her and hurries over to ANNA and GERDA.*

#### **Scene 4. Next Morning. Wegener Apartment Bedroom.**

*GERDA and LILI are in bed. GERDA wakes up and turns to LILI who is drowsy but just waking up as well. GERDA notices LILI has slept in LILI'S clothes.*

GERDA  
You pulled it off last night.  
But you came home so tired.  
You could not even undress.  
You fell asleep in your feminine disguise.  
*(she touches LILI 's dress and then her face)*  
A delightful game.  
A perfect ruse!  
No one guessed or knew.  
You are a better actor than Anna.  
Born to play any role.

LILI *(uncertain)*  
I pulled it off?  
A delightful game? A feminine disguise?  
It did not seem a game to me,  
For the first time I felt alive.  
For the first time my life felt real.

GERDA

What do you mean real? (*laughing*)  
 Einar, you are already real.  
 (*she pokes playfully*)  
 See you are real.  
 Flesh and blood enlivened by the breath of God.  
 My darling husband.

LILI

We are more than flesh and blood.  
 “Male and female He created them.”  
 In His Divine immortal plan  
 I know now what is real.

GERDA (*puzzled*)

What is “real”?

LILI

Though my mother named me Einar,  
 I have never felt like Einar.  
 It seems a thing so strange and baffling.  
 I’ve never really felt natural.  
 I’m not Einar.

GERDA

My dearest husband, my dear Einar,  
 It was just a playful game.  
 A bit of let’s-pretend.  
 Though strangely marvelous I agree.  
 As if Lili really were your sister  
 from Vejle.  
 The perfect model for me,  
 But only that. Only that.  
 You are still my husband.  
 You are still my husband.  
 I don’t want Lili to take you.

LILI

Perhaps, you have no husband.  
 And the gods have changed *you* into Orpheus  
 and made of me your *wife*.

GERDA

My God. My *wife*?

Einar, let's stop this now.  
 My head is truly spinning.  
 Let's stop this now.  
 Please.

LILI

Perhaps, you have no husband.  
 And the gods have changed *you* into Orpheus  
 and made of me your *wife*.

Look at me! Look at me now!  
 Perhaps, I am not some visitor from Vejle!  
 Maybe I'm not really Einar.  
 Though this is my home with you.

I have known the truth all these years.  
 I knew the truth.  
 What is our past?  
 The years carried us along  
 Like a boat tossed upon the sea to visit foreign lands  
 And rest awhile in every port.  
 I stopped to fill my life with love and gave my life to you.

Where is Einar now that Lili's here?  
 He has no future, only a past.  
 Where will he go?  
 Where will I go?

No matter where I go,  
 I will love you just the same.  
 Oh, Gerda you know I'll always love you.

GERDA

Then Lili will be welcome to visit us  
 from time to time.  
 But Einar you are still my husband.  
 Perhaps Lili will make me more famous than you,  
 when we leave this place.  
 All my reviews are terrible.  
*(she puts a newspaper down in front of LILI)*

LILI *(looks carefully at the article and then at GERDA)*  
 Danish critics are such fools!  
 Lili would be most delighted to make you very famous, too.  
 Now that we will finally move to Paris

where we can be truly free.  
When we're in Paris,  
then we can be truly free.  
Truly free.

GERDA  
Yes, alright.

GERDA and LILI  
When we're in Paris.  
When we're in Paris,  
then we can truly be free.  
Truly free.

GERDA  
But there's just one rule.  
Lili never overstays. Lili must always leave by twilight.  
And let my husband come back to me.  
*(LILI nods in silent agreement)*

### **Scene 5. Paris. Wegener Apartment some weeks later.**

*LILI and GERDA have rented an apartment in PARIS. Having just returned home from Italy, their friends ERIC and HÉLÈNE are visiting the apartment for the first time. They all kiss one another and embrace looking around the apartment together.*

ERIC and HÉLÈNE  
We have been away too long wandering in the South.  
We have not seen you both since you came to Rome,  
more than two years ago!  
Well, here we are together,  
together again.  
You found such lovely rooms! So spacious.

Such light! Perfect for two artists.

GERDA and LILI

Yes, we are very happy with them.

LILI

Oscar Wilde lived here.

He died in the alcove back there.

He once said,

LILI and CHORUS/T/B

“Death must be so beautiful.

To forget time, to forgive life, to be at peace.”

HÉLÈNE

Well, maybe he was right, whoever *he* was, but no matter.

There are ghosts in every room on every street in Paris.

Someone at some time has died in every spot.

It can't be avoided.

But I have never seen a ghost,

and hope they don't see me.

GERDA

I don't like to think of ghosts

or clever things they said.

LILI

I don't fear death.

I set up my easel in that very alcove.

It has the best light.

GERDA

I love the other room.

*(She leads them into the other room where there are many portraits of LILI crowded everywhere.  
The guests are astonished.)*

HÉLÈNE

Mon Dieu, Gerda.

Elle est magnifique!

Oh! Mon Dieu!

Where did you find such a stunning model?

Where?

We should like to meet her.

How could one ever get tired of painting her?

Who is she, Gerda?



Where did you find such a gem?  
*(ERIC nods smiling)*

ERIC  
Look how she makes your paintings come to life!

ERIC and HÉLÈNE  
What is her name?

GERDA  
Lili! Lili!

ERIC and HÉLÈNE  
We should like to meet her.

LILI  
You have met her already.  
You have met her before.  
Many times.

GERDA  
Einar, please. They are not ready.

HÉLÈNE  
I don't think so, Einar.

HÉLÈNE  
We would surely remember.  
We have never seen her before.  
ERIC and HÉLÈNE  
We SO want to, we SO want to meet her.

LILI *(quickly wrapping a colorful scarf around her head, one that appears in several paintings)*  
I am Lili.  
I am Lili. Lili.

ERIC and HÉLÈNE *(they are quiet for a long moment)*  
Could it be?  
Before, perhaps, we could never . . . imagine!

HÉLÈNE  
We are living in new times,  
where everything is possible.

ERIC

Still you must be careful.  
And you must know people like you  
Will not be accepted.

HÉLÈNE

These are modern times.

ERIC and HÉLÈNE

Now . . . we know you!

HÉLÈNE

Then let us introduce our new friend to the world of life.  
Let Lili come to the Danish Countess' ball tomorrow night  
and make new friends.

GERDA

And Einar, will he have to stay home?

LILI and GERDA

Lili and Gerda will be there.

LILI , GERDA, ERIC, HÉLÈNE and CHORUS

Poor, Einar. He will just simply have to stay home.

Poor, Einar. He will just simply have to stay home.

## **Scene 6. Paris. A Danish Countess' Mansion**

ERIC, HÉLÈNE, GERDA and LILI arrive at a ball at the Paris mansion of a DANISH COUNTESS. The COUNTESS is animatedly speaking with guests at the other side of the room. HÉLÈNE, *CLAUDE LEJEUNE* and *MAJOR PORTA* enter the ballroom and are approaching the group.

HÉLÈNE

Claude LeJeune! Major Fernando Porta!

Major, you know almost everyone.

But Claude, you are new in our circle.

Gerda Wegener and her friend Lili Coutard.

CLAUDE  
Three such beautiful women,  
Who could ever choose?

HÉLÈNE  
It is not up to *you* to choose, Claude.  
Gerda and I are married.  
Only Lili is free.

CLAUDE (*turning to LILI*)  
Then may I challenge you to this foxtrot, Lili Coutard?

LILI  
I accept the challenge.

MAJOR PORTA (*to GERDA who is watching LILI*)  
Where is Einar?

GERDA  
Copenhagen.

MAJOR PORTA  
Ah! The famous artist running here and there.  
Does the artist chase fame or the other way around?

GERDA  
That is a question only the Fates can answer . . .

MAJOR PORTA  
Then let's temp fate.

*GERDA begins dancing with MAJOR PORTA while ERIC and HÉLÈNE, and CLAUDE and LILI are still dancing with each other.*  
*LILI is distracted, looking at GERDA who is engrossed talking to MAJOR PORTA.*

CLAUDE (*to LILI as they dance*)  
Tomorrow let's take a stroll in the Tuileries.  
Let's!  
The lilies are in bloom.  
I would pick them all for you.

LILI

Why would you do that?  
That would be criminal!  
Why would you do that?

CLAUDE  
For enfleurage.  
Enfleurage.

LILI  
What is that?

CLAUDE  
Enfleurage is a transformation used everywhere,  
but most are unaware,  
I am a perfumer,  
I capture the exhalations of flowers.  
Some think me mad.  
But I believe flowers are sentient beings  
capable of love.

Their tragedy is they live so briefly  
and there is no time for love.  
Though when they are caressed and bathed in oil  
they relinquish their scent,  
which lives on in perfume.  
They live on as perfume

LILI  
If flowers are capable of love,  
how much more so a boy and a girl  
whose time is less fleeting.

COUNTESS (*approaches the group which has now come together*)  
There you are.  
(*She lifts her hand to CLAUDE's nose*)  
Do you recognize this?

CLAUDE (*sniffs*)  
Of course, I made it just for you long ago  
From the fragrance of Evening Faces,  
“La Comtesse Elégante.”

COUNTESS  
Yes, you named it for me,  
And so I thought . . .  
But then you disappeared!

CLAUDE

No! It was you who disappeared!  
La comtesse disparaît!

*(The countess smiles rolling her eyes and turns from him to her friends)*

COUNTESS

Who can keep track of such trifles.

Ah, Hélène,  
Who are your darling friends?

HÉLÈNE

This is Gerda Wegener.  
Like you, from Copenhagen.  
A wonderful painter.

COUNTESS

*(taking GERDA's hand)*  
A painter! Marvelous!  
Jeg er sa glad for at du er her!  
[I am so glad you are here!]

GERDA

Jeg er meget glad for at vaere her.  
[I am happy to be here.]

COUNTESS

*(then addressing LILI)*  
Er du ogsa fra Danmark?  
[Are you also from Denmark?]  
*(LILI pretends she does not understand)*

HÉLÈNE

Lili only speaks French.

LILI

Comment J'aimerais pouvoir parler une autre langue.  
Nous, les francais, sommes terriblement provinciaux!

COUNTESS

French is all one really needs.

LILI

C'est vrai, la France est le centre du monde. Tout est possible ici.

COUNTESS

Hélène! Where have you been hiding her?

HÉLÈNE

Lili is visiting from Beaugency.

She's the inspiration for Gerda's latest paintings.

Her model and muse.

You must see them. You won't be able to take your eyes off them!

COUNTESS *(to LILI)*

I can't take my eyes off her!

From the country? Yet so elegant.

As if she lived her whole life in Paris.

CLAUDE *(to GERDA)*

Are there paintings of Lili?

I would buy them all!

May I visit your studio?

GERDA

Yes. Come tomorrow at two.

CLAUDE *(to LILI)*

And will mademoiselle Lili be there?

Perhaps, after we can take our stroll in the Tuileries.

LILI *(suddenly worried)*

I must ask my host, Gerda. In case she has plans for me.

GERDA

I only paint Lili in the morning light.

Then she is free to come and go as she chooses.

But bring her back before twilight.

COUNTESS

Ah, look who is over there. The young baron. Excuse me.

*(she hurries away)*

HÉLÈNE *(whispering to the group)*

So handsome. He must be her new lover.

She won't be returning to Copenhagen

anytime soon.

## CHORUS

Everything everywhere transformed.  
 Even as the night, soon must reach its end,  
 with the summer's morning light,  
 the dancing and music transforms  
 these two into lovers;  
 into lovers.  
 Luminous, new and altered beings.  
 Like flowers transformed into perfume,  
 which long after the flowers are gone,  
 meet us with their scent  
 and rekindle lost memories.

Everything, everywhere transformed.  
 Everything, everywhere transformed.  
 Born, dying, reborn.  
 Everywhere metamorphoses  
 Everywhere transfiguration.  
 Mother Earth herself,  
 each morning with the sun,  
 every season with the stars,  
 Mother Earth herself reborn.

**Scene 7. Paris. Tuileries Gardens. Wegener Apartment**

*LILI and CLAUDE are completing their walk in the Tuileries Gardens and taking leave of one another.*

LILI

I'm sorry, Claude, this lovely afternoon is over.  
 And I'm so glad you did not steal all the garden lilies  
 to make my perfume.  
 Einar's brother and sister are coming.  
 I do not wish to be late.  
 And I want to look my best to greet them.

CLAUDE

Lili, I think you could not look more beautiful,  
 Lili. Lili. Lili. Lili. *(he pauses)*

LILI

I must hurry.

CLAUDE

However you dress up  
and whatever you want to make me believe,  
I know you are a genuine woman.  
I love you. I love you.  
*(he takes her by surprise and kisses her)*

LILI *(flustered)*

I must... I should hurry back home now.  
*(she takes leave of CLAUDE)*

*On the other side of the stage LILI's brother and sister have come to visit her and GERDA at their Paris apartment, arriving earlier than expected. GERDA answers the knock on the door.*

GERDA *(nervously)*

Dagmar! Marius! You're early!

MARIUS

Good to see you, Gerda!

DAGMAR

The trip from Copenhagen was a trial.  
Marius, ever the bachelor,  
was busy flirting with every woman.  
And where is Einar?  
He's always here to greet us.

GERDA *(nervously)*

Einar's late and you are early. Early.

*(Suddenly LILI enters the apartment)*

DAGMAR

Einar!

Why are you dressed like that?  
I do not understand. Do you, Marius?

MARIUS

Let's let Einar explain.



I'm sure there is some simple reason,  
we don't know.

LILI

I am Lili now.  
I have always been Lili.

DAGMAR

Lili? Such a thing cannot be!

LILI

What "thing" cannot be?  
A simple woman named Lili cannot be?  
I am Lili.  
I have always been Lili.  
I have always been your sister.

DAGMAR

Sister? Lili? Sister? Lili?

You are my brother, my Einar,  
I can call you nothing else but Einar.  
No offence to Marius, older than us both,  
but you are my special brother,  
almost my child.

At the moment Mother  
gave birth to you,  
I heard her cries,  
which frightened me.  
But, then yours  
were such sweet relief.  
They made me weep with joy.

I watched them bathe you.  
They laughed. They laughed and said,  
"Now you have a little brother.  
See his little man thing."

And so I know you better than  
you seem to know yourself.  
Tell me, what has changed since then?  
Tell me what has changed since then!  
You are not and can never be a real woman.

MARIUS

Dagmar, please, not so harsh.  
Be temperate.

LILI

Dear Sister,  
you cannot see  
in a newborn's bath  
a woman's true soul and heart.

DAGMAR (*now angrily*)

Gerda! You are so silent.  
What do you say to this confusion?  
What have you done to your husband?  
I know we live in changing times,  
But God and Nature do not change.  
My head may burst.  
I know what my eyes have told me all my life;  
I have a brother, born after me,  
whom I have always loved.

I know what you are.  
You want to make him your wife.

I will not allow him to be  
taken from me.

MARIUS

What of God and Nature, Dagmar?  
Let us be calm and think things through.  
What difference, Dagmar,  
a brother or sister?  
If we have another sister  
born to the same parents,  
what difference, Dagmar?

DAGMAR

I cannot think. I cannot stand this anymore.  
(*she rushes out of the apartment*)

LILI (*stunned watching Dagmar leave, then slowly*)

If I am reviled by my own sister,  
what hope is there for me,  
for Lili.

I can never be a real woman.

MARIUS (*goes over to LILI and embraces her*)

I know a great doctor  
visiting Paris from Dresden.  
We once studied together.  
He does amazing things.  
Maybe he can help you.

LILI

There is no one who can help me.

MARIUS

Perhaps he may.  
He has published about this.  
Let us see if he can help you.

CHORUS SA

You will always be a man.  
You will. You will.  
You are not and can never be a real woman.  
Never! Never! Never!/You are not a woman.

CHORUS TB

So graceful, gracious and kind.  
Yes, a little shy just standing there.  
A paragon of womanhood.

CHORUS ALL

A paragon of womanhood,  
of womanhood.

## **Scene 8. Professor Warnekros' Paris Apartment**

*MARIUS and LILI have arrived at PROFESSOR WARNEKROS's Paris apartment. LILI is waiting in the salon while MARIUS is in another room speaking privately with PROFESSOR WARNEKROS.*

CHORUS

You are not and never will be a real woman.  
A paragon of womanhood.

You can never be a real woman.

LILI (*while MARIUS awaits PROFESSOR WARNEKROS in the other room*)

What remedy exists  
for a life some insist  
is blessed in so many ways,  
Gerda the greatest blessing of all.

My life has become a living hell.  
So indeterminate.  
What remedy awaits me?  
Can there be any hope in this place?  
(*she looks around at paintings on the wall that are not to her taste*)

And if by some wizardry  
This doctor could help me,  
What would become of Gerda?

(*On the other side of the stage PROFESSOR WARNEKROS greets MARIUS. They walk together to the other side of the stage, [the salon] where LILI is waiting*)

PROFESSOR WARNEKROS  
Ah, Marius! Marius!  
Twenty years!

MARIUS  
And you have become a great man!  
While I am just a country doctor.

PROFESSOR WARNEKROS  
Marius, the country people need their doctors.

PROFESSOR WARNEKROS (*approaches LILI and shakes her hand*)  
I am Professor Warnekros.  
Your brother Marius has told me about you.

LILI (*standing unsteadily*)  
Professor Warnekros, I feel like a sleepwalker every moment.

PROFESSOR WARNEKROS (*taking LILI 's arm*)  
We live in modern times.

MARIUS and WARNEKROS  
We live in modern times.

PROFESSOR WARNEKROS

Science and medicine have advanced.  
There are new ways of thinking  
about things we never thought were possible.

But first I must examine you.  
so I may know you and help you.

We must be as rigorous in our science  
as in our art and in our hope.

*(LILI goes behind a screen where she undresses, while MARIUS shows the professor some drawings of LILI by GERDA. LILI comes out in a patient's gown and lies down on PROFESSOR WARNEKOS's examination table.)*

MARIUS

Look at this one.  
Now look at this one.  
See how womanly she is.

PROFESSOR WARNEKROS *(looking over LILI's body, MARIUS standing off to the side)*

My God!  
You've had x-ray treatments!  
They have set you on fire  
and burned your skin with their hellish devices!  
Marius, can you come here.  
Did you know about this?

MARIUS *(coming over to the examination table, looing shocked)*

No! I did not know or  
I would have stopped it.  
Those radiologists are fools  
and cruel.  
They do more harm than good.

PROFESSOR WARNEKROS  
They do more harm than good.

*(WARNEKROS continues his examination)*

It also hurts here, doesn't it?  
And there?  
*(LILI winces and nods)*  
The x-rays have damaged you,  
deep inside you, too.

LILI (*frightened*)

Deep inside? Deep inside?

PROFESSOR WARNEKROS

Please sit up.

Please sit up.

(*LILI sits up*)

I can see you have refined feminine features.

And I know you have suffered.

I believe I can help you.

I shall give you a new life.

MARIUS

Did you hear that Lili?

He can help you!

LILI

A new life?

How?

PROFESSOR WARNEKROS

I will first remove the mistaken male organs and later give you new and strong ovaries.

LILI

How is that possible?

How is that possible?

MARIUS

Modern science, Lili!

PROFESSOR WARNEKROS

With young ovaries, you will have new youth.

Like mother Eve in Eden.

But I must warn you

there will be several surgeries

and painful recoveries.

Your life could be in danger, too.

Think upon it.

LILI

I am not afraid, Professor Warnekros.

PROFESSOR WARNEKROS

I promise you I will not leave Lili in the lurch  
I will assist her with her first steps into life.  
Step by step.

Come to me.  
Come to the Women's Clinic  
In Dresden  
The city of art and science and creation.  
The Florence on the Elbe  
There are new ways of thinking.  
There are new ways of thinking  
about things we never thought were possible.

*(PROFESSOR WARNEKROS hurries out of the room.)*

LILI *(dressing, now as if all alone with the rest of the stage dark)*

I do not know if what he says  
can really be achieved.  
If it cannot  
I will take my life, take my life  
in one years' time.

That is more than enough time  
To live in a mistaken body.

I do not know if what he says  
can really be achieved.

I can barely hope to wish it true!  
But if this hope turns false,  
I will take my life  
in one years' time.  
And I shall make for my own story  
my own ending.  
I will make for my own story  
my own ending.

My death could be so beautiful,  
All suffering relieved.  
Forgetting time.  
Forgiving life.  
At last to be at peace.

End Act 1

## ACT 2

### Scene 1. Dresden. The Recovery Room in The Municipal Women's Clinic

*LILI is still under anesthesia. LILI is dreaming she is in an opera about Orpheus. She is weak and struggling to climb, being led by PROFESSOR WARNEKROS.*

PROFESSOR WARNEKROS  
Come with me, Lili, come.  
Come.  
The journey is long.  
But step by step,  
we shall reach the upper world.  
The world of life.  
Your new life.

We are almost there, Lili.  
The most amazing journey ever,  
ever made.



Don't be afraid.  
Only what is behind us need be feared.

CHORUS

I am so weak  
and tired,  
but since you speak  
so tenderly  
I shall not falter.  
I shall follow you.  
You have saved me,  
*(she winces and stumbles)*  
The pain is like the serpent's bite  
that first sent me down here.  
I have promised you,  
I have promised you,  
I would not look backward until  
we arrive in the upper world.

PROFESSOR WARNEKROS

Come with me, Lili, Lili.  
Hold on to the hand  
of the one who saves you.  
The way is long  
But step by step by step,  
we will reach the world above.  
Your new life.

CHORUS

My new life?  
My new life?  
But where is Einar?  
Where is he?

PROFESSOR WARNEKROS

There is only Lili now.  
You have always been Lili.  
Do not cry for Einar now.  
Do not look back.

*LILI and PROFESSOR WARNEKROS arrive in the upper world where GERDA, MOTHER WEGENER and CLAUDE are waiting.*

GERDA, MOTHER WEGENER and CLAUDE

Our Lili has returned  
from her great journey.  
We thought we might lose her.  
But our Lili has come back to us.  
We can't believe our eyes!  
Such a journey was never made before.

Oh, Lili, Oh, Lili,  
You have come back to us.  
As you are.  
As you've always been.  
As you are.

CLAUDE  
Oh, Lili, Oh, Lili.  
You are a genuine woman.  
Don't be frightened when I tell you  
I love Lili!  
Oh, Lili.  
You are a genuine woman.  
Don't be frightened when I tell you  
I love Lili!  
Oh, Lili.  
You are a genuine woman.  
Don't be frightened when I tell you  
I love Lili!

GERDA  
Lili, my beautiful wife.  
MOTHER WEGENER  
Lili, my beautiful daughter.

CHORUS  
Claude, I love you.  
I love you.

PROFESSOR WARNEKROS  
There is only Lili now.  
You have always been Lili.  
Lili, Lili,  
do not cry for Einar.  
Do not cry for Einar  
Don't look back.  
Don't look back.

Don't look back.  
Don't look back.

*The PROFESSOR, GERDA, MOTHER WEGENER and CLAUDE all fade as LILI wakes up moaning terribly.*

MATRON

Hush, my sweet dear.  
All has gone well.  
You have done splendidly.  
The Professor is so happy.  
You have pleased him greatly.

Hush, my sweet dear.  
Soon you will feel better.  
I will give you something strong for the pain.  
*(she injects her with the morphine and LILI falls back into sleep)*

## **Scene 2. Christian X, King of Denmark's Palace**

*Weeks after recovering from her surgery, LILI and GERDA arrive at the Danish Royal Court to petition to have LILI's gender officially affirmed and have her marriage to GERDA annulled.*

*LILI and GERDA timidly enter the court to apply their case to the judges and clerks.*

CLERKS *(announcing to the court)*

Just two ladies here.  
Strange petition, my Lords.

FIRST JUDGES *(reading from court documents)*

Who has seen or judged  
such a fantastic case?  
*(They hand the documents to the SECOND JUDGES)*

SECOND JUDGES

Which laws apply to such a circumstance?  
The husband wishes to be declared a woman.

FIRST and SECOND JUDGES

And claims that “if the husband does not exist but is a woman, there never was a marriage and hence it must be annulled.”

CLERKS (*confused*)

Just two ladies here.

That is all I see.

Can there be two married wives?

FIRST and SECOND JUDGES

Where shall we start?

The law has no precedent!

(*to LILI and GERDA*)

Which is the husband who no longer exists?

Speak up. Speak up!

What do you say?

(*LILI steps forward. CHRISTIAN X enters to the court's astonishment.*)

CLERKS and JUDGES

All bow!

By the grace of God,

The King of Denmark!

(*everyone bows deeply*)

CHRISTIAN X

We have come to see for Ourselves this unheard of case

Before the court that functions in Our name.

Our kingdom is a modern one in an ever changing world.

But We haven't been prepared for this.

(*to LILI*)

What do you say?

LILI (*at first timidly and then more confident*)

Your Majesty is just and rules with wisdom.

I have always been a woman even though called a man.

And so I yearn for my feminine role and an honest name.

Please grant me that, Your Majesty.

And grant that Gerda Wegener who was called my wife be free.

CHRISTIAN X

Our royal eyes can see you're a woman.

Indeed the ancients told us in their myths

Salmacis prayed to keep Hermaphroditus with her always.

And so they were transformed and became as one.

They became one.  
 And Baucis and Philemon, the loving couple,  
 Zeus transformed into trees  
 So they'd be together always.  
*(turning to GERDA)*  
 And what do *you* say?

GERDA  
 The marriage I had  
 was of a deep companionship.  
 But now I believe  
 The person I love,  
 My dearest friend and confidant is indeed a woman.  
 And so, I wish for her a future of happiness.  
 I believe that God has granted Your Majesty  
 the wisdom of Solomon.  
 The wisdom of Solomon.

LILI  
 I have always been a woman even though called a man.  
 And so I yearn for my feminine role and an honest name.  
 Please grant me that, Your Majesty.  
 Your Majesty.

FIRST and SECOND JUDGES  
 Which laws apply to such a circumstance?  
 The husband wishes to be declared a woman.

CHRISTIAN X *(flattered, smiling)*  
 The gods put souls together  
 But We must pull them apart.  
 As God has  
 shared with Us His power of grace.  
*(turning to LILI)*  
 We shall bestow it upon you.  
 Your marriage to this woman never was.  
 It is annulled.  
 You are a woman.  
 What name do you choose?

LILI  
 My name is Lili.  
 My name is Lili Elbe.  
 Lili Elbe.

CHRISTIAN X

We declare you Lili Elbe.

Judges see to that!

*(he exits)*

*(LILI and GERDA embrace in tears)*

### **Scene 3. Lili's Mother's House in Vejle, Jutland**

*After her official recognition as a woman, LILI goes to visit her family in Jutland. Marius brings her to their mother's house.*

MARIUS

Mother.

This is Lili Elbe.

MOTHER WEGENER *(to LILI)*.

We are happy to meet a Paris friend of Marius.

LILI

I am from a country town.

But I've lived so long in Paris.

And am flattered to be considered a Parisian.

MOTHER WEGENER

*(to LILI)*

I have never been to Paris.

I have stayed in Vejle all my life.

I have raised my three children here.

My daughter has given me grandchildren  
who I rarely see.

They have their own lives.

But my sons! My sons! *(now rolling her eyes)*

My son the doctor has not settled down.

You should marry him.

He would make a good father to your children.

LILI

My children...

MOTHER WEGENER

My other son, Einar, the famous painter,  
Has not been home in years.  
I believe his wife does not want children.  
She'd rather paint strange women.  
Paintings are not children.  
Do you want to be a mother, Lili?

LILI

Oh, to be a mother if I could.  
. . . a mother.

MOTHER WEGENER (*smiling, looking from Lili to Marius*)

Yes, to be a mother!  
Every woman's dream.  
Yes, to be a mother!  
Every woman's dream.

LILI and MOTHER WEGENER

Yes, to be a mother!

MOTHER WEGENER

You're still young enough.  
May God bless you  
with many children.

DAGMAR

Mother! This is not some woman from Paris!  
This is your son Einar!  
This is Einar.  
This is your son, Einar Wegener.

MOTHER WEGENER

Dagmar, I do not get your joke.  
I do not.

DAGMAR

That is your Einar in a foolish disguise.  
He has cruelly murdered his true self.

MARIUS

No. No. Dagmar.  
No. No. Dagmar.  
She is no longer Einar.

MOTHER WEGENER (*completely confused*)

You two are not making any sense!  
What kind of joke is this?  
How can Einar be Mademoiselle Lili?

LILI  
We are not the same person.  
I am Lili. Lili Elbe.  
Einar Wegener is not of the living anymore.  
But now I am your daughter.  
I am your child.

MOTHER WEGENER  
What do you mean?  
What do you mean?  
My child?

MARIUS  
Yes, Mother. This beautiful woman *is* your child.

LILI  
Yes, I am your child.  
I am your daughter.  
I am your child.

MOTHER WEGENER  
I love my son. I do not know who you are.

MARIUS  
You will soon get to know her  
as your daughter.  
She is your child.

MOTHER WEGENER (*to MARIUS*)  
I don't like this.  
I don't like this.  
MOTHER WEGENER and DAGMAR  
I don't like this.  
I don't like this.  
I don't. I don't!

DAGMAR  
You are Einar!  
You are Einar Wegener.  
The artist.

MARIUS



She is Lili, Lili Elbe.  
The King's declared it so.  
And so it is so!

MOTHER WEGENER  
What's this about the King?

DAGMAR  
The King is in his dotage!

LILI and CHORUS  
I am your daughter.  
I am your daughter.  
I am your daughter.  
I am your daughter.

MOTHER WEGENER (*getting up from her chair*)  
I do not understand anything.  
I don't like this.  
An abomination.  
(*to Lili*)  
I cannot look at you anymore.  
You must leave.

MARIUS  
But, Mother,  
We have always said that Einar was different.  
We all knew Einar was different.  
Won't you hear her out?

CHORUS  
A simple woman named Lili cannot be!

MOTHER WEGENER (*sharply*)  
I cannot look at you.  
Leave!  
Now!  
(*LILI and MARIUS get up and leave*)

**Scene 4. Paris. Les Deux Magots.**

*A small luncheon celebration for GERDA and PORTA's wedding. LILI, CLAUDE, HÉLÈNE and ERIC are sitting around a large table offering toasts. GERDA and PORTA are sitting in the center. LILI is sitting next to GERDA, and LEJEUNE next to LILI.*

PORTA, LILI, CLAUDE, HÉLÈNE and ERIC  
 To the talented bride!  
 The great artist!  
 LILI, CLAUDE, HÉLÈNE and ERIC  
 To Gerda and Fernando!  
 The beautiful couple!

LILI (*whispering to GERDA*)  
 You don't look so happy.  
 This is your wedding day.

GERDA  
 I've made a mistake.  
 I'd have rather married you again.  
 Why can't two women marry?

LILI  
 Don't be absurd.  
 How could two women get married?

CLAUDE (*listening in*)  
 Lili is mine now.  
 And she's engaged to me.  
 When will you finally marry me?  
 This engagement has gone on too long!

LILI  
 I am not ready yet.  
 I want to have children.

HÉLÈNE (*overhearing from the other side of the table*)  
Why do you want children?  
They're not worth the trouble.

ERIC  
Goodness.  
You have sharp ears.

LILI  
I want to be a mother.  
That's my dream.  
Warnekros will make that possible.  
Won't you wait for me a little longer, Claude?

LEJEUNE  
I would wait forever  
but I prefer not to!

CLAUDE, LILI, HÉLÈNE, ERIC and CHORUS  
(*making a new toast, GERDA is noticeably silent*)  
Lili and Claude!  
Lili and Claude!  
Lili and Claude!  
Lili and Claude!

*ANNA walks in.*

PORTA  
What is going on here?  
We are the real couple.  
Lili's not a real woman!

GERDA  
Anna, you are late as usual!  
And we bought you such a lovely watch  
a long time ago.

ANNA  
I must have misplaced it.  
(*scanning the room*)  
Look there! It's Picasso!

HÉLÈNE

I don't get what he is painting.  
He really should be in an asylum.  
That *Woman in an Armchair* of his!  
Really!  
Are those her privates where her mouth should be?  
Awful!  
Who posed for THAT?

ANNA  
You are so old fashioned, Helene.

HÉLÈNE  
No, I am not.  
I'm here with all of you  
modern folks!  
And Gerda's paints real women.

LILI  
And I'm her model now.

HÉLÈNE  
(*noticing Picasso join a woman at her table*)  
Who is that woman?

ANNA (*laughs*)  
Maybe that's his new model.

HÉLÈNE  
How could you ever tell?

ANNA  
I'm not sure.  
And she's not much to look at.  
Anyway we are here to celebrate Gerda and Fernando.

(*ANNA takes a glass from the table and raises it*)  
ANNA, HÉLÈNE, CLAUDE, LILI, ERIC and CHORUS  
To the talented bride!  
The true artist!  
To Gerda and Fernando!  
To the beautiful couple!

ANNA  
And soon we will celebrate Lili and Claude!

CLAUDE

Lili and me!

Lili and Claude LeJeune!

LILI (*together*)

Claude LeJeune and me!

Claude LeJeune and me!

HÉLÈNE and ERIC

Lili and Claude LeJeune!

ANNA

Lili and Claude LeJeune!

Lili and Claude!

CHORUS

Why can't two women get married?

PORTA

Lili is not a real woman!

Not a real woman!

LILI

Mister and Mrs. LeJeune!

Lili and Claude!

ANNA, HÉLÈNE, CLAUDE, LILI, ERIC and CHORUS

Mister and Mrs. LeJeune!

### **Scene 5. The Women's Clinic in Dresden, the Garden**

*WARNEKROS and the MATRON are walking in the clinic garden. It is a beautiful spring day, warm and sunny. The patients of the clinic are scattered around the gardens some in wheelchairs others sitting on ornate cast iron benches. In the distance LILI is sitting in a chaise longue and does not see them. Another patient, the YOUNG WOMAN is sitting in a different area.*

WARNEKROS (*to the MATRON*)

We must find the right situation.

The right situation for Lili.

I have promised her.

Perhaps I was quick to do so.

But if we succeed  
We will make history  
with the transfer of a living womb!  
This would bring us all,  
such great renown  
not only for me,  
but this great institution.  
The whole world of medicine!

MATRON

You will make history.  
You will make history.  
Yes, yes, Professor.

WARNEKROS

A womb for Lili  
And soon for other woman  
who cannot now bear children.  
We must find the right situation.  
The right situation for Lili.  
And soon for other women  
who cannot now bear children.  
They have given the Nobel for less!

MATRON (*first nodding acknowledging the rare compliment, then slowly*)

We may just have the right situation.  
The right situation.  
There is a young woman here  
barely twenty,  
never married,  
who has had two children,  
one just recently.  
She does not keep them.  
They are given to the orphanage.  
Her family is too ashamed.  
A simple girl  
who does not seem to learn  
and lives outside moral bounds.  
The right solution for two situations.  
Her parents are ashamed.  
Something must be done.  
She is just over there in the garden.  
Sweet and simple  
though indifferent to her failings.

WARNEKROS

So we have the right solution for two situations.

The right solution.

A discreet solution.

Bring me to her.

*(they walk over to the YOUNG WOMAN)*

WARNEKROS

Good day young lady.

I hope you are enjoying this lovely day.

The sun and the gardens provided for you here.

I hope you have been well treated here.

*The YOUNG WOMAN is quiet but nods. She is flustered and does not know what to say.*

MATRON *(sternly)*

Dear girl,

Do you know who is speaking with you?

Professor Warnekros.

The director of this famous clinic  
where you came to give birth.

How lucky he has taken an interest in you  
and speaks to you.

He asks you how you are feeling.

Have we treated you well here?

YOUNG WOMAN *(shyly)*

Oh, yes.

Thank you, Professor

Thank you, Madame.

I hope I can go home soon.

And see my parents and brothers.

My delivery was hard and  
this recuperation has been long.

Six weeks! But I feel fine now.

MATRON

You still need treatment.

A simple operation.

Then you can quickly go home.

YOUNG WOMAN *(alarmed)*

But I am doing so well

I don't need an operation.

MATRON

Young lady,  
are you questioning the Professor?  
Are you a professor, too?  
Have you studied medicine?

YOUNG WOMAN (*bursts into tears*)

No.  
I'm frightened.  
I want to go home.  
Why do I need an operation?

MATRON

Gracious Lord.  
You ask many questions.  
Too many questions.

CHORUS

Questions.

MATRON

It's for your own good.  
(*now more gently*)  
Be good and rest some more.  
Soon you will go home  
to your family.  
They will be so happy to see you.  
Once you are truly all better.

CHORUS

Better.

MATRON and CHORUS

You will make history.  
You will make history.



**Scene 6. A Short While Later in the Clinic Garden**

*The YOUNG WOMAN is weeping as she passes by LILI who is sitting in her lounge chair reading. LILI looks up and sees her.*

LILI (*calling out to the YOUNG WOMAN*)  
Why are you crying?  
Come here and sit beside me.  
What's wrong?  
Where is your mother?  
Can I help you?  
(*the YOUNG WOMAN hesitates but sits down*)

YOUNG WOMAN  
I'm . . . scared.  
I'm . . . scared.  
The professor says I need another operation.

LILI (*taking her hand*)  
I'm sorry to hear that.  
But the professor is very wise and kind.  
I'm sure it's the best thing for you.  
I'm sure he will make you better.

YOUNG WOMAN  
But I'm scared.  
I feel fine.

LILI  
I know. I know.  
Operations are frightening.  
But the professor is very wise and kind.  
I'm sure whatever is wrong with you,  
he will make better.  
Take my handkerchief and wipe your tears away.  
Hold my hand and sit a while with me.

YOUNG WOMAN  
Thank you.  
You are very kind.

MATRON (*coming over, alarmed seeing LILI and the YOUNG WOMAN together*)

Now, now, young lady.  
Why are you bothering Miss Lili?

LILI

Oh no, she was not bothering me.  
She is very sweet.  
I asked her to sit with me.

MATRON *(to LILI)*

You need your quiet and rest.  
*(then to the YOUNG WOMAN as she points her away)*  
On your way, dear.  
This is not the only place in the garden.  
You need your rest, too.  
You have your operation tomorrow.  
Then you will go home to your family.  
They will be so happy to see you.  
Now go.  
*(the YOUNG WOMAN goes off in one direction and the MATRON walks off in another.)*

CHORUS *(to Lili)*

You will make history.  
You will make history.

YOUNG WOMAN *(wandering off)*

They took my children.  
I wonder if some day,  
when we pass along the street,  
will they recognize me?  
I wonder if some day  
when we pass along the street,  
will they recognize me,  
Will they look like me?  
Will I look like them?  
Will we suddenly know,  
the moment we meet?

I wonder if some day  
when we pass along the street,  
Will I recognize them?  
To see them grown and well.  
Just to see them happy.  
Just to one day know that  
all was for the best.  
All was for the best.  
Then my troubled heart can rest.

All is for the best.

**Scene 7. Lili's Hospital Room. Women's Clinic in Dresden**

CHORUS

I wonder if some day,  
when we pass along the street,  
will they recognize me?

I wonder if some day  
when we pass along the street,  
will they recognize me?

Will they look like me?

Will I look like them?

Will we suddenly know,  
the moment we meet?

I wonder if some day  
my dream will come to be  
My mother recognizes me!  
She will embrace me.  
And I'll feel her love again  
when she recognizes me.  
I'll hear her say,  
"My daughter, my Lili."

*LILI has had her uterus transplant. She is in her bed with a bed tray. The MATRON enters her room smiling.*

LILI (*to the MATRON*)

Will I get better?

Will I get better?

MATRON

Of course you will.

Your operation went splendidly.  
 You just need lots of rest.  
 The professor is so happy  
 He says,  
 “Lili is our miracle.”  
*(She opens the door and motions for CLAUDE to enter)*  
 Do not stay too long, Monsieur LeJeune.  
 Your fiancé needs her rest.  
*(The MATRON exits)*

LILI *(struggling to be cheerful)*  
 Oh, Claude, you’re here.  
 Soon we will be married  
 and we will make a family.  
 Soon we will be married  
 and we will make a family.

CLAUDE  
 Oh, Lili.  
 You must get better first.  
*(kisses her forehead)*  
 But you are so feverish!

LILI *(taking the bouquet)*  
 I must tell you Claude LeJeune;  
 Last night in a dream  
 we were walking in the Tuileries  
 and you picked all the lilies!  
 I did not object at all.  
 Now you’ve brought them to me.

CLAUDE  
 Oh, Lili.  
 Yes. They are the lilies of your dreams  
 and of my dreams.  
 And I have made for you a special perfume.  
 It’s called Lili LaJeune.

LILI *(smelling the perfume CLAUDE puts beneath her nose)*  
 How lovely Claude . . .  
*(suddenly exhausted)*  
 Oh, Claude.  
 I need to close my eyes now.  
 Sit out there in the garden.  
 You will love the flowers they have.

CLAUDE

I will let you rest.

*(exits)*

LILI *(struggles to sit up, she tries to lift a pen but cannot. She imagines writing a letter)*

Dearest Gerda,

Your letters come each day  
from your loving heart in Rome.

How happy they make me!

They speak

To me softly

In your voice.

I promise I'll be better soon.

Time heals.

GERDA *(duet, writing from her desk in Rome)*

Dearest Lili,

Let me come to you.

If only you would let me visit.

I cannot bear your suffering.

I know you say,

"I'll be better soon.

Time heals."

I know it does.

But I want to be there with you.

LILI

You know Gerda,

Claude arrived today.

Don't be jealous.

You know I must have a husband.

I am so tired.

But I am not afraid.

I would die happily now,

I am a woman.

CHORUS

A genuine woman,

Who

loves you.

GERDA *(appearing in the room to LILI)*

I am here now.

My place is with you.

Give me your hand to hold tight.

I am here now.

The one who loves you.  
Hold on to my hand.

LILI

Then Gerda come with me.  
Hold on to the hand  
of the one who loves you.  
The way is long  
from the dead to the living.

LILI and GERDA

But step by step by step,  
step by step,  
we will reach the world above.  
Gerda/Lili, my love for you only grows  
Our love grows and never looks back.

*(LILI dies)*

END