

All nature was hushed. The remains of trees, long since burned, now gaunt and white, stood in the swamp as sentinels to guard the sleeping babes, and the giant pines, beneath whose cover they rested, seemed to lift up their hands to Heaven in silent pleading. Slowly yet surely the berries of the dread ground-hemlock did their work; stealthily as juice of mandrake or of poppy. The leaden hours of the long September night passed and inky clouds blotted out the stars, and when the sun rose he shot out a shaft of purplish light, which revealed the faces of the sisters, calm and cold in death, with Mignon whisking his head against the whitened cheek of his sweet mistress.

There was a roll of distant thunder; nearer and nearer it came; it grew darker and the air was hot and stifling. The forest groaned, and then there was an appalling crash and a blaze of lightning clad the scene in dazzling sheen. There was the red glow of fire; the bolt had struck a dead pine and instantly the surrounding trees, covered with withered leaves, that caught like tinder, were in a blaze. The storm shrieked, the thunder made the earth tremble, the rain fell in torrents, but higher and higher mounted the flames. It was the funeral pyre of Archange and Marie, and when it died out not a vestige of them was to be found.