

THE QUEEN OF SPADES

ACT I

SCENE 1

Spring. A Public Park in St. Petersburg.

TCHEKALINSKY

What happened after I went home?

SOURIN

As usual, I lost a fortune! The cards don't like me!

TCHEKALINSKY

I bet you stayed 'til early morning.

SOURIN

Yes, I tried to change my luck! There's no use! I cannot win at cards.

TCHEKALINSKY

Was Hermann there?

SOURIN

Yes! I often wonder what on earth he's doing there! He sits all night and watches every card, and yet he never plays himself.

TCHEKALINSKY

I know it.

SOURIN

I must confess, he frightens me.

TCHEKALINSKY

A strange, a most peculiar man.

SOURIN

I swear to you, he often scares me. I wonder why he never plays.

TCHEKALINSKY

I guess he can't afford to gamble.

SOURIN

Well, he's very careful!

(Hermann, looking thoughtful and gloomy, enters with Count Tomsky.)

SOURIN

Look, there he is . . . he looks like some lost soul, so gloomy.

(Tchekalinsky and Sourin leave.)

TOMSKY

What is it, Hermann? What's the trouble?

HERMANN

The trouble? Not a thing.

TOMSKY

You're worried?

HERMANN

No, not at all!

TOMSKY

Yet, something happened lately. . . . Come, do not deny it! You used to trust me, be my friend. You shared with me your thoughts and feelings. But now you're silent, and so sad. You sit all night and watch them gamble. Yes, something worries you, my friend, some inner secret haunts your mind and fills your thoughts with apprehension.

HERMANN

Yes, you are right. It seems I've lost all trace of courage and ambition. The days go by in emptiness . . . work lost its meaning. . . . There's but one fascination and I am powerless to deal with it, I'm in love . . . in love!

TOMSKY

What? You're in love? Who is she?

HERMANN

I do not understand my feelings. . . . I never loved before. . . . For me she is the blessed angel whom I adore! Don't ask her name. . . . I do not know it. For me she has no name. She is the fire that warms my being, a sacred burning flame! Alas, if she should love another, that thought — that very thought drives me insane with jealous fury and fills my heart with bitter pain. For me, there is but one emotion, the world consists of her alone and in my dreams she is my own. My heart is filled with one emotion, with one desire . . . the world consists of her alone . . . she is mine, my own! I do not understand my feelings. No, I have never loved before.

TOMSKY

Then you must deal with her directly . . . take my advice, my friend, go on! Approach her boldly and correctly, and tell her she's the one.

HERMANN

Oh, no, alas! She's not for me. . . . She is of noble birth. It's hopeless! No, I can never hope to win her!

TOMSKY

Well, there are others, there are other women.

HERMANN

How can I explain it? Peace has vanished from my heart. I've lost it, never to regain it! You know me, I've lived from day to day, the hours went by without commotion; but now, I have but one desire, my heart is filled with one emotion, a single thought, to call her mine, to call her mine forever, blissful and divine, forever, always, always mine.

TOMSKY

Hermann, you amaze me. I must say, I am distressed and somewhat frightened. Such fire may well consume your heart.

(Exeunt Hermann and Tomsky. The stage is filled with Promenaders.)

CHORUS OF PROMENADERS

Not a cloud to mar the sunshine, what a lovely day! Feel the breezes, warm and soothing, spring is here to stay! Who could ask for warmer weather, for a nicer day? Here among the leafy bowers, with the sweetly scented flowers, sorrows fly away! Spring is made for pleasure and enchantment, seize it while you may!

(Hermann and Tomsky return.)

TOMSKY

You mean to tell me, you're content to love her from a distance? I am convinced that she is well aware of your existence.

HERMANN

My friend, that thought alone sustains me and keeps me sane. How else could I endure this yearning, this bitter pain? I know that she is far above me; and yet I dream perhaps she'll love me. But once I am convinced that hope is vain, I'll find a way to end my pain.

TOMSKY

How?

HERMANN

Leave that to me!

(Tchekalinsky and Sourin return with Prince Yeletsky.)

TCHEKALINSKY *(to the Prince)*

This is great news, Yeletsky.

SOURIN

You mean, it's really true?

YELETSKY

Yes, my friends, it's happened. We're to be married. The fairest angel of my dreams consented to be my very own.

TCHEKALINSKY

Wonderful news!

SOURIN

Long life and many years of happiness!

TOMSKY

Yeletsky, our best wishes!

YELETSKY

I thank you, my friends! My heart is filled with joy, and nature smiles its blessing. A wondrous, new emotion within my soul intones its rapture. It sings of pure devotion, and of ecstatic happiness. . . . Yes, nature smiles at me, and sings to me of eternal happiness, and all reflects a magic promise that earth and heav'n shall be my own. My heart is filled with joy and nature smiles and sings with me.

HERMANN *(to himself)*

I curse this day of bitterness and sorrow. To hear his laughter and rejoicing, his boasts of happiness and rapture, while I endure in hopeless anguish, my heart engulfed in deepest sorrow. All nature smiles at him, replies to his song of ecstasy, while I must bear this grim and fatal burden . . . alone, in hopeless desperation, alone in agony and torture, in bitterness and sorrow, in darkness and despair!

TOMSKY

But, Prince, who is the lady?

TCHEKALINSKY

Yes, who's the future princess?
(Enter Lisa and Countess.)

YELETSKY *(pointing out Lisa)*

There she is!

HERMANN

Oh, no! Not she! I don't believe it! Kind Heaven, have mercy!

LISA AND COUNTESS

He's here again!

TOMSKY *(observing Hermann)*

So that's his joy and ecstasy, the angel of his dreams!

LISA

I'm frightened! Like a weird, unearthly ghost . . . he follows me . . . this dark and fatal stranger! Within his eyes, I see the brightly burning flame of all-consuming passion! Who is he? Why must he haunt my ev'ry step? I'm frightened! Why, oh why, must he pursue me, and haunt my steps with wild, adoring eyes? I'm frightened! Oh, those eyes!

COUNTESS

I'm frightened! Like a weird unearthly ghost . . . he follows me . . . this dark and fatal stranger! His eyes are full of fire! They burn with all-consuming hopeless passion! Who is he? Why must he haunt my ev'ry step? Why must he pursue me and look at me with dark and evil eyes? I'm frightened! Oh, those eyes!

HERMANN *(observing the Countess)*

I'm frightened! Like a weird, unearthly ghost she follows me, and haunts my steps with dark and evil glances! Her eyes are full of fire! And I feel their dark and silent enmity! What is her aim? What means that look so sinister and dark? Oh, why must she pursue me and haunt my steps with dark and evil looks? . . . Such dreadful eyes! I'm frightened! Oh, those eyes!

TOMSKY

Yes, the mystery is solved! This sudden blow can bring disaster! A while ago so full of love, now, he seems afraid! His eyes are filled with anguish! And why is she so pale, so confused? And such sorrow in her eyes! I'm frightened!

YELETSKY *(observing Lisa)*

What is it? She is frightened and confused! How strange! What is the cause of all this sudden anguish? Her eyes are full of sorrow . . . those lovely eyes which were so clear and calm! This glorious day has changed at once, and all is full of darkness! Oh, what has caused this sudden change . . . like an omen of disaster? Yes, all my happiness is threatened by this sudden touch of evil fate!

TOMSKY

(approaching the Countess)

Dear Countess! I've heard the joyous tidings.

COUNTESS

(staring at Hermann)

Who is that man, that soldier, over there?

TOMSKY

Which soldier? That one? Hermann, a friend of mine.

COUNTESS

He always follows me. I do not like him.

YELETSKY *(to Lisa)*

This air, that smells of spring and heather; this sky, this gentle balmy weather; you see they are a sign of happiness, a welcome omen of our life together.

(Exeunt Lisa, Countess, and Yeletsky.)

HERMANN *(menacingly)*

No, my friend Yeletsky, your happiness will be short-lived; the storm clouds gather, they're an omen. Your luck is changing, wait and see!

SOURIN

I've never seen a more dreadful old woman!

TCHEKALINSKY

She frightens me!

TOMSKY

We've christened her the Queen of Spades, a well chosen nickname. I have often wondered how she manages to keep from gambling.

SOURIN

What! That ancient mammy? You're joking.

TCHEKALINSKY

I'd love to see her dealing out the cards.

TOMSKY

You've heard of the three secret cards that won for her?

SOURIN

No, never! What three cards?

TCHEKALINSKY

What three cards?

TOMSKY

Well, listen closely then; it was some sixty years ago, the Countess was visiting in France. Paris was so completely

mad about her that they named her the Venus of Moscow. Count St. Germain, so gossip ran, enchanted by her beauty, was courting her, but his attentions and his gifts were not welcome. The Countess spent her days and nights at the card tables. She preferred the joys of gambling to the joys of love. One night she was trying her luck at Versailles, "au jeu de la reine", where the stakes were quite high; the Count St. Germain, who was watching her play, could see she was losing a fortune that day and moaning aloud in her fear! "What shall I do? Oh Lord, I am ruined; I've nowhere to turn; I'd pay any price if somehow I could learn three cards oh, three cards." The Count was delighted for here was his chance; he bowed to the Countess and asked her to dance, and when, for a moment, he got her alone, he whispered the words that would make her his own, the words that were sweeter than music. "Dear Countess, at the price of just one rendezvous, I'm sure I can help you by choosing for you three cards, yes, three cards, three cards!" The Countess was furious, "how dare you," she said. But he was not scared. And indeed, the next day, she came to the palace all smiling and gay, her purse was still empty, but her spirit was high . . . she knew St. Germain's magic secret! She staked all her fortune on one single game. She raked in the money, but the price we won't name. Three cards, three cards, three cards!

She first told her husband the sequence of cards . . . her lover was next, a young man in the guards, but that was too much for the late St Germain; his ghost came to see her and warned her at last: "Beware of the third man who asks you! Your hour of judgment and doom will be near, when, burning with passion, the one will appear who'll force you to tell him your secret. Three cards!"

TCHEKALINSKY

If not authentic, it's quite a story!

SOURIN

It's possible . . . but the Countess does not have to worry. Ardent lovers will hardly be attracted by her charms!

TCHEKALINSKY

One moment, Hermann, *there's* a splendid way you could gamble without fear of losing. Approach her . . . make love to her.

TCHEKALINSKY AND SOURIN

"Her hour of judgment and doom will be near when, burning with passion, the one will appear who'll force her to tell him her secret!"

(Exeunt Tchekalinsky, Sourin, and Tomsky.)

CHORUS OF PROMENADERS
(hurrying in all directions)

The clouds are so dark and forbidding, the storm has begun.

The sky is alive with thunder and light'ning.

Let's run over there to the gate! What shall we do?

It's raining! My dress will be ruined! Let's run before it's too late!

HERMANN

"Beware of the third man who asks you! Your hour of judgment and doom will be near when, burning with passion, the one will appear who'll force you to tell him your secret!" It's useless now . . . what would I do with fame or fortune? Without her all is vain, an empty, useless dream. The heav'ns may rage and roar, their fury does not scare me! My soul is aflame with such a fiery tempest that this great storm is pale beside it! No, Prince, it shall not be . . . oh, no, she will not marry you! She shall be mine, I know not how! Thunder, lightning! Hear me! You are the witnesses of my decision. She will be mine, I swear it, or may the heav'ns destroy me — my own, or else I shall kill myself! *(He hastens away.)*

SCENE 2

Lisa's Room.

(Lisa is seated at a harpsichord. Pauline and her friends are grouped around her.)

LISA AND PAULINE

Those ev'nings, when the hazy twilight would descend
And urge the world to rest awhile in gentle slumbers;

And then we'd see the sky light up from end to end

With shining stars, like burning lamps in countless numbers!

Remember! Suddenly the breeze would move the air

And fill the night with magic scents of perfumed flowers!

Remember, how the moon appeared all bright and fair

And rose on high to flood the world in golden showers!

Beloved, you looked into my eyes, and held my hands;

We watched the clouds that loomed above like giant mountains!

Just you and I, and, in the quiet of our dreams,

The gentle sighing and the murmur of the fountains.

CHORUS OF LISA'S FRIENDS

Oh, how adorable, how truly exquisite! So charming, delightful, so perfectly divine! Continue, please, another song, you won't refuse!

LISA

Now, you must sing alone.

PAULINE

Alone? What shall I sing?

CHORUS

Pauline, be an angel, ma chère we beg you, anything at all.

PAULINE

Then let me sing the one that's Lisa's favorite! One moment, let me think. Yes, that's the way!

O, dearest maidens, my faithful companions,

It seems it was but yesterday we joined our hands in carefree games and joyous songs.

O, days of gaiety, those hours of gentle pleasure,

Alas, you'll not return, you're gone for evermore,

My life is full of bitter anguish, my world is filled with darkest sadness.

Those dreams of happiness are but a bitter memory;

The vision was a lie, an empty, foolish dream, an empty foolish dream; and now, my life is doomed to anguish, to darkness and despair!

Now what is all this foolishness? Such melancholy faces! Don't you know,

this is a day for gaiety and laughter? To-day, my dears, of all days — the day for happiness! Really, now! I'm tired of all this gloom and tragedy! Why don't we sing a gay one, a wedding song, perfect for this occasion. I'll sing the tune, be ready with the chorus!

CHORUS

We're ready! Let's sing to the bride, and her happiness!

PAULINE AND CHORUS

Come, my darling Mashenka, come and join in our fun!

Come, and we'll protect you from ev'ryone, ev'ryone!

See that handsome fellow who wants to ask you to dance?

See his burning glances that speak of love and romance!

Do not be afraid, dearest, we won't let him come near!

If he wants to kiss you, we'll drive him off, have no fear!

(Enter Governess.)

GOVERNESS

Mesdemoiselles! Really, what a disgrace! What strange behavior! I'm surprised!

To sing and dance, in peasant fashion. Fi, quel genre, Mesdames!

Always remember your duty! Never be vulgar and crude!

Think of propriety, beauty; practice distinction of mood!

Prancing around like a common servant, without poise, without grace!

That is a sight most unpleasant! Especially here, in this place!

What if the Countess were present? Then you'd be red in the face!

Always I'm preaching and pleading — there's nothing more vulgar than noise!

Remember the signs of good breeding — quiet reserve, charm and poise!

PAULINE

Eh, bien, mesdemoiselles! I should think, it's time now, to say goodbye.

(Exeunt Governess and Lisa's friends.)
Lisa, what is troubling you this evening?

LISA

No, really, dear, it's nothing. Come here, and look outside, the night is cool and pleasant. The storm has cleared the air.

PAULINE
How would you like it, dear, if I should tell your bridegroom that you were shedding tears the day of your engagement?

LISA
Please, dear, I beg you don't say a thing.

PAULINE
Then how about a smile? No, a big one! That's better! And now goodnight!

LISA
Look, they are waiting for you! . . .
(Exit Pauline, enter Mary.)
(to Mary)

Don't close the window yet, it's warm!

MARY
It may get cold, I'd better close it now!

LISA
No, Mary! Please! I will close it later on!

MARY
May I help you undress for bed?

LISA
No, many thanks! Good night, my dear!

MARY
I'll help you gladly.

LISA
Don't bother, dear, good night!
(Exit Mary.)

Oh dreams of love eternal, have you lied to me? My hopes and my illusions, have you forsaken me? No, I must not complain, I must not weep; indeed I should be proud of my decision, the man I chose is handsome and of noble birth. He loves me tenderly, he'll spoil me, and I will be a princess, all will envy me. He'll love me, he'll be kind, what more do I want? Oh, God, what torment! I wish that I were dead! I'm so unhappy; my heart is sad and weary. There's no use to continue this pretense! I'm all alone, the world is fast asleep. . . . Oh, hear me, night! To you, and you alone, can I confess my grief and my despair. I know, it must not be! I know, it is impossible. All my dreams, all chance of happiness has vanished. I worship him! I knew when I first saw him that I loved him! He loves me, I'm sure, for, in his eyes, I saw the flame of passion! My heart stood still, as in a dream, I knew he was my destiny, I was his slave! Oh night, oh night!

(Enter Hermann.)

HERMANN
Please wait a moment. I must talk to you.

LISA
What brought you here? What prompted you to come? What madness?

HERMANN
Please listen. Don't be afraid of me. Believe me, I'll go away at once and promise you that I will not return. You won't refuse me, just one moment. A dying man implores your mercy!

LISA
Oh why, why are you here? Please leave me!

HERMANN
No!

LISA
I'll call for help!

HERMANN
Call them, call everyone! As long as I must die, what difference can it make? But if there's left in you a single spark of pity or compassion you will stay, you will not go!

LISA
Good angels, help me!

HERMANN
The end is near, this is my last farewell. My fate is sealed, the sentence has been passed. You chose another, oh cruel one. And I am lost forever. Before I die I beg for just one favor. Do not refuse. Could I survive the day that sees us parted forevermore! Ah, let me worship you and bless you. You were my life, you were the dream that filled my heart! The end has come, soon I will bid this world farewell forever. But let me stay with you one fleeting hour, gaze in your eyes in silent ecstasy, and in your beauty forget my anguish! Then death may come and bring me peace. Lisa! How beautiful you are!

LISA
Oh, leave me. Please leave me.

HERMANN
I adore you, my goddess, my angel! Forgive me, bright celestial vision, if I disturbed your peace of mind. Don't turn away from me, oh let me

stay beside you. That's all I ask of you. Don't be afraid, I shall not harm you. Do not deny my last request. Look down my love, look down upon me. I perish for your sake, and though my heart is torn with suffering it's full of love! Have pity! Do not despise me. Do not hate me, just look at me once more. You're crying! Oh you are no longer angry. O Lisa, my sweet Lisa! You are an angel! You are my queen, my goddess, my angel!

COUNTESS (backstage)
Lisa, let me in!

LISA
The Countess! Heaven help us! I am lost! The window! Too late! In here!
(Hermann hides. Enter Countess with servants.)

COUNTESS
What, not asleep? You're not undressed yet? What does this mean?

LISA
Oh, grandmother, I could not get to sleep tonight, I felt so restless.

COUNTESS
Why is the door still open? Come, what's the matter, why these silly fancies? What nonsense! That's enough. Now quick to bed! You hear me?

LISA
Yes, Granny, right away.

COUNTESS
Not sleepy! That's a pretty story. Not yet undressed! Not sleepy! To bed at once!

LISA
Forgive me, I am sorry.

COUNTESS
You ought to be ashamed! You've worried and upset me! Now hurry. Let's hear no more of all this foolish talk!
(Exeunt Countess with servants and Lisa.)

HERMANN
"Beware of the third ardent lover, who'll appear and will force you to tell your secret." A ghostly vision, a spectre from the grave! Oh hideous monster, death! I am afraid of you!

(Lisa returns.)
Oh, Lisa, comfort me! Just now I counted Death my best and only

friend; it was my last salvation, my only hope! Now all is changed. Since I have found you my life has meaning! You have restored my hope and courage. Now I would live for you, for you alone!

LISA
You poor unhappy man! You have no right to speak like this. What can I say to you?

HERMANN
You must decide my fate!

LISA
How can you torture me this way? Please leave me, I implore you! I command you!

HERMANN
So I must die because I cannot live without you.

LISA
Oh heaven, I am weakening. Go away, I beg you!

HERMANN
You're sending me to death!

LISA
God have mercy!

HERMANN
Farewell!

LISA
Stay, and live then!

HERMANN
Oh, Lisa, dear, my own, I love you! My love, my own!

LISA
I am yours!

ACT II SCENE 1

A large reception room. A masked ball at the house of a rich dignitary.

CHORUS
Parties are gay and inviting,
parties are always exciting,
and there is nothing that matches
the thrill of a gay masquerade.
Hearts are gay, hearts are light,
seeking joy and delight.
There's music and dancing,
oh, lovely night!
Clap till your fingers are tingling,
run where the dancers are mingling.
Seek for the smile that is brightest,
search for the step that is lightest!

Choose from the maidens so charming,
one who is sweet and disarming.
Join in the singing and dancing,
this is the time for romancing.
Tonight we'll be carefree and gay,
we'll drive all our troubles away
with music: so dance while you may
tonight we'll be carefree and gay!

MAJOR-DOMO (*enters*)

Our host has asked me to escort the hon-
ored company! The fireworks are
ready, and will begin without delay!
(*Exeunt Major-Domo and guests.*)

TCHEKALINSKY

There's Hermann! He behaves so
strangely, I am convinced that he's
in love. A while ago I saw him smil-
ing!

SOURIN

No, you are wrong! It is not love! No,
he's after the Countess! Yes, he hopes
to obtain her secret!

TCHEKALINSKY

Wonderful!

TOMSKY

I doubt it! He never would believe in
such fairy tales, he's much too clever!

SOURIN

He told me himself!

TOMSKY

What nonsense!

TCHEKALINSKY

Let's tease him and see what he will do!
(*Exeunt Tchekalinsky and Sourin.*)

TOMSKY

I wonder. In his desire to win his Lisa
he might try anything! Poor Her-
mann! Poor fellow! (*Exit.*)

(*Enter Lisa and Yeletsky.*)

YELETSKY

You are so silent, dearest Lisa. You look
so troubled, so upset. Confide in me.

LISA

I beg you, Prince, it's nothing, I assure
you.

YELETSKY

No, Lisa. I implore you, listen! Believe
me, oh, let me explain.

It is my fate that I adore you, my fate,
my blessed destiny!

I worship you, I kneel before you, but
you're so far, so far from me.

Don't be afraid, my love is not demand-
ing. I'll wait in silent solitude,
I will be patient and understanding. I'll
wait until that blessed day,
The day when you will also love me.
And then, in humble adoration, I'll
grant whatever you desire,
I'll bring you joy and consolation. No,
in this task I'll never tire!
Alas, I see you treat me like a stranger,
you look and listen silently;
I'd like to shield you from all danger,
but all your thoughts are far from
me!

I'm doomed to languish in the distance,
to feel your agony and pain!
I'd sacrifice my whole existence to see
you happy once again!
Yes, for this I'd give my whole existence,
and yet, I fear 'twould be in vain!
It is my fate that I adore you, my fate,
my blessed destiny!

I'd give my life to kneel before you, but
you are far, so far from me.
I beg you, dear, confide in me!

(*Exeunt.*)

(*Enter Hermann.*)

HERMANN (*reads*)

"After the performance, wait for me in
the room. I must speak with you." To
speak with her will give me courage.
I'll forget this foolish plan. The secret!
Three cards in a row, and I'd be rich.
I'd marry Lisa, we'd go away, far, far
from here. What madness! This must
stop! I will not think of it!

(*Tchekalinsky and Sourin return.*)

SOURIN (*hidden*)

Perhaps you're the third one. . . .

TCHEKALINSKY (*hidden*)

. . . the third ardent lover. . . .

BOTH

Perhaps you're the one, the one who is
chosen by fate to force her to tell you
the secret?

(*Exeunt Tchekalinsky and Sourin.*)

HERMANN

What was that? Yes! I heard it plainly!
God! If it were true? It's madness,
sheer madness!

MAJOR-DOMO (*returning*)

Attention! All is ready! A charming pas-
toral, called "The Faithful Shep-
herdess" will now begin!

(*The guests return.*)

CHORUS OF SHEPHERDS AND
SHEPHERDESSES

Beside this peaceful streamlet, beneath
these shady trees.
We shepherds often gather and gladly
take our ease.
With songs to cheer our dancing we
spend the happy hours,
Our fingers gaily turning these wreaths
of fragrant flowers.

CHLOE

Where is my shepherd swain? I sigh for
him in vain.
Alas, there's no mistaking, my faithful
heart is breaking!
When will he come again?

DAPHNIS (*Pauline*)

My bashful heart is broken, I know not
what to say!
It's time that I had spoken and kissed
her tears away!

CHLOE

You've seen my bitter tears, my sorrows
and my fears.
How could you hurt and grieve me?
Why did you go and leave me? I'll
always be your own.

DAPHNIS

I've seen your bitter tears, your sorrows
and your fears. I did not mean to
grieve you, I swear, I'll never leave
you! I'll always be your own.

CHLOE AND DAPHNIS

I'll always be your own! I swear it, my
heart is yours alone!
(*Enter Plutus followed by attendants.*)

PLUTUS (*Tomsky*)

Hear me, oh dearest maiden, I come
with treasures laden
To prove my deep emotion, my ardent
love, my devotion!

DAPHNIS

Gifts brought in such a fashion are sure
to win her passion.
How can my love compete? I must ac-
cept defeat.

PLUTUS

I bring you wealth and treasure and
riches beyond measure
If you will be my own!
The world I'll lay before you, I offer
you a throne!

DAPHNIS

He brings her wealth and treasure, but
can they match the pleasure of love,
the greatest love the world has ever
known?

CHLOE

Indeed, I am most flattered, but I must
tell you true,
In fairness, sir, to you — the only thing
that matters is love, and all that love
can do!

Good bye, sir, be on your way; for love
has won the day!

(*to Daphnis*)

And you shall bring me flowers, and
through the happy hours
We'll pledge our love and life, and I
shall be your wife!

CHLOE AND DAPHNIS

And now, our story's ended; we'll seal
it with a kiss.
Our hearts as one are blended in joys of
wedded bliss.

CHORUS

And now, their story's ended; they'll seal
it with a kiss.
Their hearts as one are blended in joys
of wedded bliss!

(*Exeunt Characters of the Intermezzo.*)

HERMANN

"Beware of the third ardent lover" . . .
Well? Am I not in love? Of course . . .
yes.

(*He turns and sees the Countess.*)

SOURIN (*masked*)

Behold, the angel of your dreams!
(*Laughs and hurries away.*)

HERMANN

Again that voice. Where does it come
from? Some foolish joke? Or perhaps,
I wonder, could it be a warning from
above? How can I tell? Damnation!
Oh, how I tremble. Those three cards!

LISA (*enters, masked*)

Please, listen, Hermann . . .

HERMANN

Oh, I've been waiting! What joy to see
you once again. I've missed you so, I've
suffered so.

LISA

Be careful, dear, there is no time. I've
just a moment. Take this! This key
will unlock the secret door, the garden
door . . . it leads into the Countess's
apartments!

HERMANN

What are you saying?

LISA

She's never there except at night! Near the fireplace is another door . . . into my room. I know, it's wrong, I know I should not do it, but I love you, my life belongs to you. Tomorrow, my dearest, my loved one!

HERMANN

No, not tomorrow, no, I'll wait for you tonight!

LISA (*alarmed*)

I beg you!

HERMANN

You must!

LISA

Then go at once, dear, and wait till I return. Goodbye!

HERMANN

It was ordained, and fate itself demands it! I'll be there tonight. She'll tell me!
(*Leaves in haste.*)

MAJOR-DOMO (*entering, excited and breathless*)

We're greatly honored! Their Royal Majesties are coming!

CHORUS OF GUESTS

Imagine! Their Royal Majesties! How splendid, how flattering! Our host is fortunate indeed to have this honor! Who'd have thought we'd see the Royal Couple! A great distinction for our host! A great surprise, a great occasion! The procession approaches, let us stand aside. Long live the Tsar, the Tsar of all Russias!
Hail to thee, our mighty sovereign, father of our cherished nation!
Always may thy glorious name resound throughout the whole creation!
Hail to thee, almighty Tsar! All hail!
All hail!

SCENE 2

The Countess's Bedroom.

HERMANN (*enters through the secret door*)

Ah, yes, it's just as Lisa told me . . . Lisa? Of course, I love her. . . . Yes, but tonight I will discover the secret! . . . What if it is not true? And it is all a foolish joke, an idle, empty dream?

(*sees the portrait of the Countess*) Ah, there she is, the "Venus of Moscow"! What strange unearthly power has linked our lives together? Magic, perhaps, or else, some evil force, some mystery? But we shall meet tonight, and I will learn the answer! . . . I look upon your face and I should hate it! Yet I'm not able to turn my eyes away! I know that I should leave, but I am powerless. These burning eyes, they follow me relentlessly. They speak, and I obey! Well. Fortune has ordained our meeting — it must be! But wait . . . I hear a step. . . . Yes! Well, then, so be it!

*(He hides.)**(Enter Countess surrounded by old servants.)*

CHORUS OF SERVANTS

We were waiting here to serve you and to help you get undressed
Why, of course, you are tired, and you need to take a rest.
Was it wonderful? Did you like it? Were there many at the ball?
We are certain that our Countess was the loveliest of all!

(Enter Lisa and Mary.)

LISA

Please, Mary, don't follow me.

MARY

What is the matter, Miss? Are you angry?

LISA

No, not at all.

MARY (*guessing the truth*)

Kind Heav'n above! Don't tell me!

LISA

Yes, he is there, he's waiting! I know, you will not tell, you'll help me, you won't betray us, Mary. You're my friend!

MARY

Oh, I am so afraid for you!

LISA

Don't be afraid! I have decided, he is the one I love. I'll adore and cherish him for ever, I'll be his slave until I die!

(Exit Lisa.)

CHORUS

Now it's time to say good-night, may your dreams be gay and bright! We are here to serve you, serve you night and day! Now good-night, pleasant dreams, go to . . .

COUNTESS

Enough of this! You annoy me! I'm not tired, far from it! And I don't want to go to bed.

Ah, how stale the world has grown! Vulgar and coarse. Such silly talk, such senseless entertainment! What shocking manners, what bad style! They are impossible! No one can dance nor sing! It's dreadful! Who's invited? Who are the guests? Nobodies! In the old days who would dance? Who would sing? Le duc d'Orléans, le duc d'Ayen, duc de Coigny. . . . La comtesse d'Estrades, la duchesse de Brancas. . . . What names those were, what names, what people! I have met them all. The greatest names in all of France! And I, I sang before them. Le duc de la Vallière once noticed me! Once it was in Chantilly at Prince de Condé. The King himself was there! I see it still before me.

"Je crains de lui parler la nuit, j'écoute trop tout ce qu'il dit . . .

Il me dit: je vous aime, et je sens malgré moi, je sens mon coeur qui bat, qui bat, je ne sais pas pourquoi!"

Get out of here at once! Out, I tell you!

(Exeunt servants.)

"Je crains de lui parler la nuit, j'écoute trop tout ce qu'il dit . . .

Il me dit: je vous aime, et je sens malgré moi, je sens mon coeur qui bat, qui bat . . . je ne sais pas . . . pourquoi . . ."

*(Countess falls asleep.)**(Hermann comes out of hiding. The Countess awakes.)*

HERMANN

Don't be frightened! I implore you, don't be frightened! . . . There's no cause to be alarmed! There is something I must know, that only you can tell. It's whispered that you know the way to win a fortune! All my future, all my happiness depends on it! Confide in me the secret! It is useless to keep it forever. If you remember the ardor, the rapture of love; if you re-

member the fire and the fierce passion of youth; oh, if but once in your life you smiled at the laughter of children, if there lives in your heart the semblance of human compassion, then let me appeal to you by all that you cherish, that's sacred, dear to you, all that life has to offer. Oh, tell me, I beg you, I beg you, tell me your secret! My life is at stake . . . my life is at stake! Oh, perhaps, some weird, terrible reason forbids you to tell me! Can it be, you're frightened of Hell and all its torments? Consider well . . . you're old now . . . you've not long to live . . . and I will take the blame, and all the guilt! Confide in me I beg you! Speak, do you hear me? You horrid old witch . . . I will force you to speak!

(He draws a pistol. The Countess nods her head at him and throws up her arms to protect herself, then falls back dead. Hermann bends over her corpse and seizes her by the hand.)

Stop this maddening comedy! My patience is exhausted! The secret, quickly, now! . . . My God, she's dead! she's dead! I did not learn the secret! She's dead! She's dead!

LISA (*enters with a light*)

What is this noise? You! You, here?

HERMANN

Be still! Be still, for she is dead, I'll never learn the secret!

LISA

Who is dead? What is it you are saying?

HERMANN

The curse! It all came true! I'll never learn the secret!

LISA

Yes! She is dead! You killed her! Oh God, what have you done? (*Sobs.*)

HERMANN

I swear that I am innocent. I only tried to learn the secret!

LISA

Her secret brought you here, not love of me! Three cards were all you wanted. Your love was only a pretense! Deceiver, I loved you, trusted you! Oh God, how could you do it? I am disgraced and ruined! You heartless man! Murderer, traitor! Get out of here. Go, go!

HERMANN

And she is dead!
(*Hermann leaves quickly. Lisa sinks weeping beside the corpse of the Countess.*)

ACT III

SCENE 1

Hermann's quarters in the barracks.

HERMANN (*reading a letter*)

"I do not believe you meant to kill the Countess. I am wretched, thinking I have wronged you. Set me at rest! At midnight, I will expect you on the embankment. If you fail to come, I shall be filled with dreadful fears! Forgive me! I suffer greatly!"
Poor Lisa! What cruel luck has tied your fate to my misfortune! If only I could sleep awhile, and forget! Again this vision! Do I imagine it, or do I really see it? It appears so real, so frightening and ghostly, yet so lifelike!

CHORUS (*backstage*)

Lord, my God, be merciful! Do not cast me away in Thy wrath! For my heart is sorrowful and torn with grief! Do Thou shield me against the powers of hell. My transgressions and my misdeeds cry out for the light of Thy mercy! Oh grant my soul eternal peace.

HERMANN

What was that? Singing? Or the wind outside? I can't make out, I hear it now, yes, yes, they sing! There is the chapel and the church, the people with the candles and the incense, and over there the vault, the Countess in her casket, so lifeless, so silent! What strange compulsion draws my steps still further, ever nearer to her? What is this relentless power that makes me look at her? And suddenly her eyelids move, she sees me, her lips appear to open slightly, she seems to whisper something!! Go, dreadful apparition, go!

I'm frightened, frightened! There, there . . . those steps . . . now, they are near the door . . . no, no, I can't stand it!
(*The ghost of the Countess bars his way.*)

GHOST OF THE COUNTESS

I was sent to you against my will, but I was told that all your wishes should be

granted! You must save Lisa, must marry her. Now I'll tell you the secret . . . three cards shall bring you good fortune. Remember! The three, the seven, the ace! The three, the seven, the ace!

(*Vanishes.*)

HERMANN

The three, the seven, the ace! The three, the seven, the ace!

SCENE 2

An embankment overlooking the Neva.

LISA

It's almost midnight, and Hermann is still not here. He won't fail me, he'll explain, he'll tell me how it happened. Of course, he's innocent. He could not hurt her, I know it. He's gentle, he is kind. I am so weary. I am tired with grief!

Oh, this eternal, unending grief tortures my heart, tears it apart! And my poor heart is like a heavy stone. O days of gladness, where have you flown?

Nothing but sorrow and so alone.

All disappeared in the deep of night, dreams that were bright, hopes of delight.

All that was once all my heart's now lost its glory and its glow.

Oh, this eternal unending grief tortures my heart, tears it apart.

Ah, and my poor heart's like a heavy stone

Nothing but sorrow, and so alone.

I am so weary. How long, oh heaven, must I endure this painful torture?

The time is getting short! Who knows, perhaps he has forgotten. He has left me! Oh, God, what agony! . . . It's midnight! Dreadful clock, don't strike the hour as yet! I beg you, oh please, come, for pity's sake, have mercy, don't let me perish! . . .

Why must I love him, cruel destiny? Why must I worship him alone?

Through all eternity, I know it, unto my death I'll be his own! I know, alas, that I should leave him, and yet, I'm doomed to share his fate! I know, I should escape and leave him. It's useless, quite useless, I cannot do it, it's too late to leave him. No, no, I cannot force myself, it is too late!

(*Hermann enters.*)

LISA

It was you, who killed her, the other day!

HERMANN

Oh, no! The gun, it was not loaded, but she looked . . . and then all of a sudden . . . she was dead.

LISA

Then it is all true, murd'rer! And still I love you! Cruel fortune that makes me worship you alone! I know, alas, that I should leave you, and yet I'm doomed to share your fate! I know I should escape and leave you . . . it's useless, quite useless, I cannot do it, it's too late! To leave you? No, no, I cannot force myself, it is too late! And yet, there still is time! I'll save you Hermann! I'll pray for you, and Heaven will be kind, it will, I promise you! It's not too late! It's hopeless! My soul forever lost with his!

HERMANN

Yes, yes, I know them! I know the magic cards! She came to me tonight and told me. She named the secret winning cards! She would have died another day, there was no choice, I had to do it! Yes, that's the price I had to pay! Yes, her death was the price! There was no choice, I had to do it. That was the price I had to pay to learn the secret. But now it's mine! I was the third one, who came late at night, and burning with passion appeared at her side, and forced her to name the three cards! First, she refused, but I forced her to speak, I forced her to name the three cards! Don't look at me! Who are you? I do not know you! Go! Go!

(*Exit Hermann.*)(*Lisa leaps into river.*)

SCENE 3

A Gambling House.

CHORUS OF GAMBLERS

Pass the wine and let's be merry! Let us revel while we may! When we drink our troubles disappear, and we think that happiness is near! All our cares are washed away! Pass the bottle and drown your sorrows while you may! In the cards there lies a fortune! Are you ready to begin? Lady Luck is quite capricious, she will teach us how to win! Stakes are high, there's no denying! Place your money, time is flying!

You're here, it's you! At last you're here! What joy, my hours of grief are over, and we shall never, never part! Now all unhappiness has vanished, and rapture fills my aching heart!

HERMANN

Yes, Lisa, Yes. I'll always love you!

LISA AND HERMANN

Forgotten are sorrow and pain, the grief and the tears of the past.

Farewell to our doubts and our sufferings

For now we're together again!

Our tears and our terrors were only a dream that has flown with the night.

And we shall be happy tomorrow. . . .

Now that we are together at last, forgotten is all the grief, forgotten is all the sorrow, for now we're together, together at last!

HERMANN

Get ready now; the hours are passing, the moments fly. The time is short . . . let's go!

LISA

Of course, my love! But where, where are we going?

HERMANN

Where shall we go? To the casino, to try our luck!

LISA

Oh, no! Oh God! What are you saying?

HERMANN

Those stacks of money and gold, they're mine, yes, they are ours, as much as we can hold!

LISA

Oh Hermann, Hermann, look at me, my love, I beg you!

HERMANN

Oh, I forgot . . . of course, I have not told you . . . the Countess . . . just listen, I knew, I was the third one, that young and ardent lover. . . .

LISA

Oh Heavens, this is madness!

HERMANN

At first, you know . . . she did not want to tell me, but this evening she appeared, all by herself, and she revealed the secret of the cards.

SOURIN
Let's go!

TCHAPLITSKY
What will it be?

NAROUMOV
I'll raise you!

TCHAPLITSKY
Please, wait your turn!

TCHEKALINSKY (*shuffling*)
I'll have another!

NAROUMOV
A seven!

TCHEKALINSKY
Eight!

SOURIN
The same old story.
(*Enter Yeletsky.*)

TOMSKY
What are you doing here? Don't tell me that you want to try your luck at cards?

YELETSKY
Why should I not be here? Remember what they say — unlucky in love, lucky at cards.

TOMSKY
What do you mean by that?

YELETSKY
That I'm no longer engaged. Don't ask me, why and how, right now, it hurts too much. I came to take revenge, for surely, those who win in love cannot succeed at cards.

TOMSKY
I'm afraid, I do not understand you.

YELETSKY
Wait and see!

CHORUS
Pass the wine and let's be merry! Let us revel while we may.

TCHEKALINSKY
Tomsky, my friend, it's time for you to entertain us!

CHORUS
Sing, Tomsky, sing! But let it be a jolly song to make us laugh!

TOMSKY
I'm not in voice, this evening!

TCHEKALINSKY
Hey, what is wrong, my friend. Take this, you'll feel much better! Now let us drink to Tomsky's health! Long life!

CHORUS
May you be prosperous! Long life, long life! Hurrah!

TOMSKY
Charming girls, I've heard you singing, Now I wish you'd go awinging Flap your wings in merry flight! I, myself, will be an arbor And such birds I'll gladly harbor, I would watch you day and night.

CHORUS
Bravo, bravo, let's have another verse.

TOMSKY
I will make your life most pleasant Give each bird a special present, You will lead a happy life. . . . I will offer you protection, Ev'ry comfort and affection, Give a branch to ev'ry wife!

CHORUS
Bravo, bravo, that was clever, very clever!
Bravo, what a song:
"I will offer you protection, ev'ry comfort and affection, Give a branch to ev'ry wife!"

TCHEKALINSKY
And now, friends, we shall sing the old refrain! Attention please!

ALL THE OFFICERS
Let it storm, let it rain, we don't feel any pain — Ever!
If we lose all we own, can we leave it alone? Never!
When we play twenty-one, what's the time to go on? Twenty!
If the cards give us pain, do we curse and complain? Plenty!

TCHEKALINSKY
Come on! We're wasting time, the cards are waiting. To work, to work!

CHORUS
To work, to work!

TCHAPLITSKY
How many?

NAROUMOV
I drop out!

TCHAPLITSKY
And you, sir?

SOURIN
Another card for me!

TCHAPLITSKY
A ten. . . .

NAROUMOV
You should have dropped the seven!
(*Enter Hermann.*)

YELETSKY (*catching sight of him*)
You see, I expected this. I had a premonition. (*to Tomsky*) Perhaps, I'll have to ask you to be my second, can I count on you?

TOMSKY
Whenever you may need me.

CHORUS
Look, Hermann's here! Glad to see you. Where were you? Good evening, friend Hermann.

TCHEKALINSKY
Sit here, my friend. Perhaps you'll bring me luck!

SOURIN
You're late, for once, what kept you? Was it a lady? Some fair and dainty lass?

TCHEKALINSKY
What is the matter. You look so pale.

HERMANN
I'd like to place a little bet!

SOURIN
Listen to this, he wants to play!

CHORUS
Listen to him! Our Hermann wants to try his fortune!

NAROUMOV
Dear fellow, congratulations! We're delighted to have you join our game!

TCHEKALINSKY
How much?

HERMANN
Forty thousand!

CHORUS
Forty thousand? You must be crazy, man!

SOURIN
Have you inherited the fortune of the Countess?

HERMANN
Come, does my offer hold?

TCHEKALINSKY
Of course! Just choose a card.

HERMANN
The three! There it is!

CHORUS
He won it! How amazing!

TOMSKY, TCHEKALINSKY, TCHAPLITSKY, SOURIN, NAROUMOV
There's something very strange! His luck is most uncanny! He played so daringly and seemed so sure of winning! Yes, there's something very strange! His luck is most uncanny! It's quite incredible!

YELETSKY
There's something very strange! And yet the hour is approaching. He must atone for it, pay for his evil deed, for all that he has done, pay for my suffering.

HERMANN
At last, the goal is reached, my aim has been accomplished! No, no, she has not lied to me, the cards are here to prove it!

CHORUS
Say, what a stroke of luck! I've never seen the like of it, it is incredible! Imagine! Forty thousand!

TCHEKALINSKY
Go on! Collect your money!

HERMANN
No, I'll play double or nothing!

CHORUS
No, this is crazy! Stop this nonsense! Please, Tchekalinsky, do not play with him! He's surely lost his mind!

HERMANN
All right?

TCHEKALINSKY (*shuffles*)
Of course! Your card?

HERMANN
I'll choose the seven. . . . There it is!

CHORUS
He won again! Amazing. This is beyond all reason.

HERMANN

What is the matter, gentlemen? Don't tell me, you're afraid of me? Let's have some wine!

CHORUS

Hermann! Calm yourself!

HERMANN

What is our life? A game! And what's the prize for which we aim? There's love, there's money and there's fame! Decide, which you shall choose. Perhaps you'll win, perhaps you'll lose! But let us not pretend, let's name the goal we search for and we shall win or lose it. Come on! Who'll match his luck with mine?

I've chosen gold, alone! Not love, my heart is made of stone! Not fame, but something I can own! Come on! Let's play and say goodbye! Today we live and then we die! So let us not pretend, and name the goal we search! For we shall win or lose it. Yes, we shall win or lose it. Who'll match his life with mine? Another try?

TCHEKALINSKY

No, I had enough! The devil himself is helping you tonight! *(He lays the money on the table.)*

HERMANN

Who knows, perhaps you're right? What does it matter? I'll wager everything. Who wants to try and win the whole thing?

YELETSKY

I will!

CHORUS

Don't do it, Prince! Take my word! There's something very strange. It's madness! Don't play!

YELETSKY

I know what I am doing! I have my reasons!

HERMANN

You! you, Yeletsky!

YELETSKY

Yes, We're ready Tchaplitsky!
(They play.)

HERMANN *(uncovers a card)*

My ace!

YELETSKY

No! It's your Queen of Spades!

HERMANN

I have no queen!

YELETSKY

There in your hand you hold the Queen of Spades!

(The ghost of the Countess appears.)

HERMANN

The Countess! You! But why? What is your purpose? Why have you deceived me so? Old sorceress! What do you want of me? Tell me, my life, perhaps? Well, take it then! Yes, take it!
(He stabs himself.)

CHORUS

Poor Hermann! What a bitter and cruel way to die! But look, he's alive, I think!

HERMANN

Prince! Prince . . . forgive me! I beg you, hear me! I am dying! Who is this? Lisa? You here? Lisa! But why? What for? Have you forgiven me? Yes? You have. Oh, how I have loved you, Lisa! Angel, I worshiped you! I loved you!
Oh!

CHORUS

Oh, Lord! Be kind to him! Forgive the errors of his suffering heart, Lord, and grant his soul eternal peace!

END OF OPERA