

FRANZ LEHAR

THE MERRY WIDOW

English Version by Donald Pippin

ACT I

Scene: The Pontevedro embassy in Paris, where Anna Glavari, the very wealthy widow, is expected any minute.

ST. BRIOCHE

Though far from my best as a speaker –
Of wit I can make no boast –
I lift a glass, ever eager
To praise our ambassador and host.
His door open, his hand extended
To receive one and all that come,
In quarters elegant and splendid
We find a home away from home.

CHORUS

A salute to dear Baron Zeta
And to our home away from home.

ZETA

Your high regard and deep devotion
Renew my faith in human kind;
A bid for favor or promotion
Could not be further from your mind.
But today we celebrate our nation,
The tiny country we so adore,
For on this momentous occasion
Our king has turned ninety four.
Though far away from Pontevedro,
We drink to show the world that we
From top to toe remain as ever
Pontevedro in Paree!

CHORUS

Though far away from Pontevedro, *etc.*

ZETA: Ladies and gentlemen, you overwhelm me. Such devotion! Such appreciation!
For me, your ambassador! My thanks to you for coming to celebrate the birthday of our

beloved sovereign. Far away in Pontevedro, his fondest wish is to see closer ties between our country and France.

GUESTS: His majesty! Long life! Good health!

ZETA: And now, please, that's enough ceremony until next year. Let me invite you into the ballroom for food and dancing, while I compose a special birthday greeting to His Majesty on behalf of all. *(the crowd disperses)* Bogdanovitch! Take this down: "The grinning mechanical fox nibbles at the demented diva's red wig."

BOGDANOVITCH: A colorful observation, sir, but are you sure this is the appropriate sentiment?

ZETA: *(conspiratorally)* It is in code. I make it a rule to send all official dispatches in code. His Majesty will easily decipher the meaning. "Cordial greetings from your devoted subjects and friends in Paris."

KROMOV: *(to his wife, who is in animated conversation with St. Brioche)* Olga! Come over here at once! How many times have I told you?

OLGA: Then there is no point in saying it again.

KROMOV: You are flirting in a perfectly outrageous manner.

OLGA: Are you suggesting that I do so more discreetly?

KROMOV: Leading him on! Teasing, laughing, whispering! The most obvious overtures, in public!

OLGA: *(sweetly)* That's because we were not in private.

KROMOV: Oh, the agony of having a young and beautiful wife! *(helplessly, he follows her off as she exits on the arm of St. Brioche)*

ZETA: *(amused)* Poor Kromov! The jealous husband, always making a fool of himself. He might look around and learn from someone vastly superior.

PRITSCHITCH: And who might that be?

ZETA: *(complacently)* Myself. I also am a married man, with a wife certainly no less beautiful than his, but I hope you don't think I go in for such nonsense. Distrust? Suspicion? Ha! The thought never crosses my mind. My wife ... where is she?

BOGDANOVITCH: *(darkly)* Sitting over there in the alcove with Count Rosillon – a charming young man, so very ... French.

CAMILLE: *(to Valewncienne)* When you smile, it's like the sun coming out. I feel warm all over ...

VALENCIENNE: Oh, you mustn't say these things, unless we're alone.

ZETA: See how happy she looks. The perfectly contented wife!

BOGDANOVITCH: It is always a pleasure to observe two people that seem to have so much in common.

ZETA: A true hostess! The real ambassador! We can safely leave her to her duty. It looks like everyone else has gone into the ballroom. Come, let's join them. *(exeunt)*

VALENCIENNE: *(playfully)* What mischief are you up to now? What are you writing on my fan? A message for me?

CAMILLE: You won't let me say it aloud. I can't keep it buried inside. So I must write it down. "I am in love with you."

VALENCIENNE: Camille! Impossible man! We might have been overheard. Now listen carefully. I have something very important to discuss with you.

Alone at last! Now listen well!

CAMILLE
You hold the keys to heav'n or hell.

VALENCIENNE
I have but two words to say

CAMILLE
One word alone could make my day.

VALENCIENNE
Not that! The word you seek I must hold inside.

CAMILLE
Am I to bow and blindly obey?
Is love so powerful to be denied?

VALENCIENNE
Too late for love!
I speak with a purpose;
It's time you get married.

CAMILLE

Get married?

VALENCIENNE

I've thought it over ...

CAMILLE

**Wed someone else? How can it do?
I love only you, love only you.**

VALENCIENNE

**Oh, hush! Say not so!
Or if it must be said, then say it low ...**

**A proud and impeccable wife –
That role I have taken for life.
With firm resolve and resistance
Your charms I must keep at a distance.**

**No matter the cost or the pain,
A tug or a twist of the knife,
That role I intend to retain,
A proud and impeccable wife.**

**Sweet nothings that I adore,
The messages, soft and sweet,
Are wicked and furthermore
Just possibly indiscreet.**

**However hard, we must forgo
The thrill of that forbidden game;
The hidden spark, the inner glow
Can turn into a raging flame.**

**Even magic castles in the air
Will tumble down in half a day,
A paradise beyond compare,
The fairest flowers fade away.**

CAMILLE

**My ears I can hardly believe!
Can you be in fact so naïve?
A husband at home is no reason
To squander a springtime in season.**

Is rapture to go by the board?

**Are moonlight and music taboo?
Is passion to claim no reward
Because of your odd point of view?**

**Though flowers are bound to fade
And castles will tumble down,
Persistence may yet persuade
My queen to accept the crown.**

VALENCIENNE

**However hard, we must forgo
The thrill of that forbidden game;
The hidden spark, the inner glow
Can turn into a raging flame.**

**Even magic castles in the air
Will tumble down in half a day,
A paradise beyond compare,
The fairest flowers fade away.**

CAMILLE

**No, not a jot shall we forgo
Of that inviting game,
That hidden spark, that inner glow
Now bursting into flame!**

**Castles in the air
Are here to stay,
A paradise that two can share.**

**Forever ours, the fairest flowers
Bloom today!**

VALENCIENNE: It is the only way to overcome temptation. You must get married.

CAMILLE: (*bitterly*) You speak as if it were like getting a job, taking a trip, buying a horse ...

VALENCIENNE: I'm only being practical. I am *not* suggesting that you fall in love.

CAMILLE: As if I *could*!

VALENCIENNE: Oh, dear! One of us has to be sensible!

CAMILLE: How can I be sensible when my heart turns cartwheels every time I look at you?

VALENCIENNE: We must never speak of love again.

CAMILLE: Never again?

VALENCIENNE: Not only that. I must forbid you to follow me around whenever I leave a room.

CAMILLE: Not even that!

VALENCIENNE: We have to keep up appearances. *(sadly)* Even when the appearances are ... true.

(Zeta and the others return)

ZETA: Look at her! Still at it!

BOGDANOVITCH: *(still darkly)* As you say, a born hostess.

ZETA: My wife has the gift of making a person feel completely at home. My dear?

VALENCIENNE: *(startled)* Yes, dear. Count Rosillon has been telling me of his plan to ... buy a horse.

ZETA: What could have detained Madame Glavari? Everybody has been asking. They are dying to meet her. How embarrassing it would be ...

VALENCIENNE: I am sure there is no cause for alarm. Someone who doesn't know Paris can easily get lost, and usually does.

ZETA: Just what I'm afraid of. Do go and see what you can find out.

VALENCIENNE: If you think that would be any help. *(She starts to leave; Camille dares not follow. She waits, then speaks quite fiercely)* Well, Count Rosillon, aren't you coming with me?

CAMILLE: *(confused, but pleasantly surprised)* I? You're asking me? Of course I will!

ST. BRIOCHE: Tell us more about this Madame Glavari ...

CASCADA: Whom everyone is so excited about.

ZETA: A Cinderella story. From rags to riches. Glavari was a banker, old enough to be her father. He was in love with her when she was still a girl, and as soon as she came of age, he asked for her hand.

ST. BRIOCHE: Which I daresay she promptly gave.

ZETA: On the contrary. She seemed to laugh it off. He kept asking, she kept refusing. This minuet went on for a number of years until she surprised everyone by suddenly accepting.

CASCADA: Sounds like dashed hopes.

ST. BRIOCHE: Or the cold light of reality.

ZETA: Whatever the reason, she kept it to herself, and Glavari was a man of the utmost tact. He proved it by dying, thus leaving his lovely widow with a fortune of no less than fifty million crowns.

CASCADA: Fifty million! She sounds charming!

ST. BRIOCHE: Fifty million! She sounds gorgeous!

CASCADA: She must not be neglected.

ST. BRIOCHE: Paris must open its arms to her.

CASCADA: She will need an escort.

ST. BRIOCHE: Someone must show her the town.

CASCADA: (*glaring*) Gold-digger!

ST. BRIOCHE: (*glaring*) Money grubber! (*they exit*)

KROMOV: I smell danger. We could be in for trouble. Pritschitch!

PRITSCHITCH: How so?

ZETA: The fifty million belonging to the widow ...

KROMOV: ... ix deposited in the National Bank of Pontevedro, an institution of questionable stability.

ZETA: Of which we are the administrators. Its present assets come to fifty million crowns, eleven thousand ninety six francs. Plus eighty four sous.

KROMOV: The fifty million are Madame Glavari's ...

ZETA: The eleven thousand are mine.

KROMOV: The ninety six are mine.

ZETA: The eighty four sous belong to the citizens of Pontevedro. It is obvious that if Madame Glavari married a foreigner ...

BOGDANOVITCH: ... who removed the funds from our National Bank ...

PRITSCHITCH: The bank would fold.

BOGDANOVITCH: Poof!

PRITSCHITCH: Debacle!

ZETA: Gentlemen! Let us not jump to conclusions. Take my word for it. Catastrophe will not occur. The master has taken on the case. We have to prevent Madame Glavari from marrying a foreigner. How? By getting her married to one of our own. We find an attractive man her age – suave, handsome, dashing – nature will do the rest. All we do is start the ball rolling. (*Njegus enters*) Ah, Njegus! Back from the search. Were you successful? Did you find the address I gave you? Was he there?

NJEGUS: Yes, Your Excellency.

ZETA: Bravo! Good work! But why isn't he with you?

NJEGUS: I meant, yes, I was successful in finding the address. Count Danilovitch was not at home.

ZETA: But you didn't give up? What about his club? Doesn't he have a sweetheart?

NJEGUS: The problem there, sir, is that of combing through the list.

ZETA: Damnation! The one time his country has need of him, Count Danilovitch is not to be found,

NJEGUS: No, sir!

ZETA: A pity. We tried.

NJEGUS: I meant, no, sir, you are wrong. I did find him.

ZETA: Good heavens, man! Where?

NJEGUS: Ever heard of a café called Maxim's?

BOGDANOVITCH: That pagan temple of debauchery?

PRITSCHITCH: Frequented by girls who have cast aside all pretense of respectability!

BOGDANOVITCH: Girls that live solely for pleasure!

PRITSCHITCH: Girls ...

NJEGUS: Of which our hero is a connoisseur. There he was surrounded, and in no mood to be disturbed.

ZETA: Did you give him my message?

NJEGUS: I told him that his country has urgent need of his service, that he is to report immediately to the embassy. He replied ... well, perhaps I shouldn't say what he replied.

ZETA: He dared refuse an official summons? An order from his superior?

NJEGUS: Hojd on! He will be here in fifteen minutes, thanks to a little white lie that I concocted myself.

ZETA: Which was?

NJEGUS: I told him that the champagne served by Your Excellency was first rate

ZETA: Harumph! *(music begins)*

ANNOUNCER: Madame Glavari!

NJEGUS: *(in awed tones)* A monetary glow lights the horizon!

ZETA: What's going on out there?

MEN: Madame Glavari has arrived! Here she is! Here at last! She's here! *(Anna enters, followed with great gallantry by Cascada and St.,Brioche)*

ZETA: How sublime! To inherit for one's country.

ANNA

Words of little worth!

CASCADA

So heavenly, so down to earth!

ANNA

Praises to the sky!

CASCADA

Dazzling to the eye!

ANNA

Enough of that! Say no more!

ST. BRIOCHE

**But who could see and not adore
Such perfection?**

ANNA

You gentlemen are too polite.

ST. BRIOCHE

The beauty of a starry night!

ANNA

I wonder how sincere.

ST. BRIOCHE

**And music to the ear
Unheard before!**

ANNA

**Yet how you persevere!
Please, say no more!**



You fol- low—oh, so a- mor- ous!— Each day the num- bers mount.

**Would I be quite so glamorous
Without my bank account?**

**Your inner fire I seem to stir –
With what are you in love?
My beauty, charm and character,
Or none of the above?**

**Now of course I could be wrong,
Though I fear the reverse.
The power of your song
Is inspired by my purse.**

MEN

No!

ANNA

**Forgive me if I tease.
The prize pick of Paree,
Down on their knees, eager to please.
Pardon a lady if she wonders
If you also are not fortune hunters.**

ST. BRIOCHE

**Down upon our knees,
Anything to please,
All eager to please.**

MEN

**The prize pick of Paree,
Down on our knees, eager to please.**

ANNA

**Even the bashful lover grows bold,
Drawn by the glitter of gold.**

ST. BRIOCHE

Drawn by your charm, we come to compete.

MEN

**Drawn by your beauty, we come to compete,
All of us falling at your feet.
Palpitating,
Some would say calculating,
Here we're waiting,
Ready to make a pitch.**

ANNA

**What magic do you see in me?
A vision of romance?
Or is your passion possibly
More focused on finance?**

**With chivalry you vie for me –
I have to wonder which
Would still repine and sigh for me
Had I not struck it rich.**

**Though you aim to please, no matter.
Your attentions hardly flatter.
Are you asking why?
Make a sadder widow sigh
With your chatter.
Some you may seize – Not I!**

ST. BRIOCHE
The woman of my fantasies!

CASCADA
Why stand upon formalities?

MEN
You shall be mine, by and by!

CASCADA: Deliciously candid! Delightfully unaffected!

ST. BRIOCHE: Refreshing as a summer breeze!

ANNA: Or a check in the mail. You know, I've not been in Paris long enough to get acquainted with your ways, but I am sure you are far too intelligent to mean half the things you are saying. (*good humouredly, as always*) Please, forgive me for being frank. As a newcomer, I know just enough of your language to say what I think, not enough to invent lies.

MEN: Wonderful! So charming! So marriageable!

ST. BRIOCHE: Madame, may I put down for the first dance?

CASCADA: And I for the rest of them?

OTHERS: Save at least one for me. How do I join the ranks?

ANNA: Gentlemen, please! I am quite happy to spin around the floor with any of you.

ZETA: (*entering with Valenciennes*) Madame Glavari, you do us a great honor by coming to our celebration. Allow me to present my wife.

VALENCIENNE: I am happy to welcome you to our house.

ANNA: I am delighted to be here. And I hope that you will return the honor. I am giving a Pontevedro party tomorrow afternoon, and as I know so few people here in Paris, you would all be doing me such a favor by coming

GUESTS: Splendid! Such a pleasure! Gladly! Of course!

ZETA: How quickly and completely you have won all our hearts.

ANNA: My heart still belongs to Pontevedro – on account of my late husband.

ZETA: (*overwhelmed*) Poor, dear man! So tragic! What a grievous loss!

ANNA: (*lightly*) Oh, you mustn't take it harder than I do. It wouldn't look right.

ZETA: (*with elaborate casualness*) I am sorry that Count Danilovitch is not here for me to introduce.

ANNA: Danilo!

ZETA: You know him already? Splendid fellow!

ANNA: Well, somewhat ... a good many years ago, in Pontevedro ... things were different ...

ZETA: (*to Bogdanovitch*) Notice how cleverly I plant the seed. (*to Anna*) Shall we return to the ballroom?

MEN: Allow me! Let me escort you. My arm! May I have the pleasure?

ANNA: No, please! *Your* arm, Baron. Everyone else looks far too dangerous. *All leave, except for Valencienne and Camille*)

VALENCIENNE: (*with sudden inspiration*) There goes the woman I want you to marry!

CAMILLE: But my darling, you know how I feel. How can I even look at another woman?

VALENCIENNE: Camille, what has happened, happened before I knew it, before I knew that it was even possible. Otherwise ...

CAMILLE: But it *has* happened.

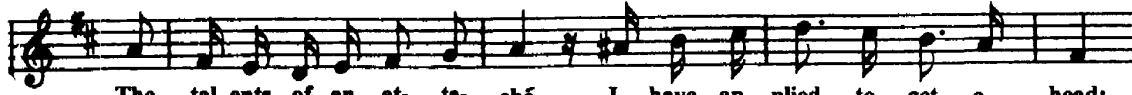
VALENCIENNE: No! I've made up my mind. I know what must be done. Marry her! And let me remain a proud, impeccable wife, even though ... I can't help sometimes wishing that I were not.

CAMILLE: Well, all right, if you insist. I'll dance with the widow and do my best to win her.

VALENCIENNE: (*flaring up*) You beast! How can you forget so easily? (*they leave*)

(Danilo enters with two ladies)

DANILO: Ladies, please! Ladies! Njegus, help! *Au revoir!* *(the ladies leave)*



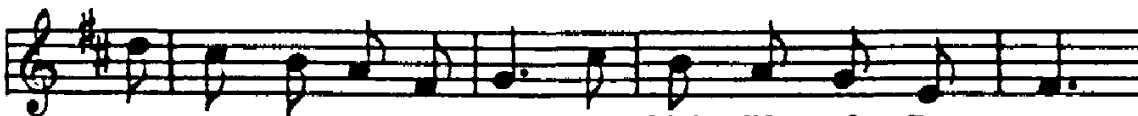
The tal-ents of an at- ta- ché I have ap- plied to get a- head;
Each government communiqué
I stick into the files unread.

'Twould never do to overdo –
A little time one must keep free.
I go to work at half past two
And have been known to stay till three.

Until I get a healthy raise,
Official parties I protest;
I know a dozen better ways
To entertain the foreign guest.

When bored with waiting on the great,
With kissing hands and rubbing brass,
The dull routine I delegate
And go to join the leisure class.

The darkened boulevards
Invite a man to stroll into the night
And float upon the winding stream
That carries you to Chez Maxim.



I saun- ter out to see the high- life of Pa- ree,
Those jewels of the nation
Of spicy reputation.

Do-Do, Margot, Gigi
Lulu, Frou Frou, Fifi,
The girls who gather nightly
For camaraderie.

The darlings of my dreams
Assemble at Maxim's --
Those captivating creatures
Put down by prudes and preachers.

**Do-Do, Margot, Gigi
Lulu, Frou Frou, Fifi,
Whom native term politely
Café society.**

(Njegus enters)

DANILO: Njegus, old man. Here I am, answering the clarion call of duty, and nobody's on hand to cheer me on.

NJEGUS: The ambassador will be delighted to see you. He is in the ballroom, no doubt entertaining Madame Glavari with the story of his rise to success.

DANILO: Madame Glavari! ... Anna here?

NJEGUS: You know her then?

DANILO: Oh, once upon a time ... she and I, ah well! Water under the bridge. My friend, there's nothing like *women* to cure you of a *woman*.

NJEGUS: I'll go tell His Excellency that you are here.

DANILO: Hold on. Not right away. The fact is, owing to the long hours, the sleepless nights, the hard work I've been putting in at Maxim's, I'm going to need a little time to pull myself together,

NJEGUS: You mean sleep it off?

DANILO: That's the idea. Overhaul the engine. But where? A desk is where I usually do it.

NJEGUS: The iron bench looks inviting.

DANILO: Right now I could fall asleep in an Iron Maiden. Come back in half an hour.

NJEGUS: Very good, sir.

DANILO: Call it a short leave of absence. *(he lies down)* Do-Do, Margot, Gigi ...

NJEGUS: Lulu, Frou Frou, Fifi ... *(He tip-toes out and Anna enters, waving off a group of men)*

ANNA: No, no! Leave me to myself for a little while. Please, no more dancing for now. Remember, I'm not yet accustomed to your Parisian pace. I insist! ... Finally free! They do cling. I wonder if gold is magnetic. A few minutes rest will be refreshing, and this seems to be the only empty room in the house. *(a snore from Danilo)* Or is it! My goodness,

Don't tell me there's someone here already. (*another snore*) French? Or Pontevedran? Man or beast? Baritone or tenor? Oh, let's take a peek ... My God! Danilo!

DANILO: Where? Who is it? What's the matter?

ANNA: (*starts to leave hastily*) Forgive me. I'm just leaving.

DANILO: (*stands up abruptly, wide awake*) Anna! Or should I say ... Madame Glavari?

ANNA: Whichever you prefer. Do continue with what you were doing. Excuse the interruption.

DANILO: No, no, don't go! I'm wide awake now. The surprise, the shock of seeing you ...

ANNA: A glass of ice water, no doubt.

DANILO: Are you staying in Paris? (*waltz music in the background*)

ANNA: There is nothing to keep me in Pontevedro. I want to see something of the world, catch up on things I've missed, enjoy life. Who knows? Perhaps even get married.

DANILO: Once was not enough?

ANNA: By your standard, once is more than enough

DANILO: There was a time when I was all for it. And if I could have had my way, you would not be the widow of Monieur Glavari, but the wife of Count Danilovitch.

ANNA: Unfortunately, the penniless girl in Pontevedro, who had two dresses and one bonnet, was unworthy of such a distinguished name.

DANILO: You know very well that I never thought any such nonsense.

ANNA: No, it was your uncle who was so concerned with preserving the family dignity.

DANILO: All right, rub it in. But it was my uncle who controlled the purse strings. I had nothing.

ANNA: And so my gallant young cavalier rose to the challenge by getting on his horse and galloping off into the sunset.

DANILO: And don't pretend that it broke your heart, Madame Glavari. You found consolation – how many million?

ANNA: Enough, I daresay, that even your aristocratic uncle might find me rather more acceptable, were he still alive.

DANILO: I am now in a position to make up my own mind ... I see that your fortune has not detracted from your beauty.

ANNA: On the contrary. It seems to have greatly enhanced it. No fewer than fifty men have fallen madly in love with me since I've been in Paris. And that's only the first three days! Amusing, isn't it? If you hurry, you might become the fifty-first.

DANILO: I promise you, that is one amusement that you will never have.

ANNA: How disappointing.

DANILO: Not for all the money in the world will I ever tell you again "I love you."

ANNA



Not all that long a-go you went your sep-arate way;

I rallied from the blow,
So here we are today.

DANILO, *interspersed*

What now? ... Back when ... too bad ...
So here we are today.
What's new? ... How nice ... how sad ...

BOTH

The past is over,
The rift beyond repair.
Dissolved forever,
The dream we used to share.

The love you whispered,
The life that might have been,
The second chance
Will never come again.

ANNA

No reason to recall the days gone by;
Never shall I waste a sigh.
Then we were young and still immature;
Youth is an ill that time will cure.

DANILO

**No reason to recall the days gone by;
Never shall I waste a sigh.**

ANNA

**We were naïve in trusting fate,
But saw the light before too late.**

**And so by chance we meet,
Now colder, more blasé.
Like strangers on a street,
We nod and go our way.**

DANILO, *interspersed*

**What now? ... What's new? ... How sad ...
We nod and go our way.**

ANNA

**You do resemble so
A friend I used to know –
An episode finished and complete.**

DANILO

Bye bye ... how nice ... back when ...

BOTH

**The past is over,
The rift beyond repair.**

ANNA

**Dissolved forever,
The dream we used to share.**

BOTH

**The love you whispered,
The life that might have been,
The second chance
Will never come again.
The second chance
Never comes again.**

ANNA: So I am never again to hear you say "I love you."

DANILO: Never!

ANNA: Stern, unbendmg Count Danilovitsch! Is this a declaration of war?

DANILO: As you wish. *(Anna drops her glove)* Aha! Throwing down the gauntlet?

ANNA: Exactly.

CASCADA: *(entering)* Madame, it's our waltz. Allow me.

ANNA: With pleasure.

All three leave, Danilo in the opposite direction. Valenciienne enters, followed by Camille.)

VALENCIENNE: *(much flustered)* Dear God, I must have dropped that silly fan! Whatever possessed you to write that preposterous message on it? No, no, it was a tender, beautiful gesture. So like you. But we must find it. If someone else does, I'm ruined! You know how people love to talk. Me, a proud, impeccable wife!

CAMILLE: Why must you keep saying that?

VALENCIENNE: Because I could so easily forget ... The buffet! I must have dropped it near the buffet. Hurry! Do see if you can find it. *(Kromov and Zeta enter)*

KROMOV: *(melodramatically)* No, no! It's no use trying to console me! The truth has come to light — the truth that I have tried to avoid. This is the end! I can deceive myself no longer.

VALENCIENNE: Why, whatever is the matter?

KROMOV: My wife ...she is having an affair! I have proof – her fan! I found it She dropped it near the buffet. Someone has written an unmistakable message on it. She is making a fool of me!

VALENCIENNE: (O my God! What can I say?)

ZETA: *(complacently)* Let's see. Why, this is not your wife's fan. I recognize it very well. It belongs to *my* wife!

VALENCIENNE: Oh no, no, no! It's not mine! Not mine at all!

ZETA: *(whispers)* Play along, dear. Be a sport. He is about to murder his wife. *(aloud)* But I've seen it in your hands many times, dear. It has to be yours.

VALENCIENNE: Oh, yes! Of course it's mine! How stupid of me!

KROMOV: Yours! But this scribble, "I am in love with you." Who put it there?

VALENCIENNE: Who put it there? Let's see. Oh yes, well ...

ZETA: (Think fast!)

VALENCIENNE: Why, my husband ... who else?

ZETA: Of course, who else? (*aside*) Well done, my dear. Oh, my wife is a clever one!

KROMOV: Oh, my goodness! I must run and find my dearest Olga! How grossly I have wronged her! Will she ever forgive me? How could I have been such an idiot?
(*he runs off*)

ZETA: Ha ha ha! My brilliance sometimes frightens me. Poor deluded husband! He doesn't suspect a thing. Dear, you had better return the fan to Olga as soon as her husband has finished knocking himself out with apologies. Tell her to be a little more careful with it in the future. Meanwhile, I wish you would find Count Rosillon and see if you can cheer him up a bit. You're so good at it. The poor man looks as if the end of the world is at hand.

VALENCIENNE: (*gulping*) Yes, dear. I'll try. (*she exits, Danilo enters*)

DANILO: Baron, you sent for me?

ZETA: Danilo! I have urgent business to discuss with you, a mission that requires the utmost delicacy and finesse. You are the only man who can do it.

DANILO: You know how I feel about work.

ZETA: But this is no work at all. Sheer pleasure! Charm! Enhancement! You must marry.

DANILO: Marry! Is that your idea of pleasure? Who is the lucky lady?

ZETA: You will gain no less than fifty million crowns ...

DANILO: I see, a love match. This could mean only ...

ZETA: Yes, indeed! Madame Glavari, the captivating widow! Get acquainted, charm her, take her!

DANILO: Never! Not for fifty *billion* would I take Madame Glavari! She would be the last woman on earth I would ask.

ZETA: You refuse?

DANILO: No! I mean, yes!

ZETA: But I've not yet explained. This is not mere self-indulgence. I am asking you to serve your native land. If Madame marries a foreigner, her fortune leaves the country. There will be no country left. Ruin, bankruptcy, collapse!

DANILO: No!

ZETA: How can you say no?

DANILO: Because I'm a man of principle. And that principle is: fall in love daily, get engaged rarely, get married never!

ZETA: I'm only asking you to do so once.

DANILO: But there may be another solution. If it's only a question of making sure that the widow does not marry a foreigner, I might be able to help out.

ZETA: How?

DANILO: By eliminating the competition, clearing the field, getting them out of the way.

ZETA: Spoken like a patriot! Pontevedro will be proud of you!

OFFSTAGE VOICES: Ladies pick! Ladies pick!

ZETA: It's now the ladies' turn to choose partners. A critical moment – time for *us* to keep a close eye on the widow.

DANILO: And time for *me* to roll up my sleeves and get to work! (*Anna enters, surrounded by eager young men*)

MEN

**All on edge
For the priceless privilege!
We are waiting in a stew
To see who dances first with you.**

**Decide, and do be quick.
A partner you must pick.
So name the lucky fellow who
Will lead the dance with you.**

ANNA

**I shall have to toss a penny!
What a vast selection!
How to choose among so many,
Each of such perfection?**

**As I can't make up my mind,
Other partners you can find
To grace the grand cotillion.**

DANILO

**(Yes, but none with fifty million!
Odd, they all happen to be free.)
Like mosquitoes they attack;
I must get them off her back.**

MEN

**Look around, you will see
None to equal me.**

DANILO

**Friends, I see you short of dancers'
I shall return with several answers.**

CASCADA

**On pins and needles we await
A nod from the belle of the ball.
Yet here you appear to procrastinate,
And seem merely bored by it all.**

ST. BRIOCHE

**Women long have fought for equal rights,
The power to pick and to choose.
Tonight having won such a worthy fight
That right you are wrong to refuse.**

CASCADA

For such an honor ...

ST. BRIOCHE

For such a pleasure ...

BOTH

We politicians run a hot campaign.

CASCADA

I'm the strongest candidate ...

ST. BRIOCHE

Put me on the party slate ...

BOTH

You are to vote who tonight is to reign.

CASCADA and CHORUS

I alone deserve the vote ...

ST. BRIOCHE and CHORUS

Pick a stallion, not a goat ...

BOTH and CHORUS

The nincompoops have their hopes in vain.

ANN

**Although you expect me to cast a vote,
I find I am still in a fix.
A party I love with a passion,
But balk when you talk politics.**

**More serious than the affairs of state,
This choosing a partner to dance,
To find the mysterious candidate
I'd best go ahead, take a stance.**

CASCADA

For such an honor ...

ST. BRIOCHE

For such a pleasure ...

ANNA

**In fighting form
The rank and file advance,
Each at my command, still
I am at a standstill.
Am I to sift and assess at a glance?**

CASCADA and CHORUS

Each at your command, still


ST. BRIOCHE and CHORUS
You are at a standstill.

BOTH and CHORUS
But my desserts you can tell at a glance.

ANNA
I suppose I must.
I gather you are starving for the pleasure.
Ah, but how shall I proceed?

LADIES
Ladies pick! Ladies pick!

DANILO



To mel- o- dy in waltz- time, come! Re- cap- ture
Days of springtime, wine and rapture.
As the twirling progresses, the dancing floor spins
To the silken caresses of violins.

A mystery and wonder set to motion]
By the magic of the potion,
Cry surrender! Come along!

A LADY
Will you dance? It's our song.

DANILO



As you glide in a dream, in a trance,

On a tide flowing on with the dance.
You're a-twirl in a world ever thrilling,
Filled with the lilt of romance.

To a tune sweeter yet than before,
Arm in arm with the girl I adore,
With a smile, with a sigh,
In a spell, you and I
Are alone on a crowded floor.

LADIES

I would stand in line for more.

ALL

**To melody in waltz time, come recapture, *etc.*
To melody in waltz time, come along!**

DANILO

**I serve my native land by day
And orders from the top I obey
But let us get this straight, my friends,
There comes a point where duty ends.**

CASCADA

Madame, may I be hopeful?

ST. BRIOCHE

You'd find no man more grateful ...

ANNA

I fear it's gone beyond a game ...

DANILO

(The moths have fluttered round the flame.)

ANNA

This must reach a conclusion.

VALENCIENNE

presenting Camille to Anna

May I present your solution?

DANILO

Good Lord! One more of the same!

VALENCIENNE

**This paragon can polka
And partner a polonaise;
His footwork on the mazurka
Is guaranteed to amaze.
His *savoir faire* in the ballroom
I've tested out myself;
In ev'ry way *tres distingue*,
Too good to remain on the shelf.**

So young and handsome,
And brighter than some,
In conversation he can pack a punch.
On reflection, I would rate
Him the current candidate.
Forget the rest,
He's the best of the bunch.

MEN

Lady, lady, I entreat!
Here's a fellow at your feet.

ANNA

I'm unimpressed
By the best of the bunch.

VALENCIENNE

Forget the rest,
He's the best of the bunch.

MEN

Forget the rest,
I'm the best of the bunch.

CAMILLE

This round of praise is far too much.

ANNA

I understand ... too well! (*sees Danilo*)
Yet I would choose another ...
The one who's trying to appear
As if he doesn't know I'm here.
May I have the pleasure?

DANILO

I? Thanks, but no. I do not dance.

ANNA

Cannot I persuade you to try?

DANILO

Am I correct? You give the dance to me?

ANNA

Of course! But why ?

DANILO

Then if the dance belongs to me,
I am to use it as I choose.
If you object, speak up.

ANNA

Go on ...

OTHERS

What does he mean?

DANILO, *addressing the men*

This dance, for which I offer humble thanks,
Is *yours* for just ten thousand francs.
All the money goes to a worthy cause ...
Do I detect a pregnant pause?

MEN

Ten thousand francs?

CASCADA, *to St. Brioche*

For just a dance?

DANILO

A piddling sum! It's all your own.

MEN

Ten thousand francs!

ST. BRIOCHE, *to Cascada*

The man is mad!

DANILO

(Is no one even taking out a loan?)
Off they go ... in a state of disarray
They discreetly slink away
As soon as there's a price to pay.

Although upon the whole
They love you heart and soul,
When time to pay, they slink away
With manly self-control.

CAMILLE

This thrust of his I mean to parry;

The ten thousand francs I'll have to pay.

VALENCIENNE

You're in love with her!

CAMILLE

I'm doing what you told me ...

VALENCIENNE

You're impossible!

(she runs off in tears, closely followed by Camille)

DANILO

There goes the last, and you are free.

So now, here on our own,

Will you not dance with me?

ANNA

I'm not in the mood.

DANILO

What of my right? You gave it to me.

ANNA

That is all well and good ...

I'm not dancing tonight.

DANILO

Violins play, soft rhythms invite;

Can you resist their delight?

ANNA

(spoken) I'm not dancing! *(he dances around her)*

Oh, you horrible man!

You dance so divinely!

DANILO

One does what he can ... *(they dance off together)*

ACT II

Scene: the garden at Anna's villa, where a party is in progress.

ANNA

You mustn't leave, for it's barely evening,
And furthermore a native holiday.
Let's celebrate with songs our people sing
That take us back to home so far away.

GUESTS

Mi velimo dase dase veslimo.
Free and proude,m celebrate with singing!
Send a shout through the mountains ringing.
Mi velimo dase veslimo. Hei!

ANNA

Back home we tell a fairy tale,
A story some remember well,
About a phantom forest maid;
Her name was Vilya, so 'tis said.



A nymph known as Vilya
With hair spun of gold.

Beheld by a hunter
That strayed from the field,
Alas! Little wonder
His fate then was sealed.

Passion heretofore denied
No longer could the young man hide.
Vale and hill
Echo to his love song still.



Love I would follow through water and fire.
Vilya, O Vilya! I call, I implore,
Come and be mine evermore.

**The wood nymph extended
Her hand with a wave
That beckoned the hunter
To come to her cave.**

**The lad was so stirred
That he wept with delight.
In rapture he kissed
Unaware of his plight.**

**Weary of his simple charms,
She vanished leaving empty arms.
Vale and hill
Echo to his love song still.**

**Vilya, O Vilya, my life, my desire!
Love I would follow through water and fire.
Vilya, O Vilya! I call, I implore,
Come and be mine evermore.
Stay in my arms evermore.**

GUESTS

Mi velimo dase dase veslimo, etc.

(after the music, all go in except Anna, Zeta, Bogdanovitsch and Pritschitch)

ZETA: Dear Madame! Only in Paris do we get a feel for what Pontevedro is really like.

PRITSCHITCH: A rare chance to go native!

ZETA: The entire embassy is here, with one exception. I do not see Count Danilo.

ANNA: Yes, I noticed.

ZETA: And I particularly wanted him to be here. I have a feeling you might enjoy his company, once you get to know him.

ANNA: *(with a hint of sadness)* Oh, I'm sure that he has far more exciting places to go, more interesting things to do. The ladies of Paris adore him wherever he goes. Why should he want to come here?

ZETA: Why, dear lady, you are too modest. Because of your beauty, your charm, your ... everything.

ANNA: Ambassador, you are very kind. But no, there's no reason ... Ah, well! We shall enjoy ourselves without him. After dinner, I am planning a surprise, more along Parisian lines.

ZETA: Are you going to tell us what it is?

ANNA: Not for the world! It's a dark secret! (*after one beat*) Now you're not to breathe a word! In the garden we are setting up a genuine, bona fide café, with six dancing grisettes. My own version of Maxim's.

ZETA: I can think of one person who will love it! Oh, dear, I mean, of course, we will all be enchanted.

ANNA: I'd better go see how work is progressing. It was rather a last minute impulse. Excuse me. (*exit*)

BOGDANOVITCH: An obvious ploy to please Count Danilo.

ZETA: My strategy is working.

PRITSCHITCH: She is beginning to warm up to him.

ZETA: All the more reason for him to be here! This is the delicate seed that we must nurture, cultivate, fertilize – encourage in every possible way. How can we do it if he's not here? How can the play go on without the leading player? (*Njegus enters*) Njegus, at last!

NJEGUS: Bad news. No use. He is not coming.

ZETA: What! Not coming? But this is impossible!

NJEGUS: He said under no circumstances would he appear, that ten oxen could not drag him here, not even if you yourself were among them,

ZETA: But the situation is critical. He is our one card in the deck. Without him, we lose the widow. He's got to come!

NJEGUS: You're arguing with the wrong man. His answer was no. Absolutely, positively NO! (*Danilo enters*)

DANILO: Your Excellency, here I am!

ZETA: Well, well, Better late than never. I was just saying that we had nothing to worry about. Danilo would never leave the fatherland in the lurch. Remember, you are to stick close to the widow, shoo away the flies, brush off the parasites.

DANILO: *Foreign* parasites, of course.

ZETA: There is one that you had better get to work on immediately.

DANILO: Someone buzzing about the widow?

ZETA: Count Rosillon.

DANILO: Not Camille!

ZETA: She has indicated a marked interest. Oh, these French! Has the man no conscience? Doesn't he realize that he is putting an entire nation in jeopardy? What has happened to the spirit of sacrifice in today's world?

DANILO: Oh, I'm sure that if you put it to him in those terms ...

ZETA: We must nip it in the bud, pluck it out by the roots,

BOGDANOVITCH: A secret in his past, perhaps ...

ZETA: A love affair ...

NJEGUS: You don't have to look far to find that.

ZETA: Aha! An affair! With whom?

NJEGUS: (*evasively*) With ... with a woman.

ZETA: In this day and age, we still take that for granted.

NJEGUS: With a married woman!

ZETA: Ah, now we're getting somewhere. No, no, no! The widow wouldn't like this at all. Tell me more. Who is this married woman?

NJEGUS: I ... I really couldn't say, sir.

ZETA: Then we must find out. No doubt, the usual case ... some pretty young thing married to an old goat who bores her to death and is too stupid to see what's going on under his nose. Ah, inspiration! My wife could handle this. She is friendly with M. Rosillon. Get them alone together, without any distraction. She will coax a confession out of him in no time.

NJEGUS: (This man is allowed to go out all by himself.)

ZETA: When the time is right – that is to say, when the widow is present – we expose the guilty lovers, and voila! We have solved everything

NJEGUS: (*striking his forehead*) Yes, Your Excellency. Solved everything.

ZETA: I think you can say that I have the situation under control. Here comes the lady now. She and Danilo must be given complete privacy. Talk with her, Count. Be charming, fascinating ... Good heavens! I don't have to tell *you* how to do it. Be cagy! Come, they must have the stage to themselves. (*all exit but Danilo. Anna enters*)

ANNA: Danilo! I was afraid you were not coming. I even thought that you might be avoiding me.

DANILO: You forget that being here is part of my job.

ANNA: Oh! No, I don't suppose that you would *want* to come.

DANILO: Are we not at war?

ANNA: How can we be at war if you are not here to fight it out with me? A good soldier stays on the battlefield!

ANNA

**Listen! Learn about the girl
And the rugged rider:
Will he gallop round the world,
Never there beside her?**

**Battle lines are clearly drawn;
He must roam no longer.
If she slyly leads him on,
Love is bound to conquer.**

DANILO

**How can he take on a bride
With so many miles to ride?**

ANNA

**How can he resist her smiles,
Never mind those many miles?**

**Cavalier, you go too far;
Gallop to parts unknown,
Leaping to the saddle,
Charging off to battle,
Gallivanting on your own.**

What a perfect beast you are!
I can think of no defense.
You would go and leave her
Fretting in a fever –
Have you not a grain of sense?

DANILO

Later comes the rider back;
High his horse is prancing.
Lo! He's on another tack,
Ready for romancing.

ANNA

Now the girl draws up with pride.
Ho! And off she flounces.
Sir, you chose to take a ride –
No the ball rebounds.

DANILO

Rider merely gives a shrug –
See you later, it's been nice.
Though you gave my heart a tug,
I am not returning twice.

ANNA

Rider, if you only knew!
Do I have to spell it out?
Is a bit of teasing
Truly so displeasing?
Does a lady have to shout?

DANILO

Though a bit of teasing
Can be rather pleasing,
How is he to turn about?

ANNA

What is one to do with you?
Why not settle down and stay?
I could love you dearly
If you were but merely
Here and not so far away.

DANILO

What is one to do with you?

**Should I settle down and stay?
I could love you dearly
If you were but merely
Here and not so far away.**

ANNA

**I could love you dearly
If you were but merely
Here and not so far away.**

(Anna leaves, Danilo stays in the background. Sylviane and Cascada enter)

SYLVIANE *(fretfully)* My darling, you've barely spoken a word to me since that dreadful widow came to town. It has got me terribly upset. In fact, my husband is quite worried about me.

CASCADA: You're just imagining ...

SYLVIANE: *(with veiled menace)* It might make me feel a little better if I took her into my confidence. Yes, a heart to heart chat would do me a world of good – there are some things only a woman can understand.

CASCADA: No, no, you mustn't! Now be reasonable.

(Olga and St. Brioche enter)

OLGA: This sudden change! Do you think I haven't noticed? Star dust has turned into gold dust. And it's all on account of that exasperating widow. Next you'll be telling me that you intend to marry her.

ST. BRIOCHE: And what if I do? It needn't affect *us*. After all, you have a husband. It's only fair that *I* have a wife.

OLGA: *(loftily)* This single standard I find quite intolerable. I have no recourse but to tell her everything. She should be warned. Heavens! My husband!. Yes, M.,St.Brioche, I, too, find these late spring afternoons rather warm ...

SYLVIANE: How tiresome! It's my husband! As you were saying, M. Caacada, Paris does become sultry. *(suddenly seeing Olga)* Darling! Perhaps *you* could help me find a cup of tea.

OLGA: *Angel!* We never get a chance to talk.

(They make their escape arm in arm, leaving Cascada and St.,Brioche fuming)

DANILO: Well, well! It looks as if I shall have no trouble shaking off these two. The ladies will take care of that.

(the husbands, Kromov and Bogdanovitch enter)

KROMOV: Wasn't that my wife?

BOGDANOVITCH: Certainly not! I could have sworn it was mine.

CASCADA: St.. Brioche, still going on your mercenary way, despite ...

ST. BRIOCHE: Cascada! Two timing the widow before you even get started.

(spoken simultaneously by the four) Where did she go? Who was she with? What are you up to? What's the idea? *(Zeta and Pritschsch)*

ZETA: Gentlemen, gentlemen! Such a stimulating conversation? What's it all about?

(spoken variously) They have gotten completely out of hand.
More uncontrollable by the day.
What is one to do about them?
How can a man hold his own?
You're asking me!

ZETA: Don't tell me. There is only one subject that would get you so stirred up.

ALL: *(with a universal groan)* Women!

(one after another)

You are baffled?

And bewildered!

Not a glimmer? Not a clue!

To the winning combination that will keep a woman true.

For an answer

Scientific,

Fully tested, Guaranteed!

What we need is quite specific, yes

A formula to succeed.

A handy guide for home or office ...

How to steer an erring spouse,

For man about the town or novice,

For the tiger and the mouse.

A master plan of operation,

**How to take and hold the reins,
The card to play on each occasion,
When to gather up the gains.**

**A dozen ways to beat the system ...
Basic standard repertoire.
The naked facts and how to twist'em
For the ballroom or boudoir.**

**The tart retort and when to turn it,
Words that either make or break,
The bonus and the way to earn it,
When to give and when to take.**

DANILO & ZETA

**Oh, the man of today has to know
What to do just to stay in the show,
To remain nonchalant, debonair
In a fight where all is fair.**

**Since the heydays of Adam and Eve,
Women's ways you would blush to believe!
In the battle of wits
You had best call it quits –
As the French put it,
*“C'est la guerre!”***

VARIOUSLY

**It is urgent! It is vital!
It's a challenge! It's an art!
How to keep your rightful title
To a woman's wayward heart.**

**Be submissive, they rebuff you ...
Be aggressive, they retreat
You must cultivate finesse if
You would sit in the driver's seat.**

**The pampered pet requires caresses;
When you pat her she will purr.
A diamond now and then impresses,
Something nice to go with fur.**

**The minx demands a sterner master,
Domineering and severe.
The solid stand, the firm position –**

**These you have to have on hand.
The talents of a politician
In condition, on command.**

**A time for tears, a time for laughter
No two darlings are the same.
You scrutinize the prize you're after
When you start to play the game.**

DANILO & ZETA

**Oh, the man of today has to know
What to do just to stay in the show,
To remain nonchalant, debonair
In a fight where all is fair.**

**Since the heydays of Adam and Eve,
Women's ways you would blush to believe.;
In the battle of wits
You had best call it quits –
As the French put it,
“*C'est la guerre!*”**

ALL

**Women, women!
Oh, the man of today has to know, *etc.***

*(all leave except Danilo, Anna enters)*β

ANNA: Count! Don't run away. Perhaps we can call a truce long enough for you to tell me something. In plain words, why have you come to my party, against your will, only to sulk and be silent? And now you seem to be trying to chase away my other guests. What's the idea?

DANILO:\ I came for amusement because I had nothing better to do.

ANNA: Be careful – I might start to wonder if you have more serious motives on your mind. This eagerness to protect me ...

DANILO: That is absurd! You are entirely off the track.

ANNA: Very well, we will scratch that idea. And since love is out of the question, perhaps you can give me some cool, level-headed advice.

DANILO: Your childlike faith in my judgment warms the heart.

ANNA: Tell me, should I get married, yes or no? I have a list of worshipers holding their breath for an answer. I don't want to remain a widow for the rest of my life, and among the many, there is one ...

DANILO: Why do you throw this at me? How should I know? Why should I care? Go ahead, marry whomever you like, whenever, wherever. Let me know the time and place and I'll come and dance at your wedding. I'll celebrate.

ANNA: Why do you raise your voice?

DANILO: I suppose you think I'm jealous.

ANNA: I think you're the last person in the world that would admit it.

DANILO: All right, I'm jealous! Now are you satisfied? I'm jealous of all women. But don't flatter yourself. There is one woman I am not jealous of – and that's you!

ANNA: How charming! You were much nicer in the old days, in that remote backwoods country of mountains, farms and villages. (*music begins*) You've been away a long time. Perhaps the memory has faded. Back then, we did not attend fashionable soirees, and we had never tasted champagne. We were intoxicated by sunshine, wild flowers, the sound of cowbells. Do you remember when we danced the kolo?

DANILO: I refuse to get nostalgic. The children have grown up, whether they wanted to or not, and have become a good deal more dignified.

ANNA: It would do no harm to dance off some of our dignity. (*they start to dance, a country dance*) From Pontevedro to Paris! Here I am, a stranger in the most sophisticated city in the world. How does one become Parisienne? Where do the natives go for gaiety and excitement?

DANILO: (*singing*) "The darling of my dreams assemble at Maxim's ..." As you enter the elegant room, eyes will turn, admirers will whisper. "Is it an unknown Countess? Or a blossoming grisette?" Led by her partner, the girl from the Balkans will forget the rough kolo of years past and glide into the smooth waltz of today.

ANNA: The tempting, dangerous waltz ...

DANILO: Watch out! You must not say anything bad about the waltz.

ANNA: And why not?

DANILO: Because it will take its revenge ... hypnotize you, lead you by the hand, twirl you around, get inside you ... and suddenly ... it will sweep you into oblivion ...
(*to a slow waltz, they gradually dance off*)

(Camille enters, followed by Valencienne)

VALENCIENNE: Dearest Camille, would I ask you to do this if I were not desperate?

CAMILLE: To say goodbye forever, when things are just beginning?

VALENCIENNE: It's for your sake, as well as mine. You deserve your own wife, your own happiness ...

CAMILLE: My happiness is with you!

VALENCIENNE: No, no, you are only making things more difficult. We've been through this before.

CAMILLE: Am I to give you up with no compensation?

VALENCIENNE: *(trying to lighten things up)* I was always taught that virtue was its own reward.

CAMILLE: But virtue doesn't have to be its *only* reward. Don't I even get a souvenir?

VALENCIENNE: A souvenir? Very well, I'll give you my fan – the fan that nearly brought the world toppling down. Promise me that you won't lose it. But first, let me write something on it – something that I came so close to forgetting. *(writes)* "I am a proud, impeccable wife."

CAMILLE: I was hoping for a kiss.

VALENCIENNE: A kiss? *(suddenly flaring up)* You wish to undo all my fine resolutions?

VALENCIENNE:

This has to end!

CAMILLE

How you torment me!

VALENCIENNE

You draw it out, procrastinating.

So take the plunge –

Why keep a widow waiting?

CAMILLE

I shall propose, although my heart is breaking.

VALENCIENNE

I know it hurts to say goodbye.

The pill is bitter, hard to swallow.
Yet so we must; we live a lie
That only grief and shame can follow.

CAMILLE

But such a final separation?

VALENCIENNE

Too long we've fed the fire of temptation.

CAMILLE

Give the command! I shall obey.

VALENCIENNE

There speaks the man
I count as my friend.

CAMILLE

One parting kiss, though ...

VALENCIENNE

Relapsing already?

CAMILLE

Oh why? Why must it end?



Born on the breeze of A- pril, and wrapped in green of May,

Full as the rose in flower,
My love perfumes the day.

It carries me to islands
Where music fills the air,
A land of golden sunshine
Because you're always there.

That paradise enchanted
Am I to wave goodbye?
The rose so newly planted
Can you allow to die?

I beg a parting favor:
O darling! Grant to me
One parting kiss to savor
For all eternity.

VALENCIENNE

O Camille!

CAMILLE

Valencienne!

VALENCIENNE

Go quickly, please!
So moving! I had not planned on this.

CAMILLE

In parting, my darling,
Grant a final kiss.

VALENCIENNE

No! ... Not here!

CAMILLE



Come! Close at hand I know a place where a hid-den door in-vites in-side.

There fearlessly we can embrace,
Tasting delicate delights
Denied.

Friendly dark will hide
Joy that no tongue will tell..
Come, open paradise again
With a tender kiss, and then –
Farewell!

VALENCIENNE

Enchantment! How can a girl resist it?

CAMILLE

Come, let us find the hidden door
To the place where we shall kiss once more!

VALENCIENNE

A magic moment ... a secret door ...

BOTH

There you and I
Enter love's magic spell.

CAMILLE
Come, open paradise again
With a tender kiss, and then –

BOTH
Farewell!

(they enter a small pavilion, closing the door behind them)

NJEGUS: *(enters and catches sight of them)* The Baroness and Count Rosillon! And it doesn't look like they are stepping in for tea and piroshki. Ah, blind, foolish husband! Thank God, he's nowhere near!

(Zeta enters, followed by Bogdanovitch)

ZETA: I ask you why is Count Danilovitch never around when I need him? I have a feeling that he has been paying no attention whatever to the widow.

NJEGUS: Your Excellency! A dispatch from the home office. It just arrived, I assume that it is in code.

ZETA: Read it.

BOGDANOVITCH: "Divorced duchesses avoid polished dance floors."

ZETA: A lovely thought. Sweet of them to say so.

BOGDANOVITCH: How's that?

ZETA: It means, "The eminent ambassador has done an excellent job."

BOGDANOVITCH: There's more. "Basso profundos are finger painting frescoes in the ballerina's boudoir."

ZETA: Not good! Not good at all.

BOGDANOVITCH: What does it mean?

ZETA: "Grave concern over Glavari millions. Crisis eminent. Solution urgent."

BOGDANOVITCH: What are we to do about it?

ZETA: First, we must try to get Count Danilo to take the national emergency more seriously. If we cannot get him into a more cooperative frame of mind, we shall need – well, frankly I am at a loss. We simply have to sit down and put our heads together. This little pavilion should offer privacy. Come!

NJEGUS: *(stepping forward)* But sir! You can't go in there! ... it's dark inside.

ZETA: Do you think we are living in the Dark Ages? Ha ha ha! Thanks to the wonders of modern science, by merely pushing a button, one can flood the entire room with illumination. It's called *eloctracity*. *(he pronounces the word with ostentatious precision)*

NJEGUS: Your Excellency! There's someone in there already. Two people. It would not be wise to disturb them.

ZETA: A romantic rendezvous! Ah, springtime in Paree! Anyone I know?

NJEGUS: Count Rosillon ...

ZETA: Aha! Why didn't you say so? Just the man we are looking for! Funny, he was with my wife just a few minutes ago. The way some people get around! This will be excellent entertainment for the widow, though I think she will be less than amused.

NJEGUS: Oh, but Your Excellency ...

ZETA: Tush, I know what you are going to say. I noticed it, too. There is another door in back. They could slip out before we have assembled an audience. Quick! Go and lock it. Then to find the widow. We'll give her the best seat in the house.

NJEGUS: Just as you say, sir. *(Hesitantly, he starts to leave, then has a bright idea. His face lights up.)* (But first we'll have to do some fancy footwork!) *(exit)*

ZETA: We were hunting for the solution, and here it falls in our laps. A scene from grand opera! A sensational tableau! We burst open the door ... the guilty lovers emerge ... the spectators gasp ... the widow faints ... the curtain falls. *(Danilo enters)*

DANILO: Baron! You were looking for me?

ZETA: A most interesting development. The plot is coming to a boil.

DANILO: What plot?

ZETA: The secret of our friend Count Roillon is about to make the headlines. This very minute, no less than ten feet away, unknowingly, he awaits the moment of his downfall.

DANILO: Inside the pavilion?

ZETA: Like a rat in a trap, Oh, look! A keyhole! *(puts his ear to the keyhole)* Shhh! I can hear. The usual romantic drivel ... madly in love ... never too late ... one more kiss ... ha ha ha!

DANILO: What's the joke?

ZETA: Her husband! Can't you see the picture? Some trusting old fool – smug, pompous, self-satisfied –without the slightest notion of what is going on behind his back.

DANILO: Really, I don't like to spy.

ZETA: Just a sneak preview. *(he looks)*

DANILO: My dear Baron, that's not exactly chivalrous.

ZETA: But practical. And amusing. Damn! All I can see is his back. He's kissing her ... now he's moving ... she's turning around ... good God! *He staggers back. As he turns away, Njegus beckons Valenciennes out of the pavilion's back door. Anna quickly takes her place inside.*

DANILO: What do you see?

ZETA: No, I don't believe it!

DANILO: What's the matter?

ZETA: Impossible! It's not true!

DANILO: Good heavens, let me see ...

ZETA: No, don't look!

DANILO: Who is it?

ZETA: *(sinking into a chair)* MY WIFE! Open that door! Open up, I say, open up!
(Anna and Camille emerge from the pavilion. Zeta and Danilo both gasp)

ANNA

Why do you take us by surprise?

DANILO

It's Anna and Camille!

ZETA

Can I no longer trust my eyes?

DANILO

It's Anna and Camille!

I know what this implies.

My mind and senses start to reel!

ZETA

I saw my wife in there!

VALENCIENNE,

entering from the opposite side

You want me?

ZETA

(I must be insane.)

VALENCIENNE

What's going on? Do explain.

DANILO

Not Anna and Camille!

CAMILLE, to Danilo

No need to make a scene.

ZETA

**This tiny keyhole I was looking through
And what I saw was clear enough.**

ANNA

Not very chivalrous of you.

DANILO

(But it gets results.)

ZETA

**And what I heard, I swear upon my life ...
This woman chaser ...was making love ...**

ANNA

You heard him addressing me?

DANILO

Oh, Anna!

ZETA

I could have sworn the lady was my wife.

ANNA, to Camille

**My dear, 'twould appear
Our secret is out.**

VALENCIENNE & CAMILLE
(A close escape, after much stress and strain.)

DANILO
(A growing jealousy I try to contain.)

ZETA
(I start to wonder if I am insane.)

NJEGUS
(How well I get along by using my brain.)

ANNA
To spy is a dangerous thing to do;
We risk finding out what is all too true.
My sweet, go ahead,
Repeat what you said.
Though uttered in private,
Recall, reconstrue.

CAMILLE
Must I go public?

DANILO
(This turns into torment!)

CAMILLE
Born on the breeze of April
And wrapped in green of May,
Full as the rose in flower,
My love perfumes the day.

It carries me to islands
Where music fills the air,
A land of golden sunshine
Because you're always there.

That paradise enchanted
Am I to wave goodbye?
The rose so newly planted
Can you allow to die?

I beg a parting favor:
O darling! Grant to me
One parting kiss to savor

For all eternity.

ANNA

**(By turning round the serenade
The Baron's fears we have allayed.
Ah, stubborn friend,
Your tongue still tied?
You choose to pay the price of pride.
Where is your sense of rivalry?)**

VALENCIENNE

**(A camouflage, a masquerade,
I have no cause to feel betrayed.
Ah, but the pang that hurts deep inside!
How can he sing to her
The song he sighed to me?)**

DANILO

**(She puts me through the paces –
Damnable serenade!
She goes to his embraces;
Pride has been repaid.
Am I to leave her,
Meekly step aside?
I must control my fever,
Contain my jealousy.)**

ZETA

**(My wife is back in my good graces;
My fears had not the slightest basis.
Sweet is the serenade
That makes the shadows fade.
How could I not believe her
All that a wife should be?
How could I not believe her true to me?)**

ANNA, *spoken*

**Everyone, come quickly! Now we can let you all share the good news!
So putting an end to silly surmising ,,,**

OTHERS

There's more to know?

ANNA, *looking at Danilo*

**My news for some may be surprising,
Camille and I have just become engaged!**

CAMILLE

Me?

VALENCIENNE

Oh, no!

CAMILLE

Her?

DANILO

Dear God!

ZETA

How's that?

OTHERS

So he's the happy man!

VALENCIENNE

Oh, no!

CAMILLE

Dear God!

DANILO

Do tell.

ZETA

That's that.

ANNA

(I handled that one rather well.)

OTHERS

Congratulations!

DANILO

(I think of fifty million reasons.)

ZETA

(We now are minus fifty million.)

CAMILLE, *aside to Anna*

You go too far, I cannot acquiesce ...

ANNA, to Camille
But then Valenciennes in a hell of a mess.

ZETA, to Anna
Are you determined?

VALENCIENNE
Have you no concern?

ANNA
Why should we not?

ZETA
But when so many might oppose?

ANNA, to Danilo
Do you?

DANILO
Not in the least!
No, that's the way it goes,
You know your mind;
I am delighted,
Though I should add ...

ANNA
You wish to add? ...

DANILO
Fall in love daily,
Get engaged rarely.
Get married never!

In circles of diplomacy
(I bow to present company)
The promised bliss of marriage
We tend to disparage.
Too often when the knot is tied
A fond acquaintance will decide
To make it a threesome.
Look around, you'll see some.

Perhaps we should be lenient
On comforts so convenient
That need so little preparation.
Depending on your point of view,

**As soon as two have said “I do”
They should return to circulation.
I see no impropriety;
The spice of life is in variety.**

ANNA

(spoken) I couldn't agree with you more!!

**We plan to marry, so to speak
In the Parisian way –
My dear, I'll not be home tonight.
We play the Parisian way!**

**C'est Paree, oui!
Ooh la la!
C'est la vie, oui!
Ooh la la!
Oh, no! A sanctum safe and sound
Is not what we are bound for.
No, no, no, no, no!**

OTHERS

**C'est Paree, oui!
Ooh la la!
C'est la vie, oui!
Ooh la la!
Oh, no! A sanctum safe and sound
Is not what they are bound for.
No, sirree!**

VALENCIENNE

**A married life of sheer delight –
In the Parisian way --
The wife goes left, the husband right
In the Parisian way.
They have a gorgeous time, of course,
In the Parisian way,
Then get the most divine divorce
In the Parisian way!**

C'est Paree, oui!, etc.

DANILO

**(This is sheer insanity!
One minute more and I'll explode.)**

**Break it off. Have you gone mad?
(No, no, this will never do.
Self-control will pull you through.)**

**A tale of old has come to mind;
You ought to find it quite amusing.**

ANNA

**Of course, go on, you have the floor.
Nothing, I trust, that we have heard before.
Tell your story ...**

DANILO

**A Prince and Princess, ill-fated,
In days long ago, far away,
In love, were -- alas -- separated
For reasons that grieve me to say.**

**The Prince was in love, but at present,
Too proud, he was loath to propose.
The next episode is unpleasant --
Through silence, hard feelings arose.**

**In anger, she sought to get even --
A step that would seem without sense.
Her hand to another she'd given
Before he could make his defense.**

**A blow to the Prince, but no matter,
For at last he had cast off the hex.
He cried, now I see you're no better
Than the rest of your treacherous sex.**

**They meet later on, quite at random.
Aha! His heart has now healed.
The pain has become a mere phantom --
Our hero is playing the field.**

**"A fool would remain broken hearted!
Be happy," he said, "as shall I,"
With these final words he departed,
As I shall do now. Goodbye!**

ANNA

You're going off, but where?

DANILO

**The darlings of my dreams
Are waiting at Maxim's --
Those captivating creatures
Put down by prudes and preachers.**

**Do-Do, Margot, Gigi
Lulu, Frou Frou, Fifi,
Whose fascinating features
Light up because of me. *(he leaves)***

ANNA

(spoken) He loves me! Now I know!
**C'est Paree, oui!
Ooh la la!
C'est la vie, oui!
Ooh la la!
Oh, no! An ordinary wedding
Is not where we are heading.
No, no, no, no, no!**

End of Act II

ACT III

Scene: "Maxim's" at Anna's villa.

NJEGUS: For the evening, the servant takes on a new role –the stage magician. I lift the curtain, and voila! We are transported into a land of fantasy, the den of iniquity, the palace of *joie de vivre* – in short, Maxim's.

ZETA: Does that mean that we are going to see grisettes?

NJEGUS: The genuine article. Six of them. Madame Glavari insisted. It was her idea to surprise Count Danilo.

ZETA: Hm! Would that he were here!

NJEGUS: But we have an extra surprise for you, sir.

ZETA: For me?

NJEGUS: A seventh grisette – mwhom you may recognixed.

ZETA: I beg your pardon. Not very likely.

NJEGUS: Oh, very likely indeed! She is your wife.

ZETA: My wife, a grisette? One of these notorious café hussies?

NJEGUS: Mind you, just pretending. She thought it might amuse you. But I thought it safer to warn you.

ZETA: Well, well, a little joke! I just might surprise her by *not* recognizing her!

GRISSETTES

**Ever bright and ever sprightly,
For delight we gather nightly:
Do-do, Margot, Gigi,
Lulu, Frou Frou, Fifi.**

VALENCIENNE

Et moi!

GRISSETTES

**In the land of operetta
We are high upon a throne;
God has given your grisette
A place to call her very own.**

**Never is grisette without
Men to light her cigarette.
With a fret, a wink, a pout,
She'll get the mink she's out to get.**

**To the wicked, wicked city
We have drifted from afar.
Heaven help us! What a pity
We must live n caviar.**

**Ever bright and ever sprightly,
For delight we gather nightly:
Do-do, Margot, Gigi,
Lulu, Frou Frou, Fifi.**

VALENCIENNE

**Long before the discotheque
We flock into the cabarets;
Painted by Toulouse-Lautrec,
We're boulevard habitués.**

**Though unlisted on the menu,
We excite the appetite.
Call for local ladies when you
Care to order something light.**

GRISSETTES

**Ever bright and ever sprightly,
For delight we gather nightly:
Do-do, Margot, Gigi,
Lulu, Frou Frou, Fifi.**

VALENCIENNE

Et moi!

GRISSETTES

**Brought to you by Franz Lehar,
Here we sparkle, here we star.
On the set and on the stage
Les grisettes are all the rage.**

**On the town or *tete-a-tete*.
Eh voila! Les belles grisettes!
Ri-tan-tou-rim tan-ti-ri,
Meet the girls of gay Paree!**

ZETA: It's no good. I simply *cannot* concentrate on grisettes. Not with this awful crisis hanging over our heads. I ask you, how many times have *you* been on the verge of losing fifty million?

BOGDANOVITCH: I can't believe that Madame Glavari will take this deplorable step.

PRITSCHITCH: Marry a Frenchman!

ZETA: What is to stop her? The minute I saw the two of them emerging from that blasted pavilion, I knew that our case was lost. Blind infatuation, if ever I saw it. And then Danilo caps it off by making an ass of himself with that idiotic story about the Prince and Princess. What possessed him to tell a pointless anecdote in a situation like that? No sense of timing. Not to mention his downright rudeness, storming out of the room as he did. A fine way to treat a lady! Take my word for it – if he ever had a chance to ingratiate himself with the widow, he blew it to smithereens.

PRITSCHITCH: Perhaps if he apologizes. You never know ...

ZETA: Too late. After such behavior, it's my guess that she would refuse to see him again, even if he came crawling back on his hands and knees – an unlikely event in any case.

BOGDANOVITCH: Well, it was a good try on our part.

ZETA: A brilliant idea, but it fizzled! The fact is that Count Danilo and Madame Glavari are not attracted to each other. It's as simple as that. You can't build a fuel without fire. And if I'm any judge of human nature – a point that few would dispute – we will never see Count Danilo on these premises again. Never! (*Danilo enters*)

DANILO: What's happened to the party?

ZETA: Ah, Danilo! There you are! I ... I had a feeling you would show up.

DANILO: (*with strained bravado*) Quite right, sir. After heating up a bit, I managed to cool off and think things over. No, said I! Madame Glavari's fortune must not leave Pontevedro. Duty calls! I must do what I can while there is still time.

ZETA: So you've decided to take the assignment more seriously! Too bad that you didn't think of it sooner. No, I fear there comes a time to look facts in the face. We have missed the boat. She is head over heels in love with young Rosillon, and there is nothing we can do about it.

DANILO: (*pained and uneasy*) It can't be as bad as that.

ZETA: Give three reasons why not.

DANILO: A passing fancy, perhaps. A romantic delusion. Paris often does this to people. She's probably had second thoughts already.

ZETA: But good Lord, man! She's going to marry him! She's announced her engagement.

DANILO: Then we must persuade her to break it. Appeal to her patriotism, her sense of duty.

ZETA: Patriotism can be pushed only so far. No, it's clear to me that her heart is set on it and there is no talking her out of it.

DANILO: You would surrender? Think of the consequences. The loss would be ... unbearable. We must appeal to her better nature. We *cannot* give up. (*Anna enters*)

ANNA: Count Danilo! What a pleasant surprise! After your abrupt departure, I had no idea we would be seeing you again so soon.

DANILO: I am here for a purpose.

ZETA: Ahem, Bogdanovitch, Kromov, Pritschitch! We have things to attend to. Come!

(they hurriedly leave)

ANNA: A pity that you missed the entertainment that I had planned especially for you.

DANILO: Anna, let me come straight to the point. Not long ago, you asked for my advice as a friend. Should you marry or not?

ANNA: And that friendly advice, I recall, was marry whomever you like, it's no concern of mine.

DANILO: *(earnestly)* Please, don't hold it against me. You know my temper. I spoke off the top of my head. But now I speak from the heart. You *must not* marry Camille.

ANNA: Why do you put it so strongly? Why does it mean so much to you?

DANILO: You must surely know.

ANNA: Yes, I think I do. But I want to hear it from your own lips, in your own words. Why must I not marry this man? Why are you so opposed to it?

DANILO: It's for ... the fatherland. If your fortune is taken out of the country ...

ANNA: I see. It comes down to money. Love, happiness, personal fulfillment have nothing to do with it – just money. Very well, let's keep it on these terms. I have no wish to bankrupt our beloved *fatherland*. You may rest assured ... this marriage that you find so objectionable will not take place.

DANILO: *(incredulously)* Oh, Anna, you would sacrifice ...

ANNA: *(impatiently)* Oh, you needn't worry on that score. I am not giving up anything that I have the slightest desire to hold on to.

DANILO: *(joyfully)* You're not in love with Camille?

ANNA: No, I am not.

DANILO: But the rendezvous in the pavilion. The love scene overheard by the Baron. I saw it myself.

ANNA: In that tender scene, my dear, I was not the leading lady – I was the understudy.

DANILO: Understudy?

ANNA: Called in at the last minute. I stepped in to help a friend out of an embarrassing situation. By quickly reshuffling the deck, as it were, her reputation was saved and her husband was deceived into thinking that he was not deceived.

DANILO: Why, that's magnificent! It's incredible! You're a heroine! Why didn't you tell me sooner?

ANNA: When did you give me a chance to tell you?

DANILO: The torment I've been going through. The misery, because I thought ... and you're not in love! You're not in love!

ANNA: Danilo, why does it make you so happy? Why are you so relieved to learn that I am not in love with Camille? Say it, Danilo, say it!

DANILO: I've already told you why ...

ANNA: Be honest. Tell me the truth. Tell me from the heart. Why are you so happy? Is it for the fatherland? Or for yourself?

DANILO: *(after a struggle)* It's for the fatherland. *(Anna turns away and starts to leave)*

DANILO



Strings are play- ing, soft- ly say- ing, "I love you."
Hearts are beating,
Both repeating, "Love me, too."

Ev'ry sigh unspoken
Sends a message through,
Tells of two in harmony,
A dream come true.

ANNA

Together as we glide,
Impossible to hide
Those incandescent signs
That tell of joy unknown before.
No sweeter words need I recall,
A silent signal tells it all –
You are the one alone
That I adore.

DANILO

Ev'ry sigh unspoken
Sends a message through,
Tells of two in harmony,

A dream come true.

ANNA: Before you say another word, I've something to show you. Something important. Wait right here. (*Anna leaves. Zeta, Kromov, Bogdanovitch and Pritschitch return*)

ZETA: How did it go? What's the report? Any luck?

DANILO: Great news, Your Excellency! Great news for you, for everyone. Madame Glavari will not marry Count Rosillon!

ZETA: So you talked her out of it. Well, well, patriotism carries the day after all. Frankly, I didn't think you could do it. For once I was wrong.

PRITSCHITCH: This calls for celebration!

KROMOV: Three cheers for Pontevedro!

(*Valencienne enters with Sylviane and Olga, accompanied by Cascada and St. Brioche*)

ZETA: Did you hear that, my dear? Madame Glavari is not going to marry Rosillon after all.

VALENCIENNE: (Oh, God be thanked!)

ST. BRIOCHE: Marvelous! I am back in the running!

CASCADA: Magnificent! She's holding out for me!

ST. BRIOCHE: Swine!

CASCADA: Pig!

KROMOV: But surely, after what we saw in the pavilion ...

DANILO: That was an optical illusion, a conjuring trick. What you saw was Madame Glavari coming to the rescue of an endangered friend – a married woman whose reputation was on the line.

KROMOV & ST. BRIOCHE: Olga!

BOGDANOVITCH & CASCADA: Sylviane!

ZETA: (*with dawning suspicion*) And who might this married woman be?

DANILO: I was not so indiscreet as to inquire.

KROMOV: So Madame Glavari allows herself to be compromised out of devotion to a friend. Very touching. *Which* friend?

BOGDANOVITCH: The question is of *general* concern.

OLGA: Sylviane, darling, it must have been just as we were having tea together.
(*Njegus enters, quite drunk, doing a grisette number and fanning himself with Valenciennes's fan*)

NJEGUS: Do-do, Nargot, Gigi, Lulu, Frou Frou, Fifi ... Well, well! Party still going strong. Everybody having a good time. Cold champagne, warm night ... (*great revelation*) Or you could say it backwards! Night warm, champagne cold. Vive la France!

SYLVIANE: I do believe the man is tipsy.

VALENCIENNE: (Good heavens, that wretched fan again!)

ZETA: (*sternly*) What is that artifact in your hand? (*he reaches for it*)

NJEGUS: No, no, sir! Mustn't touch. Belongs to a lady. Mum's the word. Incriminating evidence ... found in the pavilion. (*general gasp*)

ZETA: Olga's fan! Dear me! So it turns up once again.

KROMOV: The truth comes out! I am betrayed! Undone! O cursed day!

ZETA: (*calmly*) Now, now, I wouldn't take it so hard.

KROMOV: No, this is the end, the bitter end.

VALENCIENNE: Calm yourself, sir. Your wife has nothing to do with this. The fan is not hers. It is mine.

ZETA: What! You! Then I am betrayed! Undone! O cursed day! Scandal! Disgrace! Divorce! (*Anna enters*) Madame, I am a free man. And in the name of my country, I ask for your hand in marriage.

DANILO: Quick recovery.

ANNA: Excellency, you do me a great honor, but I am afraid that you would be doing your country a poor service by marrying a penniless widow.

ALL: (*big reaction*) What's that? Did you hear? What does she mean? Did she say penniless?

ANNA: That's the way it is. The will of my late husband specifies that if and when I remarry, I lose my entire fortune.

DANILO: (*overjoyed*) Anna! Is it true? You will have no money?

ZETA: (*stiffly*) In that case, Madame, it is only fair of me to withdraw my offer.

CASCADA: Awfully big of you.

ST. BRIOCHE: Magnanimous!

DANILO: Anna, Anna! Now there nothing to stand between us. I love you! I love you! Will you marry me?

ANNA: At last! The words I've been waiting for!

ZETA: You would marry her without a penny? You were obviously not cut out for a political career.

ANNA: He marries a poor woman, but luckily I am marrying a rich men. The will states that my fortune is to go to my husband.

DANILO: Anna! What a shameless trick to pull on an unsuspecting man! But how can I hold it against you? I would still love you, even if you had a hundred million! (*they embrace*)

VALENCIENNE: (*calmly, to Zeta*) My dear, you found my fan. I believe that is sometimes referred to as the smoking gun. But before you cast me out into the cold, why don't you read the message that I wrote on it?

ZETA: "I am a proud, impeccable wife." Then is it true? You were not ... Oh, my dear, forgive me!

VALENCIENNE: Yes, it is true, as it has always been. (*suddenly furious*) And you are a ridiculous, fatheaded, silly old fool!

ZETA: My darling! Those are the softest, sweetest words you've ever said to me. Women! Women!

ANNA

Oh the man of today has to know

ZETA

What to do just to stay in the show

DANILO

**To remain nonchalant, debonair
In a fight where all is fair.**

TUTTI

**Since the heydays of Adam and Eve,
Women's ways you would blush to believe!
In the battle of wits
You had best call it quits –
As the French put it,
*“C'est la guerre!”***

THE END

