

**THE STAR**  
**(L'Étoile)**

*Music by*  
Emmanuel Chabrier

*English Version by*  
Donald Pippin  
(1994)

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

|                                                        |                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Ouf</b>                                             | The King             |
| <b>Sirocco</b>                                         | Astrologer           |
| <b>Patacha and Zanzal</b>                              | Citizens             |
| <b>Persimmon</b><br><i>(pronounced á la Francaise)</i> | Count and Ambassador |
| <b>Aloes</b>                                           | Persimmon's wife     |
| <b>Laoula</b>                                          | Princess             |
| <b>Tapioca</b>                                         | Persimmon's private  |
| secretary                                              |                      |
| <b>Lazuli</b>                                          | A peddler            |
| <b>Granola, Baklava, Asbestos and Zucchini</b>         | Ladies of the Palace |

### The Star

*Chabrier*

English Version by Donald Pippin

### ACT I

*Scene: A street*

|        |                                                                                                                         |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| TENORS | Be on your guard.                                                                                                       |
| BASSES | And stay alert!                                                                                                         |
| BOTH   | Again, this very morning,<br>Here, maybe in disguise,<br>The King, without a warning,<br>Is out to take us by surprise. |
|        | Prowling, probing,<br>Circulating, circulating,<br>He's up and down about the town<br>Investigating.                    |

TENORS                   He plays a game ...

BASSES                   That we can lose ... and die!

TENORS                   I say the same,

BOTH                     As he hovers  
                          Undercover,  
                          Undercover.

                          For mirth, or maybe malice,  
                          Up, ever on the sly,  
                          He's left his stately palace  
                          To snoop, to poke about and spy.

                          Prowling, probing,  
                          Circulating, circulating,  
                          He's up and down about the town  
                          Investigating.

                          Smiling, smirking,  
                          Somewhere lurking ...

*(Ouf enters, incognito.)*

OUF

*(spoken)*  
Ouf! Ouf the First!

I'm Ouf, the King,  
The mover of the nation.  
My design is deep and dark,  
Not a game and not a lark,  
And for now it is not  
For publication

*(spoken)*  
Hats off to Ouf,  
The mover of the nation.  
O - U - F — OUF!

To work!  
It's on with the plan  
To single out the man.

*(approaching Patacha)*  
How now, my friend! The mood is merry.  
Share with me a sip of sherry.

MEN

*(It's life and limb now on the line.)*

OUF

A naughty, nutty little wine,  
The flavor marvelously mellow,  
Quite a favorite of mine.

PATACHA

Well, well. You are a friendly fellow.

OUF

Off the cuff ... By the way ...  
Of Ouf ... just what do people say?

PATACHA

Wise Ouf! Wonderful Ouf!  
My very life I would offer up to Ouf.

OTHERS

Wise Ouf! Wonderful Ouf!  
My very life I would offer up to Ouf.

OUF *(vexed)*

*(Not the answer that I wanted,  
But I shall proceed undaunted.)*

*(approaching Zanzal)*  
Sir, I can tell by intuition  
You've a genial disposition.

MEN

*(All affability so far.)*

OUF

Accept from me a fine cigar.  
Though local brands are mediocre,  
Cuba's where the finest are.

ZANZAL                    A rare bonanza for a smoker.

OUF                        By the way ... yes or no ...  
Do you approve of the status quo?

ZANZAL                    Wise Ouf! Wonderful Ouf!  
My very life I would offer up to Ouf.

OTHERS                    Wise Ouf! Wonderful Ouf!  
My very life I would offer up to Ouf.

OUF (*vexed*)              Setback and rebuff repeated!  
My strategies again defeated!  
Was ever Monarch so mistreated?

MEN                        (*as they drift out, leaving Ouf alone*)  
You see this very morning,  
Here, maybe in disguise  
The King, without a warning,  
Is out to take us by surprise.

                              Prowling, probing, prowling, probing ...  
Circulating, circulating,  
He's up and down about the town  
Investigating.

TENORS                    Smiling, smirking,

BASSES                    Slyly lurking. ...

OUF No luck! Satisfaction with the government seems to be running rampant. I hear you asking what's wrong with that. I'll tell you. Today's my birthday, the big celebration of the year. Dancing, food, fireworks. Small potatoes! Every meal calls for a main course. And this I have always been happy to provide: a public execution. A climax to the day's festivities that is both entertaining and morally uplifting. But how can you put on a show when you have nobody for the leading role? This is a civilized country. We can't go hanging a man for nothing, not without at least a hint of subversion — a complaint here, a quibble there. And what have I turned up so far? Nothing! Ah, Sirocco! (My astrologer. I never make a move without his advice.)

SIROCCO (*entering*) Your Majesty.

OUF And how are the stars today? Have you finished casting my horoscope?

SIROCCO Not yet. I have been delayed. Other clients ...

OUF Other clients before the king?

SIROCCO One does have to eke out a living ...

OUF Are you suggesting that your royal salary is meager?

SIROCCO By no means! It enables me to eat almost every day. Twelve

hundred, annually.

OUF Not very much for such a vital service.

SIROCCO Then might you consider? ...

OUF Indeed, one can hardly expect loyalty and devotion for such a pittance.

SIROCCO Loyalty for a mere twelve hundred! And even that may be cut off some day.

OUF I have already taken steps to correct the situation. No, my friend, I would never abandon you to an old age of misery and destitution. A clause inserted into my will ...

SIROCCO Your Majesty is too generous! If I am not being inquisitive ...

OUF Ah, you want to know what it says. As I recall the wording, "When I die, it is my will that Sirocco, astrologer of state ..."

SIROCCO Go on, go on!

OUF "is to die fifteen minutes later."

SIROCCO But this is impossible, unheard of! Such an order would never be carried out.

OUF Your concern is uncalled for. My successor will feel constitutionally bound.

SIROCCO But Your Majesty ...

OUF To be united in death with your sovereign! What greater glory could a patriot ask for? Though I daresay you will want to postpone the privilege by prolonging my life to the utmost of your ability.

SIROCCO Yes, of course, but ...

OUF Enough! Thanks are unnecessary. I have a serious matter to discuss. You know that within a few days I am to be married.

SIROCCO With the Princess Laoula, daughter of King Mataquin.

OUF Who should be arriving any day. I am told that she is very lovely, but that is secondary. The fact is, I am determined to have an heir. And it is on this particular subject that I wish you to consult the stars.

SIROCCO Then I shall need a finer telescope. My present equipment is hardly up to issues of such magnitude.

OUF All right, how much?

SIROCCO Sixty thousand. (Including a substantial commission.)

OUF Sixty thousand! Why, that will bankrupt the treasury! But so be it. Nothing but the best. Bear in mind, though, I shall expect good news in

return for the investment.

SIROCCO The stars will surely take that into consideration. I shall waste no time. (Fifteen minutes!)

*(He exits)*

OUF And I, too, have to get on with the search. Where next? Of course! The university. If I can't stir up protest there, I give up!

*(Exits)*

PERSIMMON, ALOES, LAOULA and TAPIOCA *(entering)*

Out on the road incognito,  
No longer rich and royal,  
Posing as hoi polloi we go  
Like those that sweat and toil.

Out on the road incognito,  
No longer rich and royal,  
We pose as hoi polloi and go  
Like those that sweat and toil.

Out on the road incognito.

PERSIMMON Perform the role that you are playing,  
Ever sly, subtle and discreet.  
Remember well what I am saying  
When people greet you on the street.

LAOULA and TAPIOCA  
Ever sly, subtle and discreet

ALOES When people greet us on the street.

PERSIMMON *(speaking)*  
Princess! Let's hear from you.

LAOULA *(like a recitation)*  
For mercenary motives merely  
We've traveled forty miles or more.  
With some this and that — ours clearly —  
We'll start a smart department store.

PERSIMMON Very good. Now your turn.

ALOES and TAPIOCA  
For mercenary motives merely,  
We've traveled forty miles or more.  
With some this and that — ours clearly —  
We'll start a smart department store.

PERSIMMON Letter perfect! Now once again, all together

PERSIMMON, ALOES, LAOULA and TAPIOCA  
For mercenary motives merely,

We've travelled forty miles or more.  
With some this and that — ours clearly —  
We'll start a smart department store.

PERSIMMON (*speaking*) And remember: the three of you are my employees.

When rosy dawn arrives,  
And blue and pink are blending,  
Throngs of the well-to-do  
Flock down the avenue,  
Eager and keen  
To spend the morning spending.

Soon on the scene  
Our customers appear;  
Then, never fear,  
They'll buy without intending  
Because of service with a smile.  
As they spend,  
They will say all the while:

Who are these  
Dapper employees?  
I buy to please  
All these  
Dapper employees  
Of the prize  
Enterprise.

PERSIMMON, ALOES, LAOULA and TAPIOCA  
Dapper employees, we shine  
Showing off the latest line,  
Charming you into spending more.  
With such talents on display  
Every day is bargain day.

We are employees,  
Lending charm and expertise,  
Bending you to spend  
In the splendid department store.

LAOULA  
Though elegant and smart,  
We play upon a passion,  
For we know how to say  
“What will it be today?”  
As to convey  
That thrift is out of fashion.  
Oh, what a gift!  
Uplifted to an art!

LAOULA Under the spell  
Of hypnotic eyes,  
You purchase before you realize.  
By the by,  
Need I tell  
The reason why?

Just to please  
These employees!  
You buy to please all these  
Dapper employees.  
No boutique  
Half so chic.

PERSIMMON, ALOES, LAOULA and TAPIOCA  
Dapper employees imply,  
What a pity not to buy!  
Why have two when you can have four?  
Young and old can thus agree:  
Life is one long shopping spree.

We are employees,  
Lending charm and expertise,  
Bending you to spend  
In the splendid department store.

PERSIMMON Well, my children, I am happy to announce that we have arrived.

ALOES And about time too. My feet!

PERSIMMON A royal Princess does not notice sore feet.

ALOES Sorry, but I keep forgetting that I am the royal Princess.

LAOULA What a trip! Incognito, in borrowed clothes, slinking along back roads, hiding in ditches ...

ALOES I ask you, does it make sense?

PERSIMMON This is the way secret foreign missions are performed.

ALOES And so you pass off the Princess as your wife, and I, your real wife ...

PERSIMMON Naturally. Do you want me to announce to the world: "I am Count Persimmon, ambassador, and this is the charming Princess Laoula. Meet my wife Aloes, and my private secretary Tapioca."

ALOES And why not? It would certainly make things simpler.

PERSIMMON My motives are not designed for the simple minded. I am a diplomat.

LAOULA But this mission. Obviously it pertains to me. Yet I've been told nothing.

PERSIMMON When the time comes, you will know everything.

LAOULA I suppose the king, my father, ordered you to keep me in the dark.

PERSIMMON Not in the least. I am quite at liberty to explain whatever you wish to know. Anyone else in my position no doubt would have done so already.

LAOULA Then please ...

PERSIMMON Ah, this is what separates the professional from the amateur!  
But here we are, in front of an inn that looks inviting. Time for rest. Tapioca!  
Give your arm to the Princess. The Princess, idiot! (*as Tapioca goes first to Laoula*)

TAPIOCA Yes, boss.

PERSIMMON And how many times have I told you to address me as Sir!

TAPIOCA Yessir, boss!

PERSIMMON (*to Laoula*) Countess Persimmon, allow me.

(*They go into the inn.*)

LAZULI (*entering breathlessly*) Gone! I've lost them! Well, there's no point in chasing around in circles, and here's as good a place as any to set up shop.

I'm happy to be  
The peddler Lazuli,  
Lazuli, Lazuli,  
A dealer in fantasy,  
To feminine needs I cater.

I've got the goods, the odds and ends  
On which a fair one's fate depends,  
A friend of the gender, no traitor;  
I'm a friend, not a traitor.

Hello, I'm Lazuli, oh  
A friend and not a foe,  
And as by now you know,  
To ladies' needs I cater.

Modest, but nonetheless I wager  
I am ahead of Mother Nature.  
Working upon the faded fair,  
I polish, improve and repair.  
Listen again, potential buyer:  
What does a woman most desire?  
Happily, you'll discover it  
Right here in my portable kit.

For eyes that can sparkle or smolder  
And spur the gallant to grow bolder;  
For lustre, languor, take your pick —  
My pencil quickly does the trick.

Appalled at your pallid complexion?  
The color in need of correction?

Oh, why complain about your plight?  
A touch of rouge will set you right.

This box of mine contains a lotion  
Whose merits hardly need promotion.  
Applied to dull or grey coiffures,  
The color you wish can be yours.

Finally, proudly I proclaim  
A miracle for the Hall of Fame:  
Thanks to my bottled blessings all,  
The mother and daughter  
Now go as sisters to the ball.

Lazuli, lucky me!  
Happy, peppy and free!  
Fellows, don't you wish you  
Could be Lazuli, too?  
Lucky Lazuli, too?

I'm happy to be  
The peddler Lazuli,  
Lazuli, Lazuli,  
A dealer in fantasy,  
To feminine needs I cater.

I've got the goods, the odds and ends  
On which a fair one's fate depends,  
A friend of the gender, no traitor;  
I'm a friend, not a traitor.

And as by now you know,  
To ladies' needs I cater.

It's no use. I can't get her out of my mind. On the road, traveling with two men and another woman. It was love at first sight, just like the story books. But will I ever see her again?

SIROCCO (*entering, with telescope*) This second-hand telescope will do perfectly well. And I get to pocket the change.

LAZULI Ah, sir! You are a scientist?

SIROCCO You are not one yourself?

LAZULI Far from it.

SIROCCO Ah! In that case — how sweet it is to observe the pattern of the stars as they spell out the future!

LAZULI You can read the future in the stars?

SIROCCO Like a road map, a travel guide ... Perhaps you are wondering what your own star has to tell you.

LAZULI I do have one burning question.

SIROCCO Say no more. *(with gesture)* For a modest fee ...

LAZULI You wish for payment in advance?

SIROCCO I know enough of the future to insist on it.

LAZULI Not very much, but it's all I've got. *(gives him some money)*

SIROCCO I ask no more. In my observatory, I can give my full attention to your destiny. I shall return within the hour.

*(he leaves)*

LAZULI The last of my money! No more eating for a while. But one can always sleep — for free, too. And here's a nice, shady tree, The future? ... Will my star help me find her again? ...

Little star of fate so far away,  
Tell me all!  
Speak and say,  
Will my fortune rise or fall?

Little star of love, I turn to you:  
Is my dream  
Coming true, coming true, coming true?  
Ah, shine on me a kindly beam.

Oh, distant master of my fate, you can  
Endow me with all treasures known to man,  
Determine when I sob or sing;  
All pain and pleasure you can bring.

On my head your rays of light can shower,  
Rays that turn the seed into a flower  
And make of me a prince or king.

Little star of fate so far away,  
Tell me all!  
Speak and say,  
Will my fortune rise or fall?

Little star of love, I turn to you:  
Is my dream  
Coming true, coming true, coming true?  
Ah, shine on me a kindly beam.

*(ends as he falls asleep)*

PERSIMMON *(to the ladies inside as he emerges from the inn with Tapioca)*  
Now you are not to step outside till I return. Is that clear? Tapioca ...  
Perhaps I should leave you here to look after my wife.

TAPIOCA *(eagerly)* Good idea. Certainly, boss.

PERSIMMON No, as state diplomat I should be accompanied by my

private secretary. Together, to the palace! No, no, no! Behind me!

*(As they exit, Aloes and Laoula immediately peer out.)*

ALOES They're gone! Princess! Come!

LAOULA But your husband ordered us to stay inside.

ALOES Yes, didn't he? Listen. The cat's away. What more do you want?

LAOULA I wonder if we should ...

ALOES Of course we shouldn't! That's the whole point.

LAOULA *(seeing Lazuli)* Look ... under the tree ...

ALOES Isn't that sweet? A young man sleeping. Not a bad start. You see, I told you it would be fun.

LAOULA He's very nice looking.

ALOES I do believe I've seen him before.

LAOULA But of course! On the road ...

ALOES Ah, you noticed, too?

LAOULA Oh, every now and then. Come, let's go back. Suppose he were to wake up.

ALOES Now wouldn't that be dreadful? What he needs is a little help.

LAOULA What are you doing?

ALOES You'll see.

With one light touch or two  
He'll wake up good as new.

LAOULA Have you gone utterly mad?  
Why tease and tickle the lad?  
I'm not crazy as you.

ALOES Confess, you're tempted, too!

LAOULA No, no! You fool! (How can I stop her?)

ALOES Why so prim, so priggish and proper?  
A tickle is no mortal sin.

LAOULA Never shall I join in!

ALOES Try a morsel of fun, don't be shy.

LAOULA No, I would sooner die.

ALOES                    Try a morsel of fun, don't be shy.  
*(She gradually approaches Lazuli, who is sleeping.)*  
 Come, why so shy? ...

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!  
 I'm laughing so hard I cannot stand it.

LAOULA                 You fool! You fool!  
 Stop! I command it.

*(joining the game)*  
 Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!  
 Let me tickle him, too!

ALOES                    Do I notice a new, broader view?

BOTH                    Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!  
 It's plain we're both insane,  
 So come! Let's do it again!  
 Again! Tickle the chin.  
 He sleeps through thick and thin.

LAOULA                 My word! ... I'm a royal Princess!  
 Any elders looking on  
 Would insist I've lost my senses,  
 That my behavior's far gone.

Too bad for them! They can mutter,  
 No matter when all's said and done.  
 My propensity to tickle  
 May land me in a pretty pickle,  
 But I find it loads of fun.

Yet all the same ... It's wrong,  
 Following along in such a game.  
 I'm told it's not in keeping,  
 For princesses, for princesses,  
 To tickle young men sleeping.

ALOES                    My word! ... With a total stranger  
 I would hardly be so bold  
 Were I not well out of danger  
 From one at present out cold.

So I dare because he dozes —  
 What could be a better time?  
 Go ahead and tickle, whether  
 With a fingertip or feather.  
 Lunacy is not a crime.

Yet all the same ... It's wrong,  
 Leading her along in such a game.  
 I'm told it's not in keeping,

In keeping  
For princesses, for princesses, for princesses  
To tickle young men sleeping.

Again! The cheek and chin!

LAZULI (*waking up*) (Can it be she?)

LAOULA I believe he is stirring.  
And we've not even met!

ALOES No, no! He sleeps, sound as ever.  
Oh, once again! The cheek and chin!

LAZULI (Lucky me!) (*pretends to sleep again*)

ALOES and LAOULA  
With one light touch or two  
He'll wake up good as new.

LAZULI  
With one light touch or two  
They'll make me good as new.

ALL THREE  
With one tickle or two  
{He'll/I'll} wake up good as new.  
With one tickle or two  
{He'll/I'll} be good as new.

LAZULI (*catching them*) Coucou! You're caught! Both of my pretty ones!

ALOES and LAOULA Ah!

LAZULI Fee, fie, fo, fum ... I've got you. And unless you tell me who you are,  
I shall eat you.

LAOULA Oh, dear ... I'm not sure ...

ALOES We're employees.

LAOULA Yes, of course ... Employees of a department store.

ALOES On a business trip.

LAZULI Married, yes or no?

LAOULA Not I ...

LAZULI The two men who were with you?

ALOES Fellow employees.

LAOULA Also on business.

LAZULI So now that we've got that out of the way, what are your names?

LAOULA I'm Laoula.

LAZULI Laoula! How lovely! Laoula, I love you!

LAOULA Good heavens! So sudden!

LAZULI Not as sudden as you think. I've known you for many hours. You didn't see me on the road, following as close as I dared ... watching, worshipping ...

LAOULA Perhaps I was watching, too ...

LAZULI My darling! (*he embraces her*)

ALOES Well, that didn't take long. Just a minute, sir. Who are you?

LAZULI I'm Lazuli ... a salesman ...

ALOES and LAOULA Just like us!

LAZULI I carry my merchandise with me. (*displays his kit*)

LAOULA Aloes, look! Sheer heaven! Perfume, rouge, a powder puff, a mirror ... Oh, may I? At home, I was never allowed ...

LAZULI Go right ahead. Help yourself.

LAOULA The things I've always wanted.

PERSIMMON (*returning, with Tapioca*) I risk my neck on country roads, I rush to the palace, with my private secretary, and what do I find? Nobody home. Is this the way to treat an ambassador? ... What's this? Mischief behind my back? Ladies! I ordered you to stay inside. As for you, young man, I will thank you to stay away from my wife. (*separating Lazuli from Laoula*)

LAZULI Your wife!

LAOULA But he's only ...

PERSIMMON Be quiet! Leave this to the trained expert. Tapioca, attend (*lecherously*) Just as you say, boss.

PERSIMMON (*to Laoula*) Shall we go in, my dear?

LAOULA Mrs. Persimmon, indeed!

(*the two couples leave*)

LAZULI His wife! And she led me to believe ... She deceived me!

OUF (*returning disgruntled*) Still empty handed! These students! Hopeless. You would sooner get protest out of a school of codfish. Anybody would think we were living in the land of bliss.

LAZULI I'll go away and forget her, that's what. Far, far away. I'll never see her again.

OUF                   Aha! Here's someone who looks dissatisfied. I'll bait the hook again. Hope lives. Sir, a moment ...

LAZULI                Don't bother me.

OUF                   (Rude as well. Things are looking up.) If I might have a word or two ...

LAZULI                Go talk to somebody else.

OUF                   But it's your opinion that I want. Do you trust our government?

LAZULI                To hell with our government!

OUF                   You don't love King Ouf like a father?

LAZULI                I hate everybody, including King Ouf.

OUF                   Keep talking, keep talking!

LAZULI                Do you want a poke in the jaw?

OUF                   Go on, go on! Music to my ears!

LAZULI                All right, you want a cuff on the ear. (*gives him one*)

OUF                   Oh, thank you, thank you!

LAZULI                The man's an idiot, and he's making a fool of me. How about one for the other ear? (*gives him another cuff*)

OUF                   There, there, that's enough. Sirocco! Sirocco! Success! I've got my man. Hip hooray! The show goes on! Guards! Police! Everyone! Gather round. Captain, arrest that man.

*(Laoula, Aloes and Chorus enter)*

OUF                   Disgrace! You have struck the royal face!

CHORUS                The oaf! The oaf has struck at Ouf!

LAZULI, LAOULA and ALOES  
 {I/He} struck the royal face.

OUF                   No need to plead or try the case;  
 The King is now the claimant  
 Demanding prompt repayment.  
 Today be prepared to die!

LAZULI                To die!  
 Why not? I'd rather die  
 Than live to pine and sigh.  
 Better to die  
 Than agonize and sigh.

OUF                   Brace up! Rejoice,

Good citizens all —  
Rejoice and be of cheer.  
Once again the event of the year:  
We have a head to fall.  
Formalities soon out of the way,  
A beheading will make my day.

CHORUS                    Formalities soon out of the way,  
A beheading will make our day.

OUF                        We've got the man we need  
To punish as decreed.

CHORUS                    The execution can proceed.

LAZULI                    I'd rather wait a day or two.

OUF                        Frankly, my friend, who's asking you?

CHORUS                    Enjoy, enjoy a holiday beheading!  
Holiday, holiday, holiday fun!  
A day of fun!  
No blood of my own are we shedding.  
Holiday fun  
For all but one,  
Good fun for all but one.

OUF                        When the palace becomes a bore  
And careful plans go contrary,  
A little blood, a little gore  
Will make a moody monarch merry.

When grumpy from the daily grind,  
When problems come with no solution,  
I loosen up, yes, I unwind  
By calling for an execution.

No rinky dink  
Or kinky king,  
Though on the brink of seeming inhumane;  
But when I call  
For heads to fall,  
I do it just to entertain.

CHORUS                    No rinky dink  
Or kinky king,  
Though on the brink of seeming inhumane;  
But when you call  
For heads to fall,  
You do it just to entertain.

OUF                        A quiet man, I live serene  
With little need of new devices;  
No lethal chair, no guillotine,  
A simple chopping block suffices.

So great is my desire to please  
That after each decapitation  
I send my heartfelt sympathies  
To every near and dear relation.

No rinky dink  
Or kinky king,  
I never blink where lesser mortals might,  
And with a throne  
To call my own,  
My lucky star is burning bright.

CHORUS                   No rinky dink  
                              Or kinky king,  
                              You never blink where lesser mortals might,  
                              And with a throne  
                              To call your own,  
                              Your lucky star is burning bright.

SIROCCO (*rushing in*) Stop! Stop at once! Hold everything!

LAZULI No objection from me.

OUF Have you gone mad? What's the matter?

SIROCCO (*to Ouf*) Oh, King! You don't realize the narrow escape ...

OUF Escape? Explain yourself.

SIROCCO I was casting the horoscope of this young man ...

OUF His future looks perfectly clear to me.

SIROCCO Oh, horror! Horror!

OUF The horoscope, yes?

SIROCCO What do I find? His star is interlinked with your own. The two are inseparable.

OUF Which means?

SIROCCO When he dies, it means ...

OUF It means? Go on.

SIROCCO It means that you die twenty four hours later.

OUF What are you telling me?

SIROCCO The plain and simple truth. And since you have stipulated that I am to survive you by only fifteen minutes, you can imagine my concern ...

OUF Mon Dieu! And I was on the verge ... Guards! Police! Let go of him!

Hands off! Stop what you're doing. Oh, my smelling salts! There's been a change. This young man is pardoned.

LAZULI and LAOULA Pardoned!

OUF There will be no execution this year. (*groan from the crowd*) Oh, all right. Two next year. As for you, my dear friend, my palace will be your home, where you will be provided with everything that money can buy to assure good health and a long life. To the palace! Come!

LAZULI and LAOULA To the palace!

OUF Hold on! He's not to get the axe!  
Today he rides upon your backs.

CHORUS Put away the axe!  
Turning the tide,  
He is to ride  
Upon our backs.

OUF You are to heed  
His every need,  
And in the palace handle him with care.  
As honored guest,  
Give him the best  
Of hearty food and wholesome air.

CHORUS We are to heed  
His every need.  
And in the palace handle him with care.  
As honored guest,  
Give him the best  
Of hearty food and wholesome air.  
See, see, see that you handle him with care.  
As honored guest,  
Give him the best  
Of hearty food and wholesome air.

**End of Act I**

## ACT II

*Scene: A room in the Palace.*

LADIES *(surrounding Lazuli)*  
Ah! Ah! What a charming lad!  
A morsel sweet  
Enough to eat,  
And oh, so finely clad!  
He's enough to drive any lady mad.  
All in all, enough to drive a lady mad, ah!

Who else can boast  
Of hair so fine?  
Of skin almost  
As smooth as mine?

Ah! The pretty face  
And manly grace!  
Who can resist him?

The sparkling eyes,  
The sunny smile!  
For such a prize  
I'd walk a mile.

Ah! Good form or not,  
I wonder what  
Would happen if I kissed him.

A little small,  
Yet all in all  
What lady can resist him?

LAZULI  
The dream of a lifetime I see unfold.  
Yesterday just a down and outer,  
My only wealth a heart of gold,  
My daily diet, bread and water.

Today, like a sultan of old,  
I feast on the sweets of a harem  
And refuse to forswear 'em or share 'em.

Now that I'm a man, not a boy,  
While the dream goes on, let's enjoy!

LADIES  
A dream of yours, also of mine,  
So while it goes on, let's pour the wine.

LAZULI  
For more than wine, if you but knew,  
I have a thirst that calls for curing.  
I throb, I burn each time I view  
Beauty in costume so alluring.  
The remedy let me pursue.  
Oh, ladies! Allow me the favor

Of a kiss forever to savor.

Now that I'm a man, not a boy,  
While the dream goes on, let's enjoy!

LADIES Oh, grant him the favor  
Forever to savor.  
While the dream goes on, let's enjoy.

LAZULI You don't know it, but I'm going to kiss you.

GRANOLA No, no, no!

LAZULI Does that mean yes, yes, yes?

GRANOLA Oh, I think you'll have to find that out for yourself. Ah!  
(*as Lazuli does so*)

LAZULI Who's next?

BAKLAVA Not I! Not I!

LAZULI All right, all right, if you insist

ASBESTOS And what's wrong with me?

LAZULI Nothing at all.

ZUCCHINI Isn't he a darling?

GRANOLA Careful, the King!

ALL The King!

OUF (*entering with Sirocco*) Sirocco! Why so many girls?

SIROCCO We want to keep him happy.

OUF But do we want to wear him out? That's all for now, girls.

BAKLAVA But we've just started!

OUF You've gone far enough.

ASBESTOS But there's tomorrow, *n'est-ce pas?*

OUF Tomorrow, *peut-être*.

(*girls exit — music*)

Sirocco, I am most uneasy. When I consider that my very existence hangs upon the well-being of this unpredictable feather-brain.

SIROCCO And consequently mine as well.

OUF Let's try to stick to the main issue ... He looks healthy.

SIROCCO You never know ...

LAZULI *(after escorting the girls out)*

Generous, gracious king! How can I thank you for all you've done for me?

OUF By taking good care of yourself.

*(places his ear on Lazuli's chest)*

Take a deep breath. Now another. Sirocco, tap his back ... Ah, sound lungs. Good heart beat. Thank God!

SIROCCO Dear young man!

LAZULI Good of you to be so concerned.

OUF Of course you wear heavy woolen underwear?

LAZULI Are you kidding?.

SIROCCO Ah, but you must! This changeable weather!

OUF A basic precaution. How can your parents be so negligent?

LAZULI Parents? I have no parents.

OUF Not ... dead?

LAZULI Oh, yes. Long ago, when I was a child.

OUF Then they must have died ... young?

LAZULI Barely into their twenties.

OUF Oh, Sirocco! I can't stand it! This is heartbreaking.

SIROCCO Shattering!

OUF A disease that runs in the family?

LAZULI I'll say it was. A sporting accident.

OUF Then you must never go in for sport. Is that clear? From now on, your life is to be strictly regulated and supervised. Here in the palace we shall keep a constant eye on you.

LAZULI You mean I am not to go out?

OUF But indeed. Walking is mandatory — daily, I would say, from one till two. Not alone, of course. Exercise followed by rest.

LAZULI I get a whole hour?

OUF I shall go immediately to order body guards.

SIROCCO Regularity! That is of the essence!

OUF And happy thoughts!

*(Ouf and Sirocco leave)*

LAZULI *(alone)* Ha! Locked inside! So I'm a prisoner. Bodyguards! Do they think that fine clothes and three meals a day can take the place of space and open air? Now that my stomach has been taken care of, my soul cries out for attention. I've got to see her again, even if she is married. Perhaps she hates her husband as much as I do. Perhaps she's waiting to be rescued. And if doors are locked, what are windows for? Hm! Quite a distance! A two story drop, into the water. I've never gone in for high-diving, but what is a broken neck compared to a broken heart? Here goes — one, two ...

OUF *(rushing in, followed by Sirocco)*

Wait! Don't jump! Please, I didn't mean to upset you. Dear child, for my sake, stay where you are.

SIROCCO And for mine.

OUF What do you want? Name it.

LAZULI Freedom.

OUF You will be free as a bird, but get away from the window.

LAZULI Is that a promise?

OUF On my life. *(to Sirocco)* Oh, thank God we managed to save him from that hazardous leap.

SIROCCO I weep for joy ... or is it just nerves?

LAZULI *(puzzled)* You would think I was some long lost son.

OUF Naughty child! Now why do you scare us like this? And why don't you settle down to a nice, quiet life ... carefree, nothing to worry about, servants to look after you ...

LAZULI Because I am in love.

SIROCCO In love! That's all we needed!

OUF He seems to go out of his way to be difficult. There, there, my son. You are in love. You will marry the girl.

LAZULI But that's impossible.

OUF Impossible? How so?

LAZULI She's already married.

OUF Worse and worse! So the girl has a husband? Perhaps jealous ...

SIROCCO Perhaps violent ...

LAZULI Oh, I've dealt with husbands before.

Should a lover go broken hearted?  
Should he slink away in despair  
Because a husband, outsmarted,  
Refuses to share?

Valiantly, I hold my ground  
As passion's biddings I obey.  
The huffy husband, if still around,  
Doesn't have a lot to say.

Not a lot, not a lot,  
A huffy husband hasn't got a lot to say.  
Butting out, butting out,  
He'd better learn to lean and look the other way.

Not a lot!  
A huffy husband, a huffy husband  
Hasn't got a lot to say  
As he looks the other way.

In the end, I say sincerely,  
On the husband I depend.  
He's a person to treasure dearly,  
Even cultivate as a friend.

For love in time can fade and die.  
How well a husband understands!  
My new ally, he's then close by  
To take the lady off my hands.

What a lot, what a lot  
A helpful husband  
Has to offer in the end.

Like a shot, like a shot,  
Prestissimo,  
My former foe is now my friend.

What a lot  
A helpful husband, a helpful husband  
Has to offer in the end,  
Like a shot,  
From foe to friend.

On the other hand, we may have to fight it out.

OUF With swords? Pistols? But that's dangerous.

SIROCCO You're risking your life.

LAZULI What's life without risk?

OUF Oh, this boy drives me mad! He jumps out windows, he falls in love,

he challenges hot-tempered men who are probably bigger than he is ...

SERVANT (*at the door*) His Excellence, Count Persimmon.

OUF The ambassador! With my royal fiancée. I'd forgotten. You see what you've done to me? I'm a nervous wreck.

PERSIMMON (*from outside*) I do not keep people waiting. I do not like to be kept waiting.

LAZULI That voice!

PERSIMMON (*entering*) I arrive yesterday. Not a soul here to receive me. It had better not happen again ... Ah, there you are! Your Majesty.

LAZULI It's he!

OUF It's who?

LAZULI The husband ... the husband of the girl I'm in love with.

OUF Oh, splendid.

LAZULI Nobody told me he was an ambassador.

OUF Let's keep very calm, let's not say a word.

PERSIMMON I did not come all this way to be ignored. Your Majesty, I insist ...

OUF Yes, yes, by all means. I am listening. As you were saying? (*to Lazuli*) Have you taken a good look at him? Those powerful shoulder muscles? ... He would crush you like a wafer.

PERSIMMON You are paying no attention to me.

OUF On the contrary. I am fascinated. Do continue.

PERSIMMON I've not yet started.

OUF Then do begin.

PERSIMMON I assume you know why I am here. In order to cement the ties between our two nations that have so often clashed, I have brought the Princess, your promised bride ...

OUF She is here?

PERSIMMON She is waiting to be presented.

OUF Then by all means, go and get her.

PERSIMMON I shall return with the Princess.

(*he leaves*)

OUF So this is the powder keg that you are threatening to light a match to!

SIROCCO Madness! Sheer lunacy!

LAZULI Let him explode. What do I care?

OUF Now listen. You are in love with his wife. It seems that you will stop at nothing. Very well. You will have her. We will get the Count out of the way.

SIROCCO Oh, dear! Not murder!

OUF No, no, no! Nothing so uncouth. I shall have him arrested.

SIROCCO But that could have international repercussions ... an ambassador ...

OUF Nonsense. He will be locked up for only a few hours. Through the imbecility of some underling. A minor embarrassment, at most.

SIROCCO And the underling?

OU Shot.

PERSIMMON *(from outside)* The royal Princess ...

OUF Quick! This way! Obviously, we must not be present at his arrest.

*(Ouf, Sirocco and Lazuli exit quickly, as Persimmon returns with Laoula, Aloes and Tapioca)*

PERSIMMON Your Majesty, it is my honor to present to you ...

LAOULA But there's nobody here.

PERSIMMON Good God, where did they go?

ALOES This you call an official presentation?

PERSIMMON We are early, that's all. Be patient. Ah, here they come ...

GUARD *(entering)* Are you Count Persimmon?

PERSIMMON *(to Aloes)* You see, what did I tell you? *(to guard)* Count Persimmon, ambassador from King Mataquin, to present ...

GUARD In the name of King Ouf, I place you under arrest.

PERSIMMON Under arrest? But this is ludicrous, intolerable. Obviously a mistake. I am here on a diplomatic errand, to introduce the Princess Laoula. She is to become King Ouf's wife ...

LAOULA His wife!

PERSIMMON A royal alliance, guaranteed to promote trade.

LAOULA I am to marry King Ouf?

PERSIMMON Did I fail to mention it?

LAOULA Oh, dear Lord! No, no ... *(she faints)*

ALOES Princess! Tapioca! She's fainted.

GUARD *(to Persimmon)* Come with me.

PERSIMMON I protest. This is preposterous, outrageous ...

GUARD Any comments can be held against you. Guards! Take him away.  
Lock him up.

PERSIMMON Prison! King Ouf will answer for this.

*(he is led off)*

TAPIOCA Poor boss! Let's see how the expert handles this one.

ALOES Never mind him. Help me with the Princess.

TAPIOCA What does one do? *(Lazuli rushes in)* Ah, here's someone that should know. The little peddler!

ALOES Lazuli! In the palace!

LAOULA *(half opening her eyes)* Lazuli!

LAZULI Laoula! And I was heading out to hunt for you ... She's fainted!  
What has happened? Let me help.

ALOES So you're a doctor, too?

LAZULI I handle certain cases.

Chances are she may soon recover;  
I know a method you can learn.  
First, you take her hand, like a lover,  
Then press it to your lips with sweet concern.

ALOES What a delicious cure!

TAPIOCA To this prescription we can turn as well.

LAOULA *(What a delicious cure!  
A prompt improvement I foretell.)*

LAZULI Laoula, Laoula, Laoula!

LAOULA *(He has come to my call!)*

ALOES Tapioca! Tapioca!

LAZULI Laoula! Laoula! My beloved!  
You're better now?

LAOULA Ah! Ah!

TAPIOCA You're better now?

LAOULA Ah! Ah! Ah!

LAZULI, LAOULA, ALOES and TAPIOCA  
Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

A touch or two may yet provide  
The cure if gently but firmly applied.  
A touch or two, a touch or two  
May well provide the cure.

LAZULI Only half-way have we succeeded:  
Still the patient seems a little weak.  
Further measure may be needed;  
A kiss may yet provide the cure we seek.

ALOES This you would recommend?

TAPIOCA If first you don't succeed then try again.

LAOULA Ah, spoken like a friend!  
Already, though, I feel no pain.

LAZULI Laoula, Laoula, Laoula!

LAOULA You do not call in vain.

ALOES Tapioca! Tapioca!

LAZULI Laoula! Laoula! My beloved!  
You're better now?

LAOULA Ah! Ah!

TAPIOCA You're better now?

LAZULI, LAOULA, ALOES and TAPIOCA  
Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

A kiss for sure may yet provide  
The cure, if slowly and sweetly applied.  
A kiss for sure, a kiss for sure  
May well provide the cure.

LAOULA Oh, Lazuli! I just heard. It's cruel, monstrous ...

LAZULI My darling, what is the matter?

LAOULA I am to be married.

LAZULI Married? But you are already married.

LAOULA No, no, I tried to tell you.

LAZULI Then you are not the ambassador's wife?

ALOES I am the ambassador's wife.

LAZULI Then she ...

ALOES Is the Princess Laoula.

LAZULI The Princess!

LAOULA And I am being forced to marry the King. A trade agreement!  
Oh, my poor Lazuli! (*she falls into his arms*)

LAZULI A trade agreement! Oh, my poor Laoula!

OUF(*returning*) Persimmon is locked up. Lazuli can take a nice long trip with his wife, and the sooner the better. Ah, there they are! They seem to be of one mind.

LAZULI The King!

OUF (*to Lazuli and Laoula, who are still clinging to each other*)  
Don't let me disturb you. The problem has been taken care of. Your husband will not interfere with your plans. He is in prison.

LAOULA My husband!

LAZULI (*aside to Laoula*) He thinks you are the ambassador's wife.

LAOULA But ...

LAZULI (Let him go on thinking it. This may work.) Your husband, the ambassador ...

LAOULA The ambassador!

ALOES (*joining the conversation*) Do I hear a familiar name?

OUF (*turning to Aloes*) The ambassador unfortunately is not here to introduce us. You must be the Princess, my fiancée.

ALOES and TAPIOCA What!

LAZULI Ah, Princess!

LAOULA Princess Laoula!

ALOES Sure, that's me.

OUF Very lovely, indeed. Reports have not exaggerated. (I was hoping for a blonde, but that can be adjusted.) My dear, before I can give you my complete attention, I have to finish some urgent business with this young couple. As it would be of no interest to you, let me escort you down the hall to your

own apartment.

TAPIOCA If it please Your Majesty, I can spare you the trouble. It would be a privilege.

OUF Very kind of you. Three doors to your right, Room 27. A most attentive young man.

TAPIOCA Princess, allow me.

ALOES Please! Address me as Your Royal Highness!

*(they leave)*

OUF We must act promptly. I cannot keep Persimmon locked up indefinitely. My dear children, call me sentimental, but I like to help out young lovers. You seem to be made for each other. I have cleared the way for you to leave together at once!

LAOULA Oh, Your Majesty! But how?

OUF Simple ... He will kidnap you.

LAOULA Kidnap!

LAZULI (He wants me to kidnap his fiancée?)

LAOULA How sweet of you! How can we ever repay you?

OUF All I ask is a bit of gratitude.

LAOULA Sir, you are certainly my savior,  
As I escape a dreadful fate.  
Thanks to your bountiful behavior,  
I can rejoice and celebrate.

When we become a happy couple,  
Far, far away and out of trouble,  
As we're embracing  
As lovers do,  
I shall remember then,  
I shall recall I owe it all to you.

When far away  
With you know who,  
I'll know I owe it all to you.

All hope and happiness we owe you,  
Let me repeat before we part.  
And though so very far below you,  
What I profess comes from the heart.

Forever deeply obligated,  
When we are safely situated,  
And as true lovers  
Bill and coo,

We shall remember then,  
We shall recall we owe it all to you.  
We'll know we owe it all to you.

And as we coo  
As lovers do,  
We shall recall we owe it all  
To you.

LAOULA and LAZULI

We shall remember then,  
We shall recall we owe it all to you.  
And as we coo  
As lovers do,  
We'll know we owe it all to you.

OUF Run, my children! You have not a moment to lose!

LAOULA Come along, not a moment wasting.

LAZULI Off like a shot without delay!

LAOULA Freedom I am already tasting.

LAZULI To parts unknown we're on our way.

LAOULA Instead of merely dreaming of you,  
Now we journey side by side,

LAZULI With the stars for a guide.  
And if ill-winds blow,  
We'll whisper low,  
"I love you!"

LAOULA I love you!

LAZULI I love you!

LAOULA I love you!

BOTH I love you!

OUF Enough of that! Now off you go!

LAOULA and LAZULI Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

OUF Ho ho! The joke you might explain.  
Explain! Explain!

LAOULA and LAZULI

Poor ... poor ... poor ...  
Hoodwinked husband!  
He will not be overjoyed,  
Left behind on the honeymoon.

Let him grumble!  
Someone else can fill the void,  
For we shall not be meeting soon.

ALL THREE Hoodwinked husband!  
He will not be overjoyed,  
Left behind on the honeymoon.

ALL THREE Let him grumble!  
Someone else can fill the void,  
For {we shall/you will} not be meeting soon.  
Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

PERSIMMON (*from outside*) Wait till King Ouf hears of this indignity. Never in my career as a diplomat ...

OUF The ambassador!

LAZULI Persimmon!

OUF Out so soon! Slip away by this side door. A boat is moored to the dock. On the other side of the lake a coach will be waiting. Hurry! (*they exit*)

PERSIMMON (*barging in, Sirocco close behind him*) I demand to see King Ouf. There you are! What is the meaning of this outrage?

OUF Oh, Count! A thousand apologies! I heard just this very minute. An incredible mistake. One of the idiot guards, an underling ...

PERSIMMON Arrested! Thrown into prison, treated like an animal ...

OUF Do compose yourself. I have already ordered him to be shot.

PERSIMMON I arrive to make a formal presentation ...

OUF Then let us continue exactly where we left off. I have already met the bride. Lovely, enchanting! I am willing to overlook the color of her hair.

PERSIMMON Introductions must not be neglected. I shall go get her.

OUF You will not have to go far. Your secretary has taken her in hand. Room 27, on your right.

PERSIMMON We shall return together for the formalities. (*he exits*)

OUF And I want everyone present to greet the bride. Sirocco! Spread the word!

CHORUS (*flocking in*)  
People can hardly,  
People can hardly  
Wait to meet the Princess.

CHORUS Eager to greet the great ambassador,  
Eager to greet the great,  
To greet the great ambassador,

Some are overcome,  
Some are overcome  
With joy beyond all measure  
At the pleasure long waited for.

Overcome with the joy,  
Overcome with the pleasure  
Of the momentous moment we have waited for.

PERSIMMON (*returning in great agitation*) The Princess! The Princess!

OUF My goodness, you're white as a sheet. Have you seen a ghost? What about the Princess?

PERSIMMON Gone! Kidnapped!

OUF Kidnapped! Pull yourself together. I told you, she's in Room 27.

PERSIMMON I tell you she is not. Only my wife, in the arms of Tapioca. Which also calls for explanation.

TAPIOCA What is it you don't understand, boss?

OUF Count, have you taken leave of your senses? The Princess gone? There she is, standing not six feet away from you, plain as daylight.

PERSIMMON This is not the Princess. That is my wife!

OUF Your wife??? Are you sure?

PERSIMMON Of course I'm sure! The Princess was with her.

OUF (*clutching his brow*) Oh, my! And I had her kidnapped!

PERSIMMON Had your future wife kidnapped? Why? Why?

OUF Because I thought she was your wife.

PERSIMMON You call that a reason?

OUF Someone has tricked me, made a fool of me! And I was urging them on, laughing my head off. "Hoodwinked husband! Left behind on the honeymoon." By now, they are blissfully floating on the lake.

PERSIMMON Rest assured, they will not reach the other side.

OUF Not reach? ...

PERSIMMON As soon as I realized the Princess was gone, I tipped off the guards. Even now they are pursuing her abductor, with orders to shoot at first sight.

OUF Shoot? Gun him down? Oh, no! This is catastrophic! My life ...

SIROCCO And mine!

OUF Hurry! Run after them. We may be in time yet!

*A shot is heard*

CHORUS I heard a shot!  
My ear is not mistaken.  
A deadly shot!  
A life perhaps is taken.  
An accident?  
  
*(spoken)* Or was it meant?  
Will it recur?  
*(spoken)* Mon Dieu, mon Dieu!

I heard a shot,  
A deadly shot!

OUF I am haunted and hounded ...

SIROCCO By a fear not unfounded ...

OUF Is someone dead?

SIROCCO The heart or head?

OUF Is someone dead?

SIROCCO Did someone die or not?

OUF Did someone die or not?  
Did someone die or did he not?

ALOES Is someone shot?  
Did someone die or not?

PERSIMMON Shot down or not,  
I say, so what?  
Shot down or not  
So what? So what?

CHORUS I heard a shot.  
But did somebody die, or not?  
I heard a shot!  
My ear is not mistaken.  
A deadly shot!  
A life perhaps is taken.  
An accident?  
  
*(spoken)* Or was it meant?  
Will it recur?  
*(spoken)* Mon Dieu, mon Dieu!

I heard a shot,  
A deadly shot!

*(Laoula enters, in tears)*

CHORUS                    Here she comes! The Princess in tears!

ALOES                     Speak out, your Royal Highness!  
In a word, let us know  
What occurred down below;  
Discard reserve and shyness.

LAOULA                    Alone and seated on a boat,  
The blue of sky and water blending,  
In silent bliss we seemed to float  
To isles of happiness unending.

Never was an hour more serene;  
Love and nature had come together.  
Warm, gentle sunlight graced the scene;  
My heart was lighter than a feather.

Then bang! Not a blank!  
Our rapture reached a grinding halt  
As my lover turned a somersault,  
Then fell into the lake and sank.  
Into the lake he sank.

CHORUS                    Then bang, bang!

LAOULA                    Yes, bang, bang! Not a blank!

CHORUS                    Yes, bang, bang! Not a blank!  
Your rapture reached a grinding halt  
As your lover turned a somersault,  
Then fell into the lake and sank.  
Into the lake he sank.

LAOULA                    A solemn vow I now embrace:  
Henceforth I mean no more to mingle.  
No other man will take his place;  
I shall remain forever single.

If again they force me to wed,  
Even on the day of the wedding  
No tear of protest will I shed,  
But toward the lake I'll again be heading.

With a bang, not a beep!  
My life will reach a grinding halt  
As I also turn a somersault  
Then disappear into the deep,  
Into the murky deep.

CHORUS                    With bang, bang!

LAOULA                    Yes bang, bang! Not a beep!

CHORUS                   With a bang, not a beep,  
Your life will reach a grinding halt  
As you also turn a somersault  
Then disappear into the deep,  
Into the murky deep.

OUF                       That bang's a mortal blow.

SIROCCO                 I'm next in line to go.

CHORUS                 Her loss is no concern of mine,  
But all the same,  
But all the same, before proceeding,  
Some words, however asinine,  
Would demonstrate our perfect breeding.

CHORUS                 Oh, what a shame! A dreadful shame!

A lover dies, we sympathize.

Dear Princess! Though we are not to blame. Couldn't be more sorry ... Oh  
dear!*(spoken)* Couldn't, couldn't ... Couldn't, couldn't ...

OUF Lord! In a day my life is over.

SIROCCO Fifteen minutes at most!  
Then am I due to follow.

The two are no concern of mine;  
But all the same, before proceeding  
Some words, however asinine,  
Would demonstrate our perfect breeding.

Oh, what a shame, a dreadful shame!  
You realize we sympathize.  
Your Highness,  
Though we are not to blame.  
Couldn't be more sorry ... Oh dear!

*(spoken)* Couldn't, couldn't ...  
Couldn't, couldn't ...





A lover dies, we sympathize. Dear Princess!

Though we are not to blame,  
Couldn't be more sorry ... Oh, dear!

*(spoken)*  
Couldn't, couldn't ...  
Couldn't, couldn't ...

OUF Lord! In a day my life is over!

SIROCCO Fifteen minutes at most!  
Then am I due to follow.

CHORUS The two are no concern of mine  
But all the same,  
But all the same, before proceeding,  
Some words, however asinine,  
Would demonstrate our perfect breeding.  
Oh what a shame! A dreadful shame!  
You realize we sympathize.  
Your Highness.  
Though we are not to blame,  
Couldn't be more sorry ... Oh, dear!

*(spoken)*  
Couldn't, couldn't ... Couldn't, couldn't ...

## End of Act II

## ACT III

*Scene: The palace*

OUF Oh, Sirocco! The suspense is unbearable. Is Lazuli alive or dead?

SIROCCO We shall soon know. The lake is being sounded.

OUF The fatal bullet was fired at exactly five o'clock yesterday. If the shot was on target, you know what it means. I die at five o'clock today.

SIROCCO And I at five fifteen.

OUF Oh, it can't be one o'clock yet. This clock is fast. Twelve forty-five! *(correcting the clock)* There, that's more like it.

SIROCCO Twelve forty-five! Twelve thirty, at the latest. *(also correcting the clock)*

CHIEF Your Majesty.

OUF Ah, the chief of police!

SIROCCO Thank heaven!

OUF And looking cheerful, too.

SIROCCO Let's hope it means good news.

OUF Lazuli may still be alive.

CHIEF *(entering)* Your Majesty, I am pleased to announce a happy ending. Put your mind at rest. The long search has turned out well.

OUF What a relief! To tell you the truth, I was scared stiff.

SIROCCO And I didn't sleep a wink all last night.

CHIEF Tonight you can breathe more easily.

OUF So my fears were groundless. Well, well! A false alarm, and Lazuli is... is ...

CHIEF Dead.

OUF and SIROCCO Dead!!!

CHIEF One of the most successful investigations I have ever conducted. Superb teamwork, perfect planning ...

OUF Idiot! Imbecile! Moron! Shut up and get out!

CHIEF Isn't that what you wanted to hear?

OUF I said get out! Go back to directing traffic.

CHIEF That's gratitude for you. I'm leaving the force. *(he exits)*

OUF Oh, Sirocco! My death sentence! Five o'clock! I'm so shook up I may not last that long.

SIROCCO What you need is a drink.

OUF The chartreuse!

SIROCCO Yellow or green?

OUF As if it mattered! Give me a hand. Let me lean on you ... yellow.

SIROCCO We'll have to lean on each other.

OUF Lazuli dead! *(they stagger out)*

LAZULI

*(entering through the window)*

A hideous mistake  
To leap into the lake  
And submarine across it —  
A fellow fond of fish  
Upon a chafing dish,  
And water from the faucet.

My clothes are soaking wet!  
I'm limp and out of breath  
And now about to catch my death ...  
Atchi! Atchi! Atchi!

Atchi! I could have chosen  
A warmer way to go  
Instead of getting frozen.  
Atchi! Of getting frozen  
Down, down below.

LAZULI

Yes, I'm the kind of guy  
That likes it high and dry —  
Midtown is where my turf is.  
And I can do without  
Cavorting with the trout  
Beneath a sunlit surface.

Bad swimmer that I am,  
I'm clammy as a clam,  
And coming down — oh, dear! Oh, damn!

Atchi! Atchi! Atchi!  
Atchi! I could have chosen  
A warmer way to go  
Instead of getting frozen.  
Atchi! Of getting frozen  
Down, down below.

Quick thinking on my part, jumping into the lake when the shot  
was fired. Brrr! Is the King trying to bump me off? Maybe he's  
not as nice as I thought. I'd better watch my step. Ah, Laoula!  
For you I would risk a thousand deaths. Someone's coming!  
Back into the murky depths! *(he hides)*

OUF

*(entering)* Despite that delicious chartreuse, I really don't feel at  
all myself. Two o'clock! Oh, it can't be that yet. One forty-five.  
There, that's better.

SIROCCO

*(entering behind him)* The chartreuse doesn't seem as tasty as  
usual. And I've lost my appetite as well. What! One forty-five!  
Impossible! One thirty! Yes, that's more like it.

*(to Ouf)* Your Majesty, if you will forgive me ... just an idea in  
the back of my mind, a passing thought ...

OUF

Speak out. What is it?

SIROCCO Sir, your death is in the stars. Nothing can be done to alter it. But with me the case is different. That little clause in your will ... there is still time to strike it out.

OUF Self, self, self! Always thinking of yourself!

SIROCCO One quick stroke of the pen. It would be so simple. Let me go get it.

OUF Do you think I want to die alone? Without companionship? Under the circumstances, I would expect a little more consideration of my feelings.

OUF (*Persimmon enters*) Ah, Persimmon! So it was you who gave the order for that young man to be gunned down ...

PERSIMMON (*with modest pride*) No more than duty. On the lake with your bride-to-be ... who knows what his motives might have been? Still, I am happy that I could be of service ...

OUF Imbecile! Bonehead!

PERSIMMON Are you addressing me? An ambassador?

OUF Why can't you learn to mind your own business?

PERSIMMON But he was abducting the Princess!

OUF Barging in like a rhinoceros ...

PERSIMMON Arrested one minute, insulted the next. Sir, this means war!

OUF Go ahead. Declare war. What do I care? I'll not be here to witness it.

PERSIMMON You're leaving the country?

OUF Leaving the world. Forever! As you might have taken the trouble to learn, my life depends upon the young man that you executed in cold blood. According to scientific astrological calculations made possible by our new telescope, I die twenty four hours after he does — in short, at five o'clock this afternoon, thanks to your colossal blunder.

SIROCCO And I at five fifteen.

OUF Don't interrupt.

PERSIMMON How was I to know? I beg your pardon! Do accept my apologies. I see that I was indeed somewhat careless. And what about your marriage with the Princess?

OUF Too late. Take her back to her father, with my regrets.

PERSIMMON

I shall intrude no longer. A man's final hours are sacred, as he prepares to enter eternity.

*(he tiptoes out)*

OUF

Sirocco! Another drink! And this time make it strong. No, not the yellow, the green chartreuse!

LAZULI

*(coming out of hiding)* Fascinating! So that's why the King was so concerned for my health. But now I see the rules of the game, and I know who holds the aces. Yes, I shall have my Laoula! More footsteps ... I'm still dead!

It's time to dry the tears,

For sorrow, too, will perish  
And nothing continues forever.

I was in love; my husband  
Conquered and ruled my heart.  
Marriage was born of rapture  
Fated to fall apart.

Early delight was over.  
Finding his face less fair,  
I turned my eyes elsewhere,  
For passion, too, can perish,  
And nothing continues forever.

LAOULA I'm hardly in the mood  
To share your attitude.

LAZULI *(hidden)*  
(And I have never heard,  
No, I have never heard  
Conclusions so absurd.)

LAOULA Lazuli, made for me!  
Lazuli, I love you!

LAZULI Sing on forever!

LAOULA Lazuli, you alone,  
Lazuli, still my own ...

LAZULI (Happy and hoping,  
Happy and hoping,  
Far from dead!

Currently coping,  
Currently coping,  
Ready to go full steam ahead.)

LAOULA My Lord! Is it a spirit?

ALOESA what?

LAOULA I heard him speak.

ALOESNot I!

LAOULA Did you not also hear it?  
His gentle voice was as clear as a bell.

ALOESWho, I?

LAOULA With my own ears I heard him clearly.

You listen, too.  
Now listen hard,  
Now listen well ...

ALOESSo?

LAOULA Lazuli, made for me!  
Lazuli, I love you!

LAZULI Sing on forever!

LAOULA Lazuli, you alone,  
Lazuli, still my own ...

LAZULI Happy and hoping,  
Happy and hoping,  
Far from dead!

Currently coping,  
Currently coping,  
Ready to go full steam ahead.

LAOULA Ah, it's he!  
My love, my Lazuli!

LAZULI I return! Yes, it is I,  
Your Lazuli!

ALL THREE Happy and hoping,  
Happy and hoping,  
Far from dead!

Currently coping,  
Currently coping,  
Ready to go full steam ahead.

LAOULA My dearest Lazuli! You're alive!

LAZULI My darling Laoula! You're unmarried! But I'm not alive. I'm still dead. It's the only way you and I ...

LAOULA I don't quite understand.

LAZULI Take my word for it. As long as the King believes me to be dead, he will not marry you. This I promise. By five o'clock, you will be heading for home, back to your father. But I'll be waiting at the city gate. Yesterday I set out to kidnap you. That was the rehearsal. Today is the performance!

LAOULA How exciting!

LAZULI Trust me. I'll explain later. But I must not be seen. Look for me at the city gate.



A flower placed back into water,  
Seemingly fresh I shall remain,  
And in time even marry again.  
Nevertheless, there's something gone  
Beyond recovery,  
Beyond recovery.  
There's something gone beyond recovery.

OUF The ceremony will proceed as planned. And if I'm not mistaken,  
the Mayor has arrived.

LAOULA And I am lost!

*(Chorus enters, with the Mayor)*

CHORUS Welcome, welcome, oh worthy mayor!  
Welcome, welcome, oh worthy mayor!

OUF To work, and hurry!

TENORS Come in, oh worthy mayor.  
It's now your turn to be a leading player.

CHORUS Welcome, welcome, oh worthy mayor!  
Your turn now to be a leading player.

OUF Princess, your hand.

LAOULA Poor Lazuli! Waiting for me at the city gate ...

SIROCCO *(rushing in)* Your Majesty! Do you know what time it is?

OUF Nearly four. I have still an hour left.

SIROCCO No, no! We turned back the clock ... first you, then me. It is  
three minutes to five.

OUF Good Lord! Then I have only three minutes.

SIROCCO And you still intend to go ahead with this meaningless  
ceremony?

OUF No, I must face the bitter truth. A three-minute marriage leaves  
much to be desired. Princess, a thousand pardons. Time does  
not allow ... I cannot marry you.

LAOULA (Oh, thank God!)

SIROCCO Forgive me for mentioning it ... but there's still time for one  
thing ... that little clause in your will ... I have it right here ... it  
would only take a second ...

OUF Are you still complaining? You, who have fifteen minutes more  
than I do! The hour strikes. Five o'clock, the hour of doom.  
Farewell, oh world! Farewell, oh life! For Ouf it's over ...

What's this? Am I still here? Persimmon, pinch me! Ow! Ow!  
That proves it!

SIROCCO Proves what, Your Majesty?

OUF That you're a fraud, a fake, a charlatan! You claim to read the stars. You couldn't read tealeaves.

SIROCCO But the signs were absolutely clear ...

OUF There is one thing that is absolutely clear to me. In fifteen minutes your execution will proceed on schedule.

SIROCCO Have mercy, I apologize ...

CHIEF OF POLICE *(entering, with Lazuli in tow)* Your Majesty, we've got him.  
Arrested at the city gate.

LAOULA Lazuli!

SIROCCO Alive! Oh, young man! How can I thank you? A fraud, am I?

OUF Alive! Then I am not doomed to die. And there is no need to call off the ceremony.

LAOULA Oh, no!

LAZULI What ceremony?





PERSIMMON            Not so fast! The Princess did not come here, under my escort, to be married to a common peddler.





