

# STANISLAW MINIUSZKO

## THE HAUNTED MANOR

### English Setting by Donald Pippin

The battle is over, the enemy defeated. The spunky Polish army, vastly outnumbered, has good reason to celebrate as they disband and start heading for home, back to long neglected farms, families, shops, and the normal peacetime pursuits. But there is a catch. Poland is dangerously located: Russia to the east, Prussia to the west, the powerful Austrian Empire to the south, all of them, with grand visions of expansion, casting a covetous eye on Poland. Overlooking a few brief interludes, peace and stability for the beleaguered country remain a distant, improbable dream. Not surprisingly, this perpetual state of siege has engendered in the Poles a fervent spirit of patriotism, resistance and fortitude.

Stefan and Frederick, two brothers, are both acutely aware that as soldiers they may be called back at any moment to renew the fight. Determined to be ready, instantly available when needed, and perhaps a bit intoxicated by the recent flush of victory, they make a bold and radical vow: to remain permanently unmarried. When duty summons, howling babies and weeping wives must not stand in their way. At this point, we well-wishers can only say “Good luck”!

Parenthetically, despite the inherent barbarism of war, it is reassuring to note a quaint touch of gentility still in evidence on the battlefield. The two homeward bound soldiers depart, accompanied as always by their indispensable servant, named Maxie.

*Scene: an army camp where soldiers about to disband, returning home to their farms and villages, celebrate a decisive but far from definitive victory.*

FREDERICK

As brother to brother  
Come pour out another.

CHORUS

We leave the field in blaze of glory!

FREDERICK

Our task now completed,  
The aggressor defeated.

CHORUS

At last! Release from purgatory.

FREDERICK

Soon switching from killing  
To planting and tilling.



Wedding plans I call taboo!

CHORUS

You have hit the nail on the head:  
We, too, forgo the wedding bed.  
In days to come, it shall be said,  
Better dead than wed.

FREDERICK

A toast, brothers all! To the future lift up your glasses.  
Hooray, hooray for the life without a wife!  
We've no time for coping  
With ladies still hoping.  
Unfettered and free,  
The life I want for me!

CHORUS

Better to remain at large and free –  
Which of us would not agree?  
Better stay inside and lock the house  
Lest you wind up with a spouse.

STEFAN

Yes, the plan is truly brilliant –  
That is just the way to go.  
Steadfast, and yet resilient,  
We can smile while saying no.

MAXIE

Good masters, your horses wait and time is flying!  
The sun is rising, and welcome the dawn!  
Headed for home, we've no time for stalling.

STEFAN

The road is calling; We'd best be getting on.

MAXIE, *then repeated by* STEFAN

Goodbye for now –  
A sad but glad occasion.  
Home to the plough,  
The planting of the grain.  
We'll meet again  
In service to the nation.  
We'll then forgo  
The cozy, warm fireside.

Ancestral halls  
Ancestral halls  
We shall forsake  
To serve with pride  
When stubborn duty calls.

OTHERS (*with adjusted pronouns*)  
Some return to ancestral halls;  
All will come when duty calls.  
When it's time to serve the nation,  
Brothers, we shall meet again,  
Forsaking fertile fields of grain.  
What a sad but glad occasion  
As we say goodbye for now!  
But when hostile armies threaten,  
We shall lay aside the plough,  
Recalling then our sacred vow.  
In case of need you'll find us ready  
To lay aside the plough.

## SCENE II

Back home, hope and expectation run high among the women, even though unsettling rumors have already reached them about that pesky vow of bachelorhood. Surely the brothers can't be serious. With so many of Poland's finest going off to war, so many not coming back, and the resulting shortage of marriageable men, it is not hard to guess what is foremost on the ladies' minds. As they joyfully anticipate the homecoming of the two long absent heroes, imagination has a field day.

LADIES  
Marta, Marta, tell us plainly;  
What we want to know is mainly –  
Has the rumor any basis?  
Will they welcome our embraces?

Neighbors all have been invited  
Here to gather reunited  
For a feast of celebration,  
Not for just the chosen few.

MARTA  
Still unmarried, need I mention?  
Ladies, pay attention.  
For their service to the nation.  
Give the gallant lads their due.

## LADIES

Back from battle's hurly burly,  
Home to fields of beets and barley.  
Young and still unmarried, did you mention?  
I am all attention.  
Both so strong and handsome, still unmarried,  
They arrive, not one, but two.

Keep it hopping, keep it humming  
Give the boys a real homecoming.  
Cry hosanna, go the limit!  
They're arriving any minute.

Expected back today,  
The lads are on their way.  
Due this very day,  
Not tomorrow but today.  
Strong and handsome, still unmarried,  
Will my dream at last come true?

Feasting, dancing, song and laughter!  
Who's to say what happens after?  
Cousins, aunts and uncles present –  
Suckling pig and roasted pheasant.  
Let's declare a holiday.

The modest farmhouse, now somewhat gone to seed, sparks a few sweet but sad moments of nostalgia – memories of a happy childhood with loving parents, now dead. But the past is the past. The two brothers look forward to a quiet, fulfilling life as bachelors, tending the land and restoring the estate to its former modest glory – a plan that will soon collide with an immovable object, their formidable Aunt Clotilda. Not only has she decided that her nephews must get married right away, but she has obligingly done her duty as an aunt by selecting the brides herself.

## STEFAN, FREDERICK & MAXIE.

House revered from days of old,  
Though your hallowed walls have crumbled,  
In my heart they're solid gold.

Peaceful house, though gone to seed,  
Your gardens overgrown with weed,  
My beloved home, a treasure chest of memories.  
Taught to worship by my parents  
As I perched upon their knees,  
Here inside these barren halls

That hold a thousand tales untold,  
Tales from vanished days of old.

STEFAN

Blessed with a caring, indulgent mother,  
Early we learned of right and wrong.

FREDERICK

Early I wanted to grow up strong.

MAXIE

Early I learned to hold my tongue.

STEFAN

At home in heaven among the angels,  
There she will stay forever young.

FREDERICK

Taught by our father that duty is sacred,  
Founded on stern patriotic pride,  
Winding up fighting for God and country,  
Heroes of old we deified.

MAXIE

My education came from the barnyard,  
The wayward habits of sheep and goats;  
Good at hog calling, goading the donkey,  
Also tending stable horses,  
Ever on hand with the pail of oats.

TRIO

House revered from days of old, *etc.*

STEFAN

Well, my brother, does it please you?

FREDERICK

Ah, what a life! in thee ancestral quarters  
To settle down and till the land.

MAXIE

To settle down and till the land.

FREDERICK

And labor like a hired hand.

MAXIE

A common hired hand.

STEFAN

To waken with the rising sun ...

MAXIE

To waken with the rising sun ...

STEFAN

And sleep in peace when work is done.

MAXIE

And sleep when day is done.

STEFAN

A simple life of sweet content.

FREDERICK

A simple life of sweet content.

MAXIE

A simple life of sweet content.  
Accepting what you can't prevent.

TRIO

In short, a tiny slice of paradise.

FREDERICK

Yes! What man could ask for more?  
And we've a pearl beyond a price.  
Roofer, plumber and mechanic ...

STEFAN

Maxie here in case of panic.

FREDERICK

Floor and ceiling out of kilter?

MAXIE

Call on Max, the master builder.

FREDERICK

Crops neglected, yard untended ...

STEFAN

He's the person recommended.

FREDERICK

Maxie, mentor and adviser ...

MAXIE

None are smarter, none are wiser.

FREDERICK

Shovel broken, who'll restore it?

STEFAN

Maxie's just the fellow for it.

TRIO

He's the one who can do the job.

STEFAN

Here at home we'll live contented,  
Striving for our daily bread.

FREDERICK

Here at home we'll live contented,  
Uncomplaining and unwed.

TRIO

Hail the happy bachelors!  
Brother, what a stroke of inspiration!  
Waiting to serve, we celebrate the single life, hey!  
With a song of jubilation.  
Hallelujah! Hip Hooray!

FREDERICK

Husband hunters. keep your distance!  
Women, women! Once again,  
Hail the unmarried man!

MAXIE

Carriage wheels are drawing near!  
Prancing horses setting records,  
Maybe twelve miles and hour!

FREDERICK

Why this look of frozen fear?

MAXIE

Sir, a woman's in the carriage!

FREDERICK

Drawing nearer ...

STEFAN

Drawing nearer ...

GRAVES

*(entering hurriedly)*

Sir, your father's elder sister!

STEFAN

No! Not Auntie!

FREDERICK

On the way!

MAXIE

Stop her! Tell the lady we are busy!

TRIO

Tell our Auntie, not today!

*(Aunt Clotilda enters, bursting with marital plans for her two nephews.)*

AUNT CLOTILDA

Home again, safe and sound!

Your own rightful places.

Where men are scarce and girls abound.

Starved for love's sweet embraces,

So waste no time, but look around.

You are holding the aces.

Your good neighbors from the village

Will be thrilled and excited

When they gather as invited.

Like turtle doves, they will flutter, they will coo,

When they see two such fine, handsome men like you.

STEFAN

A moment! I see trouble brewing.

FREDERICK

Sorry, Auntie, nothing doing!

BOTH

They are not for me!

AUNT CLOTILDA

I can but hope that you misspoke;  
Is this for real or just a joke?  
I find you attitude  
Not only rude,  
But impossible to understand,  
After all I've planned.

TRIO (*with adjusted pronouns*)

How I've pouted, how I've pondered,  
Yet I fear 'twas all in vain,  
Fond endeavors may be squandered,  
Golden dreams go down the drain.  
Fond endeavors all in vain.  
All for naught and rashly squandered,  
Weeks of planning down the drain.

STEFAN

Your weeks of planning down the drain.

FREDERICK

Now down the drain.

AUNT CLOTILDA

Beyond the river live girls by the dozen,  
Outstanding in beauty that hope to be chosen.  
Suitors are rare in these winters dark and frozen.  
Oh, pity these ladies kept waiting and waiting!

A joy to behold! The mouth simply waters  
At the fine array of delectable daughters.  
Without exaggeration, the jewels of the nation,  
Yet I would turn them down without hesitating.

Apart from these beauties with features so striking,  
Two I have found even more to your liking.  
As I am on hand to provide supervision,  
You both will be happy to hear my decision.

Why the look of consternation  
When your auntie's here on hand,  
Ready now to take command?  
When your auntie's here and in command?

Why the consternation  
When your auntie's here on hand?

STEFAN & FREDERICK  
Who will come to our salvation  
When our auntie's in command?  
In a heated confrontation  
Now it's time we take a stand.

AUNT CLOTILDA  
Close by, the mayor, a man of wealth aplenty,  
Has a daughter named Agatha, just turned two and twenty.  
They dwell in a mansion of noble dimension.  
Dear Stefan, I beg you to pay close attention.

For Frederick I've also a jewel to offer,  
Lovely as the other, to see is to love her.  
A girl in a million, she's called Margarita.  
And sweeter than honey  
With oh so much money!

Apart from their beauty, distinctive and striking,  
Daily you'll find even more to your liking.  
And as I envision more nephews and nieces  
Laughing and bouncing, my pleasure increases.

I extend congratulations, etc.

FREDERICK  
Dear Auntie, for us more like a dotting mother . . .

AUNT CLOTILDA  
You know you mean the world to me.

FREDERICK  
We're ever in your debt, so grateful for your guidance. But ...

AUNT CLOTILDA  
But what?  
On our behalf, you've been somewhat too zealous,  
Perhaps somewhat too zealous ...  
We have made plans far different from yours.

AUNT CLOTILDA  
Far different? How so?

STEFAN

Entirely different!

AUNT CLOTILDA

Already I detect hocus pocus.

FREDERICK (*echoed by Stefan*)

We come to plough and till the land,  
To labor like a hired hand,  
To earn a living out of doors.  
And lead the quiet life of bachelors.

AUNT CLOTILDA

You said as bachelors?

FREDERICK

We said as bachelors!

STEFAN

You heard, as bachelors.

AUNT CLOTILDA

(So unworthy of their gender,  
Their behavior takes the cup!  
Though for now I cry surrender,  
Never fear, I'll not give up.)

STEFAN & FREDERICK

(We'll pursue our own agenda  
And will lose but little sleep.  
Never shall we cry surrender;  
Vows we made we mean to keep.)

First on the agenda, concerning money –  
Our situation's not so funny.  
Forced now to call on some of our debtors  
Who've not responded to friendly letters –  
A task that should not long delay us,  
All honest men, they intend to repay us.  
After which, we'll call upon the Marshal,  
A friend of old to whom we've long been partial.

AUNT CLOTILDA

At Kalinova? No! You're out of your senses?  
Madness!

FREDERICK

Dear Auntie! Why the cry of alarm?

AUNT CLOTILDA

You must be crazy!

STEFAN

Den of werewolves and vampires?

AUNT CLOTILDA

I guarantee that you will come to harm.

STEFAN & FREDERICK

Nonsense! Nonsense!

AUNT CLOTILDA

His house is haunted,  
A rendezvous for spooks unwanted.

FREDERICK

Gossip grossly exaggerated,  
Tales of terror soon deflated.  
Cries of anguish barely human,  
Sobblings of a soul in pain,  
Could be either man or woman ---  
This is totally insane!

STEFAN

Superstition!

AUNT CLOTILDA

Evil spirits roam the halls,  
And ghouls appear when darkness falls.  
Prepare for taunts and curses hurled  
By escapees from the underworld.

FREDERICK

Nothing more than idle rumor.  
Auntie, where's your sense of humor?

AUNT CLOTILDA

Sense of humor? Sense of humor? Listen!  
Hear me!

GRAVES

Folk from miles around have gathered.

AUNT CLOTILDA

Aha! They must hear as well.

*(to the assembled crowd)*

Danger lies ahead!

What am I to do?

Rising from the dead,

They will lead them straight to hell.

OTHERS

What is this about? Who is leading who?

AUNT CLOTILDA

My stubborn nephews, starting upon a fatal journey,

Their destination, the haunted manor,

Led astray by servants of Satan!

Suicidal! Suicidal!

OTHERS

Misled by servants of Satan? ...

In league with Satan? ...

The devil is on the make!

STEFAN & FREDERICK

Slow down a trifle, for heaven's sake!

MAXIE

Is this a journey I ought to take?

AUNT CLOTILDA

Led astray, I'd say,

By a protégée

Of the devil!

OTHERS

Of the devil!

STEFAN & FREDERICK

Unacquainted with your devil,

We shall go ahead as planned.

OTHERS

Fatal, fatal, fatal journey!

Fatal, fatal undertaking.

The devil's in command.

STEFAN & FREDERICK  
We'll go ahead as planned,

MAXIE  
Must we proceed as planned?

AUNT CLOTILDA  
*(echoed by others)*

Ghostly forms  
Left and right,  
Ghouls appear  
Draped in white,

Cries of woe,  
Anger and spite,  
Things that go  
Bump in the night.

Restlessly prowling,  
Shrieking and howling,  
Like panting dogs they hunt the prey.  
(Hunting the prey)

STEFAN & FREDERICK  
Hungry dogs prowling,  
Winter winds howling --  
Wake up and see the light of day!  
Your fears have led you far astray.  
I laugh at your naivete.  
Ha ha ha ha ha ha!

STEFAN  
Sheer nonsense!  
I know the feeling,  
How it pains you to hear it,  
But now we're dealing  
With matter, not spirit.  
On fact so flimsy,  
Hearsay and whimsy,  
The proof required  
Leaves much to be desired.  
No, no! This will hardly do.  
Deep in your heart you may discover  
Gray clouds of grief and confusion that hover.  
Dark desires and fears projected  
Come to light where least expected.

So before you play the tempting terror card  
Stop and check out your own backyard.

AUNT CLOTILDA

Words of warning wasted,  
Undeterred, they're on their way.  
Soon headed for that blasted  
Ghost infested manor,  
They depart, no matter what I do or say.

FREDERICK

Words of warning wasted,  
Undeterred, we're on our way.  
Soon headed for that fabled  
Ghost infested manor,  
We are off and on our way,  
No matter what they do or say.

MAXIE

Words of warning wasted,  
As I feared, we're on our way.  
Soon headed for that blasted  
Ghost infested manor,  
We are off and on our way,  
To my chagrin and my dismay.

*(Similar words are repeated by others with minor variations.)*

AUNT CLOTILDA

Blithely scorning  
Words of warning,  
For these lads I fear the worst.  
Maybe mulish,  
Far from foolish,  
I intend to get there first.

MARTA & CHORUS

Blithely scorning  
Words of warning,  
Long may their bravado last!  
Firm but foolish  
Young and mulish,  
Come what may, the die is cast.

STEFAN & FREDERICK

Rightly scorning

Words of warning,  
With their fears I'm unimpressed.  
Maybe foolish,  
Maybe mulish,  
Craven cowards I detest.

#### GRAVES

Blithely scorning  
Words of warning,  
For these lads I fear the worst.  
Maybe mulish,  
Far from foolish,  
I believe in safety first.

#### MAXIE

Blithely scorning  
Words of warning,  
They are difficult at best.  
Seldom foolish,  
Never mulish,  
I'm already overstressed.

*Similar words are variously repeated.)*

### ACT TWO

A good many miles away, in the grand manor house, pride of the local village, home of the Marshal and his daughters, Anna and Georgina, a pretty scene of domesticity is unfolding -- young ladies, needle and thread in hand, diligently absorbed in their embroidery. But like the ladies seen previously -- whom they admittedly resemble -- their minds are elsewhere. It's New Year's eve, the one night of the year, according to legend, when melted wax will reveal the secrets of the future, notably the man that each will marry. For Anna and Georgina, the message from the wax is of immediate concern, as they eagerly await the arrival of Frederick and Stefan, fondly remembered from childhood, whom they have not seen for many years.

On the other hand, Damazy, a foppish suitor and current houseguest, so far unsuccessful in his pursuit of a wealthy bride, is less than thrilled at the prospect of two potential rivals, especially when the two sisters, either of whom would do nicely, see a soldier taking shape in the telltale wax, something that he is decidedly not. But by no means ready to call it quits, he is well fortified by a vast belief in his irresistibility.

#### LADIES

Under spry and nimble fingers  
Flowers grow and sprout;  
Humming birds and butterflies  
Gaily flit about.

Though outside the snow is falling  
On hollyhocks long dead,  
Our flowers bloom forever,  
Made of silken thread.

Supple maids will waste away,  
Become severe and staid;  
Golden hair will turn to gray  
Before these flowers fade,  
Before these woven flowers fade.

GEORGINA

Tonight, two friends of old will come to call;  
I've hatched a plan, a bit of fun for all.  
Tomorrow's New Year's Day.  
On this eve, so they say,  
We can see the man we'll marry  
As revealed in wax.

OTHERS

A game! A game!  
Who need a crystal ball?  
The wax will show  
What we want most to know.  
Your friends, of course, must stay a while—  
Their horses need a rest after so many a mile.  
(They'll need a rest after so many a mile.)

STEPHANIE

After weary hours  
Spent in sewing flowers,  
Leave off, if so inclined.  
Hollyhocks are unimportant  
When young men are on your mind.

ANNA

Hold on! Before they are greeted  
And before round the table all are seated,  
Turning to wax, let's gather information,  
Discover if they're who we hope they are.  
By tapping into divine revelation,  
Clever ladies have gone very far.

OTHERS

By tapping into divine revelation,

Clever ladies have gone very far,  
Hurry! Fetch it!  
And be ready for surprise.  
Hurry! Fetch it!  
Melted wax will tell no lies.  
Stir up the fire.  
Melted wax will tell no lies.

*(The ladies gleefully go off to make preparations for their game, leaving Georgina by herself.)*

## GEORGINA



**In my dream a hand-some charm-er from a dis-tant shore,**

Or a knight in shining armor  
Knocks upon my door,

Or perhaps a gallant hero  
Will at times appear,  
But with chances close to zero,  
Days and nights are drear,  
Oh, so cold and drear!

Living lone and isolated  
Loath to look ahead,  
Like too many women, fated  
To live and die unwed,

Filled with longing fierce and cruel  
Of a soul on fire,  
Where to find the fabled jewel  
Fashioned by desire,  
Sorrow and desire?

Oh, enough of this self-pity!  
I've no cause to fret.  
Still considered young and pretty,  
All's not over yet.  
I am through, I am through with feeling sorry!  
I can wait,  
And I'll not surrender yet.

Love will happen, what's the hurry?

It could be tonight.  
What a waste of time to worry!  
All will turn out right.

*(The ladies return with their preparations, accompanied by Damazy, a suitor from France.)*

## DUETTINO

DAMAZY

*Ma cherie, pourquoi le saucer?*

ANNA

If we're lucky  
We will see our future husbands  
Emerge from wax.

DAMAZY (*t*  
*o Georgina*)

You as well have agreed to play the game?

ANNA

Yes, but after me!

DAMAZY (*to Anna*)

Why go searching in such lowly places,  
A public show for all to see?  
If you want the answer turn to me.  
Of noble rank, *un peu* above you,  
Like a vulgar peasant I declare "I love you!"  
And not by wax, but face to face  
With a sweet embrace. Allow me . . .

ANNA

(What a snob!)

DAMAZY

So cruel, *sans merci!*  
You torture me, give me pain.  
For a hundred days I've waited  
Till I think I go insane.

ANNA

But the word so long awaited  
May not seem to you so sweet.

DAMAZY

Say a little, little word;  
I be falling at your feet.

ANNA

You may leave a bit deflated;  
Some words are better left unsaid.

DAMAZY

Then let the wax decide  
If I'm the man you're meant to wed.

ANNA

The wax will show who takes me for a bride.  
In the dish  
Perhaps you wish  
To see a fop now legendary,  
Prone to snicker, prone to simper,  
Also known to whine and whimper.  
He may appear, but let's be clear,  
I much prefer a man more earthy.  
Of the honor too unworthy,  
You are far too fine for me.  
For the moment we must wait and see.

DAMAZY

Why go searching when you could surrender  
To the one and only prize contender?  
Masterful, a nobleman,  
My face and form beyond compare,  
The answer to a lady's prayer,  
And furthermore a millionaire,  
Some would say I'm quite a catch,  
A man you'd travel far to match.

THE MARSHAL (*entering*)

Charming! My daughters with pretty neighbors  
Gathered to celebrate New Year's Eve.  
In the wisdom of wax they appear to believe.  
O these ladies! You can trust 'em  
To resurrect a worn out custom.

GEORGINA

We shall find out if the shoe still fits.

MARSHAL

Ah, Monsieur Damazy!

DAMAZY

Just an observer.

MARSHAL

Then I, too, will stand by and just kibitz.

QUARTET

ANNA & GEORGINA

Stirring the fire, we see sparks arise  
From embers aglow.

CHORUS

The embers glow . . .

ANNA & GEORGINA

Soft, melted wax will bring forth the answer  
We long to hear.

CHORUS

Who we're to marry . . . who we're to marry.

ANNA & GEORGINA

Holding our breath, hoping to know ...

ANNA

How to read the message ...

CHORUS

How to read the crucial message.  
Still barely breathing ...

ANNA & GEORGINA

Oh, fire that burns so bright,  
Reveal the hand of fate!

CHORUS

The hand of fate, the implacable hand of fate ...

ANNA

The implacable hand of fate,  
Too often contrary ...  
I want to marry before too late!

GEORGINA

The hand of fate ...  
How long to wait  
In fear it will come too late?  
*(peering into the melting wax)*  
Look! Hood and helmet!  
It's a soldier in an army uniform.

DAMAZY

I detect a dinner coat.

CHORUS

Not a tux! No indeed!  
Clearly not a dinner coat. Not a tux!

GEORGINA

On his shoulder ... silver medals ....

CHORUS

Won for bravery in battle ...

GEORGINA & CHORUS

He is seated on a saddle near a giant oak.  
Pull the pieces all together ...  
Harness, horse and halter ...  
Now the oak becomes an altar,  
And the meaning's clear:  
Oh, you lucky lady! (What a lucky lady!)  
You will wed a cavalier!

DAMAZY

Oh, all right, it's not a tux.

MARSHAL

Most unlikely. Most unlikely.

ANNA, GEORGINA & CHORUS

No indeed, not a tux.

DAMAZY

Nothing I would call deluxe.

HANNAH, GEORGINA & CHORUS

No indeed, not a tux. Not at all deluxe.

MARSHAL

You may not agree, but it's clear to me.

It's clear enough to me it's not a tux.

OTHERS

Though some may disagree.  
It's clear to you and me  
It's not a tux.

GEORGINA

No, not a tux, nor anything deluxe.

DAMAZY

Though reluctant to agree,  
It is even clear to me  
It's not a tux.

OTHERS

Though some may disagree.  
It's clear to you and me: not a tux!

MARSHAL

Though amusing and diverting,  
Possibly we've been unkind.  
All too often fond of laughter,  
Grave concerns I've now in mind.  
Grave concerns are on my mind.  
Sir, if you would wed my daughter,  
Certain rules must be applied;  
If you meet these basic standards  
I would call you qualified.

First, the man must love my daughter,  
I presume you will agree.  
Earth and heaven, fire and water –  
All the world she means to me.

Next to love, I value courage;  
A man of passion I admire.  
Firm yet tender,  
When he enters into marriage  
He will give his heart entire.

He may love my daughter dearly  
But there's more that I demand:  
First and last, I say sincerely,  
He must love his native land.

To the would-be charmer  
I would choose the simple farmer  
Standing tall among the great,  
Looking far and talking straight.

Oh, the winding trails I follow  
Seeking brawn and brain combined!  
Mars engrafted to Apollo  
Approaches what I have in mind.

As I study his behavior,  
Searching for the missing clue,  
I expect no saint or lofty savior;  
Just an honest man will do.

Hot for me that handsome devil,  
Oh so pleasing but malign.  
Though on the surface he may shine,  
Speaking frankly, on the level,  
He's no son-in-law of mine.

Bent on winding up my quest,  
I apply the crucial test:  
Only a man of dedication  
Is deserving of a wife;  
Called to serve and save the nation  
He's prepared to bravely sacrifice his life.  
*(Aunt Clotilda enters to cordial greetings)*

MARSHAL

Dearest Clotilda! Finally a visit! Delightful!  
Too long since we've had such an honor.

AUNT CLOTILDA

Mine is the pleasure! You and your two lovely daughters ...

DAMAZY *(rhapsodically)*

Sweeter than dew on buds about to blossom!

AUNT CLOTILDA

How poetic ... *(looking anxiously around)*  
But where are they? Not here yet?  
I only hope they will arrive safe and sound.  
On icy roads I raced to overtake them,  
Not knowing I'd already done so.

MARSHAL

Who are *they*?

AUNT CLOTILDA

Can you not guess? My two charming nephews.

ANNA

(Stefan!)

GEORGINA

(And Frederick!)

MARSHAL

I knew and loved their father;  
We watched our children growing up together!

AUNT CLOTILDA

The lads were reluctant, a little under the weather.

MARSHAL

I hope recovered. (*to his daughters*) How exciting!  
Your old playmates soon arriving!  
(*to Damazy*) It would seem you're about to face two rivals.

DAMAZY (*visibly upset*)

(Just when I am close to winning!)

AUNT CLOTILDA

Slow down, no need for you to worry.  
These two lads are in no hurry.  
And in fact, they've both made a solemn oath  
Not to marry!

MARSHAL

Sworn not to marry?

ANNA

(Sounds like a challenge!)

DAMAZY

(Such competition I shall enjoy!)

AUNT CLOTILDA

Alas, though hesitant to say it,  
To hide the truth would but delay it.

The boys have been too long protected;  
They're not the stalwarts you expected.  
Dear Marshal -- it pains me to tell you --  
So entrenched in lazy habits,  
When duty calls, they scamper off like startled rabbits.  
As you will see, their rugged features  
Camouflage the fragile creatures.

MARSHAL

Disgusting! Appalling!

AUNT CLOTILDA

I told them that your house was haunted,  
And so vivid was the scene I painted  
That both of the darlings promptly fainted.

DAMAZY

(I can hardly wait to see them!)

MARSHAL

Past believing!

ANNA

*(whispering to Georgina)*

We will test them! If indeed they shake with fear ...  
*(they both burst out laughing)*

AUNT CLOTILDA *(to Marshal)*

How it hurts to see you grieving.

MARSHAL

Two abject and craven cowards!  
How it breaks my heart to hear ...

## ACT II FINALE

CHORUS OF HUNTERS

*(as they enter quarreling)*

Who shot first?  
The savage boar is down and out.  
Both at once!  
The shots did more than stun it;  
The question is, "Who dunnit?"  
The boar is down and out,  
But a point remains in doubt.

SKOLUBA

Doubt no more! 'Twas I that fired the fatal shot.

HUNTERS

Maybe yes, maybe no.

SKOLUBA

It is true beyond dispute.

Not a question – yes, I myself was first to shoot.

MARSHAL

What is this argument about?

No need for everyone to shout.

You say two shots were fired,

But which one hit the mark? Answer that.

HUNTERS

Which bullet hit the mark?

We are frankly in the dark ...

DAMAZY

Both shots may have hit the mark.

SKOLUBA

Dogs were barking, the boar came charging ...

HUNTERS

Down the road where we were lurking ...

SKOLUBA

Swift, and straight in my direction –

Oh, I nearly cried with glee!

From behind a team of horses ...

HUNTERS

Horses driven by some hunters

Still too far away to see ...

SKOLUBA

Quick! Two shots were fired, and lo!

The boar lay bleeding in the snow.

TOGETHER

Two rifle shots were fired, and lo!

The boar lay bleeding in the snow.

SKOLUBA

Soon the fallen beast expired  
With a soft and stifled moan.

HUNTERS

And the horsemen galloped off,  
The one who fired still unknown.  
In the carriage two were seated,  
Now approaching to be greeted  
After traveling from afar.

TUTTI

Who fired first!  
The answer we may never know.  
Whose shot killed  
The boar that perished in the snow?

HUNTERS

The shot did more than stun it;  
The question is, "Who done it?"

SKOLUBA

I can make a valid claim;  
No one else can say the same.  
More than proud of what I've done,  
Here's your answer: I'm the one!

HUNTERS

See, the travelers appear;  
We'll find out what brought them here.  
Maybe with some answers.

TUTTI

Here they are!

*(Frederick & Stefan enter with Maxie, to be warmly greeted by the Marshal.*

MARSHAL

Two sons of a man I loved and venerated!  
So like your father, you'll always be welcomed and cherished.

With open arms, I embrace long absent friends,  
A special honor, so fondly awaited.  
My lovely daughters you no doubt will remember.  
Both then and now,

Like my own children you are dear.  
I often miss those years of laughter  
When our house rang out with cheer.

ANNA & GEORGINA

Sweet were those happy days long departed  
When we laughed and played together,  
Cheerful as the buds of May,  
Carefree and light-hearted ...  
Now it seems like yesterday.

ANNA

Then were they fearless in face of dangers,  
But manly courage have they outgrown?  
Have they become two total strangers,  
So weak, so spineless, so panic prone?

GEORGINA

Then were they fearless in face of dangers,  
But manly courage have they outgrown?  
Now watered down and panic prone.  
So weak, so watered down, so panic prone.

STEFAN & FREDERICK

Sweet were those happy days long departed  
When we laughed and played together,  
Cheerful as the buds of May,  
Carefree and light-hearted ...  
Now it seems like yesterday.

STEFAN

But now I'm sensing a call to arms;  
Noble resolutions are apt to come undone.  
Though tempted by their charms,  
Rather than surrender we should run.

FREDERICK

But now I'm sensing a call to arms;  
Noble resolutions are apt to come undone.  
Sorely tempted,  
Rather than surrender we should run.

MARSHAL

Strong, strapping lads, they seem so stout hearted  
I'm reminded of their father.  
Ah, just as well that he's now departed,

Both unfit to call his son.

But am I roused by false alarms?  
The shameful tales recently related  
Were perhaps much exaggerated.  
I'll watch, and form conclusions on my own.

AUNT CLOTILDA

Vows rash and foolish must be discarded;  
This I owe to their dear mother.  
Two girls back home, deserving and well regarded.  
Must not sigh for love in vain,  
Forever lonely and broken hearted.  
Discreetly I must steer  
The boys away from here.  
I've just begun!

*(Throughout the ensemble the hunters continue their quarrel)*

SKOLUBA

You ought to know --  
Who saw the boar charging out,  
Then fired first?

SKOLUBA & HUNTERS

Who saw the boar come charging out  
And fired first?

SKOLUBA

So was it you?

MAXIE

Of course, no doubt!

SKOLUBA

Or was it me?

VARIOUSLY

You should know.  
Don't deny it was I.  
Was it you? As you say. *Etc.*

AUNT CLOTILDA

Of a mind to see them marry,  
I am wide awake and wary,  
And to make it less confusing,  
I'm the one that does the choosing.  
Who is better qualified?

Local ladies I've selected,  
Well to do and well connected,

Not the sort to be neglected.  
Why go searching far and wide?  
I'm the one that does the choosing of a bride.  
Why go searching far and wide?  
Tell me why!

YOUNG LADIES (*discreetly observing*)  
The eyes that question with stolen glances,  
The hesitation, the shy advances  
They try so hard to hide;  
The cloud of wonder that hovers in the air,  
Casting shadows, omens of despair,  
Deep despair.  
By putting two and two together  
We conclude that they have long known each other,  
Yet still distant, so we gather,  
Surely held apart by stubbornness and pride.  
Held apart . . .

#### DAMAZY

Not again! Oh, what the devil? Left in the lurch!  
A thunderbolt! A sudden blow, fortissimo!  
Why persevere in my pursuit?  
These two appear, I get the boot, I get the boot.

Why do I stay? Why do I care?  
As they say, buyer beware!  
What to do? I say she's mine!  
I was first in line.  
What a sorry waste of time  
For a handsome fellow in his prime.

Why me? Why now? Foolish to stay.  
Rats! Where is the clout?  
Once more the old routine,  
Rivals on the scene,  
Me close to rack and ruin,  
My own juice I'm left to stew in.  
They show up and I bow out.  
First in line, she is mine, mine alone!

*(And the hunters are still at it)*

#### SKOLUBA

Which one of you dares make the claim?

I myself now say the same.

MAXIE

Whoever made the claim.  
I can say the same.

SKOLUBA

Who shot the boar?

MAXIE

'Twas me, no doubt.

SKOLUBA

But so did I, and you lie.

HUNTERS

It's a tie.

MAXIE

I was first!

SKOLUBA

So you say.

HUNTERS

Who can say?

MAXIE

Double quick, I aimed the gun  
And soon enough the deed was done.

HUNTERS

A likely story! Each would claim the glory.

MAXIE

Yes, it was I!

SKOLUBA

No, it was I!

MAXIE

That I deny.

SKOLUBA

You standing by ...

MAXIE

Dare you imply? ...

SKOLUBA

I say you lie!

HUNTERS

Both have made the claim;  
Both have said the same.

BOTH

Boom, kaboom, kaboom, kaboom!

HUNTERS

Kakaboom, kakaboom, kakaboom!  
*(And the quarrel goes on, with minor variations)*

MARSHAL

Ladies, friends and fellow hunters,  
Always here on hand when needed,  
Round the table come, be seated  
For a feast of warm delight.

First of all, we'll toast a father  
And the sons who spread his honor.  
Reunited, let us gather  
With a hearty appetite!

OTHERS

To the table one and all,  
With a hearty appetite

MARSHAL

To a friend whom I adored,  
Stouthearted as a lion –  
Across the board  
A man to keep your eye on.

Embattled more than once,  
His will was packed with power.  
He trained his sons  
To never cringe or cower.

ANNA & GEORGINA

The verdict still awaits:

Which are they, mouse or lion?  
Their less than manly traits  
We mean to keep an eye on.

For now we'll go ahead  
With expectations lower.  
A sign has said  
To drive a little slower.

So caution is the key.  
By hope and fear devoured,  
We'll wait and see  
If they'll be scared away.

#### STEFAN & FREDERICK

A man who tempted fate,  
A legendary lion,  
Now ranked among the great,  
Whom monarchs kept an eye on.

So proudly we proceed  
By gratitude empowered,  
That none may say  
His sons were base and coward.

His courage is the key;  
Above them all he towered.  
Awake and free,  
His trust we'll not betray.

#### MAXIE

We come here tempting fate.  
But frankly I'm no lion.  
The rumors spread of late  
I'd like to keep an eye on.

For spooks I have no need;  
I dread the witching hour.  
I go to seed  
And wither like a flower.

So caution is the key.  
I'd rather be a coward  
Alive and free.  
Than hounded beast at bay.

MARSHAL

A man whom all agreed  
Stood taller than a tower,  
One born to lead  
And never known to cower.

His courage was the key.  
By fortitude empowered,  
On land or sea  
His valor won the day.

DAMAZY

When they showed up, indeed  
I toppled like a tower.  
They're now ahead,  
But I'll return empowered.

Bravado's now the key!  
They're branded both as coward;  
It's up to me  
To see them slink away.

AUNT CLOTILDA

My hand I overplayed;  
A gaffe to call them coward.  
I'm much afraid  
My authority has soured.

Audacity's the key!  
And once again empowered,  
Ha ha! He he!  
I've more cards to play.

SKOLUBA

*(looking menacingly at Maxie)*

The snake is all I need!  
They don't come any lower.  
I want him dead!  
But all I do is glower.

Reprisal is the key!  
Too bad I'm such a coward.  
I'd pay to see  
The viper slink away.

HANNA & CHRISTINA

The game has just begun,  
But must proceed with caution.  
So far, they shun  
Our subtle provocation.

AUNT CLOTILDA

I wage a bold campaign  
That calls for care & caution.  
I must refrain  
From total fabrication.

STEFAN & FREDERICK

Surrounded by old friends,  
We must proceed with caution.  
Our vow depends  
On fighting off temptation.

DAMAZY

The rugged pair arrive;  
For me, no time for caution.  
For I survive  
On sly insinuation.

MARSHAL

Appalled at what I heard,  
I heed the call for caution.  
I've long preferred  
To draw my own conclusion.

MAXIE

By carriage we arrive,  
But now the need is caution.  
Can I survive  
A ghostly visitation?

SKOLUBA

I'll put the clown to shame;  
His bragging rights are over.  
Next time I aim  
He'd better run for cover.

HANNA & CHRISTINA

For now we'll go ahead  
With expectations lower

We'll go ahead  
With expectations lower  
The warning sign is read  
A sign that said  
To drive a little slower,  
Go slow to get ahead. Go slow!  
A sign has said go slow,  
Go slow to get ahead.

STEFAN & FREDERICK

By gratitude empowered  
We proudly can proceed  
That none may call us coward,  
Afraid to take the lead.  
That none may say  
His sons were base & coward,  
His sons were base & coward,  
Afraid to take the lead.  
A vow! A vow we made to stay unwed;  
And no more need be said.

AUNT CLOTILDA

Though opinion of me may have soured, ha ha!  
No one yet's ever called me a coward,  
And once again empowered,  
I have other cards to play.  
My reputation may have soured.  
But none can call me coward;  
I've other cards to play.  
I have a pack of cards to play.  
A pack of cards, ha!

DANZANY

A toppling tower! They take the lead.  
But I'll return empowered.  
Bravado is the key.  
They take the lead  
But I'll return empowered.  
Bravado is the key.  
Bravado is all I need.

MARSHAL

By fortitude empowered,  
His courage was the key.  
A man who showed his power  
On land and sea he lead.

A hero never known to cower,  
But born to lead.  
No, never known to cower,  
A hero born to lead.  
A hero born to take the lead.  
A hero born to take the lead.  
One born to take the lead.

MAXIE

I dread the witching hour,  
So caution is the key.  
Too bad I'm just a coward,  
But that's the way with me.  
I'm just a coward,  
But at least still alive and free.  
Although I'm just a coward,  
I'm still alive and free,  
And that's the way I like to be.  
Hooray, hooray, hooray for cowards!

SKOLUBA

They don't come any lower!  
I want to see him dead.  
Too bad I'm such a coward  
I glare at him instead.  
I want him dead,  
But only glare while turning red.  
Though I want to see him dead,  
How I want to see him dead!  
Too bad I'm such a coward.  
I want to see him dead,  
I want him dead,  
But only glare at him instead.  
I want to see him dead,  
The rest can go unsaid.

CHORUS ONE

We assume from what we overheard  
They talk about a father,  
But jumbled all together  
We cannot make out a word.  
From what we've heard  
We simply can't figure out a word.  
From what we've over heard  
We can't, we simply can't make out a word,  
Not a word, not a word,

We simply can't make out a word.

CHORUS TWO

From what we've heard,  
They talk about a father,  
But jumbled together  
We can't make out a word.  
From what we've overheard  
We can't make out a word.  
From what we've heard  
We can't make out a word.  
We simply can't figure out a word.  
From what we've over heard  
We can't make out a word.  
From what we've heard.  
We simply can't, no, we simply can't,  
No, we can't make out a word.  
No, not a word,  
No, we simply can't make out a word.

DANAZY

The two who just arrived  
I mean to keep an eye on.

MAXIE

We come here tempting fate,  
But frankly I'm no lion.  
The rumors spread of late  
I'd better keep an eye on.  
Perhaps a fluke,  
Or ravings of a kook.  
But I've no need  
Of poltergeist or spook.

STEFAN & FREDERICK

Our father tempted fate, etc.  
Among the great

MAXIE

I dread the witching hour  
And shake again as always  
When phantoms roam the hallways.

CHORUS

I feel an air of mystery,  
A somber cloud that hovers . . . (hangs)

The manor has a history  
Disturbing to young lovers.

The Marshal offers his arm to Aunt Clotilda, Stefan pairs up with Anna, Frederick with Georgina. Other guests similarly form pairs and move into the dining room. Damazy, furious that Stefan has preempted him, takes Skoluba aside and whispers into his ear. Skoluba, evidently delighted at what he hears, signals his willingness to cooperate, and mockingly shakes his fist at the departing brothers, and especially at Maxie. Highly pleased with himself, Damazy goes off to join the guests in the dining room..

### ACT III

#### SCENE I

An imposing hall in the north tower of the manor, believed by some to be the favored rendezvous of the spirit world. Signs of neglect indicate that the room is not often used. Prominent among the furnishing is a huge grandfather clock, Family portraits hang on the walls. The only light is provided by the moon. Skoluba leads in Maxie, who follows most reluctantly, as he peers apprehensively around the deserted room.

MAXIE

Haven't you a room well lighted?

SKOLUBA

Full moon tonight, don't get excited.  
Rooms have been prepared as ordered  
Where the brothers will be quartered,  
Quiet, cozy and secluded.

MAXIE

Where? So?

SKOLUBA

One to the left and one to the right.  
There the lads will spend the night.

MAXIE (*increasingly nervous*)  
Not together?

SKOLUBA

So I gather.

MAXIE

Holy moly! I'm distinctly feeling queasy.

SKOLUBA

I assume you're not uneasy.

MAXIE

But the room is far too gloomy.  
The old portraits stare right through me.  
Far too gloomy, far too gloomy.

SKOLUBA

The northern tower. Let me be clear,  
You're sleeping here!

MAXIE

No, no, no, no!

SKOLUBA

So one goes left and one goes right;  
You, my friend, are on your own.

MAXIE

I'll not stay here alone!  
Room for three you must provide;  
I insist on staying by their side.

SKOLUBA

Orders are orders.  
Just a servant, I'm impartial.  
I take my orders from the marshal.

MAXIE

I see no bed ...

SKOLUBA

What's wrong with the floor?

MAXIE

On the carpet?

SKOLUBA

Near the clock.

MAXIE

Is your heart carved out of granite?  
Here it's freezing,

And I've already started sneezing.

SKOLUBA

Sorry, pal, I didn't plan it.  
Not my fault if you find it unpleasing.

MAXIE

Cold as ice, and I've already started sneezing.  
What a ghastly situation!

SKOLUBA

*(with sinister implications)*

Did you say ghastly, or ghostly?  
Ghastly, or ghostly? ...

MAXIE

Why do they call it the haunted manor?

SKOLUBA

Others call it cursed by Satan, a house of evil ...

MAXIE

Grim reports that call for candor.

SKOLUBA

Cursed by Satan!

MAXIE

I demand an explanation  
For its gruesome reputation!

SKOLUBA

Go to sleep! Good night.

MAXIE

No, no! You're not leaving me here?

SKOLUBA

Pleasant dreams!

MAXIE

Alone, in this unwholesome atmosphere?

SKOLUBA

Pleasant dreams!

MAXIE

Once and for all, I demand that you be candid!  
Say what you know before you leave me stranded.

SKOLUBA

You're not afraid?

MAXIE

Well ...

SKOLUBA (*with gleeful malice*)

Bravo! ... Soon you'll settle down,  
But here's a tale to ponder on ...  
This noble clock in days of old  
Outsang the sweetest bird.  
For seven centuries, I'm told,  
No sound at all's been heard.

Not till the house receives a guest  
Willing to love without reward,  
When roused from silent years of rest  
The clock's voice will be restored.

Uncanny, but true. Well documented.  
(*offering some snuff*) Have a pinch?

MAXIE

No!

SKOLUBA

Ah! Then listen further ... (*indicating the portraits*)  
Behold this staid ancestral pair,  
Here solemnized in oil.  
When dark descends, watch out! Beware!  
Their blood begins to boil.

Were they not dead, their glares would kill.  
Leaving their frames, they come to blows.  
Their ghostly clash goes on until  
At dawn the rooster crows.

Uncanny, but true. All well documented.  
Have a pinch?

MAXIE (*more timorously*)

No!

SKOLUBA

I gave fair warning ... *(exit)*

MAXIE

Vanished! Off and away,  
Leaving me to grapple.  
He tried to scare me with poppycock.  
But what if these tall tales turn out to be more than babble?  
My throat's going dry, my knees begin to knock.  
Where are those brothers?

GEORGINA *(from behind a portrait)*

Approaching!

ANNA *(from behind another portrait)*

Approaching!

MAXIE

Huh! Ha! Who! Who was that?  
I heard it clearly, but see nobody.  
"Encroaching! Encroaching!" *(pointing to the portraits)*  
From there and there!  
Painted portraits talking?  
I might have known it --- Aie!  
Just as he told me!  
These ancestors starting now to squabble!  
Now or never! Run while you can!

*(running, he bumps into Frederick, who enters with Stefan)*

FREDERICK

Hey, Maxie! What's happened?

MAXIE

No, no! Nothing! But I think I'm going crazy.  
Those two on the wall started talking,  
And the tall clock keeping silent ...

STEFAN

You're delirious!

FREDERICK

Touch of fever!

MAXIE *(in a dither)*

The speechless clock was freezing cold;

No sound for centuries untold.  
The painted pair began to boil  
And come to blows ... a flock of crows ...  
Watch out! Beware!  
You need a pinch ... that's all I remember,  
All I remember.  
I gave fair warning ...

STEFAN

Friend, you really *have* gone crazy.

FREDERICK

You *believe* these stupid stories?

MAXIE

Documented! Ask Skoluba!

FREDERICK

Wine for dinner takes its toll;  
His folderol you've swallowed whole.  
Such a lion on the field!  
The inner mouse is now revealed.

MAXIE

There my only fear was fear.  
When Skoluba left me here  
I heard voices so appalling  
I shake and tremble at recalling.

FREDERICK

Saying? ...

MAXIE

"Encroaching! Encroaching!"  
Pictures hanging from the ceiling  
Started talking, taking over.  
I was forced to run for cover.

FREDERICK

Light of day should quickly dampen  
Superstition running rampant.

STEFAN

Go to bed and sleep it off;  
I'll see that you are safe.  
You will wake up feeling sprucer,

And we'll have a hearty laugh.

FREDERICK

Bedtime for you, sir!

*(He follows Maxie while pushing him out)*

STEFAN *(alone)*

All calm and quiet ... so peaceful ... not a murmur.  
A crystal sky, where the moon  
Plays host to a cluster of stars.  
Yet in my heart a piercing storm is raging.  
I try to sleep,  
And still my eyes stay open.  
Maxie was right ... these halls indeed are haunted.  
Not so! Though how and when I cannot tell,  
I detect uncanny powers,  
A house not haunted but enchanted!  
Unalerted, I'm taken captive  
By the hypnotic eyes of Anna  
As they cast a fatal spell,  
Surely magic, overseen by heaven or hell.

Ha! A timely warning!  
I've ample cause to fear;  
I am lost if I stay here.  
No, no! The gods have spoken:  
Flee from temptation!  
Leave while you can,  
And keep your vow unbroken.

*(an ancient clock strikes midnight)*

Very odd ... Maxie tells us  
That for at least a century  
The old clock has been silent,  
Waiting till some tortured sinner  
Released from hell, returns to haunt the manor.  
Twelve o'clock!

*(the clock goes on to play a music box melody)*

From long ago! A melody I know by heart  
That mother sang when we were children.  
Oh, the power of the past!  
Those happy days of sweet dependence ...  
A doting father, a loving mother ...  
Leading a simple life close to nature,

Brief days of summer, destined not to last ...

From field and forest  
We learned to glean and gather,  
Taught by a caring father –  
How could I forget?

He ruled, but mother guided,  
Always there when needed.  
Mild of manner, sweet of temper,  
Never known to fuss or fret.

Her song again!  
Mother, dearest mother!  
The love you radiated  
Was a lifelong validation,  
And your song a spark of light,  
Celestial light ...

A father and true patriot,  
He left to serve as soldier,  
Then to return as hero –  
Spared, though mother died,  
Worn out with worry,  
And sleepless nights of waiting,  
Uncomplaining as she floundered  
Cast adrift on the unyielding tide.

Again the song!  
Mother, dearest mother!  
The light you radiated  
Too soon extinguished, gone forever,  
Swallowed up in darkest night,  
Eternal night ...

FREDERICK (*returning*)

I close my eyes, yet sleep will not come near me.  
To think that it could happen in the space of a moment!  
I envy poor old Maxie,  
Terrified and trembling,  
His thund'rous snoring would arouse the dead.  
Oho! On catlike feet I hear somebody stirring.  
(*with a smile*) No doubt a ghost,  
Revisiting the world,  
Compelled to atone for depravity and lust.

Who's there?

STEFAN (*roused from his thoughts*)  
Who?

FREDERICK  
My brother?

STEFAN  
My brother?

FREDERICK (*laughing*)  
Unless we're both sleepwalking,  
A perfect time for talking.

STEFAN  
A heaven sent occasion  
For candid conversation.

FREDERICK  
Most amazing, almost frightening!  
Straight to the heart, a bolt of lightning.  
First I'm freezing, then I'm burning,  
Full of longing, full of yearning ...

STEFAN (*anxiously*)  
Is it Anna?

FREDERICK  
No, Georgina.

STEFAN (*greatly relieved*)  
Brother, you have met your equal,  
And to your story I've the sequel.  
Stuck by fire tonight while dining,  
I've been yearning, I've been pining ...

FREDERICK  
For Georgina?

STEFAN  
No, for Anna.

BOTH (*together, merrily*)  
Clearly, as the wise would tell us,  
This has happened by design.

Nevermore need I feel jealous:  
You have yours and I have mine.  
The wise would tell us  
No need be jealous.  
Happy lovers by design,  
You have yours and I have mine.

FREDERICK (*carried away*)  
Her sparkling eyes outshine the stars of heaven;  
Like ripened cherries, her lips so lush.  
One stolen glance and then, passion driven,  
I sigh and tremble; my knees turn to mush.

Though only a dream, it leaves lasting traces.  
Life yesterday was futile and forlorn.  
Now wide awake, I sense a transformation;  
Eager to live, I rise again reborn.  
Eager to live, I rise reborn.

STEFAN  
Not so fast, my hopeful brother!  
What about the vow we swore?  
Brace yourself and let's together  
Celebrate the bachelor!

FREDERICK  
Vows of course we can't ignore.  
I'm with you, so let's together  
Celebrate the bachelor.

BOTH  
Each more certain than the other,  
We can do without a wife.  
You And I again together  
Celebrate the unmarried life.

STEFAN (*with equal ardor*)  
Lost in the past, so entrancing, so alluring,  
I saw father and mother, both young and strong.  
Warmed by their love, so constant, so reassuring,  
How cold I know they would not live for long?  
Not long, not long ...

But joy returns; my soul cries "Hosanna!"  
Clouds are gone, the sky serene  
When I behold the eyes of Anna;

Birds start to sing and planted fields are green.

FREDERICK

Not so fast, my soulful brother!  
What about the vow we swore?  
Brace yourself and let's together  
Celebrate the bachelor!

STEFAN

Right ... right ... all hail the bachelor ...

After a short silence, somewhat saddened and immersed in thought, they proceed upstage as if to part company, but near the door, they simultaneously turn to look at each other, then return downstage. Meanwhile, two portraits slide from their frames, to be replaced by the living Anna and Georgina dressed in period costumes. The brothers, both absorbed in thought, do not notice the change. }

FREDERICK

Yet meanwhile ...

STEFAN

Tears and laughter shared together,  
Give and take of tender feelings  
Even talk about the weather –  
All's for naught without a mate!

Past the days of wine and roses,  
When the final curtain closes,  
What have we to celebrate?

SISTERS (*from behind the portraits*)

What have you to celebrate?

STEFAN

Sharing pleasure, pain and sorrow  
Through the ups and downs of fate,  
All's for naught without a mate.  
How can you call it life  
Without a loving wife?

TUTTI

Ah, no! Ah, no!  
(*Damazy tentatively emerges from the clock*)

ANNA (*still concealed*)

Hush! Damazy!

GEORGINA

Hush! Damazy!

FREDERICK

Who is speaking?

STEFAN

Aha! The portraits! The portraits!

MAXIE

*(suddenly waking up)*

Ancestors on the loose again!

STEFAN

Ladies having fun, I'll wager ....

FREDERICK

I suspect a mechanism

Hidden in the inner wall.

*(noticing Maxie, who is again dozing)*

Aha! Maxie lost in slumber ...

MAXIE *(still half asleep)*

Spooks again begin to brawl.

FREDERICK *(loudly in his ear)*

See that no one leaves the chamber!

*(The brothers rush out to investigate, Maxie looks around apprehensively, then goes back to his chair and resumes dozing. Damazy emerges from the clock.)*

MAXIE

What a night! What a night!

*(he drops off again)*

DAMAZY

Here was Anna, with Georgina ...

*(examining the two portraits in turn)*

Disappeared ... also vanished.

Inside the clock and undetected,

Crucial dots I've now connected.

I conclude, unless mistaken,

These two lads remain unshaken.

Not the cowards I expected,

My first impressions stand corrected.

Apprehensive, in frustration,

Now I pray for inspiration ...

SPOKEN DIALOGUE:

MAXIE Who goes there?

DAMAZY (*in the shadows, close to the clock*) Who goes there?

MAXIE Holy saints! A ghost in the clock!

DAMAZY Out of my way!

MAXIE (*still in terror*) No, no, no!

DAMAZY (The fool! His teeth are clattering.)  
(*sung*) From former days of passing glory ...

MAXIE

No, no! I cannot listen!

DAMAZY

Soon I return to purgatory.

MAXIE

Impersonator! I'm on to you!  
A wandering ghost, but also perchance  
The perfectly tailored suitor from France.  
(*barring the door from which Damazy is trying to escape*)  
Well trained to serve, I'm told to guard the exit,  
Make no exception, no matter who begs it.

DAMAZY

What! You dare deny me? Open the door!

MAXIE

Since you're a ghost, for you nothing to it;  
A closed door? You float right through it.

DAMAZY

Go to the devil!

MAXIE

Sir, after you.

FREDERICK (*returning with Stefan*)  
What's this commotion? Ah, Monsieur Damazy!

MAXIE

No! Prepare for shock!  
Not him, but a ghost emerging from the clock.

STEFAN

What! You, in hiding?

FREDERICK

Ha! Most peculiar!

STEFAN (*forcefully*)

Inside the clock, like a spy, you listened  
To conversation thought strictly private.

DAMAZY

(Mother of God! Where are you when needed?)  
You do me wrong, sir!

FREDERICK

The talking portraits, the chimes long silent ....

DAMAZY

Someone else may explain it,  
But none of my own doing.  
I, too, am baffled ...

STEFAN (*severely*)

No use denying;  
Sir, you are lying.

DAMAZY

Sir! How could you think ...

FREDERICK (*pointing to the clock*)

What brought you there?

DAMAZY (*suddenly inspired*)

(Ah! I've thought of what to say!)  
From here and there, I've heard the manor's haunted.  
Not satisfied with rumor,  
I wanted solid confirmation  
Through my own investigation –  
Not a minor undertaking.  
Alone and terrified, I was shaking ...  
With no time to think it over,

I saw the clock and quickly ran for cover.

OTHERS

For cover?

DAMAZY

Ah, yes, the house is haunted for good reason.  
It was built with the fruits of treason.  
The path these corrupt scoundrels trod  
Has long brought down the wrath of God.

STEFAN

A house of traitors!

OTHERS

Cursed and for good reason!  
The fruits of treason ...

FREDERICK

The shameful path these scoundrels trod  
Has brought down the stormy wrath of God.

MAXIE

The path they trod ...  
The stormy wrath of God ...

STEFAN

Guilt reaching back for ages,  
Darkness stains the manor.  
Feeding on past dishonor,  
We, too, are guilty of crime.  
Recoiling from vile outrages,  
Go, while there still is time!

DAMAZY

A triumph! One for the ages!

FREDERICK

To ourselves we must be true  
And flee from a house of dishonor.

MAXIE

A house of dishonor.

VARIOUSLY

We know what we must do.

A stately manor stained by evil and dishonor ...  
We can't afford delay;  
We're leaving today.  
From evil and dishonor we flee without delay.  
No more in doubt, no more delay,  
We leave today, this very day.  
As soldiers of honor we leave today.

## ACT IV

*The same imposing room as in Act II.*

ANNA

*(alone, pacing back and forth in deep thought)*

Two grown-ups, free and independent,  
Vow to live and die unmarried.  
Though the evidence is scanty,  
Hear it from their dear old Auntie,  
Sending shivers of alarm:  
Called upon to save the nation,  
Weeping women, howling babies  
Overrule the call to arms.

I admire their dedication,  
Yet it seems to me slightly crazy.  
Put to the question, my answer's easy:  
My friends, you've lots to learn  
About us Polish women!



Proud, arm in arm, as partners in courage,  
To save our country we both hear the call.

Must women pine like the captive sparrow,  
Caged and confined in boundaries so narrow?  
Or like the rabbit that flees in terror,  
Scampering off to a hole to hide in?  
Scampering off to a quiet place to hide?  
Not I! Not I!  
No captive sparrow  
No frightened rabbit,  
But armed with pride. Ah!  
A woman armed with pride.

DAMAZY (*entering*)  
Here's a tale you'll find amusing.  
Twelve o'clock, the witching hour,  
We were gathered in the tower  
For a ghostly get-together.

ANNA  
You and the brothers?

DAMAZY  
Rites and revels diabolic and Satanic  
Sent them rushing off in panic.

ANNA  
I don't believe it!

DAMAZY (*gloating*)  
I can prove it!  
I surmise from their demeanor  
That today they'll leave the manor.  
Would-be stalwarts made of jelly ...

ANNA  
Liar!

DAMAZY  
(Agile and resilient,  
I have to say it, I am brilliant,  
On a par with Machiavelli.  
The Marshal stewing in a frenzy ...  
My good luck the gods would envy.)  
*(he leaves in triumph.*

ANNA (*in despair*)  
They are leaving! All is over!

STEFAN (*entering cautiously*)  
Ah, Miss Anna!

ANNA  
Who'd believe it!  
After promising to stay, so soon you head for home?

STEFAN  
No choice ...

ANNA

Now?

STEFAN

This morning.

ANNA

You appear so agitated.

STEFAN

For a reason ...

ANNA

For a reason? ...

STEFAN

Ask no further ... *(in a sudden outburst)*  
I am lost unless I leave!

ANNA

Then you force me into guessing.

STEFAN

Don't even try to guess!  
What's now a secret must stay a secret;  
Knowing would bring you nothing but pain.  
Let me be silent, press no further;  
Try not to loathe me, but leave me alone.  
No, no! Dear Anna, fondly remember,  
But let my secret sorrow remain  
Close to my heart forever guarded.  
Danger is great that I'll lose my way;  
All's lost unless I leave today!

ANNA

Back home a sweet country girl is waiting?

STEFAN

There's no one! I'm on my own.

ANNA

Is Poland once again in a fight for survival?

STEFAN

No!

ANNA

I wonder ... if here lies the threat that forces you to flee.

STEFAN (*passionately*)

I implore you, question me no longer!  
The future I foresee is bleak.  
Locked in a prison of my own making,  
Watching desire and duty clash.  
Grieving, I dream of the road not taken,  
As inner fire slowly turns to ash.

Lost in a desert lifeless and barren,  
Aimless, I wander and long to die.  
You are my springtime, Anna, oh Anna!  
You are the life that has passed me by.

ANNA

(Is he so heartless to leave abruptly,  
With barely time to say goodbye?  
I must believe there is some explanation;  
I must uncover the reason why.  
He'll not leave me forsaken  
Till I learn the reason why.)  
Is this impulsive decision final?

STEFAN

Me and my brother depart today.

ANNA

You both must go?  
So firm, so unswerving,  
Yet surely your departure you could postpone,  
Sparing my father pain and vexation.

STEFAN

He will be gracious, and soon forgive.

ANNA

(Now clear as crystal! I know for certain.  
He's bound by honor to a soldier's vow.)

STEFAN

Locked in a prison of my own making,  
Watching desire and duty clash.  
Grieving, I dream of the road not taken,  
As fire turns to ash.

ANNA

In my own prison  
I watch despair and anger clash.  
While grieving, I dream of the road not taken,  
As fire turns to ash.

STEFAN

Lost in a desert lifeless and barren,  
Aimless, I wander and long to die.  
You are my springtime, Anna, oh Anna!  
But now goodbye ...

ANNA

Lost in a desert lifeless and barren,  
Aimless, I wander and long to die.  
Sorrow, only sorrow! But now goodbye.  
Goodbye forever! My love, goodbye!  
*(Anna leaves; Frederick and the Marshal enter.)*

MARSHAL

The time has come to speak with candor;  
You're in combat with your heart.  
All too afraid that you'll surrender,  
From my daughters you would part.

FREDERICK

You're mistaken.

MARSHAL *(addressing both)*

Why the hurry?  
Why not wait until tomorrow?

STEFAN

Too late!

FREDERICK

No, no!

MARSHAL *(looking closely at both)*  
*(Both ill-at-ease.)*

MAXIE *(rushing in)*

Sirs, your horses are in harness.

MARSHAL (*suddenly exploding*)  
Go to blazes! You are cowards ...

MAXIE (*protesting*)  
Brave soldiers who fought for Poland!

MARSHAL (*with utter contempt*)  
Now scared away!  
What a squeamish pair of fools!  
Blown about by midnight ghouls.

MAXIE (*repeating Damazy's words*)  
Not so! There's a far darker reason.  
A house acquired by fruits of treason,  
Cursed from the start for twelve generations.

STEFAN  
Will you shut up? Be quiet!

MAXIE  
Forces from heaven or hell  
Have cast their malevolent spell ...

FREDERICK  
Come, Maxie ... that's enough.  
He is our host, let's remember.

MAXIE  
Ruin and devastation  
Rain down on those that linger ...

STEFAN  
You've said enough!

FREDERICK  
Just hold your tongue!

MAXIE  
... Gift of the gods in anger,  
Falling on all that offend.  
So we were told by Damazy,  
Spoken as friend to friend.

MARSHAL  
He's insane! His mumbo jumbo I fail to comprehend.

STEFAN

Too outspoken, we face an unwelcome confrontation,  
And where will it end?

FREDERICK

Too forward, too outspoken,  
We face an unwelcome confrontation,  
And where will it end?

MAXIE

I swear, word for word, without alteration,  
The heinous crimes that sold off the nation.  
As told in full by Damazy. So!

MARSHAL

What are you saying?

STEFAN & FREDERICK

He rattles on.

MAXIE

His words verbatim, no alteration!  
The heinous crimes that sold off the nation ...  
Go ask Damazy – he'll say the same.

MARSHAL

So you heard it from Damazy?  
He's a fellow fond of joking,  
All in fun, but still provoking,  
And without a grain of truth.

SKOLUBA (*entering*)

Ah, your Lordship!

MARSHAL

Go! We punish stupid stunts.  
Have Damazy brought at once!

SKOLUBA

Too late! He's left the manor.

MARSHAL

What! The culprit got away?  
(*sleighbells are heard getting gradually closer*)

TUTTI

Listen!

SKOLUBA

Hear it coming closer!  
People out and on the go.  
Sleighbells ringing, crowds are singing  
As they glide across the snow.

MARSHAL

*(to Stefan & Frederick)*

Return your horses to the stable;  
I have ways to calm your fears  
When I reward that flagrant liar  
With a box upon the ears.

*The sound of sleighbells subsides, to be replaced by a general merry hubbub. The brothers silently give an order to Maxie, who exits crestfallen.*

CHORUS

Weather cold and getting colder!  
Skimming over snow and ice,  
Leaning on a friendly shoulder,  
Share a taste of paradise.

Marshal, be a fine fellow;  
Join us in round of cheer.  
Open up your wine cellar;  
Usher in a bright new year.

CHORUS

Tell us, Marshal, what's the matter?  
Lazy servants? Crazy neighbors?  
Higher taxes? Fallen arches?  
Indigestion? Thwarted passion?

MARSHAL

No, be patient, here is why:  
My good friend and guest Damazy  
Left the house, no word of warning,  
Slipped away this very morning,  
Tip-toe, tip-toe, on the sly.

CHORUS *(laughing)*

Brace yourself for someone you may recognize.  
Here among us, meet the absconder in disguise.

MARSHAL

Ah, Damazy!

CHORUS

Right! He was keen to join the party  
With a mask and with moustache.

OTHERS

Ha! Damazy!

CHORUS

Here in the flesh!  
Here's Damazy, the absconder!

DAMAZY (*removing his mask*)  
*Oui! C'est moi!*

MARSHAL (*seriously*)

How timely!  
Now that we're together, the time has come for candor.  
Why are you so bent on spreading slander?  
Why have you lied at our expense?  
Brought dishonor  
Upon the manor?  
What have you to say in your defense?

CHORUS

While accepting food and wine  
Slander oversteps the line.  
Frankly, he's no friend of mine.  
(Believe me, he's no friend of mine.)

MARSHAL

You are guilty, no denying.

DAMAZY

Passion drove me into lying.  
Love and too much wine for dinner  
Turn a saint into a sinner.  
I'm enamored of your daughter –  
Would that I had stuck to water!  
Speak, sir, do not keep me guessing;  
May I claim a father's blessing?

MARSHAL

But you're not the only one

Hoping for my daughter's hand.  
How can I know where you stand?

DAMAZY

Ever hopeful, I can dream.  
So overcome by her bewitching eyes  
That weave a spell and slowly hypnotize ...  
Allow me ...

FREDERICK

Just stay away from Georgina,  
Or you will leave with a bloody nose.

DAMAZY

*(shifting his attention slightly)*

Of course! How I thirst and hunger for her charms!  
She and I belong in each other's arms together ...

STEFAN

Just stay away from Anna,  
Or you and I will come to blows.

CHORUS

Who can say which girl he's wooing?

DAMAZY

(I thought I knew what I was doing.  
Either girl I'd gladly take,  
But now it looks like neither.)

STEFAN

*(deferentially to the Marshal)*

Sir, all I want I've found in Anna.  
Let her be mine and I'll be your son.

FREDERICK *(similarly)*

Sir, I'm in love with dearest Georgina.  
Father, I beg you to make us one.

CHORUS

They no longer disparage  
The blessings of marriage.  
As people often say, love finds a way.  
It now remains to name the wedding day.



Two, three and four got married, too.  
So four were down, yet five to go ... So?

GEORGINA

They one by one did not say no.

CHORUS

They one by one did not say no.

MARSHAL

From far and wide, when mothers found  
No husbands left to go around,  
Their anger grew to such a pitch ...

ANNA & GEORGINA

They barely knew which one was which.

CHORUS

They barely knew which one was which.

MARSHAL

In state of shock, so out of humor,  
They spread about a blood curdling rumor.  
Revenge they wanted;  
Soon word got out that the house was haunted.  
Persistent whispers rose to a clamor:  
Lo and behold! The haunted manor!

CHORUS

Lo and behold! The haunted manor!

MARSHAL

*(to Aunt Clotilda in gentle reproof)*

Clearly, ma'am, you wee unjust  
In putting down these fine young men.

STEFAN & FREDERICK

Sons and daughters turn to dust,  
But still the lurid tale lives on.

MARSHAL

Don't believe, though, all you hear!  
My Georgina, be of cheer.  
Take the husband meant for you.  
Anna, here's your dream come true.

CHORUS

Love has seen the light of day.

ANNA & GEORGINA, then TUTTI

*(to their respective fiancés in light mockery)*

“Each as certain as the other,

We can do without a wife.”

That was then, but now together

Cry hurrah for married life!

**THE END**

