

THE GRAND DUCHESS OF GEROLSTEIN

JACQUES OFFENBACH

English Version by Donald Pippin

Where, you ask, is Gerolstein? Despite our best efforts, despite searching through obscure atlases, we have as yet been unable to locate it on any map. For heaven's sake, don't tell the Grand Duchess. Though on second thought, it might not be such a bad idea to bring her down a peg or two. Being Grand Duchess is not altogether good for a lady's character. All right, being Roman Emperor is not always so great for a man's.

Be that as it may, Gerolstein is at war, and will no doubt remain so for as long as General Boom has any say in the matter. In fact, when the first act begins, the soldiers are saying goodbye to their sweethearts. When the act ends, nearly an hour later, they are marching off to battle. Now some might suppose, uneasily, that we are in for a long, tedious hour in which not much happens. Ah, but they are reckoning without the Grand Duchess, whose very presence is a sure fire guarantee that "things will happen."

They are reckoning without the festering rivalry of Private Fritz and General Boom for the heart of fair Wanda -- a rivalry that will soon take on an even greater dimension as it becomes evident that the private and the general are seated, so to speak, on the opposite ends of a giant seesaw. They cannot both go up.

They are reckoning without the sinister plotting of Baron Puck, eager to hold on to his preeminence as the power behind the throne -- a strategy that seems to rest squarely on the frail shoulders of Prince Paul, a relative newcomer to Gerolstein, whose ambitious marital aspirations, central to the plot, have so far gone nowhere.

They are reckoning without the emergence of a full scale conspiracy of three to bring down the hero.

In short, prepare yourselves for an act wherein destinies collide and drama is bursting out at the seams.

One further comment: on counting up the number of soldiers on stage, some may conclude that Gerolstein is operating under a tight military budget. We appeal to Shakespeare, who handled a similar situation by turning to the audience at the outset, looking at them square in the eye, and saying: "Now see here," or words to that effect. "It's up to you to pitch in. When you see one person on stage you are to imagine a thousand." We do not wish to overtax your imagination. A hundred will do, but feel free to go the limit.

ACT I

Scene: the army camp. Chorus of soldiers and their sweethearts, soon to be separated.

CHORUS

Before we're {you're} off to save the nation
It's fun to have a final fling.
A soldier needs little or no persuasion
To kick his heels, carouse and sing.

Whether solo or in chorus,
Here with sweethearts who adore us,
Smoothing out the path before us,
We can sing, we can dance,
Enjoy today,
Our one and only chance.

Before we {you} head for hostile borders,
Before our {your} lives go on the line,
A cup of cheer is what the doctor orders,
So bottoms up and pass the wine!

A round, or maybe three of four,
Will send us {you} reeling off to war.
Come on! Some more!

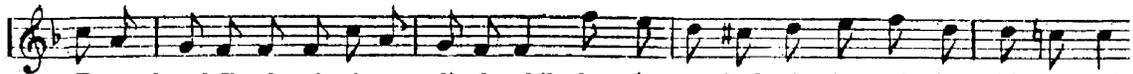
(Wanda and Fritz enter)

WANDA

Can I bear the separation?
My darling Fritz, must you go?

FRITZ

But here's my chance for promotion
And with some luck a citation
And then I shall return before you know.



E-ven though I'm leav-ing in a lit-tle while, love, in- stead of griev-ing, take it with a smile.

As I prove my mettle
In a crazy war,
You will tend the kettle,
You will mind the store.

As I rattle sabers
On the battle line
Send me news of neighbors
Back in Gerolstein.

**On the lighter side,
To laugh is no crime;
Even misty-eyed,
We can dance one more time.**

**So girls, to your feet!
And, you fellows, join in!
Set off by the beat,
We'll all take a spin.
Come on, join in!**

**Turning like a top
Spinning like a wheel
Tap a toe and heel
Until the fiddles stop.**

**Skip, dip and hop!
Pirouette and pivot,
Turning like a top.
Happy and hot,
Skip and dip and give it
All you've got!**

WANDA

**Leaving love behind you,
Off you go to fight.
Gently I remind you
Don't forget to write.**

**Even while pursuing
Ways to fame and praise,
Think of someone chewing
Nails and counting days.**

**Someone palpitating,
Sitting here at home,
Wondering and waiting
For the mail to come.**

**Putting that aside,
It's on with romance!
Sad but starry-eyed,
We can have one more dance.**

FRITZ

So girls, to your feet!

WANDA

And you fellows, join in!

FRITZ Set off by the beat,

WANDA We'll all take a spin.

FRITZ Come on!

WANDA Join in!

BOTH Turning like a top
Spinning like a wheel
Tap a toe and heel
Until the fiddles stop.

Skip, dip and hop!
Pirouette and pivot,
Turning like a top.
Happy and hot,
Skip and dip and give it
All you've got!

(While they dance, General Boum enters. The ladies flee.)

BOUM Young women in the camp!
I demand some explaining.

FRITZ (Old Blood & Guts again!)

BOUM Have you gone mad! Have you forgot
Your basic training?

FRITZ Though men of solid steel
That few would challenge twice,
Our hearts are not of ice.

BOUM *(going to Fritz)* As for you – ha! Hold your tongue!

FRITZ I only meant ...

BOUM Be silent! And tremble.
When I explode in wrath and rage,
I must insist on center stage.

CHORUS When he explodes in wrath and rage,
He must insist on center stage.

BOUM

**Riding high, with a whip in hand
I spur on the horse.
Into the fray, in full command,
I'm first of the force.**

**And when I land upon the foe,
They cry gloom and doom
They shake and shiver, for they know
My uplifted plume,
For they know my uplifted plume,**

CHORUS

**So pif paf pouf
And ta ra pa pa pa poum
The first-rate general,
The great Boum Boum.**

BOUM

**But when the war has run aground,
I bow to the charms
Of the beauties that abound
With wide open arms.**

**And as they nod to say hello,
They blush, I presume,
To indicate they, too, may know
My uplifted plume.
They, too, may know my uplifted plume.**

CHORUS

**So pif paf pouf
And ta ra pa pa pa poum
The first-rate general,
The great Boum Boum.**

BOUM

My boys! The pride of Gerolstein! An army worthy of its general. But there's a bad apple in every barrel. Private Fritz! Step forward! What a sorry specimen! What a miserable excuse for a soldier! Stand up straight. Shoulders back. When was that uniform pressed?

FRITZ

(There's a history behind this.)

BOUM

Muttering? Mumbling? Afraid to speak out? Has Private Fritz some complaint to make?

FRITZ

No complaint, sir. It's human nature ... A guy always resents it when a pretty girl goes for the other guy.

BOUM Are you suggesting? ...

FRITZ Nothing, sir. Only that the girl must be very foolish. Not dazzled by medals and ribbons. Not bowled over by a big name.

BOUM That's enough You can keep your thoughts to yourself..

FRITZ I try to, sir. But if a girl is crazy enough to prefer a young, good-looking soldier to a decrepit old ...

BOUM To a GENERAL?

FRITZ I was going to say, to a decrepit old windbag –no reference to you, sir.

BOUM You ought to be court-martialed and shot. But luckily for you, I need every man I can muster. Now then, the Grand Duchess will arrive shortly for troop inspection. We will practice formations. Private Fritz, you will stand here on sentry duty.

FRITZ Naturally, to see that nobody makes off with the pavement.

BOUM Soldiers! Attention! About face. Forward march. (*With a last leer at Fritz, as they march off*) You call yourself a soldier. (*Boum has to run to catch up with the soldiers*)

FRITZ (*alone*) It's the age-old story/ The almighty general takes it out on the lowly private because the girl happens to like the private better. ... and here she comes! Ah! I bet the general wouldn't mind trading places now! But I am on duty. Rules are rules. (*he stands rigidly at attention*)

WANDA (*rushing in*)
Darling Fritz! Here I am!
I have come so quick
That I am positively panting.
But there you stand just like a stick.
There must be some misunderstanding.
What's wrong? What's wrong? What's wrong?

Why are you no longer nice?
I come and find a block of ice,
A frozen lover too absurd,
Or does it make him feel superior
Putting on a stiff and cold exterior?

FRITZ (*motionless, looking straight ahead*)

**I must be firm, I mustn't weaken.
It's regulations, army orders –
I am not to speak,
Not a word, come what may.**

WANDA

**There's a higher law unspoken,
That rules are sometimes better broken;
The law of love should decide.
If you maintain a ban on speaking
Your nose is due to get a tweaking.**

FRITZ (*still motionless*)

**I'm on the spot, my hands are tied
It's regulations, army orders –
I am not to move,
Not a stir, come what may.**

WANDA

**A tiny whisper should suffice
To make a lover break the ice.**

FRITZ

Regulations! Regulations!

WANDA

**So when I beg on bended knee,
On bended knee, can you refuse?**

FRITZ

**Under orders, I am not free to choose.
It's those infernal orders I must obey,
And I am not to speak or stir,
Come what may.**

WANDA

**How can you then refuse?
Oh, how? Oh, how can you refuse?**

FRITZ

**Those cursed orders! Those cursed orders!
It's not for me to choose.**

BOTH

No use!

WANDA

**But just suppose I buttonholdeed you
As lovers do, and simply told you,
Enough of this!
I want a kiss.
One tender, sweet little kiss.
Would you remain so calm and cool?**

FRITZ My word, the books contain no rule
That says that kissing is taboo.

WANDA So there you are!

BOTH You (I) find no rule
That says that kissing is taboo.
No rule in the books about this;
No, not a word about a kiss,

FRITZ To hell with regulations!

WANDA Those stupid regulations!

FRITZ Make way for love!

WANDA Hooray for love!
And down with regulations!

FRITZ Those stupid regulations!

BOTH And here's to love! Three cheers for love!
Never mind the complications,
We obey the law of love.

FRITZ To hell with regulations!

WANDA Those stupid regulations!

FRITZ We've other inclinations.

WANDA Far sweeter inclinations.

BOTH Make way for love! Three cheers for love!
Oh, here's to love! Three cheers for love!

(Boum pounces on the embracing couple)

BOUM Aha! So Private Frize manages to combine sentry duty with
pleasure.

FRITZ (He's got me!)

BOUM You thought General Boum didn't know what he was

doing. You thought he was getting soft in the head, leaving you here unsupervised. I set the trap and you walked right into it.

FRITZ Then you might thank me for giving you your first strategic success.

BOUM You will pay for that remark. First I mean to put on a good show for the Duchess. But as soon as that's over, you are going to be locked up for gross neglect of duty. You'd better say goodbye to your girl friend, because you're not going to see her again for a long time. You have about five minutes. (*Fritz and Wanda leave, as Puck enters from the other side.*) Ah, Puck!

PUCK Boum! Just in time. The Duchess is on her way and you're the man I want to see.

BOUM What can I do for you?

PUCK Something big! We want to give the troops a rousing send-off, and I know how to do it. The Song of the Regiment! You and the Duchess will perform it together, before the entire assemblage. What about it?

BOUM(*preening himself*) Well, I've been told that I have a passable baritone. I suppose I could do it justice.

PUCK And the Duchess has spent the past two hours learning the song. It will be a thrilling duet.

BOUM Yes, sir! We'll light the fuse, kindle the fire, stir the blood.

PUCK Then you will do it?

BOUM Popular demand ...

PUCK It will be an historic occasion. We will start the war with a bang.

BOUM With a boom! Ha ha ha!

PUCK I suppose you know why we're fighting.

BOUM (*shocked*) Certainly not! I mind my own business. But since you bring it up ...

PUCK It's the Duchess. I don't like the way she's been acting lately. She is starting to have her own ideas about running the country.

BOUM Running the country? Why, that's a man's job.

PUCK Of course, and that is what this war is about – jobs, jobs, jobs! Mine and yours mainly. If we want to keep them, it is imperative that we get the Duchess married to the right man.

BOUM Somebody to take over the government?

PUCK (*patiently*) Boum, you sometimes fail to follow. I mean somebody who will *not* take over the government. That's ours! Luckily, I've found the perfect candidate – young, rich, well-connected and a total nincompoop. Prince Paul!

BOUM Then the problem is solved.

PUCK Not entirely. There is one small obstacle. The Duchess will have nothing to do with him. For six months she has been stringing him along. I've tried everything. I've even sent for a special envoy from the Prince's father to exert diplomatic pressure – Baron Grog. She refuses even to meet him.

BOUM Now I get it! We send the Prince to the front. The war turns him into a hero.

PUCK It would take more than a war to accomplish that. No, my idea is simpler. A short, snappy war, followed by a victory celebration and a wedding to top it off. The tide will be irresistible!

BOUM The Duchess takes the Prince!

PUCK And we keep the power. (*drum roll*)

BOUM Aha! The enemy!

PUCK No, Boum. The Duchess.

CHORUS **Comes the Duchess for troop inspection.
Her affection**

Reaches far and touches us all,

(The Grand Duchess makes an entrance)

DUCHESS

**Sturdy men of my heart,
Ever drawn to danger,
Your courage tells me what you are.
Tomorrow you depart,
And so as friend, not stranger,
I come to say
No sad adieu,
No sad adieu, but au revoir.**



**Every lad in uniform
Takes my helpless heart by storm.**

**I seem made for the military,
Made for the military,
Made for the military –
My brigade I find so very
Appealing on parade.**

**When I see them marching past
To fife and drum in rousing rhythm
Someone has to hold me fast
Or I'd be there marching with 'em.**

**What if they can or cannot shoot?
When they salute, they look so cute –
The dapper style.
The trim physique,
The cheery smile
That leaves me weak. Ah!**

CHORUS

And lady, you are not unique.

DUCHESS

**Oh, I'm mad for the military,
Mad for the military.
Mad for the military,
Cutting such a splendid dash
With or without mustache.**

**Some day under open skies
Where past dainties and delights are few,
They may find to their surprise**

I've joined the kitchen crew.

**And mid the smell of smoke and powder,
I'll stir the stew and brew the chowder.
Are not grand duchesses good for more
Than spinning round a ballroom floor
While soldiers take the heat?
But as they march to meet the foe,
I only know I skip a beat.**

CHORUS

You skip a beat as they go by.

DUCHESS

**I go mad for the military,
Mad for the military.
Mad for the military,
As with vigor and with verve
They're off to sweat and serve.**

**For the men in the military
I have a tender
And a sentimental yen.
Wicked men, you had best be wary
When you drive a lady mad,
MAD for the military!**

What gorgeous soldiers! General ...

BOUM

(with great uncton) Your Highness!

DUCHESS

Have that soldier step forward.

BOUM *(indicating the soldier on Fritz's right)* Schwartz?

DUCHESS

No, not Schwartz.

BOUM

Shumaker? *(the one on Fritz's left)*

DUCHESS

No, not Shumaker. The one in the middle.

BOUM

Oh, you mean Private Fritz. Private Fritz, step forward.

DUCHESS

Private Fritz? Oh, I'm sure he deserves better than that.
Corporal Fritz!

FRITZ

A promotion? Oh, boy! Wait till I tell Wanda.

DUCHESS Wanda?

FRITZ That's my girl.

DUCHESS (*almost sincere*) How sweet! Tell me, Corporal. Have you fought many battles, suffered many wounds?

FRITZ No battles, no wounds – oh, yes! Once I was climbing a fence to swipe some apples, but I suppose that doesn't count ...

DUCHESS Plucky and adventurous! I like that. Did I say Corporal? *Sergeant* Fritz is more like it.

FRITZ Another promotion already! Won't General Boum be pleased!

BOUM (*to Puck*) Can't you stop her? This is madness!

DUCHESS Tell me, Sergeant Fritz. How do they treat you in the army? Do they feed you well?

FRITZ Oh, so so. But it's those boiled potatoes every day ...

DUCHESS As Lieutenant, you could change that. As I was saying, Lieutenant Fritz ...

BOUM (*in agony*) Puck! Do something!

PUCK I think we'd better have the Regimental Song right away.

BOUM The sooner the better!

PUCK Why don't you suggest it?

BOUM (*to the Duchess*) Ahem! Your Highness! Allow me. Your grateful soldiers would like to welcome you with the Song of the Regiment.

DUCHESS Why, that's a song I sing myself.

PUCK Indeed? How amazing.

BOUM Then perhaps you will do me the honor. We will sing it together – you and I.

DUCHESS General, you give too much of yourself. You must save your energy for the battlefield. Lieutenant Fritz, I would like for *you* to sing with me ...

BOUM But this is unheard of! The Grand Duchess performing a duet with a mere lieutenant.

DUCHESS Oh, is that improper? Then I will make him a captain. Or is that still not high enough? Come, Captain Fritz, we will sing together.

PUCK (*to Boum*) You idiot!

FRITZ Oh, golly! I never learned the words. I'll have to make them up as we go along.

The Song of the Regiment

DUCHESS Often I thank my lucky stars
For all my husky and handsome hussars.

FRITZ Meet a platoon of goons that muster for
A musical comedy war.

DUCHESS So, eager and raring to fight,
They go at the drop of a hat.

FRITZ We may not be overly bright
But still we're not as dumb as that.

DUCHESS With bravery second to none.
They run boldly into the fray.

FRITZ Most certainly second to none,
We run, but head the other way.

CHORUS So let the trumpet blast away
And proudly beat the drum.
For when the storm has passed away
The time for love will come.

They're {we're} off! At last away!
So proudly beat the drum,
For when the storm has passed away
The time for love will come.

DUCHESS Captain Fritz, I can't wait to see you in your new uniform. Go put it on and hurry back!

BOUM Captain Fritz, huh! *(to the troops)* Attention! Right face! Forward march!
(exit all, except Boum, Puck and the Duchess)

NEPOMUC *(entering)* Madame! Prince Paul is here to see you. He is most insistent.

DUCHESS Of course, another marriage proposal. A busy morning, here I am in the middle of an army camp, inspecting the troops, my general on one side, my prime minister on the other. What could be more romantic? Tell him this is not the time, this is not the place.

NEPOMUC He will not be put off.

PUCK These impassioned lovers! There's no stopping them.

DUCHESS Oh, show him in! Boum, I want to hear your battle plans. Stay within call. This will not take long. *(Boum and Puck leave together; Prince Paul enters from the other side.)* Prince Paul! Need I ask what brings you here? Having been turned down yesterday, the day before, and the day before that, don't you think you deserve a day off?

PRINCE PAUL It's been the same answer for six months – come back later. What will I tell Daddy? Unless he sees results, he's going to cut off my allowance.

DUCHESS Well, that should convince any woman that she should marry you.

PRINCE PAUL If only you would let Baron Grog *talk* to you! He's so much more ... persuasive than I.

DUCHESS Baron Grog can save his breath. Eloquence will make no difference.

PRINCE PAUL I may have to start all over again with another Grand Duchess.

DUCHESS That breaks my heart. But today is out of the question. I'm far too busy. Why, we're at war!

PRINCE PAUL Always excuses.

DUCHESS And very good ones, too. You'll just have to wait till I have some time to think it over.

PRINCE PAUL (*in despection*) But I can't wait! They've caught up with me. I knew it would happen. Just a matter of time.

DUCHESS Poor man! What has caught up with you? Your misdeeds? Your creditors?

PRINCE PAUL (*in a awed whisper*) The press! They've got hold of the story and won't let go of it. They are turning me into a laughing stock. Just listen ---

Scandal in the News

PRINCE PAUL (*reading*) **“Hellbent upon a royal wedding,
Prince Paul has come to plead his cause.
Despite his fuming and his fretting,
Still the lady merely hems and haws.**

**“The Prince is hollow-eyed with waiting;
Again he ventures to propose.
'No, no,' she says, 'I'm hesitating,
So put away the wedding clothes.'**

**“Thus after long, expensive courting,
He's yet to move from A to B.”
The way they take a fiendish glee
In making such an ass of me!
The sassiness
The daily press
Can pass it off as reporting.**

DUCHESS The fol de rol they dare to write!

BOTH But there it is in black and white.
The sassiness
The daily press
Can pass it off as reporting.

PRINCE PAUL Each day another juicy item
Of tears and suicidal threats.
According to the guys that write'em,
London bookies now are taking bets.

DUCHESS Certainly not. If you insist on a soldier with a title, I name Captain Fritz Baron Hock-Vermouth von Schnappes. I think we can now proceed.

PUCK (*to Boum*) You knucklehead!

DUCHESS Let us hear the strategy that you propose.

BOUM (*with heavy irony*) Very well, if it please Baron ...

FRITZ Baron Hock-Vermouth von Schnappes.

BOUM The art of war can be summed up in two words: cut, then deliver.

DUCHESS I see. Like sausages. Go on.

BOUM (*pulling out map*) We divide the army into three ... divisions. The right flank, the left flank and the center. The right flank heads to the right, the left flank heads to the left ...

DUCHESS And the center?

BOUM (*after some reflection*) It goes *between* the right and the left.

PUCK Napoleon lives on.

BOUM (*working up enthusiasm*) We've got the enemy where we want'em. They're surrounded. We close the jaws tighter, tighter, TIGHTER!

DUCHESS Baron Hock-Vermouth von Schnappes, what do you think of the general's plan?

FRITZ I suppose it will do – if you want a solid, old-fashioned war that will last. Seven year, thirty years, a hundred years!

DUCHESS Heavens! I want a war that I can dispose of as quickly as possible.

FRITZ In that case, what you have to do is find the enemy's weak spot and go after it.

DUCHESS Your approach makes perfect sense. The army cries for

your leadership. General Fritz ... yes, the collar could be loosened.

BOUM (*in the last throes of despair*)

But you can't have *two* generals leading an army!

DUCHESS

Right you are as always! The battlefield is no place for a brilliant theoretician like yourself. You must stay here in the palace, where you can get started on your memoirs.

PUCK (*to Boum*)

You birdbrain!

FRITZ (*loftily to Boum*)

Boum! The plume, please! (*He removes the plume from Boum's head*)

DUCHESS

Call the troops. I want to present their new commander-in-chief.

BOUM

Ruin! Disgrace! Humiliation! Out gunned by an upstart!

PUCK (*collecting Boum and Puck, as the Duchess helps Fritz adjust his plume*)

Don't worry. We'll bring him down. We'll make him bite the dust.

PRINCE PAUL

How do you know?

BOUM

What makes you so sure?

PUCK

There are three of us. There's only one of him.
(*They exchange looks of mutual enlightenment*)

Act I Finale

CHORUS

**As bugles blow
And banners fly
To the men off to war
You {we} wave goodbye.**

**Marching along, marching along
They {we} cast no backward glances.
Sharing a song, sharing a song,
The fearless fighting force advances.**

DUCHESS

**Attention, please!
I wish to make a formal presentation:
Your new commander-in-chief.**

CHORUS **Fritz chosen for the chief?
This is beyond belief.**

DUCHESS **Fritz, indeed! Yes, it has to be him.
I recognize a leader when I see him.**

BOUM, PRINCE PAUL & PUCK *(half voice)*
**(Our revenge will be simple
As ABC --
For it happens, he
Is but one man,
Undeniably
Only one man,
While we are three.
Only one, only one
Against one, two, three!!**

WANDA **You, chosen for the chief?**

FRITZ **I only know what I hear.**

WANDA **But what of you and me?**

FRITZ **You have nothing to fear.**

WANDA **When I am out of sight ...**

FRITZ **Every day I shall write.**

WANDA **You'll love me as before?**

FRITZ **Just as much if not more.**

DUCHESS *(with marked irony)*
**As the two of you thrill
To your sweet tete-a-tete,
Do observe, if you will,
That I wait, and I wait.**

CHORUS **(As they bill and they coo,
She is ready to strike,
One at least of the two
She appears to dislike.
At least one of the two
She appears to dislike.**

DUCHESS (Why does that girl, homely as sin,
Manage to get under my skin?
How to explain
Why her complexion drives me insane?
It must be nerves.
Oh, just my nerves my nerve!
Nothing but nerves,
That silly girl gets on my nerves.)

FRITZ The Duchess looks about to murder.

WANDA It must be nerves.
Nothing but nerves, just nerves.
Yes, only nerves.

FRITZ, WANDA & OTHERS
(Why does she hurl looks of chagrin?
Who could have got so under her skin?
How to explain
With satisfaction that air of disdain?
Surely nothing but nerves.
Yes, only nerves.)

DUCHESS (*pulling herself together*)
(I must remember I'm the Queen.
Despite my agitation
I have an obligation
To rise to the occasion.
And hide the frustration
That smolders unseen.)

At once! Our glory and our pride!
Bring it here! You know what I mean.

(*A saber of monstrous proportions is brought in ceremoniously.*)

CHORUS (*variously, almost spoken*)
Golly, what a whopper!
The perfect pocket knife.
A conversation stopper.
Guaranteed for life.

Handy little cutter.
Never needs repair.
Not for spreading butter.

As hero of the day!

DUCHESS

As hero of the day!

BOUM, PRINCE PAUL & PUCK

(He'd better come back dead.)

WANDA

As hero of the day!

BOUM, PRINCE PAUL & PUCK

(We like a hero dead.)

FRITZ & DUCHESS

I {you} will stand ten feet tall.

BOUM, PRINCE PAUL & PUCK

(All the better to fall.)

FRITZ & DUCHESS

As I {you} lead the attack.

BOUM, PRINCE PAUL & PUCK

(But you will never come back.)

FRITZ & OTHERS

I [he] will be back.

BOUM, PRINCE PAUL & PUCK

**Flat on your back,
On your back, back, back, back, back.**

FRITZ, then OTHERS

**Steady of nerve,
I'm {he's} ready to serve,
Seated on the saddle
Heading into battle,
Ever so rough
And ever so tough,
Then falling on the foe
Till they cry, Enough!**

BOUM, PRINCE PAUL & PUCK

**(We are not nervous,
Heaven preserve us!
Seated on the saddle
Heading into battle,
Ever so rough
And ever so tough,
He'll fall up on the foe**

Who will call his bluff.)

CHORUS

With steady nerve
And set to serve,
He'll make the foe
Cry, Hold! Enough!

FRITZ, then OTHERS

We {The} model military
March along,
La la la, La la la La la la,
In rhythm to a merry
Marching song.
La la la, La la la La la la,

FRITZ

Doing our duty.

OTHERS

Doing your duty.

FRITZ

Pulling in booty.

ALL

Hip Hooray!

DUCHESS

Stopping to pillage

FRITZ

Stopping to pillage

DUCHESS

Innocent village,

FRITZ

Innocent village,

DUCHESS

Saving from slaughter

FRITZ

Saving from slaughter

DUCHESS

Mother and daughter.

FRITZ

Saving from slaughter
So history can say
We have earned our pay.

We pillage and we loot
And we burn to boot.
Bumping off the foe
With a cheerful blow,
We'll settle'em for good
As a hero should.

OTHERS As a hero should.

FRITZ We delight in loot
And we burn to boot.

OTHERS Now to go conquer!

BOUM, PRINCE PAUL & PUCK
(You will get conquered.)

DUCHESS & WANDA You will go conquer,
Conquer, conquer, conquer, conquer!
Waiting no longer.
Hurry, go conquer.

FRITZ Waiting no longer.
Now to go conquer.

OTHERS Steady of nerve,
Get ready to serve,
Seated on the saddle
Heading into battle,
Ever so rough
And ever so tough,
Then falling on the foe
Till they cry, Enough!

DUCHESS & OTHERS You're off and away!
Straight into the fray,
To give to the foe
A single overwhelming blow.

BOUM, PRINCE PAUL & PUCK
(To get from the foe
A single overwhelming blow.)

FRITZ We are off and away!
No further delay.
Enough ammunition
Will finish the mission
And topple the foe
With a walloping blow.

DUCHESS, WANDA & FRITZ
They're {We're} on the way,

Hip hip hooray!

DUCHESS

**Now it's on with the show!
They are ready to go.**

OTHERS, (with adjusted pronouns)

**Now it's on with the show!
They are ready to go.
They're on the way,
On the way, hip hooray!**

**Strike up the band
And cheer them onward
With trumpets blaring,
Resolute.
Proud and strong,
The pride of the land.
With lethal dash and daring,
March away
With a smile and a song.**

DUCHESS

**You've not forgot
My father's sacred saber?**

OTHERS

**You've not forgot
Her father's sacred saber?
The saber, the saber, the saber.
Take up the saber
Whose glories continue to shine
For Gerolstein!**

End of Act I

Act II

Scene: A room in the palace with chorus of ladies-in-waiting.

CHORUS

**The war is over, glory be!
The boys are coming home again.
No more need we wring our hands in vain;
A brawl is not my cup of tea.
And though it shocks the orthodox,
I've had enough of knitting socks.**

**Thank God, the war has ended!
No more days of dismay and concern.
With tales of what they saw and then did,
Our splendid heroes soon return.**

The Letter Song

IZA

The mail!

OTHERS

The mail!

IZA

**The mail! That word you need but mention
To get at once our rapt attention.**

NEPOMUC (*entering*)

**Who wants a letter?
Let me see, let me see ...**

VARIOUSLY

**One for me, one for me!
Oh, please, one for me!**

NEPOMUC

There you are.

LADIES

It's for me!

NEPOMUC

**Just let me out of your clutches!
And clear the way to the Grand Duchess. (*exit*)**

CHORUS

**The sweet suspense is hard to bear,
The shiver of anticipation!
But then the bliss, the answered prayer –
His simple words of adoration,
The tender words I want to share.**

OLGA (*reading*)

**“Your picture I placed
Here close to my heart
The day we said goodbye.**

**Out here on the field
Your face was my shield
When bullets filled the sky.**

**The enemy blows
You took on the nose,
And I remain
Unslain.”**

**Ah, this beautiful letter
Gets better and better
On reading again,
Again and again.**

CHORUS

**My beautiful letter
Gets better and better
On reading again,
Again and again.**

IZA (*reading*)

**“The war will be over,”
Ben writes, *And then
We’ll follow through as planned.
For good or for bad
I’ll go to your Dad
And ask him for your hand.**

**“It’s then up to you
To whisper, I do.
As always, I remain ...”**

**Ah! Sweet words full of wisdom!
What girl could resist’em?
I read them again,
Again and again.**

AMELIE

**The words of my Eddie
Are truly sublime.
He says, “I am ready,
You name the time.
But let it be soon.
My haste you will pardon
For then we can start on
A long honeymoon.”**

CHARLOTTE

**“Darling, as they say,
We’ve carried the day;
The war can now unwind.
Though best in the west
When keen on conquest,
I’ve greater goals in mind.
To hell with all this!
To capture one kiss
I’ll wage my last campaign.”**

Ah, this beautiful letter

**Gets better and better
On reading again,
Again and again.
A letter better yet
When read again,
Again and again.**

NEPOMUC *(entering)*

Great news! General Fritz has carried the day. The returning army is due any minute. Stand by for a gala reception.

The Return

CHORUS

**A day of delight!
The gallant men are homeward bound.
They have won their fight
And thank the Lord are safe and sound.**

(the Duchess enters)

**Sing out! Celebrate
The news on this historic date.
A day of delight!
They have wrapped up the fight
And now homeward bound
They're all safe and sound.**

DUCHESS

**(Soon to see him again!
Then the difficult part:
How to manage the message
That he is the man of my heart.)**

CHORUS

A day of delight! etc.

(Fritz returns in triumph, with saber in hand)

FRITZ

**Four days and that was it,
For we have won the fight.
Each fellow did his bit
To put the foe to flight.**

(with great emotion) **Proudly I restore
This shining symbol of might.
The saber, the saber, the saber,
The saber held before
By your inspiring father.**

DUCHESS *(also with great emotion)*

**Hand me the saber, the saber, the saber,
Held by my legendary father.
Among my hallowed trophies
Give it a place of honor.**

(to Fritz)

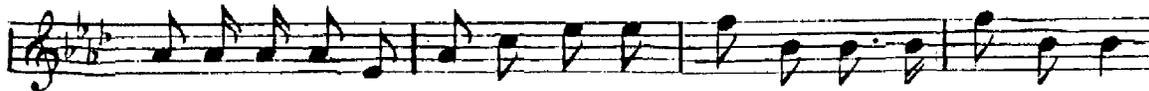
**And you, my friend, must tell us all.
With bated breath
And rapt attention
We wait to hear the tale
Of your close collision course with death.**

CHORUS

**All eyes and ears, with bated breath
We wait to hear of your clash with death.**

FRITZ

**It was a day for deeds of glory.
But not the kind you have in mind.
Prepare to hear a front-page story:
The art of war is redefined.**



**March-ing a-long we're on the go, with live-ly step & rous-ing song,
Till by mistake, we meet the foe,
A hundred twenty thousand strong.**

**Quick on the take, I call a halt.
I've got a plan you'd not expect.
New to the job, it's not my fault
If I'm endowed with intellect.**

**From brandy down to muscatel.
We've got three hundred thousand jugs.
The plan is – now listen well –
To have it stolen by those thugs.**

**And do their eyes light up or not?
Free drink today! Hip hip hooray!
As law and order go to pot,
I watch and mastermind the plot.**

**Next day at dawn, as I had planned,
The mighty fight about to start,
Oh, you should see them try to stand!**

The sight would break a mother's heart.

**Staggering on the open plane,
They fight the law of gravity,
Careening about and back again
Like ships on a wild and stormy sea.**

**Comes the general with his bottle,
Topsy, although
Rarin' to go,
Trying to walk and not to waddle,
I must confess
Without success.**

**I wink and say, "Let's have a dance"
At which I fear the dear old dunce
In anger waves the bottle round
And winds up sprawling on the ground.**

**I give a laugh that splits my britches –
Nor is the pleasure only mine.
Half of the army, still in stitches,
Start to form a chorus line.
La la la la la**

**So not a single man is shot.
Shoot the chorus? Surely not.
Ask for a flask or two of wine
To win the war for Gerolstein.**

**Now can the climax be revealed:
After a day so glorious,
Your men upon a battlefield
Fall sound asleep victorious.**

**You men upon a battlefield.
Sleep on, victorious.
You need but give the sign:
The Battle of the Bottle
We'll fight again for Gerolstein.**

DUCHESS

General, my congratulations! A thrilling story. You speak as brilliantly as you lead. Ladies and gentlemen, the reception is over. I have vital issues to discuss with General Fritz. We must be alone.

PRINCE PAUL A tete-a-tete with the General. Not even a pretence of discretion.

BOUM That glint in her eye!

PUCK Prince, how can you allow this to go on? You must put your foot down.

PRINCE PAUL And get my toes stepped on? How can I stop it?

PUCK (*ominously*) There are ways and ways ...

PRINCE PAUL If only I could get her to listen to Baron Gtog!

DUCHESS Ladies and gentlemen, if you would be so kind ... (*She indicates the exit. Fritz and the Duchess remain, alone.*) At last! Just you and I! How happy I am to have you back.

FRITZ Yes, ma'am, it feels good to be home.

DUCHESS After such a glorious success, we should talk about your future. I see endless horizons.

FRITZ Another promotion? How can a general rise even higher?

DUCHESS Perhaps not professionally. But life is not all work. There's pleasure as well. First of all, you must have a suitable place to live ... here in the palace, of course. Boum's idea.

FRITZ (*surprised*) Good old Boum!

DUCHESS At my insistence.

FRITZ The old buzzard!

DUCHESS Shall I get rid of him? (*Fritz looks aghast*) No, no. Nothing primitive. An extended lecture, perhaps ... to the Orient!

FRITZ No need to send him that far. Boum's not a bad guy, except when it comes to women.

DUCHESS Women! Ah, General Fritz! You give him good reason to be envious. I, too, have moment of envy Being Grand Duchess is sometime a nuisance. I envy the girls of the

countryside. When they fall in love, they don't have to beat about the bush.

FRITZ

Yes, they manage to get the point across.

DUCHESS

Exactly. But with us supposedly privileged women, it's a different story. We are not allowed to speak frankly, as we long to do. Instead, we have to resort to sly hints and insinuations, to guessing games. For example, here in my own palace, there is a woman who is madly in love – with you!

FRITZ

In love with me? Good heavens! (*baffled*) I don't even know any women in the palace, except you.

DUCHESS

She begged me to speak on her behalf ...

**There is a charming lady close to me,
And she adores you, you alone.
She dares not speak. Instead, she goes to me
And begs me lend a hand.
To explain how matters stand,
I'll speak her words as if they were my own.**

**She said, in giving me this errand
Speak to him softly, and I pray,
Say to him just what I would say.**

FRITZ

How odd!

DUCHESS

**You can say that no matter how it began,
You can say, he's all that I want in a man.
You can say that maybe I knew from the start
That somehow or other I'd lost my heart.**

**You then could explain in more detail
The struggle that proved of no avail;
That try as I might, I can't resist
A longing at least to be held and kissed.**

**You can say, though words cannot say how it feels,
You can call it pleasure and agony, too.
You can say I fell for him head over heels,
So what is a lady supposed to do?**

Describe the nights I lie awake
And bathe in the fountains of fantasy;
And tell him at last, for heaven's sake,
That he is the man, the man for me.

You can say I need him as gardens need rain;
You can say that passion is taking its toll;
You can say, again and again,
You can say that I love him
With all my heart and soul.

So there you are! The next is up to you.

FRITZ

(On my answer much depends.
Good Lord! What people do
To help their bashful friends!)

DUCHESS

Reply! Reply!
As briefly as you can, sir.
Can I
Give the lady a kindly answer?
Reply! Reply! Reply!

FRITZ

Tell the friend you impersonated ...

DUCHESS

What am I to say?

FRITZ

That her words are appreciated.

DUCHESS

That should make her day.

FRITZ

I would know how to answer better

DUCHESS

Yes or no will do.

FRITZ

If I knew if and when I'd met her.

DUCHESS

You have not a clue?

FRITZ

The unknown lady I shall go and see,
But that may have to be where my kindness ends.
The Lord knows what the lady sees in me,
But maybe we can be the best ...

DUCHESS

Of friends?

BOTH Of friends! Of friends!

FRITZ You can say I am obligated ...

DUCHESS She will want to know.

FRITZ But it's all rather complicated.

DUCHESS That is often so.

FRITZ Who she is, I have no idea ...

DUCHESS Who could even guess?

FRITZ I shall wait, though, until I see her.

DUCHESS (Grateful, nonetheless.
He cannot fail to see the light.)

FRITZ (But still I fail to see the light.)

DUCHESS (After all after all
He's considered rather bright.)

FRITZ (Even though, even though
I'm considered rather bright.)

DUCHESS General, do sit down. No, not over there. Here, beside me. Tell me, what am I to say to the lady whom you have so completely captivated? You have surely guessed who I mean.

FRITZ (*struggling with it*) All I need is one more piece of information.

DUCHESS (*indulgently*) And what might that one piece of information be?

FRITZ Her name.

DUCHESS (*seductively persistent*) Suppose she were sitting close to you, the way I am. Suppose she took your hand ...

NEPOMUC (*entering*) Madame! Your officer from intelligence would like to see you. A report.

DUCHESS How dare you come barging in? Is a Duchess not to have a single moment to herself? Tell him it can wait.

NEPOMUC You might want to take a look ... *(hands her a notebook)*

DUCHESS *(reading)* "Confidential report. Wanda. Comings and goings of ..."
Yes, yes, of course! Tell him ...no, no! I'll tell him myself.
You stay and escort the General to his new quarters.
(exit hurriedly)

FRITZ *(My new quarters! I don't know what all this means, but one thing's for sure. I'd better get married to Wanda as fast as possible. The Duchess will just have to tell her friend that I'm unavailable.)*

(enter Boum, Puck & Paul, mysteriously)

FRITZ Why, look who's here! It's the welcoming committee. My three buddies! Ah, General Boum, you're looking a bit under the weather these days. What you need is a wholesome whiff of fresh gunpowder. Or maybe a trip to China.

BOUM Riffraff!

NEPOMUC *(ti Fritz)* Come along.

FRITZ Where are you taking me?

NEPOMUC To your new quarters. The chamber on the right. *(they exit)*

PUCK Aha! You heard it! The chamber on the right.

BOUM At the end of the secret corridor.

PUCK This could mean but one thing.

BOUM Tonight the Duchess will tiptoe down the dark hall ...

PUCK And who will be listening for her pretty, slipped foot?

BOUM Not Fritz!

PRINCE PAUL Why not Fritz?

BOUM & PUCK Because we shall get there first!

PUCK The old story – lust, intrigue, violence, blood!

BOUM The same plot!

PUCK The same room!

BOUM The same trap!

PRINCE PAUL What are you talking about?

PUCK It so happens that a former Grand Duchess was in love with a soldier named Max ...

BOUM Poor Max!

Conspiritorial Trio

BOUM **Brace up, for I mean
To tell a somber story.**

PUCK **These palace walls have seen
A past bloodstained and gory.**

PRINCE PAUL **These palace walls have seen ...**

BOUM **A past bloodstained and gory.**



**His mustache, not to mention his figure,
Made ladies swoon.**

**The fair Duchess – and surely none blamed her –
Sighed with delight,
And she gave him her heart, plus the chamber
First on the right.**

**Our Max was much infatuated.
When night shadows fall,
He'd hear the step for which he waited
Come down the hall.**

PRINCE PAUL **Down the dark hall.**

PUCK

This very hall.

ALL THREE

Down the dark hall.

**You generations to come,
One and all, listen well
To the sinister sum
Of what later befell.**

**None can relax!
Regrettable but true.
It happened to poor Max
And could happen to you,
Someday, someday happen to you.**

PUCK

**One night something odd he detected –
Could he be wrong?
Not the dainty step fondly expected,
Too firm, too strong ...**

**Of the lady, no hint or suggestion –
Someone, but who?
And escape is quite out of the question,
So what to do?**

**Alas, too late to solve the riddle!
Twelve goons, well paid,
Adroitly slice him down the middle,
Then wipe the blade.**

PRINCE PAUL

Murderers all!

BOUM

Killers on call!

ALL THREE

**From down the dark hall.
You people, lowly or great,
Listen well, listen hard
To the sobering fate
Of a lover off-guard.**

**None can relax!
Regrettable but true.
It happened to poor Max
And could happen to you,
Someday, someday happen to you.**

BOUM Now you know what we have to do.

PRINCE PAUL Although my blood already curdles.

PUCK The word is murder!

BOUM No less than a palace coup.

PRINCE PAUL Oh dear, oh dear! We may confront
Some nasty hurdles.

PUCK We strike a blow out of the blue.

BOUM A bloody blow out of the blue.

PUCK A bloody blow

BOUM Out of the blue.

PRINCE PAUL A bloody blow out of the blue.

BOUM Before the victim has a clue.



Our friend to- night we must in- vite in- to the cham-ber on the right.

Into the chamber on the right.

As once before

The knife will fall

When we appear from down the hall.

PUCK I think we understand each other.

PRINCE PAUL A conspiracy!

BOUM The extermination of a rat.

PUCK We meet in one hour sharp.

DUCHESS (*who has entered quietly and overheard the recent conversation*)
Gentlemen!

PUCK The Duchess! Heaven help us!

BOUM We're lost! Caught in the act!

PRINCE PAUL It's each man for himself.

DUCHESS A plot, is it? Then count me in. I'm with you.

PUCK You don't mean it!

DUCHESS I do indeed. Yes, my feelings have shifted somewhat. Shall I tell you the whereabouts of General Fritz? He is in the West Chapel. What is he doing? Getting married! And where does he go from there?

PUCK, PRINCE PAUL & BOUM
Where? Where? Where?

DUCHESS To the room where you will be waiting to surprise him.
The chamber on the right!

PUCK, PRINCE PAUL & BOUM
The chamber on the right!

ALL FOUR (*dancing wildly*)
Our friend tonight
We must invite
Into the chamber on the right.
As once before
The knife will fall
When we appear from down the hall.

End of Act II

ACT III, SCENE I

Scene: The Chamber on the Right. The Duchess enters, followed by Boum.

DUCHESS So this is the famous Chamber on the Right! General, where did you leave him?

BOUM Downstairs, dancing with his bride.

DUCHESS Dancing ... while the sword hovers over him. The privileges, the rewards that could have been his for the asking! ... I suppose he really is in love with that girl ...

BOUM What are you looking at?

DUCHESS The faded bloodstain on the floor;

BOUM It is one of the leading tourist attractions of Gerolstein.

DUCHESS Tomorrow there will be *two* bloodstains ...

BOUM Which should double the tourist trade.

DUCHESS General, you see the good side in everything.

The Legacy of the Past

DUCHESS Oh, the past has a lot to relate.

BOUM A dark and dusty storeroom to study

DUCHESS Here once the hero met his fate.

BOUM In a drama gruesome and bloody.

DUCHESS So that after several centuries,
In recounting a scene too strange,
The keeper of the palace keys
Can get a bit of pocket change.

The wheel goes round and round again.

BOUM And none can stop it or delay it.

DUCHESS Great grandma's lover here was slain

BOUM And her offspring now replay it.

DUCHESS So that after a hundred years and some,
When showing the public through,
The lowly servants yet to come
Will maybe get a tip or two.

DUCHESS Our accomplices are on hand?

BOUM Waiting in the wings.

DUCHESS Have them come in.

(Boum opens the door for Paul, Puck, Nepomuc and Grog to enter)

- BOUM** Ah, here they are ... one, two, three, four ... But I ordered twelve more!
- PUCK** You want them all traipsing in at once? Boum, try to remember that this is not the battlefield. We are not trying to scare ff the enemy.
- BOUM** All right, have it your way. *(to Nepomuc)* So you, too, are part of the team?
- NEPOMUC** Anything to oblige the Duchess. And I don't wish to remain a messenger boy forever.
- BOUM** Wise young man. She will of course be grateful. *(noticing Grog)* But here is a face I don't recognize. Puck! Have you checked with counter-intelligence?
- PRINCE PAUL** Have no fear. It's Baron Grog, a fellow countryman I can vouch for. He came to Gerolstein to plead my case with the Duchess, but for six months she has refused to see him.
- GROG** Six months of twiddling my thumbs. The tedium! The ennui! Finally, a little amusement.
- BOUM** You realize the task on hand?
- GROG** Marriage or murder, I forget which. Either will do.
- DUCHESS** *(looking at Grog with awakening interest)* So you are the visiting envoy that I have been so foolishly avoiding. I see that I was much mistaken. A man so intelligent, so broad-minded, so civilized – hardly the sort that I'm accustomed to. Yes, I have paid entirely too much attention to the military ...
- GROG** I am here on behalf of Prince Paul.
- DUCHESS** Lucky man to have such a spokesman. But I sense a far greater potential – a cabinet secretary, a minister, an ambassador ... If only we could keep you in Gerolstein!
- GROG** Ah, but you can!
- DUCHESS** How? Do tell me how!

GROG By marrying my employer.

DUCHESS Boum! After long consideration, I have decided that this murder cannot proceed. You must call it off at once.

VARIOUSLY What? Call off the murder? Stop at this point? You don't mean it.

DUCHESS I do mean it. I have changed my mind. And when I change my mind, nothing can change it.

BOUM But you don't understand. I have hired twelve *professional* assassins. They will be deeply offended.

DUCHESS Nevertheless, -- as for Fritz, there's no point in crying over spilt milk. And besides, it would be a shame to spoil my wedding day by spilling blood.

PRINCE PAUL Your wedding day? Is that what you said? You all heard it?

DUCHESS We shall get married immediately! I see broader horizons in my future, a new era, a new spirit ...

BOUM But what about revenge? Do you mean we get nothing, no satisfaction at all?

DUCHESS *(with just a hint of reproach)* Boum, have you ever known me to be unreasonable? Go ahead. Enjoy yourself. I see nothing wrong with clean, wholesome fun. But no bloodshed! Got it? Prince Paul, I do not believe in drawn out engagements. I shall go select a bridal gown. Meet me in the West Chapel in two hours. *(exit Duchess)*

PUCK No bloodshed!

BOUM No assassins!

NEPOMUC No knives!

BOUM The least we can do is give that young twerp a wedding night to remember!

Nuptial Chorus

CHORUS *(escorting Fritz and Wanda to their bridal chamber)*

**The happy bride and groom we're leading
To the room that is now their own.
Further service they'll not be needing,
For they require no chaperon.
The lovely bride we are conceding
To the man who is hers alone.**

FRITZ Well, gentlemen ladies! We are certainly much obliged. A heart-warming reception. (*noticing Puck*) Oh, you here, too?

PUCK I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

FRITZ (*seeing Boum*) And if it's not my old pal! We'll name the first baby Boumer. Or Boumerette.

BOUM Huh!

FRITZ But now, having been so kind as to come, you will perhaps be so kind ...

PUCK As to leave?

FRITZ Well, you understand. We're just married!

Go to Bed!

PUCK (*to Fritz*) **So good night, young man, go to bed.**

CHORUS **Go to Bed!**

PUCK **You are no doubt well qualified
To fathom well the delights implied
For the hours that lie ahead.
Go to bed!**

CHORUS **Go to bed!**

BOUM (*to Wanda*) **To you as well, good night, go to bed.**

CHORUS **Go to bed!**

BOUM **A bashful bride, you smile, although
One could hardly expect you to know
What is implied for the hours ahead.**

My dear drummers. Need I say that I am deeply touched?
Your drumming goes straight to the heart. But perhaps you
don't realize ... I got married today ... you understand.
Goodnight, friends. Goodnight, goodnight!

(fading cries of "Long live General Fritz!")

FRITZ

(returning to Wanda) You see, they're gone ... That wasn't
too bad, was it? My dearest Wanda!

**To giddy heights I've been promoted,
And though I've risen in the ranks,
Though on my name the nation banks,
I am the same guy, yours devoted,
Even though acclaimed and promoted.**

**Instead of being blown to bits,
I'm back to reap the benefits.
Beneath it all, it's only Fritz,
Your same old plain and simple Fritz.**

WANDA

My same old Fritz.

FRITZ

**Your same old Fritz.
Your plain and simple Fritz.**

WANDA

**My plain and simple Fritz.
My darling Fritz!** *(more noise outside)*

WANDA

Not again!

FRITZ

More music! I ought to have known. An appetizer is
always followed by the main course.

CROWD *(outside)*

Long live General Fritz!

FRITZ

Well, I know how to handle it this time. Thanks a lot, but
some other time. Goodnight, good night!

CHORUS *(from outside)*

**Open the door! Up on your toes!
We have had barely time to make it
Wake up at once. Throw on your clothes.
Open the door before we break it.**

WANDA

Let's pretend not to hear.

CHORUS **The door, the door, the door, the door!**

FRITZ **Dear, no cause for alarm**

WANDA **Oh, Lord! The door they're forcing.**
We may all come to harm!

(The crowd comes bursting in)

PRINCE PAUL & PUCK **To your toes! Time to rise!**
The call is out for you!

CHORUS **To your toes! Time to rise!**
There's work for you to do.

FRITZ **What is behind the howls and cries?**

WANDA **Why the unholy hullabaloo?**

PUCK **Hurry up, to your horse!**
You are our country's one recourse.
Gallop off and away.
We look to you to save the day.

PRINCE PAUL **You've not a moment to delay.**
The military mood is black.
The foe that fled in disarray
Is back to launch a new attack.

BOUM **The Duchess, too, is of the view**
That the foe's defeat now falls on you.
What you began you must complete,
And can by turning on the heat.

FRITZ **But my good friends, do you not know**
We two were married
Just a few hours ago?

BOUM **Inopportune, but never mind!**
A soldier rides into the storm.

FRITZ **My wife then I must leave behind?**

PUCK **One of us will keep her warm.**
Be on your way without delay!

CHORUS Be on your way without delay!

FRITZ Before I take this ghastly trip
My gear I'll have to get together,
My bag, my belt, my riding whip.
The question's when, no longer whether,
So bring my plume, my fighting feather
That guarantees the foe's defeat.
My attire is now complete.

CHORUS Perfectly complete.

(Nepomuc barges in with the saber)

NEPOMUC Are you mad? Or have you forgot?
To leave without you know what!

FRITZ That blasted saber, the saber, the saber!
You stupid sword, I'd like to see'em
Put to rest in some museum,
In a museum where you belong.

CHORUS So come along!

FRITZ The soldier leaves his wedding bed
To tread the murky road ahead.

CHORUS Hurry up, to your horse!
You are our country's one recourse.
Gallop off and away.
We look to you to save the day.
Come on, hurry up!

Hurry up! Hurry up!

End of Scene I

ACT III, SCENE II

Scene: the army camp.

CHORUS We can always manage a drink,
Whether a feast,
Whether a fight.

**Never the first clinker to blink,
We are at least
Doing it right.**

**With a royal wedding in sight,
Prophets of doom
Brushing aside,
Welcome a day serene and bright
For the new groom
And for the bride.**

BOUM *(to Paul)*

**So the Duchess at last
Has turned the tide and toed the line.**

CHORUS

**To Your Highness a glass
Or two of sparkling vintage wine.**

PRINCE PAUL

**A victory ever so strange!
Rejected and scorned, I went to bed.
Through some inexplicable change,
This morning I wake in fact to find
I am wed!**

CHORUS

**You are wed! You are wed! Ah!
We can always manage a drink,
Whether a feast,
Whether a fight.
Never the first clinker to blink,
We are at least
Doing it right.**

**With a royal wedding in sight,
Prophets of doom
Brushing aside,
Welcome a day serene and bright
For the new groom
And for the bride.**

DUCHESS

My friends, we meet again.

PUCK

On a festive occasion.

PRINCE PAUL

Have a glass!

OTHERS

A glass for celebration!

**This model of sobriety.
No rival stein would thus outshine
The shattered stein of Gerolstein.**

DUCHESS Just out of curiosity, gentlemen, what has become of General Fritz? I expected him to be here. Boum, you didn't ...

BOUM No, no, no! Perish the thought. But you did give me permission to play a little joke.

DUCHESS Perhaps I did. So?

BOUM For several years, I have been – well – visiting a certain lady who lives in a farmhouse not far away. A Tuesday night tradition, you might call it. Yesterday, she writes: “Stay away tonight. My husband suspects. He will be waiting with a stick.” So I get an idea. Send Fritz instead to meet with the 43rd of the 52nd and the 52nd of the 43rd. I tell him to give three knocks at the side door ...

DUCHESS Oh, dear! Oh, dear!

BOUM By my calculation, it should have taken him one hour to get there, fifteen minutes to enjoy a rousing reception, and two hours to get back. Yes, we should be seeing General Fritz any minute! (*Wanda enters*)

The Fallen Hero

WANDA **He's back! My poor husband bruised and battered!
And his attire now torn and tattered.
Though he rose to the top overnight,
Now he is a sad, sorry sight.**

FRITZ (limping in) **Just look at the state of my clothes!
You can see.
Not to mention my knees and my nose.
Mercy me!
Far worse than the war
That I fought heretofore,
I am sore from my head to my toes.
And as for your saber, 'twill do
If you're in need of a new corkscrew.
Ooh la la!**

What a day! What a day!

**No, I never knew
What tortures a general goes through.
Sad but true,
The torment and tortures a general goes through.**

**A husband I meet first of all
At the door,
All muscle and seven feet tall,
Maybe more.
My mistake, if you like,
Was to dare him to strike,
For the rest I but dimly recall.**

**He falls on me like a typhoon.
All I can say, it was over soon,
Over soon.
Sad but true! Sad but true!
No, I never knew
What tortures a general goes through.**

(sobbing) **Ho la! Ho la! Ho la!**

OTHERS *(laughing)*

Ha ha ha ha ha ha

DUCHESS

You dare stand before me with your uniform in shreds?

FRITZ

But it's not my fault. I tried to explain ...

DUCHESS

And the saber! My father's sacred saber!

FRITZ

Was it me that turned it into a corkscrew? No! That homicidal maniac ...

DUCHESS

Quiet! Your conduct has been deplorable. Inexcusable!

FRITZ

Deplorable! Inexcusable! Is that any way to talk to nobility? I am Baron Hock-Vermouth von Schnapps!

DUCHESS

Ah, yes, so you were. Yesterday.

FRITZ

All right. So I'm no longer nobility. Is that how you talk to a general?

DUCHESS

To a colonel, yes.

FRITZ

Colonel! So I've been demoted. Why not captain?

DUCHESS Captain is higher than you deserve.

BOUM Go on, keep going! Lieutenant!

DUCHESS That would be more appropriate.

BOUM Sergeant!

DUCHESS I bow to your superior judgment.

BOUM Why stop there? Corporal! Going, going ...

DUCHESS Corporal, indeed. I've no objection.

FRITZ Then let's go all the way. As Private Fritz, I hand in my resignation.

DUCHESS The resignation of Private Fritz is accepted.

BOUM (*rubbing his hands*) I always knew I'd get my plume back.

DUCHESS This time the plume and saber will go to someone far more deserving.

BOUM (*with becoming modesty*) Your Majesty is too kind. Unworthy as I am ...

DUCHESS (*ignoring Boum, she turns to Grog with a radiant smile*)
Baron Grog! I pride myself on my ability to spot talent. From the start, you have struck me as a man of character and ability, deserving of rank and recognition. Accept this tribute, as well as the civil and military powers that go with them.

GROG Your Highness, how can I ever thank you? My wife will be overjoyed.

DUCHESS (*slowly*) Your what? You have a wife?

PRINCE PAUL Yes, my love. And three adorable children.

GROG Five, sir. Twins just a week ago.

DUCHESS Hand back the plume. General Boum, it is yours!

BOUM This time I'm going to screw it on.

DUCHESS Baron Puck, the saber goes to you, to restore for posterity.

FRITZ And I am left with nothing – except some black and blue marks.

DUCHESS Come, come! I am not so hard hearted as that. What would you like? Name it.

FRITZ The post of headmaster at the village school.

DUCHESS Can you read?

FRITZ Not yet.

DUCHESS There's no better place to learn.

GROG Your Highness, since my errand it completed ...

DUCHESS You wish to return home to the court of my new father-in-law. Go. There you will announce the joyful news of my marriage to your son, with whom I expect to live happily ever after. *(to audience)* After all, when you can't get the one you love, you'd better learn to love the one you've got.

FINALE

BOUM **At last, I've got my plume back again.**

PUCK **Again, I'm the power behind the throne.**

PRINCE PAUL *(to the Duchess)*
At last, in marriage you are mine.

GROG **At last, I say goodbye to Gerolstein.**

WANDA **Back again to our humble dwelling.**

FRITZ **The simple life, a place of our own.**

DUCHESS **As for me, of course there is no telling.
After all,
I could become quite fond of Paul ...**

FRITZ **Let others roam the world to fight,**

**I've had enough of smoke and noise.
But here at home I'll start tonight
To make a few more girls and boys.**

DUCHESS

**And even I may settle down;
My wicked ways perhaps I'll mend.
Though some will smile, and some will frown,
It is the way a play should end.**

CHORUS

**Though some will smile, and some will frown,
It is the way a play should end.**

DUCHESS

**So come, my friends, from far and wide
To celebrate the model bride,
To celebrate with song and wine
The mellowed bride of Gerolstein.**

CHORUS

**We'll celebrate with song and wine
The mellowed bride of Gerolstein.
Come, celebrate! Come, celebrate
The mellowed bride of Gerolstein!**

The End

