

# ***THE TWO WIDOWS***

**A COMIC OPERA**

**BY BEDRICH SMETANA**

**English Version by DONALD PIPPIN**



## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

**KAROLINA, an attractive, high spirited, well contented widow, owner of the luxurious farmhouse where the action transpires as well as the lush surrounding woods and farmlands.**

**ANEZKA, her far less happy cousin, also a widow, on an extended visit. Her troubled disposition might almost suggest that she is harboring a guilty secret.**

**LADISLAV, a mysterious stranger. A reckless lunatic, or a man driven by determination, with a single goal in mind?**

**GRUMPLER, caretaker and game warden, a man committed to seeing the worst in every possible situation.**

**LIDKA and TONIK, two young household servants.**

**Chorus of farmers and villagers.**

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# ACT 1

The element of surprise or suspense in opera is often not a major one. The fate motif quickly dispels any hopes that Don Jose and Carmen will somehow work things out. And even on the way to the theatre, most people have a pretty clear idea that Romeo and Juliet are not going to live happily ever after. And then there is the rather large category of opera where, if you don't know the story on the way to the theatre, you're not going to know it on the way home either.

We trust that this is not the case with today's opera. But since there are a number of surprises and the outcome is by no means predictable, I am merely going to introduce the cast, ask a few searching questions, and leave you on your own.

First, a word about the setting. No question, this is the place you've always dreamed of. A spacious, old-fashioned country house, surrounded by a lush, fertile landscape, fields of ripened grain on one side, orchards loaded down with fruit on the other, a thick forest in the distance, all blended together by a meandering stream. In short, an earthly paradise, such as you find only in the most prestigious opera houses.

The day begins with a chorus of happy farmers and villagers celebrating the harvest season and the pleasure and privilege of not having money. We soon meet the two widows: Karoline, owner and boss of the estate, and Anezka, her cousin, on an extended visit. Although both are clothed in suitably solemn colors, one is struck by an immediate contrast. Karoline is merry and lighthearted, and one gathers that her fairly recent transition to widowhood was not an entirely heart-wrenching experience. But a word of warning: when a lady goes so far as to announce in Act One, Scene One, that she is absolutely satisfied with things just as they are, you can safely start to wonder how long things will remain just as they are.

Anezka, her cousin, wears her widowhood more heavily, but as the opera progresses, one can't help wondering if she is not perhaps overdoing it. Is she entirely sincere? May not her display of grief camouflage a secret guilt? Suspicious minds will have much to chew upon.

Those of you who arrived early and have studied the program may have noticed that while the cast includes two attractive widows, it includes only one unattached young man. More work for suspicious minds. Will we be able to provide enough happy endings to go around? Will the relationship between the two women, so cordial and affectionate -- again, we refer to Act One Scene One -- be able to with-stand the onslaught of Act II?

And what do we know about this unattached young man? Nothing, except that he is prowling around the estate and shooting at random. Is he psychotic, a killer on the loose? Suffering a nervous breakdown? Or has he a clear purpose in mind? When he is finally arrested and brought into the house, why does his face light up? Why does Anezka blanche? Why does Karoline get strange ideas? Grumpler, the old caretaker, suspects the worst. But then, when does he not?

*Scene: The veranda of a garden pavilion.*

**Chorus of farmers and villagers.**

**Harvest season!  
Fields of grain  
For miles and miles.**

**Garlands crown  
The festive scene  
And nature smiles.**

**Done with labor,  
On with leisure  
For a day.**

**Come, good neighbor!  
Time for pleasure,  
Time for play.  
We have earned a holiday.**

**Starting with a song in chorus.  
Then a table ready for us.  
Old folk, young folk, everyone,  
Come and dance and have some fun.  
Everyone!**

**In a circle, come get set now;  
Trouble we can all forget now.  
Nieces, cousins, uncles, aunts,  
Come along and join the dance.**

**Tra la la Tra la la**

**Crops abundant, corn new ripened,  
Fish snapping to the bait.  
Bellies full and belts untightened,  
Good times we celebrate –**

**Beer the brownest ever boasted,  
Milk that brims in the pail,  
Nuts and apples, meat well roasted,  
Best of all, cakes and ale.**

**Golden weather, clear and sunny,  
Neither hot nor cold.  
Happy, though without much money,  
Grateful, young and old.**

**Cheers for the one to whom we owe it;  
Lucky we are, and we know it.**

**Fortune, continue to shine:  
Here is to your house and mine!**

**KAROLINA**

**Friends, all my gratitude.  
May you enjoy this day celebrating.  
You well deserve it. I'll join you later on.  
Time is short. Please, no waiting!**

**CHORUS**

**Tra la la tra la la**

*(They depart, leaving the two widows, Karolina and Anezka.)*

**ANEZKA**

**Dearest cousin, what a lovely morning.**

**KAROLINA**

**Always mourning! Spoken like a martyr!  
How is your despair today?**

**ANEZKA**

**Undampened by your repartee.**

**KAROLINA**

**But your cheeks are red as roses after showers.  
But of course...You have wept these many hours.**

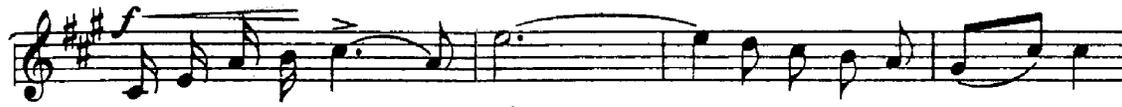
**ANEZKA**

**Laugh, but remember you're a widow, too.**

**KAROLINA**

**I can't forget, largely thanks to you.  
Widowhood takes aptitude and art.  
To enjoy it, one must learn to play the part.**

## KAROLINA



La-dy of the land, I reign o- ver field & coun- try,

Queen of an entire domain,  
Served by all and sundry.

Time to sew or time to reap,  
Mow lawns, trim the borders,  
Shoe the horses, sheer the sheep,  
I give all the orders.

Prima-donna of the dairy,  
Autocrat of sty and stable,  
My cuisine is legendary  
And my brew a thing of fable.

Famous for my bees and honey,  
Healthy flocks, and flax and linen,  
When the sky's serene and sunny  
I'm the happiest of women.

Who is better off than I?  
Weigh the evidence presented,  
Think it over, then reply:  
Tell me, lives there widow more contented?  
Think it over, then reply:  
Who is more contented?  
Lives there widow more contented than I?

At the county fair I star,  
Winning all the glory.  
My displays are best by far  
In each category.

Then my name is in the news,  
Sometimes half a column,  
And I comfort those who lose  
In words wise and solemn.

I complain and pay my taxes,  
Read the journals, barely noting  
How the market wanes and waxes;

**Ever first in line for voting.**

**I speak out on matters local,  
Claim the mayor's but a novice  
And the governor a yokel.  
Throw the rascals out of office!**

**Who is better off than I? etc.**

*Enter GRUMPLER, game warden and hired man.*

**GRUMPLER**                    **Wretched morning! Simply awful!**  
**How can you be smiling?**  
**Me, I'm far from well.**  
**Despondent! Disgusted!**  
**Hounded! Hassled!**  
**Haven't slept a wink.**  
**Getting closer to the brink.**  
**Yes, I have reached the limit.**

**KAROLINA**                    **Oh?**

**GRUMPLER**                    **Things aren't the way they used to be.**  
**Downhill every day.**

**KAROLINA**                    **Always complaining, ever whining,**  
**Let your red nose inspire you,**  
**Burning like a beacon, brightly shining.**

**GRUMPLER**                    **Burning maybe, but from anger, not from wine.**  
**Things must change here or I resign.**  
**From father to son we've served five generations.**

**KAROLINA**                    **Skip the mothers.**

**GRUMPLER**                    **What about them?**

**KAROLINA**                    **Go on. Give your list of woes**  
**I promise, not a word.**

**GRUMPLER**                    **Guard of the game, I tend my does.**  
**With warm, loving care I treat them.**

**KAROLINA** So that like the ogre you can eat them.

**GRUMPLER** Like who?

**KAROLINA** Did I speak? How rude!  
Do continue.

**GRUMPLER** I've a sacred duty to fulfill.  
Poachers, thieves and prowlers I send running.  
But to do it calls for more than cunning.  
When your husband lived—there was a model! --  
Commanding "Shoot to kill! Shoot to kill!  
Show who's the owner."  
His deer used to drive him to the bottle.

**KAROLINA** (What didn't?)

**GRUMPLER** But my gun you now deny me.  
Far from threat to foe or stranger,  
I'm the one that runs from danger.  
Now my hands are tied, the rogues defy me.

**KAROLINA** Friend, do not complain that I'm unwilling  
To pay the price of blood, the risk of killing.  
If some poor starving devil proves a winner,  
So what?  
Will this mean for us no dinner?

**GRUMPLER** This approach is most improper.  
What will all our neighbors say?  
Lady, lady! When I meet a robber  
Am I not to earn my pay?

**KAROLINA &  
ANEZKA** Friend, you have no cause for grieving.  
Why the anger and dismay?  
If you spot a fellow thieving  
Simply look the other way.

**GRUMPLER** What about my pride?  
Rack and ruin!  
Folks have started laughing— In the open!

**KAROLINA**           Who would dare to tease or taunt you thusly?  
                                  Only dolts and donkeys, obviously.

**GRUMPLER**                   Who? Him! (*with sinister stress*)

**KAROLINA &  
ANEZKA**                   Him? Him?

**GRUMPLER**                   Him! Him!

                                  Early morn, there's an impudent devil  
Roaming through the woods with loaded gun.  
                                  But I am lowered to such a level  
                                  I've no clout to send him on the run.  
Bold and brash, the rogue has got such gall;  
Bold and brash, he has got so much gall  
You would think I wasn't there at all.  
                                  Hardly aiming, he shoots....

**KAROLINA** (*speaking*)       And kills?

**GRUMPLER**           Naaa! Not by a mile! Gross incompetence.

#### ENSEMBLE

**KAROLINA**                   Ha ha ha ha ha ha!  
                                  Here is a hunter I admire.  
                                  No need to fear if he should fire.

**ANEZKA**                   She listens with laughter,  
                                  Finds it all a game,  
But I have reason enough to fear his aim.

**GRUMPLER**                   Whether he hits or he misses,  
                                  That's not the point.  
                                  Dignity, honor and pride—  
These he has knocked out of joint.

**KAROLINA**                   Tell us some more.

**GRUMPLER**                   I can tell more.\

**Middle of the night! I'm barely sleeping,  
Shots ring out, I count them: one, two, three!  
Barefoot out of bed they send me leaping.  
You'd think that the rascal shot at me.  
Bold and brash, the fool pursues his sport.  
Lady, I've reached my last resort.  
It's the limit! It's the limit!**

**KAROLINA** (*speaking*)                      **He kills?**

**GRUMPLER**                      **Naaa! Not even close! What an idiot!**

**ENSEMBLE** *repeats.*

**KAROLINA**                      **Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!**  
**Here is a hunter I admire, etc.**

**GRUMPLER**                      **Only one thing to his credit:  
He never fails to miss.**

**KAROLINA**                      **Why does he keep trying?**

**GRUMPLER**                      **I would call him cracked or crazy.**

**KAROLINA**                      **Though perverse, perhaps a harmless frolic.**

**GRUMPLER**                      **Can't shake him off.  
He's worse than indigestion, cramp or colic.  
Now in front, now behind me,  
Dodging round from tree to tree.  
In my sleep I hear him go bang, bang!**

*(A shot is heard.)*

**GRUMPLER**                      **Ha! He's at it! Never takes a breather.  
He will drive me to insanity.**

**KAROLINA**                      **Why?**

**GRUMPLER**                      **Why? Just to make an ass of me.**

**KAROLINA** (*with a twinkle of enlightenment*)

Say! Is he young?

**GRUMPLER**

Old enough to hang.

**KAROLINA**

And good looking?

**GRUMPLER**

He'd look better yet in jail.

(*Another shot*)

**GRUMPLER**

There he goes! He'll be the death of me.

**KAROLINA**

Grumpler, are you a man or mouse?

**GRUMPLER**

Better ask my neighbor Otis.  
Did you never notice  
That he whistles when he starts to breath out?  
Ever since I knocked his two front teeth out.

**KAROLINA**

Arrest the man and bring him here to me.

**ANEXKA** (*with alarm*)

To the house?

**GRUMPLER** (*with even greater alarm*) By myself?

Lady, I have no authority.

**KAROLINA**

Risk it. Pretend you're the constable.

**GRUMPLER**

If I'm the one arrested, won't that be dandy?

**KAROLINA**

Your pay I'll double and I'll bring you brandy.

**GRUMPLER**

It's a bargain.

**ANEZKA**

But it's dangerous!  
He is rash and quite unscrupulous.

**KAROLINA**  
(*to Grumpler*)

You're acquainted?  
Never mind how ruthless,  
Do not leave him toothless.  
That would much displeasure  
Some gentlemen of leisure.

**GRUMPLER**

Face to face with poaching,

I need little coaching.  
After these adventures  
He'll be needing dentures.

*(He leaves.)*

ANEZKA                    You have mischief up your sleeve.

KAROLINA                What has drawn the huntsman here?  
                                  Why so brazen?  
                                  That's the crux of it.  
                                  Possibly a harmless lunatic,  
Or perhaps the truth is otherwise.....  
                                  Handsome, bold and charming....

ANEZKA                    What of that?

KAROLINA                Someone we could pine and sigh for....

ANEZKA                    I?

KAROLINA                But of course!

ANEZKA                    My heart is closed forever.

KAROLINA                Find the key and it will open.  
They're approaching.....I've a feeling  
This intruder's rather clever.

*(They withdraw. LADISLAV enters, gun in hand, followed by GRUMPLER, close on his heels.*

)LADISLAV                How much longer must I wander  
                                  In despair and desperation  
                                  Till I meet some living soul?

GRUMPLER                Watching, I begin to wonder.  
                                  Wiser to proceed with caution  
Till the situation's under my control.

LADISLAV *(noticing GRUMPLER)*

Sly and sneaky, who comes stalking?  
First I'll try to get him talking.

GRUMPLER                To himself he mutters in his beard.

**Stay alert! This type is weird.**

**LADISLAV**

**Hey!**

**GRUMPLER**

**Who?**

**LADISLAV**

**Ho!**

**GRUMPLER**

**Me?**

**LADISLAV**

**Aha!**

**GRUMPLER**

**Ehe!**

**BOTH**

**Hm!**

**LADISLAV**

**He doesn't talk; I can't break his silence.**

**GRUMPLER**

**This rascal's cagey and itching for violence.**

**LADISLAV**

**Not yet arrested, however hard I try.**

**GRUMPLER**

**Risky to arrest him.  
Some other—not I.**

**LADISLAV**

**Must hope be drawn away  
Just as it touches?**

**GRUMPLER**

**Soon I shall have the man under my clutches.**

**LADISLAV**

**So close, yet distant—  
Oh sorrow sublime!**

**GRUMPLER**

**I'm not afraid of him.  
I could lick eight of him  
Any old time.**

**LADISLAV**

**How much longer must I wander  
Even though at last I've found her  
And I have no further goal?**

**GRUMPLER**

**Watching, I begin to wonder:  
Rather than confront the bounder,  
Would it not perhaps be sounder**

**Just to stroll?**

**EACH (*in turn*)**

**Next step, I'll get him nettled,  
For this game must be settled.**

**LADISLAV**

**Everything must be tried  
To be brought inside.**

**GRUMPLER**

**Everything must be tried;  
Him I want inside.**

**LADISLAV**

**Hey, countryman!**

**GRUMPLER**

**Who?**

**LADISLAV**

**Ho!**

**GRUMPLER**

**Me?**

**LADISLAV**

**You!**

**GRUMPLER**

**No!**

**LADISLAV**

**Aha!**

**GRUMPLER**

**Ehe!**

**BOTH**

**Hm!**

**LADISLAV**

**Useless every strategy;  
He'll not lay a hand on me.**

**GRUMPLER**

**Useless every strategy;  
None so hard to catch as he.**

**LADISLAV**

**Donkey!**

**GRUMPLER**

**Me?**

**LADISLAV**

**Halfwit! Bonehead!**

**GRUMPLER**

**I will not be so addressed!  
Sir! You're under my arrest.**

**LADISLAV**

**Finally!**

**GRUMPLER**

**What?**

**LADISLAV**

**I must say, you took your time.**

**GRUMPLER**

**What a case! Mad or moronic.**

**LADISLAV**

**Hurry! Come along and testify.**

**GRUMPLER**

**There is more here than meets the eye.**

### **DUO**

**LADISLAV**

**At last I'm on my way  
To the goal I've waited for  
And the person I adore!  
End of the quest.  
After endless pain and grief  
I come as lowly thief  
Under arrest.**

**With hope renewed,  
I'll lay my heart again before her,  
Say again how I adore her.  
In time, her resistance I shall overcome,  
Shall overcome.**

**GRUMPLER**

**Dangerous customer, handle him gently.  
Good that I've got the man under my thumb.  
Lunatic criminal type evidently;  
Stay on the lookout for trouble to come.  
Watch him for trouble to come.**

**LADISLAV**

**My good fellow, I am ready.  
Say what you would do with me.**

**GRUMPLER**

**You must follow to my lady,  
For your judge is none but she.  
Death would be the penalty  
Were your sentence up to me.**



**LADISLAV** (*entering*)

**Finally!**

**ANEZKA**

**(Where to hide?)**

**KAROLINA**

**(Just as I thought!)**

**ENSEMBLE**

**ANEZKA**

**Can I control my tears,  
Turn off my feeling,  
Shyly concealing  
The storm in my heart?**

**LADISLAV**

**What joy to see her!  
How can I smother,  
Stifle my feeling,  
Shyly concealing  
The love in my heart?**

**KAROLINA**

**Poor thing! She tries to stifle her feeling.  
What secret is she concealing,  
For it is clear she's lost her heart?**

**GRUMPLER**

**This case is one of clear sailing;  
Calls for immediate jailing.  
Justice triumphant!  
I've done my part.**

**KAROLINA**

**Bravely she struggles,  
Stifles the feeling  
She is concealing  
Deep in her heart.  
Dark is the secret,  
Drawn is the curtain.  
Into the open all will come out.**

**ANEZKA**

**Dark is the secret,  
Drawn is the curtain.  
Into the open all may come out.**

LADISLAV

Dark is the secret,  
Drawn is the curtain.  
Into the open all must come out.

GRUMPLER

There is but one thing, one only,  
I know for certain:  
He is a strange and dangerous lout.

LADISLAV

Dear ladies, I must beg your forgiveness.

KAROLINA

Armed with a gun, according to our witness.

LADISLAV

Your presence has disarmed me instantly.

KAROLINA

So you stoop to sway the court with flattery?

LADISLAV

I've need of gentle, kind and lenient judges.

KAROLINA

Hunting fever has you caught in its clutches.  
My warden marvels at your lack of skill;  
You shoot but fail to hit, try as you will.

LADISLAV

Indeed, as hunter my success is nil.

KAROLINA

Then why pursue that which ever flies away.

LADISLAV

Drawn by a hidden power I must obey,  
I cannot choose but hunt the gentle doe,  
And in pursuit find all my joy and woe.

LADISLAV

ARIA



A- lone through tan- gled wood, the worn hunt- er sore of foot

Quickens his pace as in anguish he chases  
The nymph of his heart's delight.  
Marvel to see!  
No longer nymph but timid doe,  
Transformed, she's off in flight.

As friend, not foe, he hunts the doe,  
Goes searching the forest for the lovely fawn.  
All in vain is his cry

For the doe's swift and shy,  
So he stumbles on.  
But unavailing is the plea  
Lost in the night.

He plods through wind and rain,  
Through harsh, barren terrain.  
In sunless forest he smothers his sorrow  
When suddenly in burst of light,  
What does he spy?  
The gentle doe glides fleetly by.  
God bless that wondrous sight!

Stay, gentle doe so long I've sought,  
Long hoping, hunting for you only.  
Oh leave me not to waste and rot  
Lost in the forest, dark and lonely.

But all in vain, all in vain!  
But unavailing is his plea unto the night.

#### QUARTET

KAROLINA &  
ANEZKA

Heavy to bear, love in despair.  
Sadly I can but pity him,  
Loving and forlorn.

LADISLAV

Vainly I call through bush and thorn;  
Little she heeds my hunting horn.

GRUMPLER

Long though he calls through bush and thorn,  
Let her not heed that hunting horn.

KAROLINA

For your misdeeds do not you feel remorseful?

LADISLAV

I would compound them, were I more resourceful.

KAROLINA

Then must the case be tried by court.

LADISLAV

I shall consider that a fit reward.

**KAROLINA**           Stick to the truth and soon the case we'll clench.  
                          That sofa over there let's call the bench.  
                          As prosecutor, I'll officiate.  
And you, earnest cuz -- you must be his advocate.

**ANEZKA**             I bow out, as I'm not in the least concerned.

**LADISLAV**           What harsher sentence than to be so spurned?  
                          Vainly I call through bush and thorn, etc.

**QUARTET** *reprise*

**KAROLINA** (*to GRUMPLER*) And you?

**GRUMPLER**           To insure a proper trial  
                          I, as clerk, will write a fair,  
                          Unslanted and unbiased  
                          Description of the scoundrel.

**KAROLINA**           Very wise.  
                          (Food enough at least for laughter.)  
                          Court is now in session.  
                          What is your name?

**LADISLAV**           Friends call me Ladislav.

**KAROLINA**           Your work?

**LADISLAV**           Owner of property.  
                          Others do the work, not I.

**KAROLINA**           An observer.  
                          Give your age exactly.

**LADISLAV**           Old in sorrow though my limbs are sturdy.

**KAROLINA**           Do try to be more plain.

**LADISLAV**           Just over thirty.

**KAROLINA**           One vital point we cannot ignore:  
                          Are you married or a bachelor?

**LADISLAV**           Single, sad to say.

**GRUMPLER**

**Hear, hear!**

**KAROLINA**

**As a hunter, though unskillful,  
Nonetheless your crime is willful.  
You must pay up to the limit,  
Money for the poor –**

*(to ANEZKA)*

**You be collector!  
Just put out your hand and don't be timid.**

**LADISLAV**

**Such punishment is like the taste of nectar,  
No penalty, but prize above all other.  
Pour it on.**

*(He seizes her hand.)*

**KAROLINA**

**Sir! You're to give, not gather.**

**LADISLAV**

**Any price for such a jewel.**

**ANEZKA**

**For charity; not for me, sir.**

**LADISLAV**

**I, too, plead for charity.**

*(He tries to give her both money and a letter.)*

**ANEZKA** *(rejecting the letter)*

**One thing only I'll accept, not two, sir.**

**KAROLINA**

**(A private letter!)**

**LADISLAV**

**This she hands me back.**

**KAROLINA** *(reaching for the letter)*

**If so stubborn, someone else might not be loth.**

**ANEZKA**

**Since you insist, I'll take them both.**

**TRIO**

**KAROLINA**

**Fair friend, be bolder  
And kinder, not colder,  
Hide not undercover.**

**Unbend. be tender**

**And softer, surrender  
And smile on a lover.**

**Cousin, cousin,  
Kinder, not colder,  
Hide not under cover.**

**LADISLAV**

**Beauty, be bolder  
And kinder, not colder,  
Hide not undercover.**

**Unbend, be tender  
And softer, surrender  
And smile on a lover.**

**ANEZKA**

**Face him, not bolder  
And kinder, but colder;  
Your lot is to suffer.**

**Be stern; remember  
You're not to surrender  
And smile on a lover.**

**GRUMPLER**

**Finished!  
I've described the man in full from top to toe.**

**KAROLINA (*reading*)**

**Features average,  
Height and weight average, eyes and ears average,  
Nose and chin average, shoulders average,  
Head and face average, foot and hand average.  
Ah, the living image!**

**KAROLINA &  
ANEZKA**

**Features average, etc.  
No turn, no touch has been neglected.  
Perfectly average, totally average.**

**KAROLINA,**

**Size and shape average,**

**ANEZKA &  
LADISLAV**

**Arm and leg average, suit and shirt average,  
Top to bottom, totally average.  
Most unusual man alive!**

**KAROLINA**

**Not the smallest detail is neglected.**

**GRUMPLER**      Legal style I've polished and perfected.

**KAROLINA**    As the prisoner shows not a sign or repentance,  
                    We must pronounce his sentence.  
                    We have listened impartially,  
                    With long face and due solemnity,  
                    Seeking truth with equity and justice.

                    This defendant admits bearing a family name.  
                            Landowner, lives off same,  
                            Still a bachelor though well of age,  
                            Mad about hunting  
                            But otherwise average.

                            Apprehended red-handed in crime,  
                            He must pay for his deed by serving time.  
                            Plainly guilty of a grave offense,  
                            For it he must take the consequence.

                            We shall arouse but small controversy  
                            By denying him the slightest mercy.  
                            No appeal will be of the least avail.  
                            Nothing can save this man from jail.

                            Thus as prisoner he's condemned to stay  
                            Under our custody for half a day.

**LADISLAV** (*with mock horror*)      Heaven help me!

**GRUMPLER** (*with real horror*)      Not the galleys!

**ANEZKA**                                    (A joke I fear with danger dallies.)

**KAROLINA**                                And you must eat to the very last jot  
  The game that in my woods you shot.

**LADISLAV**                                Should that be my only ration  
  I shall die of slow starvation.

**KAROLINA**                                Wretched man! He mocks the judges.

**LADISLAV**                                Heaven forbid!  
  Say he worships all she touches.

**KAROLINA**                                Take him, lock him in the cellar.

**GRUMPLER** (*aghast*)                    **With the wine?**  
**KAROLINA**                                **No, wait a moment!**  
   **Though a dungeon indeed of solid rock,**  
   **P'raps it will not do --**  
   **It lacks a lock.**

**GRUMPLER** (*to LADISLAV*)            **Follow!**

**LADISLAV**                                 **Where?**

**GRUMPLER**                               **Where?**

**KAROLINA**                               **We must keep an eye on him,**  
   **So put him in the parlor.**

**GRUMPLER**                               **Not the chamber of the Colonel!**  
   **You offend his parted spirit.**

**KAROLINA**                               **Friend, then you need not come near it.**

**LADISLAV**                               **You have judged the case so wisely**  
   **My regard will be eternal.**

**KAROLINA**                               **Settled! Now the case is closed.**

**GRUMPLER**                               **Punish thieves by playing host!**  
   **Law and order, that's the issue!**

**KAROLINA**                               **Court is over, we dismiss you.**

*Reprise of TRIO, joined by GRUMPLER*

**KAROLINA**                               **Fair friend, be bolder, etc.**

**LADISLAV**                               **Beauty, be bolder, etc.**

**ANEZKA**                                 **Face him not friendly but frostily.**  
   **Like it or not, you must suffer.**  
   **Wrong to surrender**  
   **And smile on a lover.**  
   **Merely remember**  
   **You're not to surrender.**  
   **Watch your step!**

**Colder, not kinder,**

**My lot is to suffer,  
Not to surrender  
And smile on a lover.**

**GRUMPLER**

**Beware! Not bolder  
And kinder, but colder;  
You've got to be tougher.  
Look out!  
Hold back if about  
To surrender and smile on a lover.**

**No, no! Be colder, not kinder.  
You've got to be tougher.  
Better, better hold back  
If about to surrender.**

**Colder not kinder,  
You've got to be tougher  
Not to surrender  
And smile on a lover,  
Bend and surrender  
And smile on a lover.**

*The two widows and Ladislav depart, leaving Grumpler to himself, but not for long.  
The chorus returns, headed by Tonik and Lidka.*

**CHORUS**

**Grumpler, we must put the question  
While we've got you in the corner.**

**GRUMPLER**

**Go, you give me indigestion.**

**CHORUS**

**Simply tell us:  
Who's the fancy foreigner you arrested,  
Landed single handed, unassisted?**

**GRUMPLER**

**Busy-bodies, why so nosy?  
Run along, you don't suppose he  
Is a near and dear relation?**

**CHORUS**

**We must know the why and wherefore:  
Who's the man and what's he here for?**

**MEN**

**Does he come to steal our girls  
Because he can't resist 'em?**

**WOMEN**

**Is he some recruiting scout,**

Snatching our boys away to enlist 'em?

**GRUMPLER**

Anarchy and riot!  
I want peace and quiet!

**CHORUS**

No, no! Happy only when complaining,  
You are less than entertaining.  
Ho hum, ho hum!

**LIDKA**

Maybe some romantic spell  
Conjures him to rove.....

**TONIK**

Known to you and me as well  
By the name of love....

**GRUMPLER**

Who would be so crazy?  
Who would be so stupid?

**CHORUS**

We begin to think  
You, too, have been hit by Cupid.

**LIDKA &  
TONIK**

Love is not a thing to scorn,  
Often hidden where 'tis born.  
In the heart it quivers.  
Eager and excited.

Love is sweet beyond compare.  
Nothing else on earth so fair  
As two happy lovers,  
Arm in arm united.

Love's a gift, a wondrous thing,  
Youth in flower, birth of spring.

*KAROLINA, ANEZKA & LADISLAV return and join the Chorus.*

**TUTTI**

Love's a gift, a wondrous thing,  
Youth in flower, birth of spring,  
Life's reaffirmation,  
Crown of all creation,  
Youth in flower, birth of spring.

## ACT II

At the beginning of Act II, the enigmatic prisoner has sufficiently adjusted to his luxurious confinement to sing a rhapsodic aria -- one that is overheard by the two widows.

*Scene: A large room with a veranda.*

LADISLAV (*from offstage*)

May, O month of green! Lovely spring!  
Then the woods awake, blossoming.  
And mid the song of thrush and lark  
Love opens dazzled eyes,  
Feeds on the flowers of earthly paradise.  
Lovely May, sweet time of love!  
Lovely May, our time of love!

Brief the spring of youth, sweet delight!  
Soon to slip away, swift in flight.  
And when the season withers,  
Long though we sigh in vain,  
Youth once departed  
Never will come again.  
Lovely May, sweet time of love!  
Lovely May, our time of love!

*During the song, KAROLINA and ANEZKA enter quietly, listening.*

KAROLINA

Just as I suspected, cousin.  
The man's in love, it's obvious.  
But who's the lady he has chosen?  
One of us, but which of us?  
Where is our basket?

ANEZKA

Where it was left.

KAROLINA

I detect a bit of theft.  
Something's taken.

ANEZKA (*innocently*)

From the basket?

KAROLINA

(Here he dropped a note, surely.)  
Most peculiar!.....  
I am certain you would not deprive the poor.



**Matters could be misconstrued  
If I mention that my mood,  
Far from one of sheer delight,  
Savors of ingratitude.)**

**ANEZKA**

**Would you wed him?**

**KAROLINA**

**And why not?  
He is handsome, young and charming.  
Do you think that I am blind?  
He'll do nicely.**

**ANEZKA**

**What a sudden change of mind!  
Where's your love of liberty?  
Darling, you are quite demented.  
Where's that sparkling joie de vivre  
Of the widow so contented?**

*(parodying the earlier KAROLINA)*

**“Lady of the land, I reign  
Over field and country,  
Queen of an entire domain,  
Served by all and sundry.**

**Who is better off than I?  
Weigh the evidence presented.  
Think it over, then reply.  
Tell me: lives there widow more contented?  
Lives there widow better off than I?”**

**KAROLINA**

**Spare me, pray, your questions taunt me.**

**ANEZKA**

**How your words come back to haunt me.  
Prima donna of the dairy,  
You would be a fool to marry.  
Would you sacrifice your farming  
Just because a man is charming?**

**Winner of the exhibitions,  
Scourge of local politicians,  
Would you trade this lovely life  
Just to be a docile wife?**

**KAROLINA**

**Do not mock me, this I beg.  
How unkind to pull my leg!**



**LADISLAV**

**All I ask is a word.  
(Ice and chill I suffer  
From that heart so cold,  
When I offer  
Warmth and burning fire of gold.)**

**ANEZKA**

**(Ice and chill I suffer  
Showing a heart so cold,  
When I long for  
Warmth and burning fire of gold.)**

**LADISLAV**

**(Futile my persistence,  
Still she keeps her distance;  
With disdain, my heart  
Slighted and returned.)**

**ANEZKA**

**(Deaf to his persistence,  
Still I keep my distance,  
Acting out the part,  
Seeming unconcerned.)**

**ANEZKA**

**What more would you tell me?**

**LADISLAV**

**Nothing more.**

**ANEZKA**

**All that can be told you've said before.**

**LADISLAV**

**I would only add a simple question:  
Did you find that note that I left you?  
Were you not softened by its pleading?**

**ANEZKA**

**Yes, I found it.**

**LADISLAV**

**Dare I to hope?**

**ANEZKA**

**Set your mind at rest.  
I burnt it without reading.**

**LADISLAV**

**Can you care so little?**

**ANEZKA**

**Sir, I've not the heart to read a letter  
Bound to hurt.**

**LADISLAV**

**Blow by blow you drive the nail deeper.**

ANEZKA                    Contents I could easily surmise.

LADISLAV                You judge! But without evidence  
                                  And now may never know.

ANEZKA                    I was hasty and apologize.

LADISLAV                Burnt but not destroyed, not the spirit!  
                                  Though gone up in smoke, nonetheless,  
                                  If you cannot read it, you can hear it.

ANEZKA                    Every word you know by heart?

LADISLAV                            Shall I prove it?

ANEZKA                    You remember?

LADISLAV                Would you deign to listen?

ANEZKA                Lost by fire, I'm sure your own presentation  
                                  Will provide an ample compensation.

LADISLAV                            Little wonder I can quote it.  
                                  I engraved it on my heart as I wrote it.

                                  Words to touch and move you,  
                                  Stir your inmost soul,  
                                  Tell how much I love you:  
                                  I've no other goal.

*His words are echoed by ANEZKA.*

LADISLAV (*speaking*)

Madame: The time has come to put an end to my long and painful uncertainty. Excuse the unaccustomed frankness, but my situation has grown intolerable and must be resolved, come what may.

ANEZKA                You quote word for word with nothing added?

LADISLAV                Truly...only what is down on paper.

ANEZKA                (Oh, the lies men expect us to swallow!)

**LADISLAV**                    **May I pick up where I faltered?**

**ANEZKA**                        **Go on...I shall follow.**

**LADISLAV** (*again speaking*)

**Madame:** I have loved you for a long time, in fact since the day I first saw you, But already the die was cast: you were married, you were beyond my reach. I buried in my heart a passion that was without hope, but there remained to me at least the consolation of dreaming. I could still say to myself, who knows? Perhaps she would have loved me if she were free.

You have been so now for two years, and I can no longer deceive myself with this mirage. On the contrary: you run away from me as from an enemy. You disappear, leaving no trace, no word of farewell, not the slightest glimmer of hope to my wretched heart. You flee into the country, conceal yourself in a house where I am unknown and have no access -- one which I can enter only by chance or by guile. I gain entrance at the risk of looking a fool, for the sole purpose of seeing you.

But now I ask you: is this the reward that a love so tender, so tested, so persevering, deserves? Could you have treated me worse had I hated you? Have pity on me. I am infinitely unhappy because I love you infinitely.

**ANEZKA**                        **You add phrases here and there impromptu.**

**LADISLAV**                        **Pardon, ma'am, if I could not resist it,  
For I lack your steady calm and cool.**

**ANEZKA**                        **Words of reproach that make me feel a fool.  
They deserve sincerity.  
But if you can, sir,  
Go contented with a friend's affection.**

**LADISLAV**                        **Not enough! Though more than I may merit,  
Hunger and starvation for a lover.**

**ANEZKA**                        **Though deficient, try to learn to bear it.  
Ask me not for what I cannot offer.**

**LADISLAV**                        **Tell me why.**

**ANEZKA**                        **The past contains my secret.**

**LADISLAV**                        **Buried?**

**ANEZKA**                        **Buried.**

**LADISLAV** Does respect for the departed  
Claim that you as well must die?

**ANEZKA** In the grave my sacred conscience dwells.  
There my obligations lie.

**LADISLAV** False! You're in love with someone else!

**ANEZKA** No!

**LADISLAV** Why, then, do you chastise and hurt me so?

**ANEZKA** That's a secret you shall never know.

**LADISLAV** You'll remain, then, forever heartless?

**ANEZKA** Yes!

**LADISLAV** Will you never change your mind?

**ANEZKA** Never! Never!

**LADISLAV** Finished! The end of it!

**ANEZKA** So it's goodbye?

**LADISLAV** Forever!

**ANEZKA** (Bitter gall!)

**BOTH** Ever! Forevermore!

*He starts to leave, but is stopped by KAROLINA, who appears suddenly in brightly colored attire.*

**KAROLINA** Halt, bold prisoner! This way is barred.  
So rash and reckless, you attempt to flee.  
We must place you under stricter guard.  
My cousin's far too prone to clemency.

**ANEZKA** Ha! So getting dressed took you hours and hours.

**KAROLINA** And praise I expect in heaping showers.  
You like my metamorphosis?

**ANEZKA**

**I preferred by black --  
No doubt my own prejudice.  
Are the jewels necessary?**

**KAROLINA**

**In a word, the answer's very!  
For I mean to shine and glitter  
At the harvest festival.**

**ANEZKA**

**Surely, dear, you don't consider  
Going to a ball?**

**KAROLINA  
(to LADISLAV)**

**Sir, we've punished you severely  
And your lesson has been bitter.**

**LADISLAV**

**True, I've bought my knowledge dearly.**

**KAROLINA**

**Though you've suffered, served your time,  
Now the hour is advancing.  
We'll forget your life of crime  
And tonight you'll take me dancing!**

**ANEZKA**

**He asked you? How dared he?**

**KAROLINA**

**I'm for dancing, not for brooding,  
Nor cringing like a scaredy.  
You suit yourself, but bear in mind  
That we are not in Verdi.**

**Take your choice; be sad and melancholic.  
We are off for fun and frolic.**

**Wedded to your solitude,  
You can stay at home and brood  
If thus you thrive,  
Sad and somber, heavy hearted,  
Buried young and still alive.**

**ANEZKA**

**Laugh and go your merry way.  
Leave me, for I choose to stay  
Somber and sad.  
Buried young and still alive.**

**LADISLAV**

**Widow sad and full of woe,  
Sigh not here buried so.  
Life is calling, love is begging.**

Hear them, hear them calling.  
Hear and let your heart revive.

*KAROLINA takes LADISLAV's arm, and merrily departs with him.*

**ANEZKA (alone)** Together, seeking pleasure, arm in arm,  
They go off and I'm alone,  
Abandoned to my tears and futile grieving.  
Wretched widow, miserable woman!

But did I not myself impose this penance,  
Drive him from me, force his leaving?  
Unreserved, he gave his heart.  
Now forevermore we part.

Thus I pay my debt to duty.  
Choice or option there is none,  
So I do what must be done.



Thou, at peace, with- in the grave-yard sleep-ing,

Costly is that promise I am keeping.  
Sworn forever, ever I deny  
Love where alone my happiness could lie.

Ah, but they are gone!  
With all my soul,  
Jealously I crave their sweet delights!

Envy! And despair!  
A bitter toll  
Of empty days and sleepless nights.



Cru- el! Cru- el! Love would have me suf-fer, for the cup con-tains but tears I've wept.

Harsh! Oh, Goddess!  
For you grant another  
That fulfilling bliss I could have kept.  
You grant another

That fulfilling bliss that I'm denied.  
Cruel! Cruel!



Sunlight sweet and sky unclouded,  
Blossoms where the seedling sprouted.  
What a joy this life would be,  
But for love and jealousy!

Day of bright festivity!  
All is mirth and revelry.  
Gift that knows not rank nor merit;  
None so poor that they may share it.  
Multi-colored scene!  
World of blue and green,  
Fields of golden grain,  
Gardens after rain.  
North to south and west to east,  
A bountiful, abundant feast.  
Rare and radiant lovely day!

I, alone outside, am not to enter.  
Looking on, I am my own tormentor.  
Though the feast awaits with table spread,  
I refuse it, for my soul is dead.  
Sick at heart in my lonely passion.  
Wretched widow, miserable woman!  
Where, oh where?  
What comfort have I left,  
Lost in this world of love bereft?

I, alone outside, am not to enter.  
Looking on, I am my own tormentor,  
Though the feast awaits,  
The feast awaits.

**GRUMPLER** (*entering*)      Fine thing! Goes to show!

**ANEZKA**                              What is the matter?

**GRUMPLER**                      Fine and dandy! So unlike *you* --  
Such a perfect lady, strict as a nun.  
No, she goes out to revel!

Dancing, laughing and carousing.  
It's enough to shame the devil.  
Mark my words, before a month is gone  
She'll wed that man.  
Shocking! Shameless! Scandalous!

ANEZKA Most unlikely. They're barely acquainted.

GRUMPLER Not so! They have reached the kissing stage.

ANEZKA Indeed? You have seen this with your own eyes?

GRUMPLER That was the step they were dancing.

ANEZKA Indiscreet, most unwise.

GRUMPLER And she a widow!

ANEZKA A widow? Does that matter?

GRUMPLER Does it matter!  
Are you so emancipated?  
Is fidelity outdated?

ANEZKA But to the grave?  
Does mourning last forever?

GRUMPLER Right! I couldn't say it better.  
Some may call me old-fashioned, true enough,  
But I tell you, were she my wife,  
I would roar and raise the roof.

ANEZKA From the grave?

GRUMPLER Well....maybe grumble.  
Grumpler is my name and most well-suited.  
As killjoy,  
I'm champion undisputed.

I beat 'em all at grouching,  
Ever groaning, griping.  
From Singapore to Siam  
No one's grumpier than I am.  
Meet the all-time top-notch grouch.

None grumble louder summer season, winter season,

**And for a very plain and simple reason:  
No one has to put up with so much.**

**Daily I find an added grievance.  
When calling odds it comes out evens.  
Worse than a beggar, sore and decrepit,  
My dinner's burnt, my coffee tepid.  
Dogs breaking from the chain,  
Hunt ruined by the rain,  
Rats gnawing at the grain.**

**Oh, then I start to huff.  
Oh, then I start to puff.  
Oh, I raise the roof when I complain,  
For I have cause enough.**

**I beat 'em all at grouching,  
Ever groaning, griping.  
From Singapore to Siam  
No one's grumpier than I am.  
Oh, that's where I most outshine.**

**None grumble louder summer season, winter season,  
And for a very plain and simple reason:  
No one's luck can be worse than mine.**

**I get a pain just contemplating  
All that I find exasperating.  
Nature is down on me uniquely,  
Disaster daily, hourly, weekly:  
Crops blighted by the cold,  
Sheep straying from the fold,  
Thieves brash and overbold.**

**Oh, then I start to huff.  
Oh, then I start to puff.  
A storm in winter to behold,  
For I have cause enough.**

**ANEZKA**

**You're a dear and charming friend to me  
With your stern, antique philosophy.**

**GRUMPLER**

**Lady, no one understands me better.  
What a saint! A model of a widow!  
Day in, day out, always seen in black --  
Nevermind the color doesn't flatter.**

Prim and proper, quiet as a shadow....

ANEZKA

To hell, sir, with your idiotic drive!  
You can throw that rubbish to the devil!

*(She rushes out.)*

GRUMPLER

Should have known it!  
Never trust a woman.  
And she's the one I thought was superhuman!

*GRUMPLER withdraws into the shadows. LIDKA runs in, pursued by TONIK.*

TONIK

Hussy, tell me this:  
Do not you want to kiss?  
It's quite the custom when we dance the zakolanska.

LIDKA

Mister, right you are!  
I'd rather dance by far,  
Despite the custom when we dance the zakolanska.

GRUMPLER

This to all appearance  
Calls for interference.

LIDKA

Wisely taught,  
I blush to kiss until you wed me.

TONIK

Simple the solution:  
Close your eyes and let me.

LIDKA

No, no....I am bashful.

GRUMPLER

Shocking situation!  
Oh, this generation!

TONIK

Try it.

LIDKA

Must I?

TONIK

Shut them. Keep them closed.

LIDKA

Now what?

TONIK

On your mark, get ready: One! Two! Three!

*GRUMPLER sticks his head between them and gets kissed on both cheeks.*

**LIDKA & TONIK**

**Brr!**

**GRUMPLER**

**Ho, ho! Hee, hee!**

**LIDKA &  
TONIK**

**Sharper than lemon,  
A bitter persimmon,  
A pickle that puckers the tongue.**

**Now in November,  
Old lecher, remember  
When you, too, were young.**

**GRUMPLER**

**When I can ruin  
What people are doin'  
I take a particular glee.**

**Making life hellish  
For others give relish  
To virtuous people like me.**

**LIDKA &  
TONIK**

**Break up a kiss for us delightful!  
Spoilsport! Spoilsport!  
Pity so petty, so spiteful.**

**GRUMPLER**

**Flouting morality, are you?  
Try again. Try again.  
Once more I shall bar you.**

**TONIK**

**Jealous, he's rewarded  
When he sees young lovers thwarted.**

**LIDKA**

**Next time we'll be ready  
For this prig so petty.**

**TONIK**

**Serves you right, my pet,  
For playing hard to get.  
Too long we've tarried,  
Life is short, too much we're missing.**

**LIDKA**

**Don't you know it hurts  
To hear of just desserts?  
When we are married  
There'll be time enough for kissing.**

**GRUMPLER**

**I'm in form tonight**

And feel in finest fettle.

LIDKA

See the look of spite.  
He means again to meddle.

TONIK

Love, I think you're right;  
This time the score we'll settle.

LIDKA

No, no...I am bashful. Must I?

TONIK

Come on. Shut them. Keep them closed.

GRUMPLER

Once again I'll show 'em.  
They are asking for it.

LIDKA

What now? All set!

TONIK

On your mark, get ready: One! Two! Three!

*GRUMPLER does the same thing, this time gets boxed on the ears.*

GRUMPLER

Brr!

LIDKA & TONIK

Ho, ho! Hee, hee!

GRUMPLER

Sharper than lemon,  
A bitter persimmon,  
A pickle that puckers the tongue.

Those who take relish  
In making life hellish  
For people like me should be hung.

LIDKA & TONIK

Out to make trouble,  
Your efforts redouble  
When others are having some fun.  
Nasty old lecher,  
The devil come getcha,  
But leave us alone.

Break up a kiss for us delightful!  
Spoilsport! Spoilsport!  
Pity so petty, so spiteful.

GRUMPLER

Flouting morality, were you?  
Try again, try again.

Next time I shall deter you.

**TONIK** High time we're rewarded  
When this spoilsport and prude is thwarted.

**GRUMPLER** Pesky young people like you should be hung.

**LIDKA & TONIK** How delightful to be young!

*LIDKA & TONIK run off, leaving GRUMPLER to nurse his wounds. KAROLINA & LADISLAV return.*

**KAROLINA** Grumpler, go and growl like a bear.  
Have them hurry with the bill-of-fare.

**GRUMPLER** (Every penny that I've got I'll wager  
She will prove another blot on human nature.)  
(Exit)

**KAROLINA** (First to put the man at ease,  
Then to bring him to his knees.)  
After a round of polkas one has to ward off famine.  
Stay a bit, and servants will bring cold beef and ham in.  
Tell me, are you from the city?

**LADISLAV** Prague, alas! Miles away.

**KAROLINA** So you like our countryside?

**LADISLAV** All too much.

**KAROLINA** Though not enough to stay a little longer.

**LADISLAV** I have urgent reasons.

**KAROLINA** You own a farm?

**LADISLAV** Near Sumavy.

**KAROLINA** Pleasant landscape?

**LADISLAV** Ah! Paradise!

**KAROLINA** Hunting good?

**LADISLAV** The best!

**KAROLINA** Pity, though, on you so wasted.

**LADISLAV** Yes, for me a total loss.

**KAROLINA** How long I have wished to go myself  
To see that rich terrain.

**LADISLAV** Alas! I am still a bachelor  
And seldom entertain.

**KAROLINA** Whose fault is that?

**LADISLAV** Ha! You're asking?

**KAROLINA** Did you enjoy our village ball?

**LADISLAV** Such a pleasure I shall savor  
And when alone, recall.

**KAROLINA** Country ways do not offend you?  
Manners here are looser, freer....  
(This man is a puzzle;  
You would think he wore a muzzle.)

**LADISLAV** (If I could but see her, even for a moment!)

**KAROLINA** This is your first visit, no?

**LADISLAV** First and only, I confess.

**KAROLINA** And you soon are leaving, yes?

**LADISLAV** Too late, for I leave tonight.

**KAROLINA** Sir, I'm altogether baffled!  
Many miles you've traveled,  
Leaving an estate so delightful.  
Here you arrive, danger encroaching,  
Risking all to indulge an appetite for poaching.

**LADISLAV** What to tell you?

**KAROLINA** The truth.

**LADISLAV** That indeed I surely owe you.

Hesitant to say it....

KAROLINA

Why be shy and timid?  
Do not fear rebuke or censure;  
Lower not those modest eyes.  
Not as judge, but as a woman,  
I shall listen, maybe sympathize...

LADISLAV

Well, then, freely I'll confess.

KAROLINA

You can tell me, do not fear.

LADISLAV

Love, sublime though full of pain,  
Powerful, perhaps insane,  
Draws my footstep here,  
Binds me prisoner,  
And decrees that I remain,  
Held by a magnet pull that dulcetly compels:  
Here my beloved dwells.

KAROLINA

Sir, your feelings overwhelm me.  
I'm more than charmed by what you tell me.  
Though my lips must answer with discretion,  
Surely my eyes have made a full confession.

LADISLAV

(Oh, the devil! Now I've done it!  
How did I give that impression?)

KAROLINA

(Poor fellow!)  
Pardon, sir, your look of terror  
Might suggest there's been a tiny error.  
Stand I in need of correction?

LADISLAV

Madame, I beg you to excuse me.

KAROLINA

There's no excuse for gross deception!

LADISLAV

I mislead you? Oh, my lady!  
My humiliation is complete.  
I implore your forgiveness  
And fall down at your feet.

*As he does so, ANEZKA returns in brightly colored attire, in time to witness the scene that she has dreaded most to see. GRUMPLER enters from the opposite side. All four give a gasp.*

**ENSEMBLE**

- ANEZKA**                    Can my very eyes deceive me?  
                                  He already doesn't care.  
                                  Punishment can go no further;  
                                  More than this I cannot bear.
- LADISLAV**                Can my very eyes deceive me?  
                                  Cruel blow beyond compare.  
                                  Much against my will I hurt her,  
                                  Trapped within this fatal snare.
- KAROLINA**                Can my very eyes deceive me?  
                                  Jewels she deigns to wear.  
                                  Something happened to convert her --  
                                  This with mourning doesn't square.
- GRUMPLER**                Can my very eyes deceive me?  
                                  What a scandalous affair!  
                                  Blasphemy can go no further.  
                                  Kneeling at her feet, I swear.
- ANEZKA**                    Vowing truth, this fabricator  
                                  Swore his love in rhapsodies.  
                                  Traitor, full of high-flown language,  
                                  You deserve no nod from me;  
                                  You deserve no sympathy.
- KAROLINA**                Could a change of style be greater?  
                                  Now at last she aims to please.  
                                  He's no traitor, no unfeeling traitor.  
                                  Truly it's my frank wish  
                                  That in time she will agree.
- LASDISLAV**                Do believe me, I'm no traitor.  
                                  Though you saw me on my knees,  
                                  I am filled with anguish,  
                                  Feeling your disdain for me.  
                                  In despair I'm filled with anguish  
                                  At the scorn I clearly see.
- GRUMPLER**                Who would not turn woman-hater,  
                                  Seeing two the likes of these?  
                                  Widows, I don't give a hang which,  
                                  Should be under lock and key.



Someone else would have what you discard.  
Suddenly we see you turning green.  
Lo, a shift! A striking transformation!  
And a sudden taste for decoration.

Gaily clad, you hop upon the saddle  
Like a trooper charging into battle.

ANEZKA                    Pardon, cousin, I'm ashamed, forgive me.  
Sheer despair and weakness overcame me.  
                                Can I deny my guilt?  
                                But I have suffered.  
Knowing how much might change your view of me.  
Warlike, I gave fight to my own feelings,  
But I am weak, and have no weapons.

KAROLINA                But why make war? And why so secret?  
                                If so in love, why drive him away?

ANEZKA                    Because I fell in love too soon.

KAROLINA                Too soon?

ANEZKA                    When I had no right to love.

KAROLINA                As your husband still was much alive?

ANEZKA                    Even worse, he knew; perhaps it killed him.  
Full of self-reproach and vain repentance,  
I concealed my love to soothe my conscience,  
Ready to give up every future promise  
In atonement for a past so blemished.

                                It was too much! I saw in despair  
He was leaving and 'twas I that sent him.  
Then the worst! To someone else he offered  
All that I had lightly tossed away.  
Then my strength gave out; I gave up fighting.

Weak, but unresigned to fade and wither,  
For the nourishment of love I hungered.  
Desperate for life, I spread my arms.....  
But no matter. Too late, too late....  
Make him happy. Love and cherish him.

**KAROLINA**

**Thank heaven! Thank heaven!  
Finally my trap is sprung!  
He is yours and I'm exhausted!**

**ANEZKA**

**You! Play-acting for my benefit?**

**KAROLINA**

**Yes, dear.**

*(calling to LADISLAV just outside)*

**As the end approaches near, oh  
Sir! Step up and play the hero.  
To the rescue, come, be gallant.  
Come in, cousin soon to be.**

*(LADISLAV returns)*

**Do admit that I have talent  
And can act a comedy.**

**LADISLAV**

**May I hope now?**

**ANEZKA**

**Here's your letter.**

**KAROLINA**

**Things are looking rather better.**

**LADISLAV** *(to KAROLINA)*

**Hunt the wide world over  
Till the sands of time have run.  
You'll find no woman so adorable --  
You're the one!**

**ANEZKA**

**And for me? What praises can you offer?**

**LADISLAV**

**None that do you justice.  
My only love, my darling,  
You are my heart and my soul.**

**GRUMPLER** *(entering)*

**Everybody's hungry, I presume.  
Supper's waiting in the dining room.**

**KAROLINA**

**Come along then. We are starving.  
You seat the bride, then try your hand at carving.**

**GRUMPLER**

**Seat the bride? My blood congeals!  
Fickle like all women.**

**COSI FAN -- Where was I?  
Women! Women!**

**CHORUS**

**If you want a moral, it is up to you.  
We believe a summing up instead will do.  
Now that we are heading  
For a happy wedding,  
Broken hearts are mended  
As the Lord intended.  
If distorted by translation, what the heck?  
You are free to check it out in Czech.**

**Gone is the season of sorrow;  
Here's to the dawn of tomorrow!**

**KAROLINA**

**Thank you all! I quite agree.  
God is good to you and me.  
Joy at last crowns romance.  
Join in. Let's dance!**

**POLKA**

**CHORUS**

**Headed for a table loaded down with food,  
We would thank the Lord in humble gratitude.  
Waking and in sleeping,  
Ever in safekeeping,  
No one here is scanted,  
None goes empty handed.  
Here we come together on a holiday.  
What could be a better way to end our play?**

**THE END**