

CARL MARIA VON WEBER

DER FREISCHUETZ

(The Free Shot)

English Version by Donald Pippin

INTRODUCTION

Aware that listeners have sometimes found the story of DER FREISCHUETZ puzzling, that others have hastily brushed it aside as operatic nonsense, we wanted to underline the fact that its subject matter is by no means remote from the life that swirls around us. And so we toyed with the notion of updating it and changing the locale---from the heart of the deep, dark forest to the heart of the deep, dark city. Maybe Chicago, in a time not too long ago. Our hero we would change from a huntsman to perhaps a salesman, a profession that I believe shares some of the same vocabulary -- making a hit, scoring, etc. -- and where the difference between success and failure is equally stark and clear cut.

This particular young man is driven to succeed, not only for the sake of his career, but also in order to win the boss' daughter. But the more the pressure is on him to prove himself, the more he distrusts his own ability. The closer he gets to the crucial test, the more he feels inwardly doomed to failure. The vicious circle is in full swing; his fear brings about the very loss of ability that he fears so.

A prime target for a thriving drug cartel that deals in any number of magic bullets guaranteed to give an immediate lift, he is approached by one of its members, himself already a victim, who can survive or extricate himself only by enlisting a new recruit. They get together at The Wolf's Glen, a shadowy, sinister, smoky night club, an underworld hangout where hallucinations run rampant, owned and operated by a godfather figure named Samiel.

The offer is enticing, diabolic, irresistible: six free shots, six sure wins, power at your fingertips, instant success. But the seventh shot we don't talk about. That one is aimed at you. The young man succumbs, has a fantastic run of successes, but is finally jolted back to his senses when the seventh shot strikes the person dearest to his heart.

The notion was tempting, but we have resisted it. Does an audience need to have the meaning spelled out? We hope not. Interpret the metaphor as you will, but our setting remains the Bohemian Forest, on the eve of the trial shot. This is a ceremonial event, a test required of one who aspires to the position of Master Ranger. Max, our hero, is doubly motivated; with the promotion comes the hand of the girl that he loves. But recently he seems to have lost his grip. As the

challenge gets closer, he feels increasingly helpless, more and more convinced that he will lose. The opera begins with a superb shot, a bulls eye -- fired by someone else.

In an open space before an inn, with a forest in the background, a target has been set up. Max is seated at a table with a mug of beer, looking despondent. Kilian, his rival, fires and the last star falls from the target. The crowd roars: "Bulls-eye! Well done! Good going! Bravo!" Max, obviously upset, manages a bitter "Congratulations."

CROWD: A triumph! A cheer for the hero!
 The man of the day, the front-runner!
 The farmer has mastered the art of the gunner.
 A straight to the target, the shot was a stunner.
 When put to the test
 He comes off the best.
 A cheer for the hero!

MAX: Let them roar! Those idiots! What's the matter with me? Have I gone blind? What's happened to my steady arm?

NARRATOR: A procession is formed, in tribute to Killian, the hero of the day, who snubs Max with undisguised disdain.

KILIAN: Doff your hat to me, the winner;
 You came off a rank beginner.
 Bow your head and bend the knee;
 Thank you kindly, he, he, he!

 On my chest the badge of merit –
 Say, perhaps you'd like to wear it.
 All the laurels went to me.
 How did you score? He he he!

 Tell me while we're on the topic.
 Are you cross-eyed or myopic?
 Better days, friend, I foresee.
 In the meantime, he he he!

NARRATOR: Cuno, the father of Max's fiancée, who presently holds the position that Max hopes to attain, is eager for Max to be his successor, and regards him already as a son-in-law. But he too is appalled and mystified by the recent run of failure, and warns him again that everything depends upon his performance the

**Love and honor,
All I have I fear to lose!**

CUNO: **Let the will of heaven guide you;
Be prepared to win or lose.**

CASPAR: **Secret sources can provide you,
'Tis within yourself to choose.
Yours to win or yours to lose.**

CUNO: **My son! My son, be brave, trust God;
In Him confide.**

(to hunters) **Come on! The hunt is in season.
Tomorrow at seven we ride!**

CHORUS: **The beast that hides under cover,
The bird that soars up and over,
We claim when our courses collide,
Our courses collide.**

**The horn to the hunter is sounding.
Before the days pleasures subside,
May echoes from mountain rebounding
Cry hail to the bridegroom and bride.
May echoes from mountain rebounding
Cry welcome to bridegroom and bride.
Cry hail and hurrah for the bridegroom and bride.**

(As others go in to join the dance, Max is left alone.)

MAX: **No! I can bear this pain no longer!
My dream of love and laurels gone.
Of what transgression am I guilty?
What fiendish phantom draws me on?**

**Through the forest, through the meadow,
Free of care, I walked my way.
Undeceived by light or shadow,
Never went my (rifle) shot astray.**

**Homeward bound as night descended,
I would haul my treasure trove,
Every trial or trouble mended
By my darling's smile of love.**

By heaven's grace am I forsaken,
A straw that fate has cast aside.
By fear of failure tossed and shaken,
I founder on a darkening tide.

At her window now she's waiting,
Full of hope and sweet concern,
All the while anticipating
Joyful news at my return.
Ah! Good news at my return.

She foretells my footstep falling
When the winds of autumn cry.
She comes running, gently calling,
Though the leaves, the rustling leaves alone reply,
Though the leaves alone reply.

Deaf to appeal, what fiend is my tormentor?
What hostile demon just ahead
Compels me onward out of spite, sheer spite,
To lose my way in caves of night?

Can no soft ray of solace enter?
No ray of solace, no comfort enter?
Blind fate has conquered, God is dead!
What hostile demon, born of spite,
Compels me onward, lost in night?

NARRATOR: Seeing that Max is in no mood for the customary festivities that precede the trial shot, Caspar, ever genial, tries to cheer him up with a little drink:

CASPAR:

Born into this vale of tears,
Prone to sorrow, prone to fears,
Age and ills attack us.
Care is no concern of mine
When I fill the glass with wine.
Hail to friendly Bacchus!

Wine counts one; to this we add
Three more ways to please a lad
Sturdy, stout and lusty:
Dice that roll upon command,
Cards with all the aces, and
Betsy, big and busty.

Since the fall of man, I'm told,
Red is red and white is cold.
"Cheers!" said Eve to Adam.
Drink and cards and fair ladies:
These I count my ABC's.
Lucky he that's had'em.

NARRATOR: Having broken the ice, Caspar now reveals something more of what he has in mind -- merely hoping, of course, to help out. But first, a demonstration. He points to an eagle, flying in the distance, far out of range. He gives Max a gun and orders him to shoot. The eagle falls. An incredible shot, an impossible shot--yet it succeeded, thanks to a miraculous bullet, guaranteed to shoot straight, to hit the mark every time. More such bullets are available, if Max chooses to assert himself, to take control of his own destiny, to leave the hopeless, mediocre rut that he is stuck in. Now is the time. The stars are auspicious, a one and only chance. He need but come at midnight to The Wolf's Glen, where Caspar will be waiting with the sure-fire remedy.

Max is not taken in by Caspar's benevolence, but the temptation is strong. Though he leaves in great perturbation, by the end of Act One Caspar has no doubt of the outcome:

CASPAR: Off! Off! Already he is mine.
Silence! The fool is not to know.
The stars for him will cease to shine;
The fangs of hell will not let go.
Agents of darkness will enslave him;
No plea or call for help can save him.
None! No prayer can save him,
Nor can he flee.
None, none can set him free.

Surround him, you spirits that rise out of hell;
Goad him until he grows defiant.
Surround him, confound him, coerce and compel;
Show who's the dwarf and who is the giant.

Revenge! Revenge! I rise to freedom again.
Too late for struggle or flight,
He enters the chambers of night,
Where tears are futile and pleas are in vain.
Long though he languish and wail,
The powers of dark shall prevail.

Surround him, you spirits that rise out of hell!
The dwarf must fall before the giant.
I rise to freedom again!
His chains he'll rattle in vain.

ACT TWO

NARRATOR: Act Two opens inside the Master Ranger's house where Agatha, his daughter, whom Max is in love with and whom he hopes to marry, is presently bandaging her forehead after a strange and startling accident. An ancestral portrait, after at least a century of good behavior, mysteriously and rather indecorously fell from the wall and hit her on the head. Aaennchen, her lively cousin, is standing on a ladder, hammering back the offending nail and, as usual, making light of the incident. Instead of dignified, irascible old men painted in oil and framed in oak that for no reason at all leave their venerable perch and decide to have a tumble, she would choose a young man, live and in the flesh -- and preferably good-looking:

AENNCHEN: (*addressing the nail*) Rogue! Behave!
Such melodrama!
No theatrics from a fixture
Haunted houses are passé.

AGATHA: Mock not our ancestral picture.

AENNCHEN: A furrowed brow so old
I could hardly scold.
I rebuke with wrath so fervent
Not the sire but the servant.

AGATHA: Where's a servant? Why the frown?

AENNCHEN: Careless nail! You're
But a failure,
For you've let the master down.
Let him down! I say go hang!

AGATHA: Naughty nail! So incorrect!
A sign, a sign do I detect?

AENNCHEN: This I call a grave defect,
A sign, a sign of disrespect.

AGATHA: Tears you would turn to laughter,
Sunless days to mirth and comedy.

Such a tone is not for me.
No, my song's in a different key.

AENNCHEEN:

Time to mope and fret hereafter.
Cheerful and light of heart,
Merry from morn till night,
Dancing is my delight.

Envy and sorrow
Leave for tomorrow.
Dancing is my delight.
Time to mope and fret hereafter;
Lots of time hereafter.

AGATHA:

Loudly my heart begins to hammer.
Sweet the pain of love I bear.
Ill at ease, I sigh and stammer;
Fears unknown cry out, beware!
My fears cry out, beware!

AENNCHEEN:

Comes a lad of sheer perfection –
Sleek and slim, with curly hair,
Eyes of blue and fair complexion –
Answer to a maiden's prayer.
Learn to take the lad in tow
With some rules that every girl should know.

First of all, to show good breeding,
Drop the eyes as though unplanned.
Only after urgent pleading
You extend a dainty hand.

Then proceed to bashful glances –
Oh, be careful not to rush!
Take the time to spur advances
With a shy and simple blush.

Count the game as nearly over
When you melt him with a smile.
He sighs, Darling! You, sweet lover!
Soon you're marching down the aisle.

Would-be lovers of all ages,
Seek no further for a guide.
Merely learn the seven stages
On the way to be a bride.

NARRATOR: Although the night grows late, Agatha cannot retire before Max returns. Deeply in love herself, she shares his anxiety about the pending challenge, the single shot that will determine their future happiness. Torn between hope and foreboding, she waits at her window, gazing out into the night, where a radiant moon seems to belie the threat of storm that gathers on the horizon:

AGATHA:

How could I close my eyes
Before my love's returned?
Love, ever full of sighs,
Has ever been hard-earned.
Pale moon, you smile on mortal plight?
Oh, radiant night!

Gentle air, float my prayer
To the spheres in heaven turning.
May my melody rise toward eternity
Where the fire of love is burning.

Overhead, the stars are sparkling
In a sky serene and warm.
But on the horizon darkening,
I perceive a hint of storm.
Over woodlands deep and still
Hover clouds that threaten ill.

Heart adoring, hands imploring,
Hear me, Lord of all created!
Light provide us. Angels, guide us
Toward our joy awaited.

Nature sleeps at close of day.
Dearest friend, so long away!
Though I bend and strain my ear,
Rustling pines are all I hear.

Slender birches near the glade
Break the silence of the thicket;
None but nightingale and cricket
Grace the night with serenade.

But hush! Coming from the grove . . .
Footsteps draw near . . .
There, where the boughs are bending . . .

The shadows move . . . He's here! He's here!

**The flag of love let fly!
Throughout the night your sweetheart waits.
I still haven't caught his eye.
Ah! Subtle tricks the moon creates . . .**

**He wears a flower, does he not?
A sign that he has fired a winning shot!
For sure, an omen of reward!
New glow of courage! Hope again restored!**

**Toward him with arms extended,
To embrace him I would run!
Heart, sing out with hope reborn,
Herald of a glorious morn!**

**Hope and love together blended,
We can smile on trials ended.
Ah, my friend has found success!
Fate has turned and nodded yes.**

**He will carry off the honors
In the test we face tomorrow.
No delusion born of despair?**

**Heaven, merciful to sorrow,
Has received my humble prayer.
Kindly heaven's felt my sorrow
And received my humble prayer.**

NARRATOR: Max returns, but only for a moment. Desperation has won out. He has made up his mind; he will go to The Wolf's Glen. Nor can Agatha dissuade him, despite another eerie and disturbing revelation. It seems that the miraculous shot that felled the eagle, the shot that for Max was so persuasive, occurred at the precise moment that the portrait fell and wounded Agatha. An ominous coincidence, surely. But Max is beyond heeding words or omens. Everything is at stake:

AGATHA: **No! No! Sheer madness!
Not to the haunted glen!
Not to the haunted glen!**

AENNCHEEN: The wild huntsman there rides nightly,
 A grisly sight for wayward men.

MAX: No prey am I to tales of phantoms.

AGATHA: To challenge God is mortal sin.

MAX: No midnight terrors faze the hunter,
At home with starving wolves that howl,
Where tempest tears the oak asunder
And drowns the hooting of the owl.

AGATHA: See how the night grows clouded;
 Oh, leave me not in fear.
 Oh, stay here within
And brave not a night so dark and drear.
But for a while, love, stay with me . . .
 I'm so afraid.

MAX: No tales of terror faze the hunter.
 My duty calls; I must obey.
The moon not yet in mist is shrouded,
Though soon her borrowed light will fade,
Forsake the woods and hills surrounding.

AENNCHEEN: Is it the stars you would be counting?
 I choose to roam the woods by day.
 I'd rather roam the woods by day.

AGATHA: In deadly fear my heart is pounding.

MAX: Stern duty summons; I obey.
 That summons I obey.

AGATHA & MAX: Farewell, farewell! Dearest friend, farewell!

AENNCHEEN: Farewell, farewell! Trusty friend, farewell!

Max leaves hastily, but immediately returns with sad and tender words.

MAX: My hasty words pray pardon,
 And love me well despite.

AGATHA: I bear a heavy burden,
Despair and deadly fright.

AENNCHEN: Thus ever lives the hunter,
On call both day and night.

AGATHA: Though I cannot detain you,
Your safe return I await.

MAX: Soon will the moon grow paler;
I go, hurled on by fate.

AENNCHEN: *(to A.)* My dear, be calm and patient, be patient.
(to M.) Sir, lengthen not her wait.

Max leaves; Agatha and Aennchen return to their chamber.

NARRATOR: The scene is The Wolf's Glen, a wild, craggy place where the moon's ghostly light illuminates a desolate, confused landscape. There Caspar is waiting for his victim -- the dupe whose entrapment may gain for him a temporary reprieve. The hour is nearly midnight. By the time the act is over, Max, seeking to gain power, will be fully in the power of his tempter.

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE SPIRITS:

Milk of moon the woods have drunk;
Uhui! Uhui!
Blood has stained the warbler red.
Uhui! Uhui!
Ere tomorrow's sun has sunk,
Uhui! Uhui!
Shall the fair young bride be dead.
Uhui! Uhui!
Ere the moon rides forth again
Shall the huntsman writhe in pain.
Uhui! Uhui! Uhui!

In the distance a clock strikes twelve. Caspar speaks.

CASPAR: Samiel! Samiel! Appear!
By the skull of ancient seer.
Samiel! Samiel! Appear!

SAMIEL: **Why do you summon?**

CASPAR: **You know my time's run out,
My payment nearly due.**

SAMIEL: **Tomorrow!**

CASPAR: **Oh, grant me three more years of grace!**

SAMIEL: **No!**

CASPAR: **A substitute I'll get for you.**

SAMIEL: **To take your place?**

CASPAR: **A huntsman I'll obtain,
Eager to serve, though new to your domain.**

SAMIEL: **What does he want?**

CASPAR: **Your seven bullets to win the trial shot.**

SAMIEL: **Six fire; the seventh backfires.**

CASPAR: **The seventh, yours, of course.
The bride shall die,
Gunned down upon the spot.
Too late will come the long remorse,
When she has fallen.**

SAMIEL: **To her my power does not extend.**

CASPAR: **So will the fool suffice?**

SAMIEL: **I'll have to see.**

CASPAR: **To buy three years
I pay the standard price:
A soul for mine will set me free.**

SAMIEL: **The devil claims a rendezvous;
No matter, be it him, or you.**

As Samiel vanishes amid low thunder, Caspar, exhausted, gets up slowly and wipes his forehead. A small hearth with glowing coals rises out of the earth.

CASPAR: A fire! Good service!

He takes a draught from his hunting flask.

Skoal, Samiel!
I'm starting to warm up.
But what is keeping Max?
Would he dare break his word?
Samiel, to work!

As he performs an incantation, Max appears on the point of an opposite precipice and peers down below.

MAX: Ah! Sheer and steep, the abyss before me,
Black as pitch, a murky plunge
Into the churning depths of hell.
The air congeals, a storm is brewing,
And clouds have swallowed up the moon.
The woodlands fill with ghostly shadows,
The buried dead awaken. I hear . . .
Hush, hush! Again, the laughing cry of loon.
There, like a gnarled and ancient giant,
The oak shoves out an arm . . .
No! Blind and deaf to harm,
I must! On, fearless and defiant.

CASPAR: (Samiel, well done!
My reprieve's as good as won.)

(to Max) So you've come at last, my friend!
After keeping me waiting so long?
Surely a bit . . . inconsiderate.

MAX: I shot the eagle, I saw it fall . . .
No turning backward . . . Too strong the call.

He starts to climb down, but suddenly stops, gazing fixedly at the opposite rock where the spirit of his mother appears.

Dear God! I cannot proceed.

CASPAR: Come along, time is short.
Too steep? You've lost your nerve?
Times past, you'd scamper like a mountain goat.

MAX: See over there! A warning sight,
My mother's ghost in white,
Come forth from the grave,
Silent, cold and black,
Her son she seeks now to save.
Her eyes flash, go back!

CASPAR: (To work, Samiel!)
Nerves again! Ha ha ha!
But look once more and recognize
The consequence of cowardice.

The ghostly figure has vanished, to be replaced by the form of Agatha, who appears distracted, as if about to throw herself down the cascade.

MAX: My dearest! Drawn into the flood!
To her! To her! I must!
My dearest! Hold back, you will drown!
My dearest! To her! I must go down!
I must go down, I must!

CASPAR: Of course you must. Play the hero.

MAX: Here I am. What am I to do?

CASPAR: First, let's have a drink.
The night air is rather chilly.
Would you prefer to do the casting yourself?

MAX: No, that was not our agreement.

CASPAR: Very well, up to you. Then observe. Perhaps you can pick up a few pointers. We start with lead. Stir in broken glass from a shattered church window. Easily come by. Add a pinch of quicksilver. And now three bullets that have already hit the mark. Flavor with the right eye of a hoopoe, the left of a lynx. Proven stuff. And now the banquet's spread, we'll say grace:

Huntsman, prowler of the dark,
Samiel, Samiel! Attend and mark:
Throughout the night till rise of sun
Stand by until my spell is done.

Touch, transform this sundry mix,
Bless the bullets one through six.
On the seventh I rely:
Samiel, Samiel! Reply, reply.

The storm rises, sparks fly. Animal cries are heard, the neighing of horses, the barking of dogs. Various apparitions appear, as Caspar grows increasingly agitated.

**One! Two! Three! Four! Five!
Ah! The wild huntsman!**

AN INVISIBLE CHORUS:

**Through hill and bog,
Through blast and blight,
Through formless fog
And stormy night,
Through stagnant swamp
And desert sand,
Through fire, water, air and land,
Jo ho, wau wau!
Ho ho ho ho!**

**CASPAR: (*in convulsions*) Six! Samiel! Samiel! Help!
Seven! Samiel!**

(He falls senseless. Samiel appears.)

**SAMIEL: Here I am!
Here I am!**

(At that moment the storm begins to abate. In the place of the dead tree stands the Black Huntsman, firmly clasping Max's hand.)

ACT THREE

NARRATOR: It is morning of the next day. Agatha in her bridal dress, waiting for Max to return, kneels in prayer.

AGATHA: Though unbeheld and clouded over,

The sun remains and shall prevail.
So God in heaven governs ever
When days in dusk and twilight pale.
His eye is tender, calm and clear,
To gather all His children near,
To draw His children near.

To me as well His love's extended,
A kindly father, friend and guide,
And when my earthly journey's ended,
His arms will claim a trusting bride.
His eye is tender, calm and clear.
His children all to Him are dear,
His children all are dear.

NARRATOR: Despite the calm and certitude that she expresses, Agatha is in fact fearful and anxious. She has had a strange, portentous dream, that she was a white dove, that Max shot her, that she fell and then became herself again, to discover a great malevolent bird of prey bleeding to death on the ground beside her. Aaennchen, as usual, dismisses these supernatural portents and visions with a laugh:

AENNCHEN: Dear auntie, bless her, now in heaven!
She saw a ghost and nearly died.
So dark the night, the hour eleven,
Her chamber door flew open wide.

In strange attire, with eyes blazing fire,
Or at least on the red side,
It crept to her bedside.
Her hands turned to ice!
(For aunties are mostly
Aghast at the ghostly.)

So mournfully it moaned!
So gruesomely it groaned!
She crossed herself twice,
Collapsed, and then let out a yell:
Susanna! Hannabel!

So they came with a light,
And -- brace yourself --
And -- so ghastly the sight --
And -- what they found!
And -- the ghost was Nero,

That pesky hound!

**You're cross at me?
Though teased and taunted,
You know that I'm for you.;
But bridal tears are tears unwanted.**

**Droopy eyelids overflowing
Mar the features of a bride,
Mar the features of a loving bride.
Furtive teardrops barely showing
She must brush away or hide.**

**Her expression should refreshen,
Looking forward, animated,
Near that wholeness long-awaited,
Giving forth the spark that glows inside.**

**Let eternal mourners
Slink into their corners;
Joy ahead your signs foretell.
See the candles newly lighted
To regale true hearts united.
Gentle cousin, all is well.
Gentle cousin, fear not: all is well.**

The bridesmaids enter, bringing flowers for the bride.

**Bridesmaid 1: From forest, field and countryside
 We bear a gift of flowers,
 A garland woven for the bride
 To grace the lagging hours.**

**Chorus: Four leaf clover,
 Lavender and myrtle green,
 Hyacinth, hawthorn, heather . . .
 Weave them all together.**

**Bridesmaid 2: Forget-me-not with phlox and fern
 With eager hands I braided.
 But ah! Will not my love return
 Before the bloom has faded?**

Chorus: Four leaf clover,

Lavender and myrtle green,
Hyacinth, hawthorn, heather . . .
Weave them all together.

Bridesmaid 3: For seven years the maiden spun
More deftly than the spider.
Though hope grew cold, she told to none
The storm that raged inside her.

Chorus: Four leaf clover,
Lavender and myrtle green,
Hyacinth, hawthorn, heather . . .
Weave them all together.

Bridesmaid 4: Her cheek grew pale; she pined away
As seven years he tarried.
But came at last the joyful day --
At church the two were married.

Chorus: Four leaf clover,
Lavender and myrtle green,
Hyacinth, hawthorn, heather . . .
Weave them all together.

NARRATOR: Aaennchen presents the box containing the bridal bouquet to her cousin. Agatha, already apprehensive, on edge, opens the box and cries out in horror. It contains, not a bridal bouquet, but a funeral wreath.

The scene changes to the clearing in the woods where Prince Ottokar has ordered the trial shot to take place. Max, rifle in hand, nervously waits for the order to shoot. He is aware that he has but one magic bullet left. From the opposite side, watching from behind a tree, Caspar gloats. He is also aware that this last bullet is the fatal seventh. And he himself has chosen the target . . . an easy target. The white dove on the lowest branch . . .

A chorus of huntsmen is happily unaware that anything untoward is in the offing:

CHORUS: What pleasure compares to the hounds and the horses,
The lure of the quarry, the call of the horn?
Oh, happy the hunter who canters and courses
Past valley and vineyard, through thicket and thorn!

The pastime of princes, the sport of Apollo,
It hardens the muscles and stiffens the spine.
So off and away, over hill, over hollow,
Then homeward at nightfall to feasting and wine.

Diana, chaste goddess so dear to the hunter,
Rekindles the day and enhances the night.
And woe to the wolf and the boar when they plunder
The fruit from our orchards and leave only blight.

Hooray for the hunt! 'Tis the sport of Apollo,
It hardens the muscles and stiffens the spine.
So off and away, over hill, over hollow,
Then homeward at nightfall to feasting and wine.

NARRATOR: Acutely aware of his daughter's anxiety, and eager to relieve Max of the added strain were she present, Cuno requests that Prince Ottokar allow Max to take the trial shot before she arrives.

As he is about to pull the trigger, Agatha rushes in, crying out: "Max, don't shoot! I am the dove!" Too late. He fires. The dove flies away. Simultaneously, Agatha and Caspar both fall to the ground.

CHORUS: No! Say no! He shot and struck his bride.
The hunter fell from the tree,
We hardly dare investigate
A scene of horror too great.
We can only tremble, shudder!
Can we even trust our eyes?
Oh, I dread to know for certain
If the victim lives or dies.

AGATHA: (*awaking*) Where am I?
I fell, or do I dream?

AENNCHEN: Oh, take my arm!

MAX & CUNO: She lives!

CHORUS: Dear God, receive our thanks!
God be thanked!
Her eyes again are open.

CUNO: (*pointing to Caspar*) Here lies a hunter wounded,
His blood upon the ground.

CASPAR: The hermit came, by her he stood.
The stars have won,
And I am doomed for good.

AGATHA: (*rising*) I breathe again . . .
From fear alone I fainted.
I breathe the sweet and delicate air . . .
The balmy air . . .

CUNO: Her life restored!

MAX: A smile from heaven!

AGATHA: My love!

MAX: Your voice is my reward,

AGATHA: My love, I live again!

MAX: My darling, alive again!

TUTTI: God be thanked!

(*SAMIEL appears,*)

CASPAR: Ah, Samiel, how apt!
So this is how your bargain's kept?
Take what is due,
Damnation I defy.
A curse on God, and you! (*He dies*)

CHORUS: Ah! With contempt he meets his maker!

CUNO: A man of evil, friend to none,
The hand of heaven struck him down.

CHORUS: The source of life he spat upon,
A servant bonded to the devil.

PRINCE OTTOKAR: Off! Hurl his body into the Wolf's Gen.
(*to Max*) I order you to explain this evil,

Wherein that wretched life was lost.
Answer! Or with your own you'll bear the cost.

MAX: Lord, here I stand, a man dishonored,
Who well deserves your looks of wrath.
Weak and despondent, I was tempted
To leave the straight and honest path.
Charmed bullets I misused instead,
Cast by myself, and by the fiend now dead.

OTTOKAR: (*sternly*) Where I command, you'll find no haven;
From my domain be ever banned.
No, no!
(*indicating Agatha*) Hope not to gain this treasured hand.

MAX: Your harsh decree I dare not argue.
Too weak, I grant, yet not entirely bad.
Weak I was, wrong I was,
And yet not villainous.

CUNO: Till now, a loyal, honest lad.

AGATHA: Must he be torn from my embraces?

CUNO: Not only brave, but warm and kind,

CHORUS: As true a friend as you'd hope to find.

AENNCHEEN: Noble prince, forgive and pardon.

CHORUS: Noble prince, forgive and pardon.

OTTOKAR: No, no, no!
The girl is more than he deserves.
(*to Max*) In my domain you have no place;
You go to prison if you show your face.

The HERMIT enters, as all reverently make way and bow to him.

HERMIT: Who dares to lay so harsh a ban?
Is the forfeit justified?

OTTOKAR: Are you the holy man
Revered and valued far and wide?
I humbly greet a saint whom all commend,

And to your judgment I shall bend.
Pronounce the sentence as you see it.
Whether sharp or mild, so be it.

HERMIT: Even the purest heart can waver
And step beyond the bounds of right
When fear of loss invades the lover
And when despair blots out the light.

O Prince, upon one shot alone
Should every hope of joy be rested?
If man should err, so sorely tested,
Propelled by passion and chagrin,
Who shall be first to cast the stone?
Who is entirely free of sin?

May nevermore the trial shot take place!
(*gazing sternly at Max*) And as for him who fell from grace,
I urge you that the law require
Probation for one year entire.
And should he prove the man I trust he is,
Then let Agatha's hand be his.

OTTOKAR: Your words are wise and true;
I hear our savior speak through you.

CHORUS: Hail to our lord, for he does not oppose
The force that through the hermit flows.

OTTOKAR: A year from now, without a trial shot,
With my own hand I'll tie the knot.

MAX: No more shall I succumb to pressure;
My own unswerving path I'll seek.

AGATHA: May grateful tears convey my pleasure,
For feeble words are far too weak.

HERMIT: Our God above is all-forgiving;
The earthly prince should do the same.

CUMO: Redeem yourself through honest living,
And never more lie down in shame.

AENNCHEN: A year from now, with jubilation

We'll deck you out a festive bride.

HERMIT: **To Thee, our center and foundation!**
 To God that reigns in heaven
 Our arms we open wide.

CHORUS: **To love and joy may your vessel be charted,**
 And sail on a sea with a calm, gentle tide.

OTHERS: **We turn unto God with a trust single-hearted,**
 And never shall want for a father and guide.
 Toward love may our vessel be charted,
 And sail on a sea with a calm, gentle tide.
 We turn unto God with a trust single-hearted,
 And never shall want for a father and guide.

THE END

