
Aspects of Love
Music: Andrew Lloyd Webber
Lyrics: Don Black + Charles Hart
Book: Andrew Lloyd Webber
Premiere: Monday, April 17, 1989

ACT ONE
Scene One

(Music. A man discovered on stage, singing to a woman.
Only later are we to identify him as the 34-year-old
ALEX)

ALEX
Love,
Love changes everything:
Hands and faces,
Earth and sky.
Love,
Love changes everything:
How you live and
How you die.
Love
Can make the summer fly,
Or a night
Seem like a lifetime.

Yes, love,
Love changes everything:
Now I tremble
At your name.
Nothing in the
World will ever
Be the same.

Love,
Love changes everything:
Days are longer,
Words mean more.
Love,
Love changes everything:
Pain is deeper
Than before.

Love
Will turn your world around,
And that world
Will last forever.

Yes, love,
Love changes everything,
Brings you glory,
Brings you shame.
Nothing in the
World will ever
Be the same.

Why did I go back to see her...?

WOMAN (GIULIETTA)

Alex, it's all in the past...

ALEX

Off

Into the world we go,

Planning futures,

Shaping years.

Love

Bursts in, and suddenly

All our wisdom

Disappears.

Love

Makes fools of everyone:

All the rules

We make are broken.

Yes, love,

Love changes everyone.

Live or perish

In its flame.

Love will never,

Never let you

Be the same.

(The number does not finish formally, but cuts into Scene Two...)

ACT ONE

Scene Two

(A small provincial theatre in Montpellier, France, 1947. View from backstage. The closing lines of a poorly attended performance of Ibsen's *The Master Builder*, the last of the season.

Among the cast are MARCEL, the troupe's actor-manager, and ROSE, its 25-year-old leading lady, who plays HILDE WANGEL)

A VOICE (down in the garden)

The master builder is dead!

OTHER VOICES (nearer)

His head is all smashed in.... He fell right into the quarry.

HILDE (ROSE) (turns to RAGNAR and says quietly)

I can't see him up there now.

RAGNAR

This is terrible. So in fact he couldn't do it.

HILDE (ROSE) (with a kind of quiet, bewildered triumph)

But he got right to the top.

(waves the shawl upwards and shouts with wild intensity)

My...my...master builder!

(Curtain. Limp applause. Curtain call. Curtain falls again. ACTORS and STAGE-HANDS mill about. ROSE rounds furiously on MARCEL)

ROSE

The toast of the town?

The hit of the year?

The birth of a star?

The end of a career!

MARCEL

Darling, these things happen...

ROSE

You turn round and tell us

We're closed for two weeks!

MARCEL

Rose, I thought of everything...

ROSE

You thought of nothing!

MARCEL

...There are posters in the streets

And banners in the squares.

Scream away, feel free,

But at Ibsen, not at me...

ROSE (interrupting)

Why did I agree

To accept this bloody tour?

The only thing in store

Is two weeks of nothing!

ACTORS (in the background, to one another)

Win some, lose some...

What the hell...

ROSE

Working till I drop

For an audience of four:

Three nuns and your mother...

MARCEL

It's no good complaining...

ROSE

And she only bothered

Because it was raining!

MARCEL

Love...

ROSE

Don't call me 'Love'!

MARCEL

This isn't personal.

ACTORS (departing, to one another)

I don't care...

The theatre's my life...

MARCEL

We will start the tour again

In Lyon in two weeks!

Rose, the people there

Are all Ibsen mad, I swear!

Come on, show me a smile!

ROSE (turning away)

God, I'm not in the mood...

MARCEL

What's a fortnight or so?

ROSE

With no money or food...

MARCEL

Don't be glum...

ACTORS

Don't let's be downhearted!

ROSE

Don't waste your breath.

ACTORS

We'll get by...

(Dodging the issue, MARCEL beckons forward the 17-year-old ALEX, who has been lurking in the background)

MARCEL

Now Rose, you must meet this young man!

He's a dedicated fan --

Been in every evening!

ROSE

Marcel, don't run away --

I can see your little plan.

ALEX (approaching nervously)

It's an honor, mam'selle,

I could watch you for hours...

You can't have forgotten,

I threw you the flowers...

Mam'selle, seeing you on stage

Has changed my life!

ACTORS (exiting, to one another and to ROSE)

Join us in the cafe

In the square!

ROSE

See you...

The cafe...

The square...

ALEX (to ROSE, tentatively)

Would you let

Me walk you there...?

(Dissolve to Scene Three...)

ACT ONE

Scene Three

(A cafe in Montpellier. Later the same evening. MARCEL, MEMBERS OF THE TROUPE, WAITERS. ROSE and ALEX in the forefront, alone at a table. A CROONER sings on a wireless playing in the background, which is tuned into the American Forces Network. ACTORS are occasionally heard chatting)

CROONER

'Parlez-vous

francais?

Je suis sad.

Parlez-vous

francais?

I feel bad.

How do you say

'Ce soir vous etes si

belle?'

I only know

A word or so,

Like 'Cat' and

'School' --

Je suis fool.

ACTOR 1 (to COMPANIONS)

Death to him

Who dares mention Ibsen!

Parlez-vous

francais?

ALEX (to ROSE)

One day Montpellier's

Going to scream...

Please say 'oui'.

ACTOR 2

Death to all directors!

ALEX (continuing)

...To get you back!

Shall I order?

Parlez-vous

An espresso?

francais?

Or cappuccino?

Speak to me.

ROSE (flatly)

Armagnac.
How do you say:
ACTOR 3
Why we bothered heaven knows.
'Vous etes jolie,
ACTOR 4
Marcel's a dreamer.
ACTOR 1
Marcel deserves
The firing squad.

Mam'sell'?
ALEX (to WAITER)
Armagnac.
And a glass of house white for me.
ACTOR 2 (looking across at ROSE)
Who's she with?

(The OTHERS shrug. One of the other ACTORS, exiting,
takes his leave of ROSE)

Cherie,
ACTOR 5
Two weeks
Before we meet again.
ROSE (unsmiling)
Two weeks
Before we eat again.

Where do I
commencer,
If you won't parler
WAITER (returning with the ACTORS' bill)
Is that all?
francais with me?
ACTORS 1, 2, & 3 (to one another)
The same again?
ACTOR 4 (to WAITER)
The same again.

(The WAITER goes off, crossing with MARCEL who has just
arrived. The ACTORS hail him)

ACTORS 1, 2, 3, & 4
Here's the man
Of the hour!

Parlez-vous
francais?
ROSE (to ALEX)
Please promise me
You'll answer...
Say you do.
MARCEL (to the ACTORS)
Am I allowed
To join you?
(MARCEL sits down with the ACTORS, who are looking
across at ROSE)

ACTORS (To MARCEL)
Who's with Rose?

ROSE (continuing)
...Truthfully.

ALEX
What's the question?

ROSE
You must promise first.

Parlez-vous
francais?

ALEX

I promise, I promise.

MARCEL (replying to the ACTORS)
Rose's young fan!

Tell me true.

ROSE

How old are you?

How do you say:

ALEX

In three years

I'll be twenty.

'Je suis unhappy

(ACTOR 1, who has sidled up to ROSE, overhears this)

ACTOR 1 (to ROSE)

Is this your

Younger brother, Rose?

Fella'?

ROSE (ignoring the ACTOR, to ALEX)

Is that all?

ACTOR 1 (hisses loudly back to the OTHERS)

Seventeen!

WAITER (returning to ROSE and ALEX with their drinks)

Is that all?

(ROSE downs the brandy in one and hands the empty glass
back to the WAITER)

ROSE

Another armagnac.

(The WAITER goes off and ACTOR 1 returns to the
OTHERS, highly amused)

Cherie,

ACTORS (shouting across to ROSE)

You're in with

Adieu to drinks

A chance there!

and danser,

(ROSE ignores them. Other ACTORS are by now beginning
to drift out)

If you won't parler

francais
ALEX
I have this theory:
With me.
Unless you say
'oui'...
If you think
What those images mean,
Adieu to drinks
and danser,
Then clearly
If you won't parler
Most of Ibsen's subtext
Is obscene...
francais
With me.'
ROSE (dryly)
Seventeen...
ALEX
It makes one very aware...such frightfully modern ideas...

(He is interrupted, by MARCEL)

MARCEL (to ROSE)
Darling, it's only two weeks...

(He blows her a kiss and departs. The CROONER's song has
come to an end. We hear the voice of the RADIO
ANNOUNCER:)

ANNOUNCER
Johnny Lejeune with 'Parlez-vous francais?' Encore, Johnny!

(The radio orchestra starts up again and we hear the opening
bars of the song)

CROONER
'Parlez-vous francais?'
Je suis sad...'

ROSE (calling across to the BARTENDER)
Oh, turn that thing off!

(The BARTENDER shrugs and turns off the wireless. By this
time the cafe is more or less deserted)

I don't need some crooner crooning.
Or a stage-door Johnny swooning.
Look, if I'm not very nice to you,
It's because I have things to worry me.
But thanks for the flowers every night...

(A pause. She explains)

I'm resting again.
That's what actresses say
When they're not in a play.

(Another pause)

You're a long way from England.

ALEX
Yes.

ROSE
And what brings you to Montpellier?

ALEX
I'm traveling through France
Until my call-up.

ROSE
You mean the army?

ALEX
May I ask a stupid question?
How will you survive for two weeks?

ROSE
I'll get along somehow.

ALEX
What, with no money?
May I make a bold suggestion?

ROSE
And what kind of 'bold suggestion'?

ALEX
Come away with me, Rose...

ROSE
With you? Where?

ALEX
I have a villa --
Don't be suspicious --
You won't believe it,
The view of the Pyrenees!
I leave this evening --
Come with me...

ROSE (after a pause)
Are you sure you want me to accept?

(No reply)

Very well, then,
I accept.

(Still no reply. ALEX is in a daze)

Here. Have some armagnac.

(He drinks and returns the glass. She too takes a sip, as if to seal their agreement. Then breaks the moment with:)

Not another night
In this hateful city!

ALEX
You'll need to pack --
We'll meet at the station.

ROSE
I'll pick up my script and my dress.
By the way...

ALEX
Yes?

ROSE
...What's your name?
No -- let me guess...
Rupert?

ALEX
No. It's Alex.

ROSE
Alex.
Hello.
I'm Rose.

ALEX
I know.

(They hurry in opposite directions. Dissolve to Scene
Four...)

ACT ONE
Scene Four

(Gare de Montpellier. Later the same night. ALEX
waiting anxiously)
ALEX (pacing, finally exploding)
That girl can really act!
I could have sworn that she'd be here!
She's got a great career --
She should play Salome!
Maybe I was mad,
But she really seemed sincere...

(ROSE rushes in)

ROSE
Please say you're not angry,
I just couldn't bear it!
Please say you forgive me --
I want you to swear it!

(ALEX's rage dissolves instantly)

ALEX
Of course I'm not angry --
I knew that you'd make it.

There's plenty of time...

(taking her case)

Here, that's heavy -- I'll take it.

ROSE

I feel seventeen again!

ALEX

So do I...

(They kiss. A stunned beat. She hands the flowers she has been carrying to the STATION GUARD, who has just entered. BOTH hurry off. Dissolve to Scene Five...)

ACT ONE

Scene Five

(Interior of train. Later the same night. ROSE and ALEX, midway on their journey, she lying against him, asleep)

ALEX

Seeing is believing,
And in my arms I see her:
She's here,
Really here,
Really mine now --
She seems at home here...

Seeing is believing.
I dreamt that it would be her:
At last
Life is full,
Life is fine now...

Whatever happens,
One thing is certain:
Each time I see
A train go by,
I'll think of us,
The night, the sky
Forever...

(Time passes. He is now asleep, she awake)

ROSE

He's young,
Very young,
But appealing --
I feel I know him...

Seeing is believing,
And I like what I see here.
I like
Where I am,
What I'm feeling...

What are we doing?

Can you believe it?
A starving actress and
A star-struck boy --
Oh well, I might
As well enjoy
The moment...

(He wakes and they look at one another)

ALEX
Can you believe it?

BOTH
Seeing is believing!
I never thought I'd be here!
Is this
Really me?
Am I dreaming?
No way of knowing
Where this is leading...
It's fun forgetting
Who we are...
Who cares? When now
The world is far
Behind us...

Seeing is believing!
My life is just beginning!
We touched,
And my head
Won't stop spinning,
From winning
Your love!

(They kiss. Dissolve to Scene Six...)

ACT ONE
Scene Six

(GEORGE's villa at Pau. Interior of drawing-room.
Night. Pitch black. The glimmer of torchlight. ALEX is
trying to prise open the French windows)

ALEX (outside)
Wish my arms were longer...
Or the gap was wider...
One more go and
That should do it...
One more try and there --
That does it!

(A crash of breaking wood and glass. They stagger in,
throwing torchlight onto the scene)

ROSE
You will rue the day
That you got me in this mess!
I've torn my one good dress!
You're really a charmer!

ALEX

Rose, I know this seems
Like a scene from "Modern Times"...

The house is my uncle's --
All right, I was lying --
He's working in Paris,
He won't come here prying...
Oh Rose,
Rose, can't you see?
I would have said anything
To get you here with me...

(No reply from her. Nervous, he tries changing tack)

Shall I make some coffee...?

(She suddenly decides to give in, laughing long and loud)

ROSE

One cup of fresh coffee
Buys two kisses --
Shall we have dinner?

(They touch in the darkness, and kiss)

BOTH

Whatever happens,
We have this moment.
Who needs tomorrow,
When we have today?
Tonight we'll mean
The things we say
Forever...

Seeing is believing!
My life is just beginning!
We touched,
And my head
Won't stop spinning
From winning
Your love!

(They kiss again in earnest. Dissolve to Scene Seven...)

ACT ONE

Scene Seven

(An art exhibition in Paris. Among the throng of
ARTISTS and GLITTERATI is GIULIETTA TRAPANI, a
young Italian sculptress. GEORGE DILLINGHAM, her
58-year-old lover, fights his way to her through the
crowd angrily brandishing a telegram)

GEORGE

Damn the boy!
Damn the boy's
Damn-fool schoolboy antics!

GIULIETTA

Calm down now, George...

GEORGE (interrupting, reads)
"Nephew Alex break in, stop.
Stealing household supplies, stop.
Living in sin, stop.
Please advise, stop."
My gardener, Jerome!

GIULIETTA (smiles)
How very nice!
How sweet!

GEORGE
How handy!
My bed!
My brandy!

GIULIETTA
He sounds like you --
I think you ought to introduce us!

GEORGE
Giulietta.
You'd better cancel supper at "Chez Max" --
This week was fun.
It shouldn't end like this...

GIULIETTA
This interlude was heaven...

GEORGE
How sad to think that it must end
When it had just begun...

GIULIETTA
George, you've got a painter's eye:
Everything is magnified!
I know you're all he's got,
But I don't see why you should go.

GEORGE
No, I must go.
Our little fling has done us good.
I have my paint.
You have your clay:
We both have work...

GIULIETTA
I know, I know.
Don't look so sad, George!
What times we've had, George!

GEORGE
There'll be more...

GIULIETTA
Ah yes.
That's true.

George...
There'll never be another you...
But, as you say, you are his guardian,
And sacrifices must be made.
We must part,
I'm afraid...
So put "Giulietta" thoughts behind you,
Forget about your broken heart!

(turning away, half to herself)

Back to Venice...
Tend my art...

GEORGE (moving across to her)
A love affair is not a lifetime.
It's calendars and clocks, my friend.
All good things
Have to end.
A memory of a happy moment --
That's what this week will one day be.
Life goes on,
Love goes free.

(Thrusting the telegram into his pocket, he disappears)

GIULIETTA (alone)
Life goes on...
Love goes free...

(Dissolve to Scene Eight...)

ACT ONE
Scene Eight

(Bedroom at Pau. Morning sunlight. ROSE alone at the window, drinking in the view)

ROSE
This is what I ought to feel on stage...
Soaring up like snow-capped mountains...
I feel your beauty and your rage...
I could be those tumbling forests,
I could play those jagged hillsides...
Star of mountain,
Star of valley...
(She rehearses, in mime, the closing lines of The Master Builder. ALEX enters)

ALEX
Would Madam care for breakfast?
Will croissants and fresh coffee do?

(A pause. BOTH gaze at the view)

Wonderful view!
Whenever we see those mountains,
We will think of me and you...

(Another admiring pause)

George insists on magnificent views.

ROSE

I think I should like your uncle...

(Dissolve to Scene Nine...)

ACT ONE

Scene Nine

(Exploring sequence covering the whole day. Various locations in GEORGE's house, starting with:)

1/Drawing room

(Dust-sheets are pulled off furniture. ROSE uncovers a portrait of a young woman in a sumptuous Edwardian ball-gown)

ROSE

Alex, she's beautiful. Who is she?

ALEX

My aunt Delia. She was an actress too.

ROSE

Delia! Was she famous?

ALEX

Yes. But she died very young. That's why my uncle doesn't come down here very often. Too many memories.

(ROSE uncovers another painting, rather a famous one)

ROSE

Haven't I seen that somewhere before?

ALEX

Not the one you're thinking of. That's in the Louvre. George did that one. Some people call it fraud, but he prefers to think of it as a tribute.

2/Hall

(They open a trunk)

ALEX (brandishing a rapier)

En garde!

ROSE (parrying with a tennis racket)

Fifteen love!

BOTH

Promise me today will never ever end!

3/Kitchen

(Boxes full of food)

ROSE (pulling out various tins)
Caviar! Anchovies! Peaches in brandy! We can have a banquet tonight!

ALEX
When he does get down here, George doesn't believe in having to rough it.

BOTH
I could get to like it here!
Let's not ever think of leaving!

4/Bedroom

(A wardrobe full of fancy-dress costumes)

ALEX
Look at this. Pierrot. Carmen.

(Holding up a particularly flimsy one)

For the ballroom? Or the bedroom?

(ROSE produces an old bound volume from a chest)

ROSE
Merimee, "L'Occasion". I know this -- it's a wonderful play!

ALEX
Really?

ROSE
Let's do it. You can be the priest, I'll be Dona Maria Colemenares.

ALEX
But I don't know anything about the theatre.

ROSE
I'll teach you. We'll do it. Tonight.

(ALEX takes the book and quotes dramatically:)

ALEX
"What are you doing? Pull yourself together..."

(ROSE has meanwhile pulled out a spectacular ball-gown -- the same one featured in the portrait)

ROSE
This one is gorgeous!

ALEX (looking up)
It was her favorite dress...

ROSE
He must have loved her so much.

ALEX

Rose, leave things as they are...

ROSE (holding it up to herself and looking in the mirror)

I can just see her...

I feel I know her...

(Dissolve to Scene Ten...)

ACT ONE

Scene Ten

(Terrace at Pau. The figure of GEORGE is seen approaching the house. Voices are heard from inside.

ROSE and ALEX appear from the house in costume, rehearsing. GEORGE steps back into the shadows, unseen)

FATHER EUGENIO (ALEX)

What does this letter contain? Give it to me.

DONA MARIA (ROSE)

But promise me not to read it while you are here. Read it this evening -- wait till this evening. Promise me. And tomorrow...no, never speak to me about it. If you give it back I shall punish myself for my folly...but for God's sake don't scold me.

FATHER EUGENIO (ALEX)

Hand it over.

DONA MARIA (ROSE)

Have pity, I implore you. I have resisted as long as I could, but you mustn't open it here. Oh, God, what are you doing? Father Eugenio, I implore you. For pity's sake, give it back. Father, you are killing me.

FATHER EUGENIO (ALEX)

What are you doing? Pull yourself together.

(Suddenly aware of GEORGE's presence, ALEX spins round. A beat)

GEORGE

You must forgive this rude intrusion,
But I really felt I had to say "Well done"!

(General embarrassment. No one is sure what to say)

ALEX

Oh, uncle George,
Come in, come in...

ROSE

I've heard a million things about you...

GEORGE

And you are...?

ROSE

I am Rose Vibert.

GEORGE

I hate to spoil your fun,
But I was dying for a gin --
But don't let me disturb you.

ROSE

Oh, it's nice to meet you...

GEORGE (warming to the situation)
Surely Merimee's "L'Occasion"?

ALEX

Lemon?
Ice?

ROSE

The perfect play.

GEORGE

Yet overstated...

ROSE

Yes, that's true.

GEORGE

...And somehow dated now --
A living fossil!

ROSE

How concise!

GEORGE

And Alex, you show promise.

ROSE

Well, he is my pupil!

GEORGE

Ah, so this is your profession?

ALEX

Rising star!

GEORGE

I'm sure, I'm sure.

ROSE

I'm playing Hilde...

ALEX

...In two weeks.

GEORGE

"The Master Builder"?

ROSE

Yes.

GEORGE

What a courageous girl you are.

ROSE

I hate to tear myself away,
But I must go and change --
Please promise me you'll stay.

GEORGE

I wouldn't dream of going far!

(She goes. GEORGE turns to ALEX, delighted)

I'd like to be the first
To say "She's perfect!" --
A face like that
I haven't seen in years!

ALEX

You must forgive us
For breaking in here.
I'll make it up, George,
Have no fear --
But please don't throw
Us out of here,
I beg you...
Seeing is believing --
I saw her and I loved her...
You must understand what I'm saying --
She's not just someone...

GEORGE

A love affair is not a crisis.
Enjoy it like a fine champagne --
Taste, but never let it
Cloud the brain.
A memory of a happy moment --
That's what this time will one day be.
Life goes on,
Love goes free...

ALEX

Some girls are like that,
They'll love you and leave you,
But Rose --
There's only one Rose...
I'm telling you,
This is not some schoolboy game --
My life will never be the same.

GEORGE

I look at you and

ALEX

I knew it from the moment
I remember
That I saw her face...
How many times I've

There could
Felt this way --
Never be
Ah, the tricks
Any other
Love can play...
Love for me...

(ROSE appears in the doorway. She is wearing the ball-gown we saw earlier, which lends her a resplendent, other-worldly quality. For a moment we half believe we are seeing the portrait come to life. BOTH turn upstage and see her. The effect on GEORGE is devastating. Overcome, he stumbles to a chair)

GEORGE
Alex, quick!
Some brandy!

(ROSE and ALEX rush over to him)

ROSE
You go...

ALEX
I'll go...

ROSE
Quickly...

ALEX (hurrying out)
I'm going...

(He goes. GEORGE recovers himself while ROSE tends to him)

GEORGE
Do forgive me...
So unlike me...
You looked just like her...
My wife...
Delia...
I thought for a moment...
The dress was hers,
But you look just as lovely --
It should be worn...

I've caused such drama here...

ROSE
You mustn't think that...

GEORGE
It wasn't meant, my dear...
I'd better leave you two alone...

(He makes to go. She stops him)

ROSE
You're in no state to travel --

No,
You won't go anywhere.
You're staying in that chair.
Why spend the evening on your own?

(The scene transforms to reveal ALEX in the kitchen
attending to GEORGE's brandy)

ALEX
Why, why must he spy on us?
It was perfect till he came!
Why, why must he ruin it?

(Dissolve to Scene Eleven...)

ACT ONE
Scene Eleven

(Terrace at Pau. Later the same evening. ROSE,
GEORGE, and ALEX at the tail end of dinner, ALEX
slightly drunk)

GEORGE
...Of course, painting always was my first love.

ROSE
Oh, to be so gifted.

GEORGE
When I'm dead they'll fetch a fortune.

ALEX
We shall see.

ROSE
I'd buy one now.

ALEX (to GEORGE)
You'd better tell her...

ROSE
Tell me what?

ALEX
...Before you sell her one,
That they're just copies...

GEORGE
But by me!

ROSE (changing the subject, to GEORGE)
I'd love to hear your poems!

GEORGE
I shall write one for you...

ALEX
Byron isn't here to sue you.

ROSE

Alex, please --
Don't interrupt.

GEORGE
At least I do things.

ROSE
Yes, that's true.

GEORGE
...I see a few things through...

(to ROSE)

We often have disputes like these.

(Then, changing the subject)

Did Alex ever tell you...

ALEX
We'll be here till breakfast...

GEORGE (ignoring him, continues)
...Why his final year
At school was rather short?

ROSE
No, not a word.

ALEX (horrified realization)
No, George, you couldn't...

ROSE
Please go on!

ALEX
No, George, you wouldn't dare...

GEORGE
I think it might amuse her...

(He leans over and whispers in ROSE's ear. Her reaction is a long and loud guffaw. ALEX blushes to the roots. A beat. Then GEORGE adds:)

GEORGE
I've had a splendid time,
A truly splendid time --
But I can see that I'm de trop...
I have a little tryst
Too tempting to resist,
And now I really ought to go...

(He rises, then turns back to them)

I wish you both a charming fortnight,
Enjoy your little one-to-one --
Have your fling,

Have your fun...

(moving off)

A memory of a happy moment --
That's what these days will one day be...
Life goes on,
Love goes free...
(He disappears. ALEX looks after him)

ALEX
I think I know where he's gone --
He's off to take his Italian lessons!

(A beat. Suddenly ROSE rounds on ALEX)

ROSE
How could you have let me wear this dress?
He must think I have no feelings!
You should have said what he was like...
I must seem a heartless woman!
I must seem a soulless creature!

Anyway, let's not have a scene...

(She moves off, heading for bed. Dissolve to Scene
Twelve...)

ACT ONE
Scene Twelve

(The terrace. Pitch black. A noise outside has woken
ROSE)
ROSE (offstage)
What was that?

ALEX (offstage)
What?

ROSE
There.
Listen.
It's her ghost.
I'm frightened.

ALEX (himself a little scared)
Don't be silly. I'll go and have a look.

(He comes out to investigate)

ROSE (from inside)
Well?

(We see ALEX on the terrace. He has found a solitary
satin ladies' shoe lying there. He cannot remember it
being there before. Mystified, he puts the shoe to one
side and returns to the house)

ALEX (covering his misgivings)

There's nothing there. I suppose it must have been a rat.

ROSE (going back in)
I can't sleep in a house full of rats!

ALEX (following)
Well, I don't want you to sleep just yet...

ROSE
Alex. Not now.

(Lights fade. Musical interlude carrying us through to morning. ALEX discovered alone, talking in his dream)

ALEX
Rose, where are you?
Rose, where are you?

(He wakes with a start to find himself alone. For a few moments he is confused by the apparent overlapping of dream and reality. A moment later ROSE cheerfully bounces in carrying his clothes)

ROSE
I've been out walking.
And what a day --
So crisp and clear!
And you're not spending it in here!

(She throws him his clothes)

Let's breathe some mountain air!

ALEX
I thought you'd left me...

ROSE (continuing on her own line of thought)
What do you say?

ALEX
I had a dream you'd left me...

ROSE
Good idea?

ALEX (coming to)
Good idea!

(Dissolve to Scene Thirteen...)

ACT ONE
Scene Thirteen

(Various locations in and around the Pyrenees. A brief excursion taking us through the rest of the day. We see ALEX and ROSE enjoying the idyllic scenery)

ROSE
"Pas de tendresse
Et pas de joie,

Loin d'ici,
Loin de toi.
Rien de plus triste
Que mes soupirs,
Lorsque vient le jour
Ou il me faut partir.

Chanson d'enfance,
Tu vis toujours dans mon c?ur.
Toi, la plus douce!
Toi, la plus tendre!"

(All is once again perfect. As the day ends, ROSE and ALEX take a final, admiring look at the scene)

ALEX
What could be sweeter?

BOTH
Nothing is sweeter...

(We follow their path homeward, as we dissolve to Scene Fourteen...)

ACT ONE
Scene Fourteen

(ROSE and ALEX returning to the house. Late afternoon. She notices a telegram lying on the doormat. Slowly picks it up, opens it, and reads)

ROSE
Marcel wants me in Lyon...
He says that I'm needed today...

ALEX
Well, it must be important...

ROSE
I won't go.
I don't want to.
I'll ignore it.

(She screws up the telegram and throws it aside)

How can I desert you?
It's all so unfair,
So unfeeling!

ALEX
How can you say that?
Don't be a fool, Rose!
You can't put me before your whole career!
You can't let feelings interfere --
You must go!

(She nods and moves tearfully away)

ROSE
I'll pick up my script and my dress.

(She goes. Lights fade, time passes. When next they come up we see ALEX, now alone, pensively wandering about the house. He finds the crumpled telegram, and picks it up)

ALEX

"A memory of a happy moment --
That's what this week will one day be..."
George...you're wrong...

(Re-reading, a flash of realization hits him)

Marcel -- how could he have known where she was? Unless she told him...or sent this herself.... And there was I, completely taken in, when she was going all along...

(cries out)

No, she couldn't...
Oh God, she wouldn't...

(Blackout. Dissolve to Scene Fifteen...)

ACT ONE

Scene Fifteen

(A fairground in Paris, two years later. Early evening. ALEX in military uniform with TWO FELLOW OFFICERS and their TWO GIRLS. ALEX is also accompanied by a GIRL. BARKERS cry their wares from various stalls and PLEASURE-SEEKERS mill about)

RIFLE-RANGE BARKER

Who's feeling lucky?

Twenty out of twenty

And a prize could be yours!

FREAK-SHOW BARKER

See "Marie the Monkey"

With the poisonous claws!

RIFLE-RANGE BARKER

There's a prize

To be won!

FREAK-SHOW BARKER

Take a risk,

Take a ride!

RIFLE-RANGE BARKER

Right this way,

Have a go!

FREAK-SHOW BARKER

Try your luck

And step inside!

(ALEX is persuaded to try his skill at shooting. As he shoots, the OTHERS sing encouragement)

CHORUS

If you reach
For the moon,
If you aim
For the sky,
Then the moon
And the sky
Can be yours --
Come on and try!
Everybody loves a hero!
Let's hear it for the man with the gun!
Everybody loves a hero...

(ALEX successfully completes the volley. The jackpot is his, and he is handed his prize: a toy donkey)

BARKER

And you, sir,
Are now the proud owner
Of this magnificent donkey!

(General hilarity. The group moves away from the stall)

CHORUS

Everybody loves a hero!
Let's hear it for the man with the gun!
Everybody loves a hero...

FRIEND 1 (to ALEX)

Two more days...

FRIEND 2

Just two more days!

FRIEND 1

...And you'll be back
To civvy street again!

FRIEND 3

And decent food.

FRIEND 2

And your life is yours at last!

FRIEND 3

You lucky devil!

GIRLS

Your girlfriend's gonna love that donkey!

ALL

You'll be her hero!

ALEX (detaching himself from the limpet GIRL)

Two long years...
I had a dream I'd see her name in lights:
Rose Vibert, the shining star!
I've given up trying to find her...

Perhaps she's resting...

FRIEND 3

So who's the lucky girl tonight, then?

ALEX (moving off as the scene dissolves)

I've told you:

It's my uncle.

FRIENDS (fading into the background)

Uncle?

Not likely...

Give her a kiss from us...

(We have by now dissolved to Scene Sixteen...)

ACT ONE

Scene Sixteen

(Living room of GEORGE's flat, later that evening.)

ELIZABETH, GEORGE's elderly housekeeper, is showing

ALEX in)

ELIZABETH

How you've grown!

ALEX

It's been two years.

ELIZABETH

You should have phoned --

Your uncle isn't here.

ALEX

I might have guessed!

ELIZABETH

And such a splendid uniform!

ALEX (looking around the flat)

The same old paintings.

ELIZABETH

Madame will be so thrilled to meet you --

I'll go and tell her.

(ALEX picks up a small sculpture, examines it and reads the artist's signature on the base)

ALEX

"Giulietta Trapani"...

ELIZABETH (turning back)

Life has changed!

Since those two met

He lives life to the full!

ALEX

Well, good for him!

ELIZABETH

She has made him young again!

ALEX

Where is he now, then?

ELIZABETH

He's doing up the country villa --

They plan to live there.

Now, tell me, do you still like omelettes?

Won't be a moment!

(She bustles out. ALEX, alone, wanders about the room, musing)

ALEX

And so he got his wicked way with that Italian girl --

He hasn't lost his touch...

(Placing the toy donkey on a coffee table, he relaxes into a chair. A beat. Very slowly, behind ALEX, ROSE appears. Gently, she speaks)

ROSE

Well, hello...

(ALEX turns and sees her)

ALEX

I should have known

Where you were hiding --

You like the good life,

George likes trinkets!

God, what a fool

I was to love you!

What was all my searching for?

It's never hard to find a whore!

ROSE

Well, if it makes you happy, think it...

ALEX

You scheming bitch...

ROSE

The truth is we're a perfect pair.

ALEX

Because he's rich...

ROSE

Shout and scream --

I don't care...

ALEX

You could have let me know...!

ROSE

Your uncle's shown me new horizons...

ALEX
Well, didn't I?

ROSE
And as a lover he is perfect too.

ALEX
Another lie!

ROSE
He takes his time.
Unlike you.

ALEX
I wasn't good enough?

ROSE
Why can't you listen
And come to your senses?
It's George...
I really love George...
He's made me a
Better, fuller, stronger person,
I have never been as happy!

ALEX
Or, indeed, as wealthy.

ROSE
Look, I don't need your uncle's money!
And I could have a thousand lovers!
Yet I've been faithful and I'm happy --
More faithful than he'll ever be:
It's not as if he's married me...

(She turns away, tearful)

ALEX (calming)
I'd better go...
I'm sorry...
It was a shock...

ROSE
Try and understand,
And it won't hurt you so much.

ALEX
At least admit you loved me once...

ROSE
Of course I did.
I may even love you now...
George gives me so much...
But he gets so little from me...
But with you I made an impression
That will last you a lifetime...

ALEX (moving close to her)
So change my life for me again...

(Lights fade as, fatally, he kisses her and she leads him to her bedroom)

ACT ONE

Scene Seventeen

(Living room of GEORGE's Paris flat. Next morning. The cuddly donkey still sits on the table. ALEX enters from the bedroom in search of ROSE)

ALEX

Here we go again!
Heaven knows when she'll be back --
That girl has got a knack
Of keeping you guessing!

ELIZABETH (entering, flustered)

Madame will soon be here,
But she says you are to leave:
Your uncle is coming,
You'd better get going...

ALEX

So why all the panic?
Why shouldn't I be here?

ELIZABETH

She's scared that his heart
Couldn't stand all this drama...

ALEX

Well, it's hardly a shock
If my uncle sees me here...

(ELIZABETH hurries out)

That girl is unbelievable!
Was last night the sort of thing
She could just forget?
It would be hard to find
A more capricious mind...

(ROSE bursts in and is instantly infuriated to see him still there)

ROSE

What are you doing here?

ALEX

All right, where have you been?

ROSE

Will you please disappear?

ALEX

What the hell do you mean?

ROSE (turns away)

Leave me, leave me!

I don't want George exposed
To some unpleasant scene.

(She walks over to the gramophone and puts on a record,
casually, halfway through. It is "Parlez-vous francais?".
To ALEX this is red rag to a bull)

ALEX (getting out his gun)
If I can't have you, no one will.
Killing you would be a pleasure.

ROSE
So all you're fit for is to kill?
Go on and pull the trigger,
See if I care!
Come on, soldier!
Be a hero!

ALEX
You never loved me?

ROSE
Does it matter?
You never meant it?
Who remembers?
And now you hate me...
Go away, you little
Schoolboy...
(Enraged, she suddenly seizes a heavy candlestick and
hurls it at him, causing his gun to go off. She is shot in
the arm and a painting hanging behind him falls to the
floor. The gramophone needle jumps and the record
starts to repeat itself.
Hearing the shot, ELIZABETH rushes in brandishing a
hammer with which she hits ALEX on the elbow,
knocking the gun out of his hand. She goes to the aid of
ROSE who has passed out.

No sooner has this happened than GEORGE enters the
flat. He takes the needle off the stuck record. He glances
at the spectacle of this 'crime passionel' and then he sees
the displaced painting. He hurries across to inspect it)

GEORGE
My only genuine Matisse!
Thank God...
No damage done...
Would someone kindly tell me
What on earth has happened?

ELIZABETH
He lost his head,
The gun went off,
She's bleeding badly,
Use your scarf --
Here, let me help...

(They kneel down beside ROSE and tend to her wound.
ALEX approaches tentatively)

GEORGE

You'd better phone the doctor.

(She turns away from ALEX, who turns to GEORGE)

ALEX

I should never have come back here...

GEORGE

Oh, don't talk such nonsense!

ALEX

I'll bow out now --
It's the decent thing to do.

GEORGE

Don't be absurd.

ALEX

I'm a disaster...

GEORGE

Oh, come, come!

ALEX

...It wouldn't last a week --
She'd be far better off with you.

GEORGE

You two have your lives before you.

ALEX

It would end in murder...

GEORGE

I'm too old for her --
It's high time I withdrew.

ALEX

Your place is here.

GEORGE

The jowls are dropping...

ALEX

It's the light.

GEORGE

...The paunch needs propping up --
She'd be far better off with you.

BOTH

Your words are generous and selfless,
But alas untrue --
She'd be far better off with you.

ALEX

You are steeped in wit and wisdom.

GEORGE

Well, I've learnt the odd thing...

ALEX

You could teach George Bernard Shaw
A thing or two!

GEORGE

I had a go...

(ROSE leaves the room, helped by ELIZABETH)

ALEX

You've dined with Garbo...

GEORGE

Only twice.

ALEX

...Translated "La Boheme" --
She'd be far better off with you.

GEORGE

You're athletic.

ALEX

You're distinguished.

GEORGE

You don't cheat at croquet.

ALEX

You're more seasoned.

GEORGE

You can skate.

ALEX

You're in "Who's Who".

GEORGE

Just half an inch.

ALEX

We're talking drivel.

GEORGE

So we are.

BOTH

Can't we be civilized?

She'd be far better off with you.

Your words are generous and selfless,

But alas untrue.

It's only Rose that matters!

Just take a look: there's no comparison

Between us two --

She'd be far better off with you!

GEORGE

You're too young
And too confused
To understand what's best,
And what's best is obvious:
The two of you belong together --
There'll be less damage!

ALEX

Perhaps you're right --
I'll do my best
To turn our lives around
And brush away this memory.

GEORGE

I'll phone you when I get to Venice.

ALEX

Giulietta?

(GEORGE makes no reply, but instead casts a wistful
final gaze about the room)

GEORGE

Now you be good to her...
I have to say these were
The sweetest days I've ever known...

ALEX

Well, have a pleasant journey...

GEORGE

One thing before I go,
Just one thing you should know:
Rose doesn't like to be alone...

(He leaves. ELIZABETH re-enters the living room. She
rounds furiously on ALEX)

ELIZABETH

You're a delinquent.
A silly schoolboy with a gun.
Take a look at what you've done.
I hope you're satisfied.

ROSE (re-entering)

Goodbye, Alex.
Goodbye forever.
We've packed your tunic,
Here's your gun as well.
So, blow your brains out,
Go to hell,
Just leave me.

ALEX (stunned)

You don't know what you're saying...

ROSE

I've phoned Marcel.

To see you off.

(MARCEL enters. With decisiveness masking his fear, he hurries ALEX along)

MARCEL
Come along,
Get marching.
Double-quick,
Look lively.

ALEX
Let me see...
My suitcase...

(He goes, MARCEL following)

ROSE (momentarily alone)
Will he ever forgive me?
But what can I do?
I'm in love with them both...
But I only have one life,
Not two...

(MARCEL re-enters)

MARCEL
Your life is one enormous drama!
My God, you'll be the death of me!

(examining her wound)

What a mess...
Let me see...

A memory that is best forgotten --
That's what this ugly scene should be.
Life goes on,
So must we...

(ROSE meanwhile has picked up from the desk a letter.
She reads aloud the name of the sender)

ROSE
"Trapani"...

Marcel, we're taking a trip.
I'm told that Venice is fun.
We have to meet an Italian lady...

(Dissolve. During the scene change we see GEORGE
arriving in Venice, being greeted by an overjoyed
GIULIETTA and re-establishing his relationship with her)

ACT ONE
Scene Eighteen

(GIULIETTA's studio in Venice. Some days later.
GEORGE sitting for a sculpture of him on which

GIULIETTA is working, at the same time giving her his version of events in Paris)

GEORGE

...And then with a swift karate-chop
I removed his gun --
You should have been there!
Poor chap didn't know what hit him...
GIULIETTA (interrupting)
Still, George!
If you can't keep your tongue still,
You will have the face of Edith Sitwell!

GEORGE

Ah well, they're happy...
It's for the best anyway...
Let's face it,
He's the man for her,
And I'm the man for you, dear...

GIULIETTA

Don't talk such nonsense --
You'll never stop loving her.
You don't fool me:
You're quite besotted with her...

(attention back on her work, pleased with his pose)

Stop. Wait. Good. Please...

Still, George...

GEORGE

With my scarf I made a tourniquet --
Shantung silk, but worth the sacrifice --
It stemmed the flow, the arm was saved, and...

GIULIETTA

Still, George,
Rose would seem the kind of lady
Who would live through any blood-bath...

GEORGE

Darling, it's over --
So don't be so cynical.
I don't suppose that you've become a nun
Since last I saw you...

GIULIETTA

Wouldn't you love that!
Perpetual chastity!

GEORGE

So tell me,
Have you found some young Adonis?

GIULIETTA (back to work again)

Stop. Wait. Good. Please...

No, Geoge.

BOTH

Time and light are fading --
Shouldn't we make the most of
Every precious moment?
Life is sweet and slow and still and...

(They are interrupted by a babble of voices outside the door, rising in volume. We can just make out the following voices:)

VOICES

I'm not leaving here till I get what I came for...it's a scandal...out of my way...heaven help him if he won't pay...who are you pushing...I got here first...all I want is what's fair...he had better be there...

GEORGE (over the voices)

For heaven's sake!
Who's making all that mayhem?

(He rises to be greeted by the entrance of MARCEL, closely followed by an angry crowd of people, numbering a HOTELIER, a DOCTOR, a HOTEL CASHIER, a PHARMACIST, and a GONDOLIER. Together they burst into the room, all apparently demanding money from the bewildered GEORGE)

MARCEL (to GEORGE)

Thank God you're here!
We've got trouble with Rose --

HOTELIER (to MARCEL)

Are you certain that
This is the man?
Running up bills
Wherever she goes!
Is he the one
Footing the bill?
(to the others)
This is the man I was
Looking for,

Is this the man?

This is your man!

DOCTOR (to MARCEL)

Can you be certain that
This is the man?
Is this the right man?

CASHIER (to HOTELIER)

This is the man
Who will pay for
The eighty-one phone calls!

(to GEORGE)

I beg of you, pay!
My poor mother is dying!

HOTELIER (to GEORGE)

She loses her job if
These bills don't get settled!
If I lose my job, then...

PHARMACIST (to DOCTOR)

This is the man
Who will pay for
The codeine and dressings!

DOCTOR (to GEORGE)

I've called the police, there
(to GEORGE)
We'll call the police if...

Are eight in the lobby!

CASHIER

The Doge's Suite!

HOTELIER

DOCTOR & PHARMACIST

Beluga caviar!
Twenty thousand lire!

GONDOLIER

You are the man,
I understand,
Who can clear my expenses.

Here they are:

Thirty thousand lire!

(All of them present GOERGE with their bills. He and
GIULIETTA attempt between them to assemble the cash
needed to clear the various accounts)

CASHIER

Forty thousand!

HOTELIER

Fifty thousand!

GEORGE (counting)

DOCTOR & PHARMACIST

Nineteen...

Twenty thousand lire!

GIULIETTA (counting)

GONDOLIER

Twenty-three...

Thirty thousand lire!

GEORGE & GIULIETTA

Forty-eight...

CASHIER

Forty thousand!

Forty-nine...

HOTELIER

Fifty thousand!

(Scraping together the last few coins he and GIULIETTA
have, GEORGE settles the last bill. MARCEL turns to
him apologetically)

MARCEL

George, I'm sorry...She's been very ill.

(The crowd now parts to admit ROSE, the cause of all the confusion, supported by a NUN. She is ailing and delirious from the gun-shot wound)

ROSE

George...George...
My life is draining...
Away...

(She collapses into an armchair and passes out. The crowd ushered away by GEORGE withdraws, MARCEL following)

MARCEL (backing out, to GEORGE)

We'd best be on our way --
We'll leave you three alone...

(He goes)

GIULIETTA

So this is Rose Vibert.
The famous Rose Vibert.

GEORGE

I have to talk to her.
Sit down and talk to her.
This can't go on another day.

(He looks at ROSE who begins to recover)

Rose, what can I do with you?
Wreaking havoc left and right --
It's absurd!
She must change her ways,
She must pass this passing phase --
Problem child...
Running wild...

Rose, I ought to strangle you!
But there's a style about that girl
That stops me in my tracks.
Heaven knows why she
Wants to waste her life with me...

And yet if she went off,
If she set herself free,
As I've told her she should...
Where on earth would I be?

GIULIETTA

You'd be lost, my friend,
And so would she...

(With a sad smile, she looks away. Dissolve to Scene Nineteen...)

ACT ONE

Scene Nineteen

(The same. About two weeks later. Late afternoon.
ROSE is propped up on a couch. GIULIETTA is
sketching her)

ROSE

...And he said to me
He really ought to buy that vineyard...

GIULIETTA

Please, Rose.
Don't you think you ought
To take a little rest
From George's foibles?

ROSE

Well, you'll have to learn to live with it.
That and all his other pet obsessions:
God and Trollope,
Other women...

GIULIETTA

Please, Rose!

(then, more serious)

George is a remarkable man.
He was there when I thought I had no one.
He saw me through my darkest moments.
He made me talk about my husband.

(thinking back)

We had been married five days...
He drove like the wind...
Not any more...

(turning back to ROSE)

But George was always there,
No matter when or where.
He stopped me feeling so alone...

(A pause)

ROSE

When did you meet him?

GIULIETTA

One evening at Harry's bar --
He wore a silver tie pin
And a smile that was even brighter...

(She smiles. ROSE returns the smile)

ROSE

I know that tie pin --
It catches on everything!

GIULIETTA

And as for all those paint rags...

ROSE
Heaven help us!

BOTH
We deserve a medal!

(BOTH laugh. A bond seems to be developing between them. ROSE glances about the room, which is strewn with the debris of GEORGE's occupation)

ROSE
Nice to see that George has settled in:
Fifteen novels on the go, as always!
Used to drive me to distraction...

GIULIETTA
Please, Rose!

(then, with a smile)

Last year he forgot my birthday,
So I rearranged his bookmarks...

(They laugh again. GEORGE wanders in)

ROSE
George dear, we're talking --
We don't need you hovering.

GIULIETTA
My darling, you're completely right --

(to GEORGE)

We're doing fine without you.

GEORGE (smiles)
I get the picture.
Condemn me to solitude!

ROSE
You'll find some things to keep you occupied.

GIULIETTA
We'll call you if we need you!

(GEORGE leaves)

ROSE & GIULIETTA
Time and light are fading --
Shouldn't we make the most
Of every precious moment?
Life is sweet and slow and still
And perfect!
All the more, now our man George
Has brought the two of us together!

(Dissolve to Scene Twenty...)

ACT ONE

Scene Twenty

(Beside a canal in Venice. Daytime. GEORGE reads a letter and is clearly disturbed by the contents. ROSE, her arm still in a sling, joins him)

ROSE

I never imagined she'd be like that --
Your lady friend comes as a sweet surprise...
A wonderfully sweet surprise...

GEORGE

Take a deep breath and prepare yourself...
I've been such a trusting fool...
Those wretched investments I made
Have gone down the drain...
After today, there'll be no more champagne...
The ways of the world are cruel...

ROSE

If I ask a question,
Will you promise...?
You must promise...
That the answer to my question is "yes"...

GEORGE

Yes, I'll say yes...

ROSE

Take a deep breath and prepare yourself...
My mind is in such a mess...
But really, George,
All that I wanted to ask was this:
Would you be willing to marry me?

GEORGE

I've already told you.
Yes.

(A beat. They embrace. Dissolve to Scene Twenty-One...)

ACT ONE

Scene Twenty-One

(A registry office in Venice. The wedding of GEORGE and ROSE. GEORGE, ROSE, MARCEL, a REGISTRAR and various GUESTS. We cut in at the very end of the ceremony)

REGISTRAR

"...I now pronounce you man and wife."

(General merriment. MARCEL steps forward and kisses both of them)

MARCEL

My dears, congratulations!

GUEST 1

Here's to the happy couple!

MARCEL

Here's to happy days!
And even better nights!

GUEST 2

You lucky man!

GEORGE (turning to ROSE, with a grin)

Well, now we've done it!

ROSE

And, oh, what fun it was...

GIULIETTA (advancing on ROSE)

And now I claim my best man's rights!

(And with that she kisses ROSE full and passionate on the lips. All look on. Reactions vary, but GEORGE is clearly highly delighted. He claps his hands and exclaims:)

GEORGE

Bravo, bravo!

(Dissolve to Scene Twenty-Two...)

ACT ONE

Scene Twenty-Two

(A military encampment in the Malayan jungle. Some months later. Evening. ALEX composing a letter)

ALEX (deadpan)

"News takes time to reach us here.
So you're married.
How time flies.
And George will be a father soon.
That was more of a surprise.
Perhaps one day we'll meet again,
If I ever leave the army..."

(He breaks off)

Live or perish
In its flame,
Love will never,
Never let you
Be the same...

(The frozen image of GEORGE, ROSE, and GIULIETTA, in tryptich, disappears from view, leaving ALEX alone)

Love will never,
Never let you
Be the same!

(He goes)

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

Scene One

Orchestral Introduction to Act II

(A theatre in Paris. Some 12 years later. View from backstage. A performance of Turgenev's A Month in the Country, a triumphant last night. ROSE, now 39, is alone on stage, starring as NATALIA PETROVNA)

NATALIA (ROSE)

Natalia Petrovna.... Unhappy woman, for the first time in your life...you are in love.

(Cut to the end of the play. Tumultuous applause ringing in her ears, ROSE comes off stage and makes her way through a throng of backstage visitors, to her dressing room. MARCEL pushes to the fore and embraces her)

MARCEL

If Turgenev were here
He'd order champagne!
A triumph, my dear!

ROSE

What a night to end with...

MARCEL

Rose, you were incredible!

ROSE

They seemed to like it...

MARCEL

I have never heard a crowd
Make a noise like that!

A PASSING VISITOR (clapping MARCEL on the shoulder)

It's your best production!

MARCEL (to ROSE, continuing)

Are we in the mood
For debauchery and food?

ROSE

Marcel, you are a dear
But a most forgetful man!
I've told you that I plan
To drive through the country.

(We have by this time reached the dressing room. VISITORS and ADMIRERS cluster in the room offering congratulations)

VISITORS (severally)

Well done, darling...

Well done you...

ROSE (to MARCEL, continuing)
Have a lovely night!
Come and see me when you can.

(She turns to HUGO LE MEUNIER, her young current admirer, who is at her heels)

Now come along, Hugo.

HUGO
I'm ready, don't worry.
I've done all the packing,
There's no need to hurry.

GUEST 1
Tonight was a wonder!

GUEST 2
A soaring sensation!

ROSE
The best thing is having
My friends' admiration.

(Silence falls as MARCEL begins his encomium)

MARCEL
The perfect leading lady:
Unique and true and towering!
Magnetic, overpowering!
The star the crowds adore!
If they could only know you:
Your humor and humility...
Your strength and your fragility...
They'd love you even more...

Tonight was a wonder!
All the dreams we've worked for
Have come true!
My shining leading lady!
Bravo, bravo, bravo!
I owe so much to you.

(MARCEL now beckons forward a figure lurking in the background. It is the 30-year-old ALEX)

MARCEL
Now, to top it
All, you'll never guess
Who's turned up --
You'll never recognize him!
Twelve years on and still as handsome...

ROSE (oblivious)
Later --
Don't I ever get a minute to myself?
I'll see him later.

(She turns, sees ALEX)

Alex!

(to MARCEL)

It's Alex!

(to ALEX)

How long have you been standing there?

(to MARCEL)

You are a fool!
You should have told me!

(to ALEX)

Come on, let me see you!

ALEX
You were amazing!
Now that's more like an audience!
This time I must have been the only one
Who didn't throw you roses!

ROSE
Now Hugo, be a dear
And get our guest an armagnac.
It's on the bottom shelf --
Why not have one yourself?

(She turns to ALEX, smiles, lost for words)

Where to start?

ALEX
It's been so long...

ROSE
Come, have a seat and tell me all your news!

ALEX
Let me see...

ROSE
George will love to hear it all!

ALEX
How is my uncle?

ROSE
He's at the house in Pau with Jenny.
They really love it.
I can't wait
To leave all this and be with them again!
No more stuffy dressing rooms!

(to HUGO)

Tell Jean-Michel to bring my car round.

(back to ALEX)

We leave this evening.

(then, on impulse)

It's such a long and lonely journey --
Why not come with me...?

ALEX (after a pause)
Are you sure you want me to accept?

(No reply)

Very well, then.
I accept.

(Still no reply. ALEX smiles)

Here. Have some armagnac.

(She drinks and returns the glass. He too takes a sip.
ROSE breaks the moment with:)

ROSE
Hugo, I'm afraid that your trip is cancelled.
ALEX (to ROSE)
Let me just make a very quick phone call.

HUGO
I know how it is with old friends...

ROSE (to HUGO)
Well, join us by train in a week.

(Attention focuses on ALEX telephoning)

ALEX (into the phone)
Janet?
Janet, it's me here.
Look, I don't think I can make it.
It's not that I don't love you, but...

(At which point we realize that she has hung up. ROSE
catches his eye and smiles)

ALEX
So who exactly is this Hugo?

ROSE
So who exactly is this Janet?

(Both laugh. Dissolve to Scene Two...)

ACT TWO

Scene Two

(Outside the stage door at the theatre. A little later. The wall is covered with posters of ROSE. ROSE and ALEX appear)

ROSE (looking up at the posters)

Have I changed?

ALEX

No, not at all.

ROSE

You're too polite.

This face has had its day.

ALEX

Don't be so silly!

ROSE

Is it "General Alex" yet?

ALEX

I hardly think so.

ROSE

Two weeks without a script or camera!

I can't believe it!

And then another madcap movie...

(a throwaway)

With Monsieur Cocteau...

George is sweet.

He says I'm like his favorite Jurancon:

Very strong and beautiful --

But hardly very sweet or subtle,

and not too heady...

ALEX

His head must be extremely strong, then --

I'm drunk already!

What a life!

ROSE

You're telling me!

ALEX

What does Jenny make of all this fame?

ROSE

Ask her yourself.

ALEX

Do you think I ought to come?

ROSE

My darling, you've become so bourgeois --

We'll have to change that!

(ALEX moves towards her and attempts to kiss her)

The same old Alex...
I should be flattered...
You're never one to let a chance slip by...

ALEX
I'll never understand you till the day I die...

BOTH
I'm sorry...

(They look at each other and smile. Dissolve to Scene Three...)

ACT TWO
Scene Three

(The terrace at Pau. We discover GEORGE, now in his seventies, is urging his 12-year-old daughter, JENNY, to go to bed)

JENNY
I think by now I'm old enough
To put myself to bed.
Why don't you go and forge
Another masterpiece instead?

GEORGE
Oh, Jenny, you're a monster!
I should have had a son!
It seems, alas, a father's lot...

BOTH (she chiming in, as it is a line she has heard often before)
...Is not a happy one!

JENNY
You know I need my donkey.

GEORGE
Why can't you just count sheep?

(hands her the animal)

All right, you have your donkey --
Now will you go to sleep?

JENNY
I'm really thrilled for Mummy!
Weren't they wonderful reviews?
She'll be the toast of Paris!
Mummy's always in the news!

GEORGE
You're right, it is amazing
How the work keeps flooding in,
With appearances in London
And movies in Berlin.

JENNY

Now off you go to bed --
I'll wake you when I hear the car!

GEORGE

Look, Jenny, go to bed --
God, what a chatterbox you are!

(She relents and goes off to bed. GEORGE sits on the terrace, musing)

Jenny,
You're a miracle!
Is there nothing you conceal?
Jenny,
You astonish me!
Never hiding
What you feel...

Other pleasures...
And I've known many...
Afternoons
In warm Venetian squares,
Brief encounters,
Long siestas...
Pleasures old and new
Can't compare with you.
You amaze me!
Where did you come from?
You do things
Champagne could never do.
Crystal winters,
Crimson summers...
Other pleasures --
I would trade them all
For you.

Pleasures old and new
Can't compare with you...

Wild mimosa...
The scent of evening...
Shuttered rooms
With sunlight breaking through...
Crazy soirees...
Lazy Sundays...
Other pleasures...
I would trade them all
For you.

Sailing off
In the night
On a silver lake...
Taking more
From this life
Than I ought to take...
Other pleasures...
I would trade them all

For you.

(As he is about to doze off, JENNY rushes in)

JENNY

Quickly!

She's here now!

Don't be an old lazybones!

GEORGE (coming to and looking at his watch)

Good Lord!

The time!

For once she's managed

To arrive ahead of schedule!

(ROSE enters with luggage. JENNY rushes over to her.
Embraces and hellos)

ROSE (to JENNY, producing a gift-wrapped present)

Wait till you see

What I've got for you,

Darling.

(hugs her, then turns to GEORGE)

And wait till you see

What I've got for you...

(And in comes ALEX. Stunned, he surveys the old,
familiar scene and finally sees GEORGE)

ALEX

I don't believe this...

ROSE (echoing him)

I don't believe this...

GEORGE (struggling with his emotions)

Good God, I wondered what had happened to you!

Rose, you really should have let me know!

(to ALEX)

Dear boy, you must meet Jenny!

ALEX

Hello, cousin.

Nice to meet you.

JENNY

So you're the soldier?

ROSE

This is Alex.

You remember.

JENNY

Yes, of course.

ROSE (to GEORGE)
He saw my last performance.

ALEX
She really was phenomenal.

JENNY
"A truly blazing star"!

GEORGE, JENNY, & ALEX
Rose, you're a wonder!

GEORGE
All the dreams we've worked for
Have come true!

(They go into the house. Dissolve to Scene Four...)

ACT TWO
Scene Four

(An open-air cafe in Venice. GIULIETTA alone, letter-writing)

GIULIETTA
"Big surprise:
I can't be with you this weekend.
But don't be cross --
You should thank me.
You wouldn't find me much fun.
It seems my life is one enormous drama!
Men are such a dreadful nuisance...
I'll call you when I'm me again.
C'est la vie,
C'est l'amour..."

(She stops writing and reflects her situation)

There is more to love,
So much more,
than simply making love --
That's easy.
Gazing into eyes,
Pretty eyes,
Which could be any eyes --
That's crazy.

Hands are just hands,
A face is just a face...
They come and go --
They're easy to replace...

There is more to love,
So much more,
Than moon-struck escapades --
That's nothing.

There is peace of mind,
So much peace,
In quiet company --

That's something.

Everyone but him
Seems wrong for me...
Every time I feel
There has to be
More...

If I could hear
The music I heard then,
I'd never let
It fade away again...

Now each time
Love reaches out to me,
I can only feel
There has to be
So much more
To love...

There is more to love,
So much more...

ACT TWO
Scene Five

(Terrace at Pau. A few days later. ROSE, GEORGE,
JENNY, and ALEX at the end of lunch)
GEORGE (to ALEX)
I trust you're staying for the vintage?

JENNY (to GEORGE)
Oh, he mustn't miss it!

ROSE
Alex, promise me you won't run off just yet!

JENNY
There's lots of room!

ALEX (shrugs and smiles)
I'm in no hurry --
If it won't worry you...
This could be something you'll regret!

(ROSE has been reading a letter. She suddenly bursts
out with:)

ROSE
Oh, no!
That's really disappointing!

GEORGE
What on earth's the matter?

ROSE
Giulietta won't be with us this weekend.

GEORGE

What's happened now?

ROSE

Same situation.

GEORGE

That girl's relationships
Are too involved to comprehend!

ALEX

Looks like I'll never meet your friend.

GEORGE (rising)

One day you will, old chap.

(to ROSE)

It's time I took my nap.

(looks at his watch)

Good Lord, the time has really flown!

(He leaves, ROSE also rises)

ROSE

I'd better run along.
You'll have to manage on your own!

(She goes. ALEX and JENNY are left alone. He walks
into the sunlight, JENNY watching him)

ALEX (to himself)

Part of me was always in these hills...
This is where my eyes were opened...
When life was young and we had time...
I wonder why she brought me back here...
Why invite me?
Why entice me?
Why rekindle old emotions...?

(JENNY, idly combing her hair, sings quietly to herself:)

JENNY

I am a mermaid
With golden hair...

(ALEX comes out of his day-dream, turns, and smiles)

ALEX

I've never seen one like you!

JENNY

Not all us mermaids
Have silver tails --
I have no tail at all.

ALEX

Well, I've never

Seen any mermaids
With knobby knees!
I'd say this tale
Was a touch too tall,
Maybe a touch too tall...

JENNY

Sailors would smash on
My jagged rock,
Lured by my siren's song...

ALEX

It isn't the
Song of the siren
That tortures men --
That's where your theory
Goes sadly wrong,
That's where it all goes wrong...

JENNY

I thought you'd know better.
You know nothing
About mermaids.

ALEX (wry)

You know nothing
About sailors...

JENNY

I do!
Much more than you!
If you were a sailor
And heard my song,
Would you be lured by me?

ALEX

I wouldn't be
Foolish enough to
Go near your rock --
I'd steer my galleon out to sea...

BOTH

...Lonely and lost at sea...

(GEORGE comes back, sees them, then looks around)

GEORGE (muttering to himself)

Has somebody stolen my copy of "Brave New World"?
Why can't that woman leave things alone?
My patience is wearing thin...

(He gives up the search irritated)

Sorry for barging in...

(He leaves. JENNY and ALEX exchange smiles. Dissolve
to Scene Six...)

ACT TWO

Scene Six

(Estate, farms, vineyards, countryside around Pau.
Various locations, cinematically unfolding.
A sequence of idyllic summer days, focusing on JENNY
and ALEX. They are evidently spending a lot of time
together, becoming friends. He more and more embraces
the pastoral life, becoming increasingly rustic in dress.

ALEX becomes a more and more frequent visitor to the
house at Pau.

The scene culminates at the end of a period of almost
three years, when we see ALEX meeting the now 14-year-
old JENNY.

Dissolve to Scene Seven...)

ACT TWO

Scene Seven

(Outside the house. Late afternoon. ALEX and JENNY
relaxing after a long day of walking and talking. Bored
with her reading, she steals up on him mischievously and
pins him down in a wrestling hold)

JENNY

Say the word!

Say it now!

Nice and loud!

ALEX (defeated)

What the hell, then --

Uncle!

(She frees him)

Jenny you're a monster!

You ought to be locked up!

JENNY (going into the house)

Before I am,

I think I'll dress for dinner --

You mix the drinks...

(ALEX notices ROSE who has witnessed the latter part of
their high jinks)

ALEX (looking after JENNY)

She needs a Paris education.

I've told you time and time again.

ROSE

And wouldn't that be cozy?

You could then have your very own Parisienne!

Alex, how can you even think

Of moving her away from this place?

I mean, Alex, you of all people have found

That leaving here is hard to face.

ALEX

Yes, I love it here and always will...

But Rose, it's not the views
Or the vines that keep me here...
I stay year after year
For something far deeper...
Being in this house
Makes the past seem very near...

BOTH

...When the world was a playground
All train-rides and laughter,
And love in the morning...

ROSE

...And armagnac after...

ALEX

Since leaving the army
And being around you,
I know I'm reliving
The night that I found you...

ROSE

But George...
I couldn't hurt George...
Oh Alex, you know by now
How much I love him...

ALEX

So what is it
You feel for Hugo?

ROSE

Please understand I'm not in love with him.
He's a friend, he makes me laugh...
That's all it is.
Alex, can't you see
That you mean much more to me?

Alex, that's why I won't
Play the lover with you.
What I did to you once
Wasn't easy to do --
But I only have one life,
Not two...

(Dissolve to Scene Eight...)

ACT TWO

Scene Eight

(Outside on the terrace at Pau. Early summer evening.
GEORGE alone, enjoying the evening air)
GEORGE (murmurs to himself)
What could be sweeter?
Nothing is sweeter...

(ALEX appears)

When the time comes,
The hour of darkness,
When the light
Is fading from the sky...
When that time comes,
I'll be ready.
Death can hold no fear:
I've done my living here.

Earthly pleasures...
And I've known many...
All my life
I've always lived for now.
Who needs heaven?
This is heaven...
When that time comes,
It isn't hard if you
Know how...

(ALEX and GEORGE clasp hands, then ROSE and HUGO wander in. GEORGE smiles at them)

Glass of champagne and endless sunset!
These are the times that life was made for!

ALEX (gazing at the view)
Hard to believe that I'd forgotten
Just how perfect life can be --
This magic place has rescued me!

HUGO
The only one not here is Jenny --
I might have known that she'd be late!

GEORGE
She'll be here --
We can wait...

ALEX
She said she had to "dress for dinner" --
She's talked about it half the week!
What a girl...

HUGO
Quite unique!

GEORGE
Far too advanced for rural classrooms --
She needs the education Paris offers.

ALEX
George, I am in complete agreement --
Paris is the place to learn.

(to ROSE)

I can't say I share your concern.

ROSE

The pair of you talk so much nonsense --

(to GEORGE)

She's better here and so are you.
What a pair!
Not a clue!

(JENNY now makes her 'grand entrance,' radiant in the same ball-gown which ROSE had worn fifteen years ago. She looks approvingly at the champagne)

JENNY (so sophisticated)
Veuve Cliquot...
How divine...

(ROSE and ALEX gesture at her to go back before GEORGE sees her. The shock of seeing the past revisited may this time prove too much for him. But it is too late, he turns. To their astonishment he shows no sign of remembering anything and exhibits nothing but delight at this vision)

GEORGE
I want to be
The first man you remember,
I want to be
The last man you forget.
I want to be
The one you always turn to,
I want to be
The one you won't regret.

May I be first
To say you look delightful?
May I be first
To dance you round the floor?
The very first
To see your face by moonlight?
The very first
To walk you to your door?
JENNY (playing to GEORGE)
Well, young man, I'd be delighted!
There is nothing I would rather do!
What could be a sweeter memory
Than sharing my first dance with you?

GEORGE
I want to be
The first man you remember...

JENNY
The very first
To sweep me off my feet.

GEORGE
I want to be
The one you always turn to...

JENNY

The first to make
My young heart miss a beat.

(He gently takes her in a dance hold and they tentatively
try a few steps around the terrace)

GEORGE

Seems the stars are far below us...

JENNY

The moon has never felt so close before...

(looking up at GEORGE)

Our first dance will be forever...

GEORGE

And may it lead to many more!

I want to be

The first man you remember...

JENNY

The very first
To sweep me off my feet.

GEORGE

I want to be
The one you always turn to...

JENNY

The first to make
My young heart miss a beat.

(Once again they 'take to the floor,' this time in a fuller,
more formal dance. The atmosphere is dreamlike and
beguiling, and ROSE and HUGO are drawn into the
dance. ALEX declines JENNY's attempts to draw him
into the dance as well. At the end of the sequence
GEORGE leads JENNY back to his seat, and the dance
dissolves)

GEORGE

I want to be
The one you always turn to,
I want to be
The one you won't regret...

GOERGE & JENNY

The very first...
The very first...

(Dissolve to Scene Nine...)

ACT TWO

Scene Nine

(The same. Two hours later, after dinner. JENNY and

ALEX alone. She is puzzled by the earlier alarm which greeted her arrival)

JENNY

Now what on earth
Was all that shaking heads for?
Grown-ups are strange --
They're not grown up at all!

ALEX

That dress belonged to George's first wife...
Someone should have said before tonight...
Years ago your mother wore it --
Your father fainted at the sight...

JENNY

Will you be last
To dance with me this evening!
One final dance
Before you run away!

ALEX

It's very late --
But since it's you who's asking,
One final dance
Would crown the perfect day!

(They dance. JENNY begins to hold ALEX in an intimate adult way, when ROSE interrupts them)

ROSE

You shameless pair,
So this is what you're up to.

ALEX

Our game is up --
We might as well come clean!

(He shrugs to JENNY, kisses both goodnight and leaves. JENNY looks after him intently. Then turns to ROSE)

JENNY

He is the first
To make me feel a woman...
The very first
To make me fall in love...

(ROSE remains silent, studying her face)

The very first...
The very first...

(JENNY turns away from her mother. Their pose remains. Dissolve to Scene Ten...)

ACT TWO

Scene Ten

(The vineyard at Pau. Summer evening. HUGO, ALEX, and several WORKMEN relaxing with wine after a day

of hard manual labor: they have been building a stone wall in the vineyard. ROSE and GEORGE have come down to join them)

LABORER 1

Now that's what I call a wall!

LABORER 2

It's a masterpiece!

ALEX

It's Picasso!

JENNY

Except it's straight...

GEORGE

Hugo, we should call you Samson!

JENNY

He has many talents.

GEORGE (to ALEX)

How you didn't break your back I'll never know!

ALEX

No, nor will I!

HUGO

Thank God for Sundays!

ALEX (appraising their work)

Not bad for one day's work.

ALL

Our wall will be the talk of Pau!

ROSE

Two more days, then off to Paris.

ALEX

And a school for Jenny.

HUGO

Didn't Jenny look a picture in that dress?

ALEX

Indeed she did.

GEORGE

So like her mother...

Shades of another time...

Of vintage nights --

But I digress...

(ROSE and ALEX exchange glances. Did he recognize the dress all along? Had he really ever forgotten it?

GEORGE offers no explanation, but slowly moves off)

Good Lord, the time!
Ah well, God bless...

(He leaves with JENNY. ALL begin to follow except
ROSE and ALEX. A beat. ROSE looks at ALEX)

ROSE
Alex, this has gone on long enough --
What I mean is you and Jenny.

HUGO (leaving)
I'll be off now...
See you both tomorrow...

(He leaves. ROSE continues, more kindly)

ROSE
Since you came, she's truly blossomed --
But, my friend, a flower is fragile...
Heaven help you if you hurt her...

ALEX
Why all this concern?
God, you're hardly ever here!
Your whole life is your career,
And nothing else matters.

ROSE
My career?
We wouldn't eat if I had no career.
You know that George lost everything.
I do it all for George and Jenny.
I thought you knew that.

ALEX
All right, I'm sorry.

ROSE
Can't you see?
What we three have is something very rare.
In a word, it's happiness.
Nothing in the world will ever
Tear apart the sweet existence
We have spent a lifetime building!

ALEX
Rose, let me explain to you...
Yes, I can't deny the feelings that I have...
But what's wrong with that?

(He breaks off. How to convince her?)

Rose, I'd never harm the girl...

ROSE
You were once prepared to do
A lot of harm to me...

ALEX

You cannot compare
This with our insane affair...
What I wanted from you
Was both body and soul...

ROSE

Aren't you trying to play
An identical role?

ALEX (face to face)
This is one thing that I will control.

(Dissolve to Scene Eleven...)

ACT TWO

Scene Eleven

(ALEX retraces with JENNY the journey he first made
with ROSE)

JENNY

Do you remember the first time you fell in love?
Did it make you happy or sad?
Did you waste away and lie awake all night?

ALEX

Yes, I remember...
I cannot forget...
It's haunted my life since then...

(A pause. Both remain lost in thought; then, not without
calculation)

JENNY

"Pas de tendresse
Et pas de joie,
Loin d'ici,
Loin de toi.

Rien de plus triste
Que mes soupirs,
Lorsque vient le jour
Ou il me faut partir..."

(ALEX is moved, only now recognizing the melody)

ALEX

How do you know that?

JENNY

Mummy used to sing it to me.
That was her love song.
Her very first love song...

(She turns and looks at him)

Love,
Love changes everything:
How you feel and
What you do...

What...
What would you say to me,
If I told you
I loved you...?

ALEX (with difficulty)
Then I'd have to say to you:
You are bright and sweet and foolish...
Yes, love,
Love changes everything,
But not always
For the best --
Love can sometimes
Be a most
Unwelcome guest...

JENNY
You don't believe that.
You know you're fooling yourself.
Why not be honest?

(moving closer)

Alex,
Be honest...

(She kisses him on the mouth. He allows the kiss to happen. Dissolve to Scene Twelve...)

ACT TWO
Scene Twelve

(In the middle of the night. A room in the house.
GEORGE discovered typing)
GEORGE (to himself, as he types)
"...Beluga caviar...
My finest vintage champagne...
And then a night of dance...
My ashes to be scattered
Among the vines at sunset..."

(ROSE enters, knows immediately what he is doing and interrupts)

ROSE
Oh, do stop planning your wake!
You're bound to outlive us all!

GEORGE (with a twinkle)
"...My funeral oration to be written by Giulietta
Trapani..."

(then, suddenly serious, looks up)

Rose, we should talk --
I've got something on my mind.
It's Jenny,
Jenny and Alex --

The whole thing's unnatural
For a girl of her age...

ROSE

You needn't be anxious:
He's explained all this.
And she's no longer a child.
It's just that he's younger
And you're getting jealous.
Am I right?
Anyway, I'm filming in Paris,
And it's her birthday --
We promised we would take her to the circus --
George, you know that I'm right.

GEORGE

Maybe you're right...
Look, you're free to keep your lover
And your noisy Paris clique.
A man who's pushing eighty
Is not exactly chic...
But Jenny's all I have now --
Don't let him take her from me...

ROSE

My darling George, I love you!
How dramatic can you be!

GEORGE

You think that I'm dramatic?
Wait.
If we don't take some action,
We'll be too late...

ACT TWO

Scene Thirteen

(A circus in Paris. JENNY's 15th birthday. The performance is in full swing. We see GEORGE, ROSE, ALEX, and JENNY and at the same time they show that they are themselves watching.

We are greeted by a whirlwind of activity: clowns, jugglers, tumblers perform under the streamers and gaudy lights. Various of the CIRCUS PERFORMERS, led by a CHANTEUSE in exaggerated make-up and costume, strike up a song as an accompaniment -- part hymn in praise of daring, part invitation for a volunteer from the audience.

At certain points the CHANTEUSE has the CIRCUS AUDIENCE joining in with the song)

CHORUS

Take the journey of a lifetime!
It's only just a drum-roll away!
On the journey of a lifetime
Every day's a high-wire day!

CHANTEUSE

If you've got what it takes,
The stars and streamers are yours!
Take a risk in the ring
And feel the thrill of applause!

(Drum-roll. A KNIFE-THROWER appears and with his ASSISTANT enters the ring. Applause)

If you reach
For the moon,
If you aim
For the sky,
Then the moon
And the sky
Can be yours --
Come on and try!

There's a prize
To be won,
Take a risk,
Take a ride,
Right this way,
Have a go,
Try your luck --
And step inside!

If you reach
For the moon,
If you aim
For the sky,
Then the moon
And the sky
Can be yours --
Come on and try!

(A volunteer is now being sought for the KNIFE-THROWER's act. Attention focuses on JENNY and ALEX, seated side by side. She asks him to step forward, and when eventually he does, it is much to the annoyance of GEORGE. ALEX is led away by the ASSISTANT)

CHORUS

Take the journey of a lifetime!
It's only just a drum-roll away!
On the journey of a lifetime
Every day's a high-wire day!

CHANTEUSE

If you've got what it takes,
The stars and streamers are yours!
Take a risk in the ring
And win the thrill of applause!

(ALEX now reappears clad in a sequined circus jacket. He takes up his position and duly braves the hail of knives. The trick is treated with great approval by all but GEORGE, who is evidently becoming increasingly distressed by JENNY's obsession for his nephew. As the applause fades the song starts up once again)

If you reach
For the moon,
If you aim
For the sky,
Then the moon
And the sky
Can be yours --
Come on and try!

There's a prize
To be won,
Take a risk,
Take a ride,
Right this way,
Have a go,
Try your luck --
And step inside!

(ALEX re-emerges, removing his costume. Grinning, he returns to his seat, where he is greeted with an ecstatic embrace from JENNY. The next act is now arriving. JENNY and ALEX are whispering and laughing together. Finally losing his temper, GEORGE breaks in:)

GEORGE
I came to watch the circus
Not an overgrown child!
So either watch the circus
Or just leave us in peace!

ROSE
Don't get moody.
You were young once.
Take no notice.

JENNY
We weren't doing anything. We were only talking.

ALEX
I'd better go.

(to JENNY)

I'll come and see you later.

(leaving)

Enjoy the show...

(JENNY goes after him)

JENNY
Why's he leaving?

(to GEORGE)

You made him go...

After all, I am fifteen...

(Dissolve to Scene Fourteen...)

ACT TWO

Scene Fourteen

(Bare stage. ALEX, JENNY, ROSE, and GEORGE are singled out in the darkness. At some points they sing separately, at some points together, but throughout they do not acknowledge each others' presence)

ALEX

Love, and your
World can become
A madhouse.
Love and your

JENNY

Love
World can become
A circus.
Has turned my
World around.
Love turns around...
And my
World now turns round
Jenny, your
Alex...
Love is a
Drug that I dare
Not take, a
ROSE

Love should not
Drug to make me mad...
Be used as a weapon.
Why, Alex,
Why can't you
Rose, I'd never
See it's George you're...?
Harm the girl...

ALEX, JENNY & ROSE

Breaking
And burning...

GEORGE

Love is a knife.
It's a curse.
A cancer.
Breaking
To love is to
And bleeding...
Hate letting
Go...

In the name of
Jenny, I can
Love...
Never share your
Love...

ALEX, JENNY, ROSE & GEORGE

And I'm falling,

I am suddenly falling,
And my story
Is older than the stars...
ALEX, JENNY, & ROSE

GEORGE
Suddenly falling,
Suddenly falling,
I can feel myself falling...
I can feel myself falling...
Down into this
In this
Madhouse
Madhouse
Of love...
Of love...
(Dissolve to Scene Fifteen...)

ACT TWO
Scene Fifteen

(JENNY's bedroom, GEORGE's Paris flat. Later the same night. ALEX discovered saying his promised goodnight to JENNY)

ALEX
Come on, Jenny.
That's enough now.
Jenny, even mermaids
Have to sleep.

JENNY
I am a mermaid
With golden hair...

ALEX
Come on, Jenny.
Be a good girl.

JENNY (suddenly serious)
Alex, let me hold you...
There's so much I want to say...

(She opens the covers. ALEX tentatively gets into bed beside her)

I want you here forever,
In my arms and in my life,
To belong to you entirely...
You know we're not just cousins...

ALEX (getting up)
We are just cousins, Jenny,
And you're fifteen years old.

JENNY (pulling him back)
It's not as if I don't know passion
From living in our house...
I've learnt that feelings can run deep...

ALEX

We'll talk tomorrow --
Go to sleep.

(Passing of time. JENNY is now asleep. ALEX
contemplates returning to JENNY's side)

Taking more...
Than I ought to take...

(snapping out of his reverie)

What are you doing?
Don't even think it...
You have no right to feel this way,
And yet...
I love her, and I must not love her...
I wish to God we'd never met...
She ought to be
The last one I should think of...

(We have become aware of GEORGE climbing the stairs)

GEORGE

I know he's
Up there with her now...

ALEX

She ought to be
The last one I should love...

GEORGE

If he is,
My God, I'll kill him...

ALEX

She ought to be
The last one I should care for...

GEORGE

I should have
Stopped this long ago...

ALEX

The very last...

(In turmoil, ALEX breaks off. GEORGE meanwhile has
begun to make his way across the landing towards
JENNY's bedroom, increasingly agitated)

GEORGE

Selfish little cradle-snatcher...
Twisted, rotten, heartless monster...
Filthy, filthy callous bastard...

(He reaches the bedroom door, breathless. ALEX
freezes hearing GEORGE outside the door)

I was right...

He's in there...
There he is...
He's in there...

Jenny, my Jenny,
I can't let him take you,
I...

(Surprised by his weakness, he staggers a pace, attempts to regain himself, then suddenly collapses to the floor. ALEX hears the noise and opens the bedroom door. He sees GEORGE's body and immediately stoops down to examine it. In vain)

ALEX
George...George...

(ROSE and HUGO, both in dressing gowns, now appear from ROSE's bedroom)

ALEX
I was saying goodnight to Jenny,
When I heard a noise in the passage...

(looking down at the body)

He must have fallen
And had a heart attack.

HUGO (to ROSE who is bending down to attempt to revive GEORGE)
No, it's hopeless...

ROSE
He was listening --
Jenny mustn't know.
If she asks you,
Say he died while sitting by the fire --
Help me to move him in there.

(As they start to move the body, JENNY appears in the doorway. OTHERS turn to look at her, but no one can speak. Dissolve to Scene Sixteen...)

ACT TWO
Scene Sixteen

(Farmland around Pau. A large gathering at GEORGE's wake. GIULIETTA addresses the assembled company which includes ALEX, JENNY, ROSE, MARCEL and an odd mixture of estate workers and GEORGE's famous friends)

GIULIETTA
George was an original man.
He did not want to change human life.
He rejoiced in the way we are made.
He did not look forward to heaven --
He was happy with the earth.
He loved and understood

The flesh, food, wine, love...
He lived for today, and firmly believed:

If death were given a voice,
That voice would scream through the sky:
Live while you may for I am coming...

So...

Hand me the wine and the dice,
I want my carnival now,
While I have thirst and lust for living!

So gather all you can reap,
Before you're under the plow --
The hand of death is unforgiving!

Hand me the wine and the dice,
While there are grapes on the vine --
Life is a round of endless pleasures!

The end is always in sight,
But it tastes better with wine --
Why pour your life in tiny measures?

Hand me the wine and the dice,
The time is racing away --
There's not a taste that's not worth trying!

And if tomorrow it ends,
I won't have wasted today --
I will have lived when I am dying!

(ROSE now addresses the assembled throng, clasping in
her hands the urn holding GEORGE's ashes)

ROSE

Dear friends and neighbors.... If what I am doing seems
strange to you, I must remind you that I am carrying out the
wishes of my husband. He made me promise to strew his
ashes among the vines he loved. He asked that everyone
should drink his wine, that there should be music and
dancing...

(The guests are led away by ROSE and an impromptu
dance begins. JENNY and ALEX appear on the edge of
the throng)

ALEX

Why don't you dance with me?

JENNY (turning away)

How can you think of dancing?

ALEX

George used to say: you can have more than one emotion at
the same time. The one makes the other more acute and
then it cures it.

(The dance begins in earnest, becoming increasingly wild and bacchanalian)

GIULIETTA & CHORUS

Hand me the wine and the dice,
While there are grapes on the vine --
Life is a round of endless pleasures!

The end is always in sight,
But it tastes better with wine --
Why pour your life in tiny measures?

Hand me the wine and the dice,
I want my carnival now,
While I have thirst and lust for living!

So gather all you can reap,
Before you're under the plow --
The hand of death is unforgiving!

(ALEX and GIULIETTA finally meet in the midst of the dance)

GIULIETTA

You must be the famous Alex!

ALEX

You must be Giulietta!

GIULIETTA

Tell me, are you still shooting women?

CHORUS

Hand me the wine and the dice!

ALEX

Rose never could keep a secret.

GIULIETTA

Rose and I hide nothing.

ALEX

I heard you got on well together...

GIULIETTA

Death says: live while you may, for I am coming! Do you dance with women of your own age?

(He whirls her into the dance, which is now reaching its frenzied climax, swirling, almost dangerous)

CHORUS

Hand me the wine and the dice,
The time is racing away --
There's not a taste that's not worth trying!

And if tomorrow it ends,
I won't have wasted today --
I will have lived when I am dying!

(GIULIETTA and ALEX leave the dance. ROSE breaks down in tears and rushes away)

Hand me the wine and the dice,
I want my carnival now,
While I have thirst and lust for living!
So gather all you can reap,
Before you're under the plow --
Life is a round
Of flesh, food, wine, love...

(GIULIETTA and ALEX are strolling together some way off)

ALEX (a little drunk)
Got the feeling George is watching us --
Only he could make a wake this joyous!
Let's go back and try a tango!

GIULIETTA
Later.
Don't you think a quiet stroll
Would be a little more inviting?

ALEX
Your idea sounds far more promising --
There's a barn that George was fond of sketching.
Take my word:
You ought to see it...

(He is interrupted by GIULIETTA's kiss. Slightly stunned, he returns her kiss, they leave together; from the shadows the figure of JENNY emerges, following them. Dissolve to Scene Seventeen...)

ACT TWO
Scene Seventeen

(The deserted vineyard. ROSE has returned to the scene of the wake, still crying. HUGO has been trying to comfort her)

HUGO
Don't cry, Rose.
You'll always have wonderful memories.

ROSE
Hugo, go away.
Leave me alone.
I mean it.

(At a loss, he shrugs; MARCEL arrives and urges HUGO to leave them alone. HUGO departs)

MARCEL
George would have been so proud of you!
The bravest thing you've done!
Tonight was a wonder!
You're a wonder...

(ROSE sobs convulsively)

Rose, you mustn't cry like this.
George would not have wanted that...

ROSE
Oh God, I miss him so...

MARCEL
Come on, show me a smile...

(Together they walk slowly back into the house. Dissolve
to Scene Eighteen...)

ACT TWO
Scene Eighteen

(A hayloft in the barn. Nearly dawn. GIULIETTA and
ALEX lying in the hay. She is startled by a noise. In the
darkness the figure of JENNY retreats and disappears
down the ladder)

GIULIETTA
What was that?
ALEX (sitting up)
What?

GIULIETTA
There.
Listen.

ALEX (gets up and looks around)
There's nothing there. I suppose it must have been a rat.

GIULIETTA
So what do you propose to do, then?
Get married while she's still at school?
Tell her now.
Don't be cruel.

ALEX
There has to be a way to say it...
Common sense can be so cold...

GIULIETTA
Common sense
Says: be bold...

ALEX
Yes, it's a crime to make her love me --
But surely, it's just as bad to leave her...
And yet, that can be the only answer --
The whole damn thing's got out of hand...

GIULIETTA
The only crime that I'm aware of
Would be to let our moment die --
Tell her now.
Tell her why.

"A memory of a happy moment,
That's what this time will one day be" --
Tell her that.
Then you're free.

ALEX
Will you still be here when I get back?

GIULIETTA
Yes. But don't be too long, Alex. Don't be too long.

(He goes. Dissolve to Scene Nineteen...)

ACT TWO
Scene Nineteen

(Outside the house. Dawn. A huge trestle-table strewn
with party debris. JENNY and ALEX alone. He has
broken the news of his departure)

ALEX
Jenny, this is just as hard for me...
What we feel is wrong...
Unnatural...
Our bodies must not rule our minds...
You're much too young to understand your feelings...
Can't you see?
This has to finish...

JENNY
All right, I heard you.
Now please be quiet.
This needs some thinking.

ALEX
When you're older you will thank me...
Come on, Jenny...
Little mermaid...

JENNY
You say that it's unnatural.
What exactly does that mean?
When you first met my mother
You were only seventeen.

The thing that is unnatural
Is to keep your feelings in.
And lying to yourself must
Be by far the greatest sin.
Oh yes, it's all too easy
To pretend I don't exist...

ALEX
Oh Jenny, can't you see that
There are things we must resist?

(She cuts him short)

JENNY

Look, I think I know the reason
You're so keen for this to end --
I saw what you were doing
With your new Italian "friend".
You're the one who seems to
Let your body rule your mind.
If that's what being grown-up means
Then please leave me behind.

ALEX

If my body really ruled me,
Then we both know all too well
You'd end up with a lover
Locked inside a prison cell...

JENNY

No one said that Romeo
Was a monster --
Why are you?
I'm as old as Juliet...
What...
What are you frightened of?
When you know...
You know you love me...
And love,
Love changes everything,
Turns the tide back,
Breaks the rules...

ALEX

Jenny, we're behaving like a pair of fools...

JENNY

Are you going to marry her?
Giulietta...
Have you said?

(ALEX cannot reply)

Because...
If you don't marry her...
Would you marry me instead...?

(by now openly crying)

Why...
Why can't you wait for me...?
Three years is not a lifetime...

(She cannot continue. ROSE appears in the doorway)

ROSE (to JENNY, quietly)
Darling, I just need a moment...
I must have a word with Alex...

(JENNY runs away in the garden. ROSE approaches and
pours wine for herself and ALEX)

I hear you're leaving us...

Our lives are changing yet again...
I came to say goodbye...
Good luck...
Come back and see us now and then...

(She hands a glass to him)

Anything but lonely,
Anything but empty rooms.
There's so much in life to share --
What's the sense when no one else is there?
Anything but lonely,
Anything but only me.
Quiet years in too much space:
That's the thing that's hard to face,
And...

You have a right to go,
But you should also know
That I won't be alone for long.

Long days with nothing said
Are not what lie ahead --
I'm sorry, but I'm not that strong...

Anything but lonely,
Anything but passing time.
Lonely's what I'll never be,
While there's still some life in me,
And...

I'm still young, don't forget.
It isn't over yet --
So many hearts for me to thrill.

If you're not here to say
How good I look each day,
I'll have to find someone who will...

Anything but lonely,
Anything but empty rooms.
There's so much in life to share --
What's the sense when no one else is there...?

(He replaces his glass on the table and moves away)

Just promise one thing...

ALEX
All right.
What is it?

ROSE
Don't ask me questions...
You must promise first...

ALEX
I can't.
I must know what it is.

ROSE

Don't leave me!

(JENNY reappears. ALEX turns and leaves them.
JENNY rushes to her mother and they embrace, and go
into the house.

GIULIETTA appears and sits at the table. ALEX re-
enters. They look at one another)

GIULIETTA

It won't be long
Before Jenny's a woman.
What then?

(No reply)

"Hand me the wine and the dice"...

(They move towards one another)

BOTH

Love will never,
Never let you
Be the same...

ALEX

Love will never,
Never let you
Be the same!

(They embrace again)

END OF ACT TWO