

IN A TIGHT SPOT

a two act play by
Louis Aragon

taken from
The Libertine

translated from the French by
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transcribed for radio by
Richard Francis

CAST (in order of appearance):

Voice #1

Narrator

Lumberjack 1

Lumberjack 2

Lumberjack 3

Lumberjack 4

Lumberjack 5

Lumberjack 6

Speaker (*perhaps a lightly-treated-enough-to-just-distinguish variation of young man*)

Olympia/Madame Tosini

Young Man/Monsieur Givre/Monsieur Pierre/Frederic

Melanie/Mademoiselle Aumuse/Phantom Voice

Man

Arc Lamp

Innkeeper/Monsieur Trapeze/Monsieur Tontaine

Lamp Lighter

Goatherd

Second man

Postman

Betsy the maid

Fairy 1

Fairy 2

Fairy 3

Gentle

Cotton

Madness

Voice 2

(voice 1, a loud, curt, authoritarian voice announcing:)

In a tight spot ... The Prologue

(narrator, friendlier, to sounds of forest, “timber”, and falling trees:)

A forest.

Lumber-jacks are felling fir trees.

This group of six has paused for a cigarette break.

(lumber-jack 1:)

Did you see in the papers?

(lumber-jack 2:)

You can't believe them.

(lumber-jack 3:)

It's money down the drain.

(lumber-jack 4:)

Let him go on.

(lumber-jack 5:)

Liars and Company, Limited.

(lumber-jack 6:)

Papers are for women now they've given up going to church.

(lumber-jack 5:)

The print makes your fingers black, you'd think ...

(lumber-jack 4:)

Come on, let him speak.

(lumber-jack 1:)

Yesterday's papers.

(lumber-jack 3:)

Yesterday and today: soft boiled eggs.

(lumber-jack 4:)

But ...

(lumber-jack 5:)

They should have their bellies slit open.

(lumber-jack 6:)

It's like politics.

(lumber-jack 2:)

Politics is basically just news items like all the rest.

(lumber-jack 3:)

Some people are interested in them:
shagged-out old fools.

(lumber-jack 4:)

But ...

(lumber-jack 5:)

Shut it you bleating old windbag.

(lumber-jack 6:)

For goodness sake let him speak.

(lumber-jack 2:)

Yes, what's in the papers?

(lumber-jack 3, 4, 5, 6 together:)

In yesterday's papers.

(lumber-jack 1:)

I shan't tell you after all this.

(cry of "timber" in distance and the loud crash of falling tree)

(narrator:)

The lumber jacks extinguish their cigarette butts,
rise from their break and draw back into the wings.

(voice 1:)

Act one.

(narrator:)

A mostly-naked man steps out in front of the curtain.

He *is* wearing a top hat,
down-at-heel boots with no laces,
a collar with frayed edges and a pink tie.
He steps forward to the prompt-box
holding a straw broom in his hand.

(speaker to orchestra:)

Orchestra, lets have a little tune:
do, re, mi, fa, sol, something rather soothing,
like a bird skimming over water before a storm.

(then provide a sense of him turning to address audience)

Once again the heart of man:
lights dimmed, we'll have fascinating voices,
moon, stars and lovers with fingers entwined.

We'll be rather sentimental than boiling hot,
more swallow-like than Shakespearian.

Oh, oh listen,
through the window we watch the sun
sinking each day shrouded in mist.

Nothing has changed since we thrashed nuts
in the sky of childhood and when we're alone,
we light fuses for fun.

Oh, oh, in the parks of the past
we saw sad, musing soldiers with deep blue eyes
bend towards our nurses' breasts.

Oh, oh, music, just listen to that, no?

(Tannhauser begins slowly "oh beautiful star")

speaker sharply to orchestra:)

Are you mad, you fiddle-scrappers?

(the music stops abruptly)

(speaker cont.):

I ask you for the night wind on summer's balcony
and all I get is your onion peel under my nose.

I'm talking to you of love,
a lake like in the songs, straight young men,
a young girl lost and found,
and on her fine linen sleeves
eternal words are embroidered in gold:
“from the depths of the forest she comes and smiles.”
The beautiful brunette ...

(narrator:)

And here the naked speaker parts the curtain.
He holds out his hand to a woman who emerges.

(speaker:)

Madame Tosini plays Olympia,
a young coquette married to Silas Randau the banker.

(narrator:)

As the naked man speaks,
two stage hands quickly bring a dressing table onto the stage
and leave.

Olympia crosses the stage to the dressing table
and sits down in front of it.

(olympia:)

I don't love jewels for the way they kiss my shoulders,
nor for their glitter which rubs off on me,
for if you only give it a moment's thought
you realize they haven't the power
to change man's essential nature;
but they retain forever
the silent desire that I seek to fulfill
and without which ...

(narrator:)

Olympia is interrupted by her maid
who brings in a note on a tray and exits.

(olympia, reading:)

“All is ended;
the chestnuts in the Bois de Boulogne,
the days' macadam,
large posters on the horizon,
supple nickel-plated cars.

“Olympia --

I can hardly bear to write this flame --
you'll never see Frederic again:
he's going away and leaving no address.
No more will he enfold this body in his arms,
fun-fair marshmallow,
taratati taratata.
Your desperate: Frederic.”

(narrator:)

Olympia then uses the note she has just read
to wipe clean her curling tongs.

Now, the stage grows dark.
Olympia and her dressing table
disappear into the darkness.
All we hear is ...

(speaker:)

There, the orchestra, Love,
now do you see what it's about?

Where is the exiled lover now?

All around us in the enveloping night.
Did you feel his breath on you Madame?

And you, don't move,
he's there wandering about.
No one will greet him by his own name anymore.

He'll even throw into a river his ring
which has been so admired.

They've told me about a country overshadowed by mountains,
there a chamois leaps over the rocks
and in the noise of the waterfall cries in a despairing tone:
Olympia!
But man's riotous imagination is a wheel
turning free on a frozen river.

Orchestra! What's melancholy?
(the boat song from the "Tales of Hoffmann" begins, speaker:)
These magicians have bells for brains.
Does that music evoke the solitary gorges
where Frederic came to hide his grief?
Is that him striking his forehead on the rocks
in the loud voice of the hurricane?
Light, which we rediscover
when we're again among sane men.

(narrator:)
The stage lights come back up
illuminating a room in an inn,
a young man is writing at a table.

**(the sound of someone knocking on the door,
no indication in text as to when music should stop,
perhaps with the knocking or carry through entire scene?)**

(young man:)
Come in.

(narrator:)
A maid brings in a jug of water.
She puts it on the wash stand.

(the maid, melanie:)
What time shall I come, Sir?

(young man:)
Stay tonight Melanie, tomorrow will part us forever.

(narrator:)

The maid walks to the young man
and sits at his feet.

(young man:)

Forever!
I feel like swearing eternal fidelity to you.
Here, where no one was expecting it,
once again the absolute enters and speaks.
Absurd, absurd.
Your hair.

(narrator:)

The maid's long hair falls over the young man's knees.

(melanie:)

When I'm nothing but a black dot behind you,
I'll return to the inn, sick at heart.

(young man:)

You're a good girl.
A lot of travelers and cars pass through every day.

(melanie:)

Look, I'm like a corpse.

(young man:)

A manner of speaking.

(melanie:)

Man of passage,
you are going away from me as you came to me:
for three days,
henceforth a strong wind will shake up my abandoned life.

(narrator:)

The young man rises abruptly and begins to pace the stage.

(young man:)

So the lie begins all over again: like this.
Eternity taken as witness, a disease.
I've booked my seat on the coach
and it's unlikely I'd miss it for love of your fair face.
Why put in the "henceforth"?

(melanie:)

Sir, you can see quite well
that my eyes aren't trying to hold you back.
But on other mountains or in lowland towns
when he's reunited with the one he hasn't stopped thinking about,
this if this miraculous woman lies,
let him remember Melanie --
doubtless anyone's girl,
who bedded with carters and low types
but who, once only, closed her eyes with pleasure, Melanie.

(young man:)

I'm a lone man crossing the scene.

(narrator:)

Melanie seizes the young man's hand
and looks at it.

(melanie:)

Monsieur Pierre, your ring?

(young man:)

I threw it into the Romanche.

(melanie:)

Your gold ring?

(young man:)

I've worn it on this finger for so long it's left a mark.
It'll fade quickly.
Pretty, a ring in the water;
a ring which bounced on the stones and the foam
and on different things which you,
nor any one else will not know anything about.

(melanie:)

Pierre.

(young man:)

Pierre, yes, that's me,
all the difference between the past and now is in that Pierre,
yes look Pierre or Joseph or Rene or, ... ah ah!

(melanie:)

Pierre.

(young man:)

Do you hear me?
tomorrow morning the coach is taking me away
and you won't know any more
if I'm living Monday, Tuesday, Saturday, at all.

(narrator:)

He abruptly leans over her.

(melanie:)

I await your pleasure.

(narrator:)

Melanie gets up lightly.
The lights go out.
The curtains close.

(the music stops for certain here, narrator:)

In front of the curtain,
a man meets an arc lamp.
He shields his eyes with his hand,
protecting them from the harsh light.

(man:)

Watch out, can't you?

(lamp, high thin metallic voice? treated? vocoder?:)

What do you want? I am light.

(man:)

That's handy.

(lamp:)

Don't talk like that.

I waste my life in trivial domestic quarrels.

Like a sugar lump and over-done meat.

(man:)

You're exaggerating.

(lamp:)

Believe me, sir.

Besides why should I lie?

Thus the days fly by and cling by their finger nails
to gracious family portraits which I light up uselessly.

(narrator:)

Agitated, the arc lamp begins to smoke.

(lamp:)

It sets my teeth on edge. But what can you do?

(man:)

I am a traveler for the Lido House,
of Lido braces fame, you know the advertisement,
"Chic Lido! here are real braces."
They don't go over your shoulders,
they don't hook on to your trousers.

So no more of those red marks which are man's dishonour
and prevent him from taking off his shirt
in front of his timid companion;
and no more buckling at the belt because of pulling at the wrong time.

The crease falls neatly, the belt stays put.
Man and his trousers free, that's the ideal.

And we sell little rubber rings to replace
the only part of our braces which wear out:
I mean the soul.

(narrator:)

And here the man takes some braces out of his pocket and brandishes them proudly.

(lamp:)

I mean ... but I don't wear braces: I don't wear trousers.

(man:)

You don't have to wear trousers to wear braces.

(lamp:)

Will braces help me support my troubles?

(man:)

You're an imbecile if you have troubles Sir.
Now, do I have troubles?

(lamp:)

You're humiliating me.
But do you know what it's like to fume away
all alone on the road,
your pockets empty
and only a piece of brown bread between your teeth?
Or what it's like to refuse someone for the hundredth time
on a matter of courtesy,
or to do with their itinerary?

(man:)

It's pity that's killing you my dear, pity or patience.

(lamp:)

That's what you say.
But what can you do against several generation of women?

(man:)

Braces, braces.

(lamp:)

Against obstinacy, silence and gentleness?

(man:)

Braces.

(lamp:)

Do you know the difficulty
of really refusing one kind of fate after another
and then falling back after a few moments of ecstasy
into the old routine of coming home on time
and closing the door behind you.

(man:)

Braces.

(lamp:)

And I haven't said a word about conversation.
When I think of such considerations.

(man:)

Braces.

(lamp:)

Hey Doctor, do you think you'll get me to swallow your braces?

(man:)

Say aaah,

(narrator:)

The arc lamp smokes.

(man:)

I was right, braces.

(lamp:)

I know I'm lost.

(man:)

Braces.

(lamp:)

Piss off, man,
with your one-track mind.

(narrator:)

And the lamp begins to shine with a terrible brilliance
(increasingly loud electrical hum)
and the man runs away brandishing his braces.

(man, voice fading off stage:)

Braces! Braces! Braces!

(voice 1:)

The curtain rises.

(narrator:)

A candle sheds a weak light
on the same room where the young man is sitting.
His shirt is undone.
He caresses Melanie's hair as she sleeps with her head on his lap.

(young man:)

Do lies have the eyes of a child?
Flattered my dear Frederic ... I mean Pierre,
you're flattered by these proofs of admiration.

And yet I want to know.
Yes, you may well shake your head and laugh at yourself:
it's man's nature to want to know.

What's in the sun that watches me,
man takes hold of its light and decomposes it,
and calls tellurium something he's never seen.

A name for everything:
life's like that and for once in my life
I want to distinguish between what's true
and what's false in a woman.

Come my dusky beauty,
wake up my darling,
so we can have a chat about metaphysics.

(melanie, waking up:)

My love is it time ...?
Oh, already (*yawns*) no,
It's still the middle of the night.

You are not going to drive me crazy again are you?
What a face, Pierre!

(young man:)

Pierre that's me, listen:
a woman gives herself to a poor trembling boy
who doesn't believe his five senses,
especially his hands when they run up and down the lady's whole body,
such a proud lady,
run over the whole body from top to toe.

How old was he exactly? ... twenty-two, twenty-three?
Not a penny to his name and so shy!

Now wouldn't you say that's a young fellow loved for himself.
Naturally he thought so.
As he walked beside the hedges all day long
what was he thinking about?

Ah, you can guess.
A handsome dislocated puppet.
Of course he would never have imagined
what motive would lead a woman ...
to enter into someone's life like that,
so much the worse,
first come, first served.
One day she was eating,
he was like a mad man, you see ...
he makes an excuse and she gets the servant to tell him ...
goodness she's fallen asleep,
Melanie ...

(narrator:)

He shakes her.
She passes her hand over her forehead.

(young man:)

That's a fine way to listen to me.

(melanie:)

Forgive me my master,
but it's your fault too.

(young man:)

Yes, that's what she said to me,
"it's your fault too."

(melanie:)

Oh, are you annoyed because I spoke to you familiarly?

(young man:)

I used to speak of "our" kisses.
"Our kisses? Are you mad?"
Yes, I was dumbfounded as you can imagine.

(melanie:)

Pierre is that your story?

(young man, coolly:)

No.

(melanie:)

My love, aren't we going to sleep?

(young man:)

Heavens, I don't feel like sleeping.
When I sleep I relive the time
I waited at the foot of the stairs in the rain
and the compassionate chamber maid who comes down to tell me
it's no use waiting there abandoned,
freezing to death,
that she left an hour ago by the back door.
What again?
Your eyes are closing again!
Don't you understand what he's recovering from?

(narrator:)

He gets up and walks to the chest of drawers.
Melanie gets up slowly and reluctantly.

(melanie:)

In the depths of night. So weary.

(narrator:)

Pierre takes a little brown flask from a case,
goes over to the washstand,
pours water into a glass and drops
a little of the contents of the flask into the glass.

(young man:)

Life has strange locks.

(melanie, suddenly awake:)

Poison?

(young man:)

Yes.

(melanie:)

Don't drink it Pierre!

(narrator:)

She runs to him.
His free arm raises up to stop her
as he puts the glass where it can be seen on the table.

(young man:)

Don't be afraid for me, listen.

(melanie:)

Go on then.

(young man:)

There's one thing worse than death, Melanie,
one thing which lasts and grows in time.

A man who has once been well and truly deceived, imagine it:
you suspect the very air you breathe, now that's the hardest.

You might as well say you suspect yourself.
Yourself, very soon a poor machine with a worm in it
and not a doctor on earth to pull it out.

Everyone who speaks to you is lying.
Oh, it's endless.
If you ever met a man like that would you want to cure him?

(melanie:)
I've never thought about it.

(young man:)
Could you see into a man's heart and say,
well goodness is that all!

When you can give the sick man
such an indisputable proof
of your trustworthiness that he'll be cured.

(melanie:)
People never believe me.

(young man:)
Of course, before all this happened,
he never would have thought ... never.

And now every time he falls asleep it wakens him up
and in the day time he walks around as if possessed;
he scrutinizes little girls coming home from school
with their satchels and barley sugar
and for two pins he'd call them tarts.

Melanie,
Haven't you any idea what you could do for this man?

(melanie:)
How can I force a man to love me?

(young man:)

Sly girl.

Something which reflection and suspicion have no hold over.

Something so decisive that nothing ... don't you understand?

Idiot. What is above suspicion?

This isn't a charade.

(melanie:)

My love for you is above suspicion.

(young man:)

Perfect, I can take that at least two ways, perfect.

No more of your nonsense.

(melanie:)

Oh, how can I doubt this sun under my closed eyelids.

(young man:)

Just like a woman;

who's asking for your opinion you sex object?

What about him, the ulcer blocking roads and blocking all light.

(melanie:)

What's certain is certain.

The sudden flame inside me when you come in.

Yesterday evening in the dining room, who was I talking to?

Suddenly I go icy cold, *he's* behind me.

(young man:)

You good soul,

anyway you'll have to choose between fire and ice.

(laughs)

(melanie:)

More certain than your laugh, than life, than death.

(young man:)

Now you're getting warmer.

(melanie:)

What?

(young man:)

More certain than death, what's more certain than death? Nothing!

(narrator:)

He takes her hand and forces her to dance round with him.

(melanie:)

Pierre!

(young man:)

The cure, Melanie, the cure.

(melanie, with a cry:)

You told me ...

(young man:)

“You told me” more promises!

Of course, there's nothing to be afraid of.

What could he prove by his own death

and anyway he still loves her, why should he want to die?

(melanie:)

But who are you talking about?

(young man:)

I'm talking in general, I can generalize can't I?

The delights of conversation; I sum up; innocence, two white arms in the night,
miles of walking barefoot on stones, you can still say I'm play acting.

But how do you act death,
you're too afraid and you don't know.

If he finds in the eyes of the death agony
what he has been looking for everywhere then out!

You look at me like a deaf-mute.
But who knows, maybe you've guessed
but prefer to be taken for a fool, artful girl.

(melanie:)

Tell me what I must do.

(young man:)

Firstly, I'm talking in general;
you have no imagination, you leave it all to me.
Once again the same trap:
the whites of your eyes, clenched teeth,
your hand which clings on, hysteria.

Ready to believe and if he believes he's cured,
he asks her for the proof we're talking of,
they are in the bedroom,
the same room and he gets up ...

(narrator:)

And as he talks he does what he is describing.

(young man:)

He takes the glass and holds it out to her.

(melanie:)

For me?

(young man:)

You see you immediately draw back.
I was talking in general.

(narrator:)

Melanie takes the glass.

(young man:)

If the occasion arose would you cure the man?

(melanie:)

If I loved him.

(young man:)

Foiled if you refuse or if the glass is spilled by accident.

(narrator:)

He reaches pretending to knock her glass accidentally,
but she draws it away from him.
She shields it with her hand.
And then she raises the glass.

(young man:)

I'm talking in general.
If it happens by accident or in a game,
she's dead and he's not one jot advanced.
He's just added one more question mark.
Was she pretending?
Later he'll imagine she'd realized.
The agony of the death.
He chose quite a slow, painful poison.
Do you follow me?

(melanie:)

Yes.

(young man:)

I'm talking in general. A terrible poison.

(melanie:)

Yes.

(young man:)

Yes, yes, that's no answer.

(melanie:)

If you want me to.

(young man:)

Naturally, be a martyr.

(melanie:)

I'll do it.

(young man:)

Well then, let's have a little good will, a little spirit.
I don't love you.

(melanie:)

Then it's so very easy.

(young man:)

All the same it costs you a bit doesn't it?

(melanie:)

Fields, the summer like my dress and boys
(before I knew you I quite liked the lads,
always different
and always ready to beat me or bowl me over).

(young man:)

What are you waiting for?
Oh, I was forgetting the "if I loved him," sorry.

(narrator:)

She drinks and puts down the glass.
They sit in silence.

(young man:)

Now comes the drama, the pity;
no, no let's have no misunderstanding eh?
It's as clear as spring water.

(melanie:)

As your eyes.

(young man:)

I don't love you any the more for it,
after all what's it worth and what am I in all this?

And when you're in love it's so natural.
Ah, how well I know what it is to love.

(melanie:)

I don't feel anything yet.

(young man:)

It's not plain water, you'll know when the pain starts.

(melanie:)

I trust you.

(young man:)

Trust viper, and what about my peace of mind?

(melanie:)

You can see I'm going to die.

(young man:)

Has it begun yet? Wait.

(narrator:)

He goes to the chest of drawers and takes a flask from the case.

(young man:)

Sure you don't miss the lads?

They're brown round here aren't they?

and rather on the thin side.

They smell of gun-flint. Take that.

(melanie:)

Don't make fun ...

(young man:)

The antidote. I'm putting it on the table.

(melanie:)

Oh, it's beginning to burn, aah.

(young man:)

Are you in pain? If you love me it can't hurt.

(melanie:)

Oh, heavens.

(young man:)

She's no longer thinking of me,

no more than if I were the Grand Turk himself.

(melanie:)

Oh, my love.

(young man:)

Who are you talking about?

(melanie:)

Pierre, oh Pierre.

(young man:)

A common name.

(melanie:)

You, you; the storm is ravaging me.

(young man:)

Once in my life I saw someone struck by lightning,
I'm no longer impressed.

(melanie:)

Oh, my God, to stop groaning, I can't,
oh the night, Mexico and Brazil,
the sky and the night, I hear its flight,
Mexico and Brazil, the sky and the night,
I hear its flight, Mexico and Brazil,
it's a green chamois, the sky and the night,
oh the sky the sky.

(young man:)

The antidote's on the table.

(silence)

(young man:)

I'll get it ready.

(narrator:)

He pours the antidote into the glass.

(young man:)

There.

(melanie:)

Leave me alone. Leave me alone.

(young man:)

What are you thinking about now?
True at last and doubled up? Speak.

(melanie:)

About you, the sky and the night, the sky and the night.

(young man:)

You hate me for the suffering don't you?
Me, Pierre. You're going to die.

(narrator:)

Melanie wrings her hands.

(melanie:)

My love.

(young man:)

She's only thinking of herself, *her* love.

(melanie:)

Pierre quickly, the antidote.

(young man, with a triumphant cry:)

There false lover, what a farce.

(narrator:)

He hands her the glass with the antidote.
She deliberately spills it out onto the floor.

(young man:)

What are you doing?

(melanie:)

Now I feel better;
oh, if it had got any worse I would have been tempted ...
Pierre, Pierre.

(young man:)

A point of honor conceited woman?
That's all I could do to save you my girl.
No mistake, a suicide.
You know I don't love you.

(melanie, screaming:)

Holy Mother of the wind and bloody swords.

(young man:)

Don't scream like that.
That's a great image to remember of a girl in love:
like a wounded bitch dragging herself over the carpet.

(melanie:)

Oh, my little velvet belly.

(narrator:)

Abruptly he opens the door and throws Melanie out.)

(young man:)

Go and scream somewhere else, corpse;
you find bales of hay to peg out in.

(sound of door slam)

(narrator:)

With the door now shut,
he slowly makes his way back to the dressing table.
He looks at himself in the mirror.

(young man:)

Frederic you'll be Gaston in the next stage.
Good, and her ... it's quite a strong poison.
After all I don't know what she'd dreamt up.
She wanted to drink it. She drank it.
No power on earth could have stopped her drinking it.
A good way of erasing your footprints behind you.
But what an experience!
Along with the death agony a few reproaches for this poor Pierre,
an old friend of mine, comes into her head.

(narrator:)

He lies down and blows out the candle.
The stage goes completely dark.
And speaking in the darkness ...

(speaker:)

Lightly, lightly the dream swans fly away
wreathed in necklaces like on Australian postage stamps.
A mackerel sky in your heart.
A chestnut horse burnt into your memory.

Mist flies off to the sea.
Where ever you go
you hold a little squirrel of gold-beater's skin on a lead;
the string makes zig-zags like in children's exercise books.
You never did lose the habit of drawing on the last page:
your whole life is there.

A dream?
Flip a coin to see if it's a dream.

(sound of coin dropping, speaker:)

I can't see in the dark.
Bah, we'll know soon enough when we wake up
whether it was a dream.

(a very discordant sound pierces the darkness, speaker cont.:)

Celestial music:
are the angels in Paradise combing their locks?

**(a barrel organ begins to play very quickly
“My old man says follow the van”)**

(narrator:)

A light slowly rises in the corner of the stage
and there we see Olympia sitting at her dressing table.

(speaker:)

No it's not the angels but the Virgin Mary.
Oh, it's a traditional apparition.
You can take my word for it the scene will be painted
and I'll be depicted in a corner,
little Frederic with his hands clasped, like a little orphan.

(narrator:)

Olympia carefully applies lipstick to her lips.

(speaker:)

Yes, that makes you more beautiful, Mother of Jesus.
Apple from heaven.
Mechanical tedder.
Snail's silvery trail.
Oh but speak, gate to eternal elevation.

(olympia:)

The lieutenant, the lieutenant,
but what about the little hairdresser!
Have you ever heard of such a thing,
the wife of Silas Randau and her hairdresser.
A darling hairdresser called Peril.

But the lieutenant:

his kisses leave your mouth bruised,
as if you've been eating blackberries.

The lieutenant uses a bit too much brute force,
though it certainly has its appeal ...

But Peril, oh the wicket child
whose only possession is a name which I don't know.
Brr, the noise of his scissors like wings. (*laughs*)

(speaker:)

Carpet of birds. Shutter against storms.
Unquenchable match. Automobile of the graces.
Mary the Lord's polarimeter.

(olympia:)

Some caresses are like insects running up and down your legs.
Peril's triumph.
Then when I'm in my salon I suddenly think,
he held me like this,
and while he did this, did ...
It's bad for you to have to repress your laughter.

(speaker:)

Celestial conveyor of heat. Glossy waterfall.
Mary of the aerodromes. Azure of eyes.
Mary invoked when it rains.

(olympia:)

And what's Silas doing in all this!
His visits planned in advance make me die laughing.
The strangest man I ever met,
next to the little fool Frederic who was afraid of corrupting me.

(narrator:)

Suddenly there is a loud shout from somewhere in the night.

(young man:)

Shut up demon!
Cast off Olympia's features.

(narrator:)

Olympia rises, terrified.
The stage is suddenly dark with flashes of light sweeping the stage.

(the sound of whistles and terrible noises, narrator cont,:)

Suddenly lights cross the stage
to light up the speaker and the young man,
Frederic, in his shirtsleeves,
fighting in the midsts of a great tumult.

(speaker:)

Don't be afraid, orb of the planets, virgin studded with lice.

(narrator:)

Suddenly all the lights go out. The stage goes dark.

(young man:)

Demon, you're not my Olympia, I forbid you to blaspheme.
And you, idiot, let me go, demon, demon, demon.

(narrator:)

The light comes on again.
It is a dawn light,
and now we see that the stage again contains
the young man's room in the inn.

The young man is waking up.

(young man:)

Demon!

(narrator:)

And suddenly he is aware of the innkeeper
who has brought in his water.

(innkeeper:)

Sir, this demon's the innkeeper, Sir,
who's come to wake you up for the coach,
Sir, it's morning.

(young man:)

Ah yes.

(sound of rooster crowing, young man cont.)

Were the cocks making that din?

(innkeeper:)

Yes sir, a large hen-house, a lot of bother,
mind you the eggs are tip-top.

(young man:)

Lucky fellow. Wait though,
why are you waking me Monsieur Trapeze and not the girl?

(innkeeper:)

Poor Melanie.

(young man:)

Why?

(innkeeper:)

It's not a fit subject for early morning conversation.

Poor Melanie.

(young man:)

Well what's wrong with her?

(innkeeper:)

Oh, nothing Sir, nothing at all now.

Poor Melanie.

(young man:)

Monsieur Trapeze please stop being so infuriating,
what about Melanie?

(innkeeper:)

Sir, in an honest inn! And I'm on the town council too.

It's never happened before in our mountains.

(young man:)

The inn can go to the devil,
and the innkeeper and the mountains too.

What about Melanie?

(innkeeper:)

If you must know, Sir, she's dead.

(young man:)

And what then?

(innkeeper:)

Last night to tell you the truth,
there's someone knocking at my door:
yesterday we brought the manure in.

I say "who's there?" and Madame Trapeze whispers to me
it's that drunkard again who's always prowling around here
since that Melanie threw him over.

I shout “get on your way” and then
I hear that Melanie through the door:
“If I die it's my own fault.
I took the poison because I loved a man
who had other things on his mind.”

So I want to get up, the Madame Trapeze:
“She's sleep-walking that's what.”

Five years ago we had a girl who walked on the roof.
Well about four in the morning some one's at the door again
and this time it's Firmin who's found that Melanie in the stables
on the dung heap, all stiff;
and she must have cried out
because the bitch Faraude who had six puppies three days ago
had jumped on her and bitten her face to shut her up.

(young man:)

Poor Melanie. What time does the coach leave?

(innkeeper:)

In half an hour Sir,
and your breakfast is ready in the dining room.

(young man:)

What about the bill?
and have you made me a packed lunch?
Here's Firmin's tip.
That will be all Monsieur Trapeze.

(innkeeper:)

You're too kind, Sir. I'll tell him to thank you.
Perhaps I'm in your way Sir, and you want to wash?
Good bye Sir ...

(narrator:)

The innkeeper walks out of the room backward.
The young man puts the basin on the floor
and begins washing his feet.

(young man:)

Poor Melanie, Sir, poor Melanie.

(narrator:)

As he washes his right foot he sings ...

(young man, singing:)

Sky and night, Mexico and Brazil
Sky and night I hear its flight
Mexico and Brazil is a chamois green
Sky and night, sky and winter e'en
 Mexico

(narrator:)

As he washes his left foot he sings.

(young man, singing:)

Snow and wind, gun-flint
Snow and wind, who knocks on the screen
Gun-flint is a hunter's dead pate
Snow and wind, snow and fate
 Flint

(narrator:)

Having finished washing his feet, he dries them,
empties the basin, puts it on the dressing table,
pours water in it, takes off his shirt
and begins to soap his arse.

(young man:)

Ice and fright, day-break or fear-break
Ice and fright, the sign of the cross
Day-break or fear-break, each has his way
 Day-break.

(narrator:)

Covered with soap, he stops singing,
goes over to the chest of drawers,
takes the flask of poison from it,
lifts it up to the light, and laughs for a long time.

(sound of young man's laughter)

(narrator:)

The lights go out on him laughing.

(voice 1:)

Interlude.

(narrator:)

Madame Tosini who is playing the role of Olympia, and Mademoiselle Aumuse who played the role of Melanie, still in costume, enter a public park laughing wildly.

(melanie:)

I couldn't help it my dear, an irresistible urge.
If my scene had lasted a minute longer I'd have said it.
I was hardly in the wings before I shouted:
eenie meenie mynie mo ...

(olympia:)

We'd better get on with our fable.

(narrator:)

The two of them turn to face the audience.

(melanie, crying:)

What a darling, what a darling child ...

(narrator:)

She is waving her hand in the air indicating different heights.

(melanie:)

about twelve months I'd say.

(olympia:)

Here's mine. Three years.

(narrator:)

She takes a magnifying glass out of her bag and an invisible object which she pretends to hold in the hollow of her hand.

(melanie:)

Oh, poor angel, how thin he is!

(olympia:)

Nothing does any good;
not sea, not mountain air.

(melanie:)

Mustard baths?

(olympia:)

That was the first thing I thought of.
Well, sport perhaps? Your wasting your breath.

(melanie:)

Counting sheep?

(olympia:)

It gave him warts.

(melanie:)

Marriage?

(olympia:)

He's too young.
They did say to me a good disease, but I don't dare.

(melanie, laughing:)

Oh, the poor little daddy-long-legs. My dear friend.
MY DEAR FRIEND! I'm going to help you.

(olympia:)

How, *how*, HOW?

(melanie:)

Here he is!

(narrator:)

Monsieur Tontaine, the actor who plays Monsiuer Trapeze
the innkeeper, crosses the stage and goes to the prompt-box.

(olympia:)

Well?

(melanie:)

That's a mistake, that fool Tontaine.
Here the child enters and you shout
HOW BEAUTIFUL HE IS.

(innkeeper:)

Dear Aumuse, don't get annoyed.
I'm the prompter in this play
and I'm taking my place at the time the author indicated.

(long silence)

(olympia:)

Well?

(innkeeper:)

If you must keep interrupting me!

(melanie:)

What are you doing now?

(innkeeper:)

I'm doing up my shoelaces.

(olympia:)

Well?

(innkeeper:)

Child of misfortune,
when will you stop licking up
all the Nestle flour pots that are left
lying about in the wings?

Never mind worrying about being tidy,
what about your health?

On stage, on stage.

(narrator:)

Enter Monsieur Givre who plays the young man
who is Pierre who is Frederic.
But he is dressed up like a baby.

(olympia:)

How beautiful he is, how beautiful he is, how beautiful he is.

(young man, sings:)

I climbed up into evening
One moon-full morning
There were chandeliers
Which whispered hidden fears
to the giant blond on the stairs

It was somewhere in the shade
Sheltered
The shoulders of the lucernes
Danced in the hands of the wind
The prisoners in the casernes
Were still dreaming of other bodies

I ask you my little flies
What do you think of the universe
I lying on the mica-shiste
I'm damned through my pride

The open air wants it that way

(melanie, full speed:)

Miracle of Nestle flour,
it's given him a tenor baritone voice,
and fine muscles.

Alfred, show your legs.
And it hasn't marred his intelligence in the least!
He can count up to thirty-three.
After that it's a bit harder.

Alfred, count to thirty-three.

(young man:)

One, two, three, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, thirteen,
seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty, twenty-one, two, three, five,
six, seven, eight, twenty-nine, thirty-one, two, three, thirty-three,
thirty-three, thirty-three, thirty-three, trrr (*sound of machine winding down*).

(melanie:)

History and geography too!
No one can touch him in history and geography.

(young man, in a shrill voice:)

Emperor Constantine, having taken Byzantium,
the capital, 20,000 inhabitants, good inns ...

(melanie:)

No one's asking for that, we're not interested.
And trigonometry. And comparative literature!
And bike riding!

(young man, confidential, yelling:)

Trade mark France on Pirelli tires.

(innkeeper:)

Oh tandem bike-rides in a high wind!
Words of hate and desire mingled and the dust,
the bitter dust.
The acrobat skillfully follows Madame's thoughts.

(melanie, furious:)

Tontaine, now's hardly the time to play the fool.
Your turn Tosini.

(olympia, clasping her hands:)

And where can we find this polish which makes the children shine so?
This black lion of growth?
At the Louvre? At Bon Marche?

(melanie:)

At all good locksmiths. But between ourselves ...

(innkeeper:)

Wait a minute. Mademoiselle Aumuse, while we still can:
your charming baby, your sweet child,
(at the top of his voice)
chuck it with the rubbish!

(narrator:)

Madame Tosini faints.

(olympia:)

Aaaah

(sound of her hitting the floor)

(narrator:)

A dancing Monsieur Tontaine and Givre
scoop up Madame Tosini and carry her off,
while Mademoiselle Aumuse tags along beside them,
bringing Madame Tosini around by tickling her, ti hee;
they exit grimacing and making contortions.

(script here calls for them to be dancing to a “ritornello.”)

(voice 1:)

Act Two

(narrator:)

Paced across the stage in front of the curtains,
seven unlighted street lamps.

Enter the lamplighter
who slowly makes his way across the stage,
lighting the lamps and singing as he goes.

(lamplighter, singing:)

I am Popol and I live on the mezzanine.
I am Popol and I live on the mezzanine.
etc. etc. etc.

(narrator:)

Finally he has crossed the stage and lit them all.

(lamplighter:)

Some people do their jobs grudgingly.
Not me. I like my job.

(narrator:)

Then the lamplighter turns,
puts out the lamp which he has just lit,
and then walking back in the opposite direction,
extinguishing the lamps as he goes.

(lamplighter, singing until his voice fades off stage:)

I am Popol and I live on the mezzanine.
I am Popol and I live on the mezzanine.
etc. etc. etc.

(narrator:)

Stage hands appear to remove the lamp posts.
Then the curtain rises;
somewhere in the mountains,
Frederic dressed in climbing gear,
meets up with a goatherd tending his goats.

(sound of the wind and goats, maybe goat bells)

(goatherd:)

Good morning Sir, a strong sun.

(young man:)

And a strong wind, comrade.

(goatherd:)

Are you by any chance from the North or South valley?

(young man:)

I came from Romanche;
the coach took me up to the spur and now I'm walking.

(goatherd:)

Really. Did you by any chance take the coach at the "Green Chamois"?

(young man:)

I stayed three days at the "Green Chamois".

(goatherd:)

Really? There's a good looking girl at the "Green Chamois."

(young man:)

That may be.

(goatherd:)

A very dark brunette, with white teeth, Melanie.

(young man:)

Melanie!

(goatherd:)

There, you can't help but know her.

Not shy eh?

But she does have her whims.

I had her once, and then no go:

you'd think she was the virgin and all her saints.

(young man:)

Like that, eh? Cigarette?

(goatherd:)

If you've got one to spare, but this nasty wind ...

(narrator:)

The goatherd lights his cigarette,
shielding it with his hat.

(goatherd:)

And was she well, this Melanie?

(young man:)

She's dead.

(goatherd:)

Dead, stone dead ...

(young man:)

You've dropped your cigarette. Here, I'll get it ...

(pause)

Here.

Yes. Dead as moraine, as earth, dead as that.

(clank)

(narrator:)

Frederic strikes a rock with his ice-axe.

(goatherd, his voice altered:)

You're not joking, not having me on for a laugh?

You be telling me the truth eh?

(narrator:)

Frederic points to the sky without answering.

(goatherd:)

Melanie and I in the mountains.

(whistles)

Get down my breasts, get down!

Melanie, joy and blood.

Thanks for the news Sir, Melanie oh ...

(narrator:)

And the goatherd exits pushing his animals in front of him,
leaving Frederic alone.

(young man:)

She had her whims. And you,
walking alone in the sun and the wind,
striking the hard soil with your foot,
telling yourself under your breath an old, well-known tale:
a young man and a coquette,
kisses in a large bed and later a flight of stairs
in the rain for hours.

(narrator:)

Frederic exits. The curtain closes.

(voice 1:)

In front of the curtain.

(narrator:)

Two men walk out onto the stage in front of the curtain.
One crouches down and seems to be looking for something.
The second man watches his companion's movements.

(second man:)

Are you looking for something, Sir?

(silence)

Are you looking for something: a pin?

(silence)

No, a tie pin perhaps?

(silence)

A blue diamond?

(silence)

Or perhaps you've lost your watch?

I'm always losing my watch.

Or someone's photo?

(silence)

Perhaps you've only lost threepence.

It's not the value that counts, but you want to find them.

(narrator:)

The first man rises from his crouch, turns,
and slaps the face of the man who's questioning him.

(second man:)

You'll pay for this!

(narrator:)

He presses a hand to his wounded face,
then he turns and runs off, still shouting ...

(second man, voice fading off stage:)

You'll pay for this! You'll pay for this!

(narrator:)

The man who is searching again crouches down,
examining the floor as he exits.

The curtain rises to display a glacier.

(fade in sound of sharp wind)

A postman carrying his sack slowly crosses the stage.

On the point of exiting

he opens his sack and flicks through a bundle of letters.

He picks out a letter, holds it up in the light and smiles.

(postman:)

A love-letter.

(narrator:)

The postman then tears the letter to shreds and exits.

(appropriate sound effects, tearing paper etc.)

Enter from opposite sides Frederic dressed as before,
the Speaker dressed like him.

We notice for the first time that they are very alike.

You can only tell them apart because the Speaker
has a straw broom as an alpenstock.

(young man:)

What's your business in these parts, foster brother?

(speaker:)

Come on now, at least let's have a bit of politeness from you.

(young man:)

We'll be as thick as thieves.

I didn't recognize you last night, my image.

(speaker:)

What was going on when you hurled yourself upon me?

“demon, demon,” the shout went up.

And I saw I had a naked man in my arms,

with a shirt on of course,

and a handsome man at that, just like me.

(young man:)

Scoundrel, why didn't you let me be?

(speaker:)

Ah, yes Monsieur Me, if you please,
I'd have missed my chance to caress you in passing
and to find out that you still loved Olympia.

(young man:)

Frederic you are irredeemably vulgar,
I can't do anything with you.

(speaker:)

There's nothing I can do about it, Frederic,
and anyway you wouldn't do so well without my vulgarity.

(young man:)

You're a fine baggage.
The sun on the glacier owes nothing to you.

(speaker:)

Frederic, my pretty Frederic.

(young man:)

Well, Frederic what?

(speaker:)

Look at me and tell me whom you really love, Olympia or me?

(young man:)

Olympia.

(speaker:)

Pst. Bother! are you quite sure you're thinking of Olympia?
It's a long time since I last saw you;
you've put on weight. Your skin's soft.

(young man:)

Poor reflection of myself. You think you can catch me out.

(speaker:)

What do you love in Olympia that isn't yourself,
your pleasures, your kisses,
Never hers – she doesn't know how to kiss.

(young man:)

What do you know about it idiot?
What's the memory of the embrace beside the embrace itself?
A windmill beside the wind.

(speaker:)

We agree then.

(narrator:)

The speaker waves his broom.

(speaker:)

And what's Olympia beside Frederic himself, I ask you. A mouse.

(young man:)

Fool, you were a creaking door when you left her.

(speaker:)

You're the one who wonders if he's suffered,
ah you talk of suffering.
Frederic, you only love yourself.

(young man:)

Little knife-pen lost in the mountains.
What do I know and who am I?
Look, you can't guess your own fate.

(speaker:)

Look into the depths of my eyes.

(narrator, drag out:)

The two stand face to face ...
motionless ...
and silent ...
for a long time. ...
Evening begins to fall.

(young man:)

An incomparable country where glass hunts
ride over forests of flexible bodies which groan
like the water willows in our country in the hot breath of evening.
Lost property, loose ventilated ice-floes;
scenery, scenery, there's only a stage set.

(narrator:)

The speaker opens wide his arms.

(speaker:)

Frederic.

(narrator:)

And Frederic falls into the speaker's arms.

(young man:)

Frederic, poor Frederic.

(speaker:)

Myself, dear lost part of me, come back and weep.
There, again you've loved other people too much.
Melanie pooh!
and the other, the white fake ermine in love,
all those people dancing in your optical field, illusion.

Frederic you've loved other people too much,
their ridiculous, charming bodies, your mistresses, strangers,
servants, people who asked you for a light in the street.
A confounded band, their outer world.

(narrator, perhaps to the sound of squeeking wheel?:)

An empty wheel barrow, moving on its own,
makes its way across the stage to bow to the two climbers.

(barrow, squeaky voice?)

With the evening comes the rain like caterpillar dust.
It's the big night of the year and here you are, Sirs,
in the land of eternal ice.

Tonight all the laws of the world are at your command,
my dear compatriots,
until the fire raining from the autumn sky
forces watch-dogs to return to their kennels.

Will you stand back so the miracles can begin?

(narrator:)

They slowly move off behind the wheel-barrow;
it's quite dark ...

(soft music fades in, narrator cont.:)

A pale, solitary light appears
and makes its way slowly across the stage and exits.

(young man:)

What's that light which doesn't come from the stars
and which walks about like a queen in the night?

(speaker:)

Shush my own one,
you must never question the mysteries of the great night.

(suddenly the sound of "my old man says follow the van")

(narrator:)

A halo of moonlight appears out of the darkness,
and in it also appear Olympia and her maid.

They are not at all suitably dressed for these barbaric regions;
they are walking very quickly.

(olympia:)

Betsy, where are we at such a late hour?
We must have lost our way. I don't understand how.

(betsy:)

Neither do I madam.
I can't remember how our outing began.
Madam was sitting at her dressing table.

(olympia:)

Here we are, still in the mountains, it looks like we're on a glacier.
Tell me, did I receive any letters today?
Who knows, maybe I'm going to a rendez-vous.

(betsy:)

Madam received two letters and a blue, scented billet-doux, oh ho.

(olympia:)

I didn't notice. But I'm not meeting Maurice here.
Could it be Rudolf or little Denis?
I'm lost. Help me.

(betsy:)

Madam will excuse me, I'm not good at arithmetic.

(olympia:)

Betsy, Betsy just look at what's coming.

(narrator:)

The empty spot light again slowly crosses the stage,
this time in the opposite direction.

(olympia:)

Did you see? What does it mean?

(betsy:)

Madam, Madam what are we doing here?

**(music again: ritornello, which I suspect should play whenever fairies dance
if not whenever they are on stage, as part of their "presence")**

(narrator:)

Now enters three naked fairies,
three human-size females holding hands.
They dance around the goatherd
whom they're dragging along with them.

(goatherd:)

Look here my fairies, my girls, you're not being at all reasonable.

(fairy 1:)

Goatherd, look at my little mouth, whoopee.

(fairy 2:)

Goatherd, touch my curvy hips, ho ho, beautiful curves.

(fairy 3:)

Goatherd, don't touch me, don't look at me.

You're too beautiful for a fairy.

(goatherd:)

It's not fair to tempt a poor man so.

(fairy 1:)

Your teeth are gleaming

(fairy 2:)

Your eyes are shining.

(fairy 3:)

Oh breath of man, breath of man and love.

(goatherd:)

You're leading me where I have no wish to go.

I was going down and now here I am coming up.

I have no intention of following you.

There they go turning all around me.

I can kill all three of you at once:

first there's one,

then another and then the third one too.

My beauties, I don't know myself any more.

And now I've lost my goats.

(fairy 1:)

Don't be afraid for them, you'll find them again.

(fairy 2:)

They've met sacred rams on the heights.

(fairy 3:)

They'll be pregnant and their bellies
descending to the plain will make a noise like bells.

(goatherd:)

You wicked one.
I'll get you.

(narrator:)

The goatherd tries to grasp the last fairy to speak.
But she runs away, evading him.

(goatherd:)

oof! like quick-silver.
But here I am bewitched by their bare skins:
I was going somewhere else, wretches,
to the valley were Melanie's as dead
as the rock under the ice-axe,
like the man from the coach said, Melanie.

(fairy 1:)

Who are you going to think about?
I have violets in my armpits.

(goatherd:)

She's dead and buried.

(fairy 2:)

Bah! You're not going to go all that way for a corpse.
My breasts are like rubber.

(goatherd:)

The joy and the blood.

(fairy 3:)

Does she have my gentian hair?

(fairy 1:)

Come, we'll drink gin and sing songs
which will make the phantoms of this solemn night blush.

(goatherd:)

You, you!

(sound of fairies giggling)

(narrator:)

And the goatherd is off,
trying to capture even one of the fairies.

(olympia:)

Heavens, these women are naked; or horror!

(narrator:)

While pursuing the fairies
which escape him and dance around him,
the goatherd instead catches Olympia
who was hiding with her maid in the shadows.

(goatherd:)

I've got one, oh the cunning devil.

(olympia:)

Is it Rudolph or Denis?
Heavens no, it's a stranger; well, that's all right by me.

(narrator:)

Having caught her,
the goatherd now drags Olympia out onto the stage.

(goatherd:)

You, I'll prick you with my beard,
I'll throw you under the stars like a nanny-goat skin,
then you'll fear the men who pasture their goats in the summer months.

(olympia:)

I ask for nothing better Sir, you quite make me turn on my heels.

(narrator:)

And with that the goatherd and Olympia exit the stage.

(betsy:)

Madam, Madam. Where is she? I'm afraid.
Once she's got hold of a man there's no hope of her remembering me.
Just like our masters.

(narrator:)

Having heard her voice, the fairies find Olympia's maid.
They now begin to dance around her.

(fairy 1:)

Madam? So it's your mistress who stole him from us. She-cat!

(fairy 2:)

Hey you others,
have you ever seen a woman who looks more like the back of a bus?

(narrator:)

Then one of the fairies lunges forward
and snatches away the wig the maid is wearing.

(fairy 3:)

Ha my friends,
these women's hair doesn't stick onto their heads like ours does.

(betsy:)

Madam, be so kind as to give me that back, I'll catch cold.

(narrator:)

But instead of returning the wig to the maid,
the three fairies begin to play catch with it.

(sound of fairies giggling)

(fairy 3:)

Catch! (*laughs*)

(fairy 2:)

Catch! (*laughs*)

(betsy:)

Instead of torturing an honest girl
you should go and get dressed you silly geese,
aren't you ashamed of yourselves?

(fairies laugh at her, betsy cont.:)

Laugh, laugh, bats from hell!

(narrator:)

The three fairies run off stage ...

(music fades down and off)

with Betsy chasing them.

Enter downstage three mechanics,
men named Gentle, Cotton, and Madness.

(gentle:)

I assure you Cotton this is not the right road.

(cotton:)

Lead us Gentle, you know all.

(gentle:)

Now, let's have your opinion, Madness.

(madness:)

I am of the opinion that we are at the North Pole.
So we must light a fire by rubbing pieces of wood together
and dig holes in the ground for sleeping in.

(gentle:)

What's this fairy tale? Is this our road?

(cotton:)

We've really done it.
We're late and I have the claims in my pocket.

(madness:)

Go on, they always have a few claims to claim in reserve.

(gentle:)

You may think it's funny.

They're going to increase the price of bread and lower wages.

(madness:)

Whether you're there or whether your not it's all tied up.

Bosses are the same and they'll bribe the government.

Then the minister says:

“Don't move, I'm coming my little lambs”

and he sends soldiers to fire on you.

When they camp in front of the factory, form groups,

you see the tip of the minister's big nose,

the one who's been chosen as impartial arbiter.

We'll be eaten alive. I prefer bears and the North Pole.

Me, I'm sleeping here.

(narrator:)

And making a dramatic show of it, madness lies down on the ground.

(cotton:)

My little Madness, weren't you with us in the uprising?

(madness:)

And you Cotton? ...

(narrator:)

At this point the fairies run across the stage.

(and with them, fading in and out, the music)

(gentle:)

Did you see that Cotton? Three little girls, I won't say more.

(cotton:)

Bare as the back of my hand.

(madness:)

What? I didn't see anything.

(narrator:)

And madness gets back up
and finds himself face to face
with Betsy without her wig,
still chasing the fairies.

(madness:)

As the back of my hand, really are these your beauties?
Goodness gracious.

(betsy:)

Now we've got hooligans.
There are hooligans even on glaciers.

(narrator:)

Betsy breaks free and runs off after the fairies.

(gentle:)

That's another thing altogether, but look at this!

(narrator:)

The three fairies return again.

(music also returns)

The men each catches himself one of the fairies.

(gentle:)

What lovely play things.

(fairy 1:)

Let me go, Sir; you smell of garlic.

(gentle:)

Get that, she's disgusted.

(fairy 2:)

Well mine is handsome, but dirty.

(madness:)

What's dirt got to do with it.

(cotton:)

And you, dummy, what've you got there.

(narrator:)

The fairy with Cotton then brandishes Betsy's wig, placing it on Cotton's head.

(fairy 3:)

Hey master, you look like a girl.

(narrator:)

The three couples go into the shadows.
We can only hear them laughing.

(sounds in background)

The scene is only lit by a projector
which follows Betsy as she comes back.

(betsy:)

Everyone gone? Stuck-up pigs.
A new wig, what's more everyone could tell it was.
What's the noise from over there?

(narrator:)

Then Betsy stumbles across the first couple.

(betsy:)

Oh!

(narrator:)

Then Betsy stumbles across the second couple.

(betsy:)

Oh!

(narrator:)

Then Betsy stumbles across the third couple.

(betsy:)

Oh! Oh! Oh! I ask you.

(narrator:)

Then Betsy catches sight of her wig on Cotton's head.

(betsy:)

My wig!

(narrator:)

Cotton removes the wig from his head and throws it at Betsy.

(cotton:)

Here, take it and go see if I'm still inside it.

(betsy:)

You can say what you like, what's happening to me is out of the ordinary.
And Madam is away a long time with that vulgar man.

(loud noise of a saw on stone)

My poor ears.

(narrator:)

Enter Monsieur Trapeze with a ray of moonlight on his belly.
He is completely flabbergasted.

(innkeeper:)

A worthy innkeeper on a dark night, skating on thin ice.
What will Madame Trapeze say if she wakes up?
The first time in twenty years of marriage.
And what if I were going to ... ole!
But no, thin ice on a dark night.
I ask you, there's no rhyme or reason it in.

(narrator:)

But he then catches sight of Betsy.

(innkeeper:)

What a horrible apparition!
Let's have a song to keep our spirits up and to dispel the ghosts:
(singing)
Come dance the capucine
For at home we have no bread
There's plenty in the neighbor's house
But that's not for the likes of us.

(the three couples in unison:)

Us!

(innkeeper:)

What's that, an echo.

(betsy:)

Now what on earth's this one. Oh a gentleman.

(narrator:)

Betsy straightens her apron and curls.

(innkeeper:)

By jove, the mighty ghost has spoken.

I don't feel altogether comfortable.

It's a frightful apparition; she reminds me of a Madam
who used to keep a certain establishment when I was in the army.

What will you think of next Trapeze?

(besty:)

Sir, you seem to be an honest gentleman:

I'm waiting for my mistress and

I'm afraid of all the phantoms that haunt the mountain nights.

Would you keep me company?

(innkeeper:)

Crafty devil! You won't catch me like that!

Be off goat foot, owl, bawd.

(narrator:)

He makes a display of crossing himself expansively.

(betsy:)

Ho I could have sworn he was a gentleman.

And then poof!

another of those foul.-mouthed wind-bags acting the fool!

There's no harm in abusing a poor defenseless girl.

(innkeeper:)

Heaven and the dove which looks so nice
hovering over the good Lord's head preserve me from such a calamity.
Yes, is this muck-spreader attacking my virtue?
Poor Madame Trapeze.
There, there, my love you needn't worry, my darling.

(betsy:)

Phantom I forbid you to call me your darling.

(innkeeper:)

If it's Madame Trapeze I'm referring to I believe I'm within my rights.

(narrator:)

Appearing at the back with a beautiful light all to themselves
Olympia and the goatherd enter looking quite dishevelled.
Trapeze notices Olympia.

(innkeeper:)

Now this is something different.
Madame Trapeze, may it please her, needn't know a thing about it.

Right, here's my chance, she's not alone.
My goodness it's the scoundrel who was chasing Melanie.
He wanted to die.
Well, it just shows how much you can trust these young fellows.
Madame Trapeze was born lucky.

(betsy:)

Ah, it's Madam, I'd given up hope.

(narrator:)

Olympia speaks to her partner ...

(olympia:)

My friend am I really on a glacier?
It's unbelievable. But don't leave me yet.

(goatherd:)

Insatiable sprite, already all the things in the world
are changing their skin like snakes
and sleep's dark rays are reflected in our pupils.

(olympia:)

It's not sleep, it's desire;
you brush against me like a butterfly in the night,
hot and heavy.
You won't convince me we're on a glacier.

(betsy:)

Madam, are we going home soon?

(narrator:)

But Olympia ignores her maid.

(olympia:)

I think you'll continue to love me
as long as the night lasts, am I right jackal?

(goatherd:)

Sorceress of the rocks,
I'm a top which you whip up with your words.

(innkeeper:)

I'm really afraid the world's gone mad.

(narrator:)

The workers and the fairies in couples are lit up in turn.
Each group in its own patch of light
and the entire area is striped with wide bands of shadow.

(cotton:)

My topaz, only birds flutter like that.

(fairy 3:)

My little Cotton, how deliciously you smell of garlic.

(fairy 2:)

Madness my sweetheart, where did you get your pretty black make-up?

(madness:)

You must at least be a florist with such affected manners.

(gentle:)

You'll see, I'll lend you novels.

(fairy 1:)

Novels? Do you wear them in your hair.

(betsy:)

Madam, are we going home soon?

(narrator:)

A shadow crosses the stage, momentarily brushing each cone of light.

(olympia, crying out:)

Did you see? Betsy what's that?

(innkeeper:)

Another witch.

(madness:)

There's someone we can't see.

**(everyone stops talking and a voice --
which should be some distortion of Melanie's voice --
begins to speak in the darkness coming from all around)**

(narrator:)

A phantom in a black veil studded with gold stars
appears and disappears intermittently.

(melanie:)

Winding roads that's what you bind your brows with now
and at your throat you have houses and a thousand rivers of diamonds;
everything that shines in the moonlight,
including the silvery flanks
of beautiful locomotives at the exit of tunnels,
are your lover's muscular legs, perfume from the stars.

(innkeeper:)

Where the devil have I heard that voice before?

(melanie:)

It's you who, with the wind enter the mouths of lying travellers;
they don't understand where such sensuality comes from.

The reaper's blond arm belongs to you wasp,
and the brown necks which the handkerchief
doesn't always protect at midday belong to you, sun.

I am scattered caresses, the day's bouquet,
touch of bodies, endless desires.

I am wasp, sun and everything you so strangely call nature.

I sleep in your beds you handsome young men quick to flare up,
and you my sisters who, when their hands have barely touched you,
become sighs like arches spanning time.

(goatherd:)

I don't know where this disturbance is coming from.
How there, who has spoken?

(melanie:)

I shake my cloak, a hundred men and women,
disheveled from sensual pleasure fall out of a fold.

When they wake up they won't remember
the name they've been murmuring till day break.

You only know yourselves all of you,
and you'll continue to know yourselves for a short time more,
but beware when you wake up!

The other, the other, yet it's always me, like contraband liquor,.

You take your pleasure where you find it,
and it's always on your own lips, dupe of meadows,
dupe of bridges and ships,
dupe of shirts taken off behind the shutters of the universe.

(narrator:)

Suddenly all the lights leave their masters
and converge on the apparition, on top of a rock, in the center of the stage,
so that all actors remain in dark except for their heads.

As if decapitated they appear in a ring around the luminous rock:
the apparition lifts up its veil, but its back is turned
so that only those encircling it can see its face.

(goatherd:)

Melanie!

(olympia:)

Oh horror – her face is covered in blood.

(innkeeper:)

Melanie! it's where the bitch bit her.

(narrator:)

The innkeeper falls to his knees.

(innkeeper:)

Melanie, my little one, forgive me.
Are you angry I didn't open the door to you?
Oh, oh,

(goatherd:)

Mad, mad, mad, what was your body doing with this slut?

(narrator:)

The goatherd pushes Olympia and she falls.

(olympia:)

Ruffian! I've fallen on the ice; it is ice!

(betsy:)

Madam, let's go home.

(innkeeper:)

Melanie, let me go back to the warm with Madame Trapeze;
I'll bring you flowers.

(melanie:)

My little body is a violin, naked in the nocturnal air.
Men, men have you arms and legs to climb up to me.

(narrator:)

Cotton, Gentle, Madness, Goatherd, Trapeze
all rush into the light and attempt to scale the rock.
Monsieur Trapeze, the innkeeper, falls.

(gentle:)

Cotton, don't push me.

(cotton:)

Get back pig.

(narrator:)

The men begin to fight.

(goatherd:)

This one's mine, city dweller.

(betsy:)

Madam, let's go.

(olympia:)

I hurt myself on the ice and I've lost my heel.

(fairy 1:)

It's a corpse, my lover.

(fairy 2:)

Madness, your humming bird.

(fairy 3:)

Just like them to desert us.

(narrator:)

The three fairies join the fray, attempting to stop the fighting men.

(fairy 2:)

You're running away from me for a corpse.

(fairy 3:)

Lololo ...

(fairy 1:)

Baballooo ..

(melanie:)

Men, men, you're taking too long
and I'm in the breeze like a bristling Leyden jar.

(goatherd:)

I'm coming dusky Melanie, me, desert and fury.

(narrator:)

As the goatherd reaches the rock platform,
Frederic rises up between Melanie's phantom and the goatherd.

(young man:)

Go away trick of the darkness, puppets from the outside.

(narrator:)

Everyone disappears into the darkness.
Frederic stands alone in a bright light facing the apparition.

(young man:)

Here you are column of smoke, spectre of Melanie!

(melanie:)

Is that you Pierre?
Come and sleep on the blue scree or in the valley's mist.
I will wrap my open dress around us both.

(young man:)

Fade away last image of life, corpse from inside my brain.

(narrator:)

He strikes her in the face with his ice-axe.
She spins down from the rock.

(young man:)

That's it; Frederic is alone.
You'll never come out again from the limbo
where I've thrown you, Melanie you tramp,
nor you others, mistletoe which devours the oak.

Frederic my boy, at the moment you are in a unique position.
You're alone you can sit down.

(speaker:)

Frederic!

(young man:)

I'd forgotten that one.

(narrator:)

The speaker enters. He is carrying a lantern.

(speaker:)

Frederick. Where has my little brother got to?
Frederic! ah, there you are.
What are you doing stuck on top of that rock like a piece of sticking plaster?
Goodness the beautiful people have bowed out.
Here you are Frederic, alone with yourself.
Will you have a little picnic? it's now or never:
I've got bread, salami, and a bottle of beer.
Nothing like a climb to work up a thirst.
And on top of that, all these emotions quite wear you out.
Olympia, Melanie the Devil and his gang.

(narrator:)

But Frederic decides that his best course
is to completely ignore the speaker.

(young man:)

Where am I?
Mirror in the darkness scratch the lying silver off your back,
become glass again as before.
The power to deceive yourself,
let's say I haven't seen you since 77,
for seventeen years, that's life.

But penetrate a little deeper still in a young man,
what would you call the power of self-destruction?

Our imagination does make things difficult for us.
Humanity in particular:
mirage of a flight of crows at each stage en route to the land of cisterns.

(speaker:)

Well Frederic, are you going to come down off your perch?
You must eat to be beautiful my boy.

(narrator:)

By the light of his lantern, the speaker sets out a meal from his rucksack:
glasses, knives and forks, etcetera.

(young man:)

And you, suspicion of a storm, doubt from the outside world?
I am a truth standing still between two lies.
Which side are you going to come down on?
Look at him, your inner world:
Descartes in his room eating salami. (*laughs*)

(speaker:)

What else do you want to do?
You're on your own.

(young man:)

Frederic can you hear your own thoughts?
That's what you are,
you who moan in the wind and
throw lying mistresses into the nettles,
it's obvious yes,
mistresses whiter than the whites of your eyes,
mistresses like revolving twigs which cling to your clothes.

(speaker:)

Eloquent gentleman, me, food's ready.

(narrator:)

Forgetting himself, Frederic finally addresses the speaker.

(young man:)

Abortion! Will you shut your pestilent mouth?

(speaker:)

Little me, you're quite carried away by your own rhetoric.

(young man:)

Crab wallowing in your own mud, go and find other apparitions.

(speaker:)

You've gone off your head.

(young man:)

Cardboard figure, dummy target will you leave me in peace.

(speaker:)

Sss, can he be serious?

Would you like me to remind you of certain details of your,
of our adolescence?

(young man:)

Oh, you cling to that do you?

to drown the voice of the forest and the noise of cars.

(speaker:)

There now you're more polite,

but if you are missing the carnival of the outside world ...

(young man:)

Their masks or your solemn face, toad?

Neither your cancer, nor their pox my shadow.

(speaker:)

You can't dismiss me Frederic,

you'll have to give me up as lost.

(narrator:)

Frederic hurls his ice-axe at the speaker.

(young man:)

Go away phantasmagoria of myself!

(sound of shattering glass, narrator:)

But instead of hitting the speaker,
the ice-axe strikes the lantern which goes out.

At that same instant, Frederic's spot of light goes out.

There is total darkness.

(fade in a kind of grumbling)

(voice 2:)

It's the big night of the year

Hurry up

It's the night of flying fishes

Hurry up

It's the night of bicycles

Hurry up

It's the night of wrist watches

Hurry up

It's the night of broken windows

Hurry up

It's the night of masked bandits

Hurry up

It's the night of dreamy crank-arms

Hurry up

It's the night of horse-power.

(as sound of grumbling fades, narrator:)

Shooting stars rain down from the sky,
occasionally illuminating an empty stage.

(young man's voice:)

A man alone crossing the scene.

(narrator:)

A falling star points out the exit to the audience.

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and voice 1 should provide the credits here.