

Kilian: Look at me! I'm the king. Did you think that I was just learning to shoot? Tip your hat to me, my friend! Will you do it, I ask? Ha ha! I'm decorated with stars and flowers. The cantor's son carries the target. Can you now see what I hit? Ha ha! May I invite you next time to a shooting match? You owe the others a show, sir! Will you come then? Ha ha!

Max: Leave me alone!

Kuno: What's going on? Who dares to touch one of my hunters?!

Kilian: He's not much of a hunter if he can't beat a peasant.

Max: I can't deny it. I didn't hit one target.

Kaspar: (Aside) Thanks Zamiel! (To others) Believe me, my friend, someone must have put a curse on you that you'll have to break. Otherwise, you'll never hit a bird.

Kuno: Nonsense! Silence, you impudent man! I already know you are a gambler and a cheater, make sure that I don't think worse things of you. But, Max – you need to take care – if you fail at the trial tomorrow, you'll lose both your job and the chance to marry my daughter, Agathe.

Kilian: What is the point of the trial shot, anyway? We've all heard of it, but don't really know why it exists.

Kuno: My great-great-grandfather, who, just like me, was also named Kuno, was a ranger for the Prince. My ancestor Kuno's picture still hangs on the wall in the ranger's house. One day, while the Prince was hunting, he came across a poacher tied to the back of a stag, being chased by dogs. That was how they used to punish poachers in the old days. The Prince took pity on the poacher, and he promised a prize to any hunter who could bring down the stag without harming the criminal. My ancestor Kuno pitied the poacher and took down the stag. Kuno shot, the stag fell, and the poacher, though badly scratched, was truly unharmed.

Kaspar: It sounds like a lucky shot.

Max: I wish I had been your ancestor Kuno!

Kuno: My great-great-grandfather rejoiced at having saved the poor man. The Prince fulfilled his promise and gave him the Master Ranger position, as well as a home for all of his family to be passed down from generation to generation.

Kilian: Really!? So, friends, now we know the origin of the trial shot!

Kuno: Here's the end of the story...There are tales that a devil – an evil spirit of a huntsman – guided the shot. It was said that Kuno didn't aim, but rather had fired a charmed bullet!

Kaspar: I thought so! (aside) Help me, Zamiel!

Kilian: I've heard all about the charmed bullets. My grandmother told me the story – Six bullets will hit their mark, but the seventh belongs to the Devil – the evil huntsman – and he guides it wherever he wants.

Kaspar: That's ridiculous!

Kuno: Because of this tale of the devil, the Prince added a clause to the deed of the house. He said that each of Ancestor Kuno's successors for Master- Ranger must successfully fire a trial shot. Enough of that, though! Let's go home. As for you, Max, take heart. You just need focus to get the shot. I'll see you before sunrise at the Prince's home.

Max: I'm so worried that I won't have a successful shot.

Kuno: Then you have to stop worrying. You can have grief or joy. It's up to you.

Kaspar: (to Max) You can only be really successful if you take big risks.

Max: I can't bear to lose Agathe. But, I've been such a bad shot lately!

Kilian: Hey, Max! Come into the tavern. Find a girl and dance with her!

Max: I don't feel like dancing!

Kilian: Suit yourself.

Aria:

Max: No! I can't bear these torments any longer. My fear takes away all of my hope. I have this strange feeling of guilt. Why do I feel doomed to failure?

Once I used to roam the forests and meadows happily. Every time I took aim, I reached my target. At night, I would bring home a full bag of birds. Agathe would watch from the window with a smile. She always greeted me with a wonderful smile.

And now, God has forsaken me?! All the angels in Heaven have forgotten men? Am I determined to fail? Have I fallen into the hands of Fate?

Now, surely, her window is open, and she waits for my footsteps to approach. She loyally waits for me, always certain that I will bring her good news. When the leaves rustle, she'll look for me, jump for joy, and move towards me – but her love will only greet the wind and the leaves. It is all in vain.

Now, dark forces surround me! Despair and mocking torture me! I can't feel any light or hope. Does Fate rule blindly? Is there no God?!

Kaspar: I can't get over all of those peasants making fun of you. Come on, Max, my good friend, let's drink. Wine! We need wine!

Max: Please spare me that.

Kaspar: Long live the head ranger, Kuno! Surely, you'll drink to the health of your boss?!

Max: All right, then.

(Max sits.)

Max: Leave me alone.

Kaspar: Here's to your Miss Agathe! Anyone who won't drink to his bride is no gentleman!

Max: Don't be rude!

Kaspar: Ugh. There's no making you happy, is there? Long live our Prince! If you don't join in that toast, you're a traitor! Here on earth, there are only tears! If it were not for wine and grapes, there would only be toil and torment! So, until I breathe my last breath, I place all my faith in the divine belly of Bacchus! One is one, and three are three! Then to wine, add two more things – cards and dice... and a busty girl – to help you find eternal life! Without these three things, there would be no real joy – since man's first sin! Let my flask be my ABCs, a girl be my prayer book, and cards be my Bible! Hey! You have to toast with me, Max!

Max: Leave me alone. Do you really think I'd join in a toast like that one? Agathe was right to warn me about you. You're a creep.

Kaspar: Oh, come on. Stay and take a bit of advice. You need some help, you know. Here, take my gun. See that bird over there? Shoot, shoot! Hey! A brilliant shot! The biggest golden eagle I've ever seen.

Max: What did you load into that gun? What kind of bullet was it?

Kaspar: Don't you know a charmed bullet when you see one?

Max: Do you have any more bullets like that?

Kaspar: That was the last one. There were just enough.

Max: Enough? What do you mean?

Kaspar: Because we can get more tonight.

Max: Get me a bullet like that!

Kaspar: Be in the Wolf's Glen right at midnight. Don't say a word to anyone. Not a word!

Max: At midnight! I'll be there!

(Max exits)

Kaspar: Be silent so no one can warn you! You are about to be caught in a trap that will send you to Hell! Nothing can save you from the terrible abyss. Surround him, you evil, dark spirits! He already is in your trap, gnashing his teeth. Triumph, triumph, triumph is mine! Revenge is almost here!

Act II

EVE: A beautiful mansion, which was once a prince's hunting lodge. Annchen is hanging a portrait that fell off of the wall and hit Agathe on the side of the head.

Duet:

Annchen: You stay put, you horrible thing! I'll teach you to behave! No ghosts are allowed in our house!

Agathe: Show some respect for our ancestor's portrait!

Annchen: I'll be happy to respect the old gentleman, but teaching the servant manners doesn't command respect.

Agathe: Who do you mean? What servant?

Annchen: The nail, of course! He's awful! Shouldn't he support his master? Wasn't it terrible to let him fall off the wall?

Agathe: Yes, certainly, he should behave better.

Annchen: Letting him fall – that's cruel! Certainly, he must behave!

Agathe: You turn everything into a joke. Everything is an excuse for laughing and joking with you. Oh, I wish I could tease easily, like you do.

Annchen: Sadness is no friend of mine! I'll always be lighthearted and dance through life. It's the only way to be! Cares and sorrows must go far away. We need to have fun all day!

Agathe: All I can think of is my beating heart and the sweet pangs of love. My heart is anxious and always worried about Max when he is away from me.

Annchen: There! I've settled the old man on the wall for at least another century. He looks nice up there.... You took off your bandage. Did your head stop hurting?

Agathe: Don't worry about it, my dear. It scared me more than it hurt.... Where is Max? Why isn't he back yet?

Annchen: He'll be here soon. Master Kuno said he would send him home tonight.

Agathe: It's so lonely here without him.

Annchen: It certainly is unpleasant to be almost all alone on the night before your wedding. Especially since we're in a haunted old castle, where the ghosts could come out at any time! I prefer living men – especially young ones!

Aria:

Annchen: If a young thin man came by, whether he's blonde or dark, as long as he has bright eyes and rosy cheeks... well, he'd be worth checking out!

Of course, I would drop my eyes, because I'm a delicate young maid, but I'd steal a glance when he wasn't looking!

And if our eyes should meet, well there's no harm in that! The worse that might happen is that we would both blush a little.

A glance here, a glance there... until one of us speaks. He would say, "You're beautiful!" I would say, "My darling!" And soon we would be bride and groom!

Come closer, friends! Don't you want to see my bridal crown?! Now aren't I a pretty bride with such a handsome groom!

Agathe: Yes, you'll wear a bridal crown beautifully!

Annchen: That's how I like to hear you talk! Be happy, just like I will be someday when I wear one!

Agathe: I hope you will... but who knows? I'm feeling better now, but this morning I went to talk to the hermit. Afterwards, I felt terrible.

Annchen: Why? Tell me what happened! All you said is that he gave you some blessed and holy roses.

Agathe: He warned me that I was being threatened by a great danger. You know it must be true, because that portrait fell off the wall, hit me in the head, and nearly killed me!

Annchen: What an astute observation! We'll just have to get rid of all of the evil omens around us! Those roses will help!

Agathe: I'll cherish the roses and make sure to take care of them.

Annchen: I'll put them on the windowsill to get fresh air. Now, let's get ready for bed.

Agathe: Oh I can't go to bed until I've seen Max!

Annchen: You lovers! So much trouble!

(Annchen exits)

Agathe: How could I possibly go to sleep before I see him? Yes, love and anxiety always go hand in hand! The moon lights a silvery path. Oh, what a beautiful night!

Softly, softly, soars my song, gently into the starry sky. Day is dying, and I send my prayer into the heavens.

Oh how brightly the stars shine! They gleam with pure radiance. Only... in the distance, a storm seems to be brewing in the mountains. The forest is dark with gloomy and heavy clouds overhead. Lord, I turn to you and pray with sincerest devotion. Send your angels to protect us from all dangers!

Every one else is asleep! Why is he not here? My ear listens eagerly for his footstep. I hear it, but no... it's just the fir trees rustling in the breeze. Only nightingales and crickets are enjoying the evening. But wait! I think I hear footsteps! There, from out of the pines, someone is coming! It's Max! It's Max! He must see me! Your bride is still waiting for you!

(Max and Annchen enter)

Agathe: Max! Oh, Max! You're finally here!

Max: Agathe! I'm so glad to see you! But, I can only stay for a few moments.

Agathe: Oh, you're not leaving again tonight, are you? There's a storm coming.

Max: I must!

Agathe: How did you shoot today, Max? Were you successful?

Max: I... I didn't go target shooting at all today, Agathe. But, look! I shot the largest bird of prey out of the sky! Why aren't you happy?

Agathe: Large birds like that always frighten me.

Max: I must go out again. I shot a stag, as well. The peasants will take him if I don't bring him back tonight.

Agathe: Where is the stag?

Max: He's quite far... near the Wolf's Glen.

Trio – Sung:

Agathe: Where?! What?! Oh how terrible! You're going to the haunted Wolf's Glen?

Annchen: There is a demon in the forest! He is a wild hunter. At midnight, he seeks refuge with the other spirits in the Wolf's Glen!

Max: Should a hunter be afraid of such things?

Agathe: It's a sin to tempt God by going to such a horrible place!

Max: It is natural to have a little fear of the forest, especially when it is dark and nearing midnight. I'm used to it. It is only trees rustling, bird's screeching, and owls hovering overhead.

Agathe: I'm so afraid! Stay here! Please don't go away. I'm so afraid for you!

Annchen: She's so afraid! Oh, please stay here! Don't hurry away so fast.

Max: The moon is still in the sky, with a clear and beautiful shimmer, but soon it will fade into darkness.

Annchen: Why are you looking out into the darkness with a scowl and frown on your face, Max?

Agathe: My fear won't change your mind?

Max: My honor and duty calls me to leave now.

All Three: Goodbye! Take care! Goodbye!

Max: (Leaving) But, Agathe... Do you forgive me for leaving you so soon tonight?

Agathe: I forgive you, but please be careful. I worry about you so much!

Annchen: That's the hunter's job! No rest day or night!

Agathe: I hate to let you go, but I know that I must! Please be careful and stay away from the evil ones in the darkness. Remember my words!

Max: Soon the moon will be gone. My destiny tears me away from my love!

Annchen: (To Agathe) Please try to stay strong!

(To Max) Remember Agathe's words! Be safe!

EVE: The Wolf's Glen is a weird, uncomfortable place, full of shadows, surrounded by high mountains. Kaspar is there already, making a circle of black stones with a skull in the center, a ladle nearby, a mound of bullets, and an eagle's wing. A thunderstorm rages.

Spoken:

Kaspar: Come down here! We don't have much time!

Sung:

Max: I can't get down there!

Spoken:

Kaspar: Don't be a coward! Normally you climb like a mountain goat!

Sung:

Max: Look over there! Over there is my Mother's ghost! She's as white as she is dead, calling to me through the mist. Oh look! With tears she warns me to leave! Spoken:

Kaspar: Zamiel! Zamiel! Appear! By the magician's skull, appear! Zamiel, Zamiel, appear!

Zamiel: Why do you call me?

Sung:

Kaspar: You know that my time is almost over!

Zamiel: Tomorrow!

Kaspar: Let me live just a little longer.

Zamiel: NO!

Kaspar: I'll bring you another victim to sacrifice.

Zamiel: Who?

Kaspar: My fellow hunter. He is coming now, but he has never yet experienced your darkness.

Zamiel: What does he ask in exchange for his soul?

Kaspar: Magic bullets! He has all of his sights set on them.

Zamiel: Six bullets will help him. The seventh will damn him!

Kaspar: The seventh is for you, and you must kill his bride! With your dark spirits, her death will make him desperate – both him and her father!

Zamiel: I don't have any power over her... yet.

Kaspar: Will he serve enough as payment to you?

Zamiel: Perhaps.

Kaspar: Grant me a delay. Let me live another three years. If you do this, Max will also be your victim!

Zamiel: So be it! I vow by the gates of Hell! Tomorrow it will be him – or you!

Act III

EVE: Agathe's Bedroom

Sung:

Agathe: Even though clouds may hide it, the sun still shines in splendor. We are not driven by sheer chance. There is always a God looking out for us. His love and purity always protects his children.

The Father will always care for me, too. Like a child, I give him my heart and mind, and he protects me. If he calls me to be a bride, I know that he will protect me forever.

Annchen: Hey! You're ready so early! But, you look so sad! You've been crying! What's wrong?!

Agathe: Oh, it's been such terrible weather – and Max was out all night! I had awful dreams!

Annchen: Dreams?! I always heard that you should try to remember your dreams from the night before your wedding. They are supposed to determine how your marriage will turn out! Tell me about them!

Agathe: It's strange. I dreamed that I had been changed into a white dove and was flying from limb to limb on a big tree. Max aimed at me, and I fell, but then the white dove vanished and I was myself again. Instead of shooting me, there was a large black bird of prey that was dying in its own blood.

Annchen: Oh that's charming! Let me interpret! You stayed up late working on your white wedding dress, which explains why the white bird was on your mind. You were frightened by the eagle feather's on Max's hat – and you know that you fear all birds of prey – so there is your black bird!

Agathe: I'm just worried that my dream will come true.

Annchen: Hmm... You know, you can't believe everything you hear or dream. Here's a good example! My aunt, the poor soul, has died and gone to Heaven. Let me tell you how she was almost killed of fright! The clock struck eleven, and she heard a noise and saw a scary sight! Nearer and nearer crept a terrifying monster! It had eyes like fire and made sounds like clanking chains. As it crept closer to her, she became more and more horrified! She began to pray a fervent prayer to all the saints – "Susanne, Margaret! Susanne, Margaret!" All of a sudden, the lights came on and – to her surprise – can you believe it! – don't be alarmed!!! – It almost scared me half to death! It was... not a ghost at all, but rather her big watchdog, Nero!

Oh don't be upset with me! I'm just trying to lighten your mood. Tears don't become a bride.

Sad eyes, my dear, don't make a bride beautiful. Her glances should be happy, charming, refreshing, and delightful! Being charming is her loveliest duty.

Don't be mournful any longer, Agathe! Be happy! The candles are already lit for a union of happy, happy hearts. Dear friend, have no fear!

Annchen: Now, I need to find the bridal wreath! Ancestor Kuno's portrait fell off the wall again last night!

Agathe: I don't know why, but that frightens me so much.

Annchen: Oh no! The girl at the shop gave me the wrong wreath!

Agathe: That's a death wreath! How awful! Maybe this is a sign from heaven. The old hermit gave me the white roses. Maybe these were meant to be my bridal wreath.

Annchen: Yes! They look so good on you!

EVE: The scene is now a beautiful, outdoor landscape where the trial shot will be held.

Ottokar: Enough of the joys of hunting, dear friends! Kuno, I approve of the son-in-law you have chosen! Where is the bride-to-be? As we wait for her, we can do the trial shot. There you go, Max! It is an easy shot for you – a white dove in the tree. Do it now!

Agathe: No, Max! Don't shoot! I'm the white dove!

Killian: Oh no! Max shot his bride! I can't bear to look her way!

Kuno: Wait- a hunter fell from that tree over there!

Annchen: I can't look. What a horrible day! My heart is sobbing and pounding! Did this horrible thing really just happen? My eyes can't see – who was the victim? Was it Agathe?

Agathe: Where am I? I dreamt that I fell!

Annchen: Oh thank heavens! She's awake!

Max and Kuno: She's alive! Thanks be to God and the Saints! She's alive and has opened her eyes!

Killian: That man is shot, lying here in his own blood!

Kaspar: I saw the hermit standing over her. Heaven is victorious and I am damned!

Agathe: I am breathing again! I fainted from the terror, but I'm so much better now. I can breathe the sweet, balmy air.

Kuno: She's breathing normally again!

Max: Ah! She's smiling again!

Agathe: Oh, Max! My love!

Max: Her sweet voice calls to me!

Agathe: I'm still alive, Max! I'll be yours forever!

Max: Agathe, you're alive and we'll always be together!

All: Thanks to God! Praise be to God and all the Saints!

Kaspar: Zamiel! You're already here! This is how you keep your promise? Take me as your prey, then! In death, I'll defy you! A curse on heaven! A curse on you!!!

Chorus: Oh! That was his dying prayer!

Kuno: He was set on his evil ways! Heaven has punished him!

Kuno and Chorus: Didn't you all hear? He called upon the Evil One, Zamiel!

Ottokar: Go throw the evil man into the Wolf's Glen where he belongs!

(To Max): Only you can solve the riddle of what has happened. A terrible thing has taken place. You must now confess the truth.

Max: Sir, I humbly bow before you. I am unworthy of your mercy. I was so tempted by Kaspar's promise that I left my normal virtue and morals behind. I shot four bullets today, and they were all bullets that I cast with him in the Wolf's Glen!

Ottokar: Then you must leave now from my land, and never come back! You've tried to bring Hell to Earth, and that is unacceptable! Go, go! This maiden's hand in marriage will never be yours!

Max: I'm devastated, but I don't dare complain. It is my own fault for having trusted in the Evil One's magic instead of keeping my faith in God. I was weak, even if I never meant to be wicked.

Kuno: Until this time, he's always been faithful to his duties!

Agathe: Oh please, Prince Ottokar! Do not separate us!

All: He has a brave and noble heart. He's always been virtuous and true. Please don't separate them!

Annchen: Please, Gracious Prince Ottokar, don't separate them!

Kuno: Please have mercy!

Annchen: Have mercy!

Ottokar: No, no, no! Agathe is too pure for him! Let him pay for his sins against heaven, or otherwise, he'll go to prison. Either way, get out of my sight!

Hermit: Who gives this severe punishment? Princes must honor repentance from sinners.

Ottokar: Are you the holy man that is so cherished and revered throughout the area? I will honor your wise degree. I see that you speak for those above. Give him his sentence. He won't need to fear further punishment from me.

Hermit: Even the most sincere heart can be swayed by temptation. If a man fears or despairs, he can stray from right decisions and duty. Is it right to determine two people's happiness by the hitting of target with a bullet? And if tribulation gets in their way, who is fit to judge them and their decisions? No one on Earth should condemn them. From this day on, let's end the trial shot and take away this temptation against God!

And please, let me beg of you... since Max was always true and brave, give him a year to prove his worth of the maiden, Agathe. And then, if he proves faithful and true, let Agathe's hand in marriage be his prize.

Ottokar: I grant this decision. All higher beings speak through you.

Chorus: Hail to our Prince Ottokar. He is kind and just.

Ottokar: (To Max) Prove yourself faithful and true, as the holy man says, and I will marry you, myself.

Max: I am so happy! I will prove that I am faithful and true in this year ahead. I thank you for this graciousness.

Agathe: Let's let nothing on Earth separate us. The sun finally shines upon us!

Ottokar and the Hermit: Heaven will judge what is right and just.

Kuno: (To Max and Agathe) Always be virtuous and kind, and you will be worthy of your happiness.

Annchen: (To Agathe) In one year's time, I'll be happy to adorn you for the altar again, my dear friend.

Hermit: Now, dear friends, raise your eyes to Heaven and thank God for your many blessings! We must put our trust in His guidance.

Agathe, Annchen, Max, Ottokar, Kuno, and the Hermit: Our hearts were full of sorrow and doubt, but now we can sing a happy song to our Heavenly Father!

All: Yes, let's raise our hearts in song and trust in the Father's guidance. He who is pure of heart and free of guilt may trust, like a child, in the Father's kindness.

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