

# La Bohème

## by Giacomo Puccini

### Cast

RODOLFO, a poet (tenor)  
MIMÌ, a seamstress (soprano)  
MARCELLO, a painter (baritone)  
MUSSETTA, a singer (soprano)  
SCHAUNARD, a musician (baritone)  
COLLINE, a philosopher (bass)  
BENOÎT, their landlord (bass)  
ALCINDORO, a state councilor (bass)  
PARPIGNOL, a toy vendor (tenor)  
a customs Sergeant (bass)  
students, working girls, townsfolk, shopkeepers,  
street-vendors, soldiers, waiters, children

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### ACT ONE

#### *A garret*

*(A large window through which an expanse of snow-covered roofs is seen. At right, a stove. A table, a bed, four chairs, a painter's easel with a half-finished canvas: books everywhere, manuscripts. Rodolfo is thoughtful, looking out the window. Marcello works at his painting "The Crossing of the Red Sea," his hands stiff with cold; he tries to warm them by blowing on them now and again.)*

#### MARCELLO

This *Red Sea* of mine  
makes me feel cold and numb  
as if it were pouring over me.  
I'll drown a Pharaoh in revenge.  
*(to Rodolfo)*

What are you doing?

#### RODOLFO

I'm looking at Paris,  
seeing the skies grey with smoke  
from a thousand chimneys,  
and I think of that no-good,

hateful stove of ours that lives  
a gentleman's life of idleness.

#### MARCELLO

It's been a long time  
since he received his just income.

#### RODOLFO

What are those stupid forests  
doing, all covered with snow?

#### MARCELLO

Rodolfo, I want to tell you  
a profound thought I've had:  
I'm cold as hell.

#### RODOLFO

As for me, Marcello, I'll be frank:  
I'm not exactly sweating.

#### MARCELLO

And my fingers are frozen —  
as if I still were holding them  
in that enormous glacier,  
Musetta's heart.  
*(A sigh escapes him, and he leaves off painting.)*

RODOLFO  
Love is a stove that burns too much...

MARCELLO  
Too fast.

RODOLFO  
Where the man is the fuel...

MARCELLO  
And woman the spark...

RODOLFO  
He burns in a moment...

MARCELLO  
And she stands by, watching!

RODOLFO  
Meanwhile, we're freezing in here!

MARCELLO  
And dying from lack of food!

RODOLFO  
We must have a fire...

MARCELLO  
*(seizing a chair)*  
Wait...we'll sacrifice the chair!  
*(Rodolfo keeps Marcello from breaking the chair. Suddenly he shouts with joy.)*

RODOLFO  
Eureka!

MARCELLO  
You've found it?

RODOLFO  
Yes. Sharpen your wits.  
Let Thought burst into flame.

MARCELLO  
*(pointing to his picture)*  
Shall we burn the *Red Sea*?

RODOLFO  
No. Painted canvas smells.

My play...  
My burning drama will warm us.

MARCELLO  
You mean to read it? I'll freeze.

RODOLFO  
No, the paper will unfold in ash  
and genius soar back to its heaven.  
A serious loss to the age...  
Rome is in danger...

MARCELLO  
What a noble heart!

RODOLFO  
Here, take the first act!

MARCELLO  
Here.

RODOLFO  
Tear it up.

MARCELLO  
Light it.  
*(Rodolfo lights the part of the manuscript thrown in the fire. Then the two friends draw up chairs and sit down, voluptuously warming themselves.)*

RODOLFO and MARCELLO  
What blissful heat!  
*(The door opens and Colline enters, frozen, stamping his feet. He throws some books on the table.)*

COLLINE  
Signs of the Apocalypse begin to appear.  
No pawning allowed on Christmas Eve.  
*(surprised)*  
A fire!

RODOLFO  
Quiet, my play's being given...

MARCELLO  
...to the stove.

COLLINE  
I find it sparkling.

RODOLFO  
Brilliant.

MARCELLO  
But brief.

RODOLFO  
Brevity, its great merit.

COLLINE  
Your chair, please, Mr. Author.

MARCELLO  
These intermissions  
bore you to death.  
Get on with it!

RODOLFO  
Act Two.

MARCELLO  
No whispering.

COLLINE  
What profundity!

MARCELLO  
How colorful!

RODOLFO  
In that dying blue flame  
an ardent love-scene dies.

COLLINE  
See that page crackle.

MARCELLO  
There were the kisses!

RODOLFO  
I want to hear three acts at once.  
*(He throws the rest of the manuscript on the fire.)*

COLLINE  
And so unified is your bold conception.

ALL  
Beautiful death in the joyful flame.  
*(The flame dies.)*

MARCELLO  
Oh Lord! The flame is dying.

COLLINE  
So useless, so fragile a drama!

MARCELLO  
Already curling up to die.

COLLINE *and* MARCELLO  
Down with the author!  
*(Two porters come in, one carrying food, bottles of wine and cigars; the other has a bundle of wood. At the sound, the three men in front of the fire turn around and with shouts of amazement fall upon the provisions.)*

RODOLFO  
Wood!

MARCELLO  
Cigars!

COLLINE  
Bordeaux!

RODOLFO  
Firewood!

MARCELLO  
Bordeaux!

ALL THREE  
Destiny provides us  
with a feast of plenty!  
*(The porters leave. Schaunard enters triumphantly, throwing some coins on the floor.)*

SCHAUNARD  
The Bank of France  
has gone broke just for you.

COLLINE

*(gathering up coins, with the others)*

Pick them up!

MARCELLO

They must be made of tin!...

SCHAUNARD

Are you deaf? Or blind?

*(showing a crown)*

Who is this man?

RODOLFO

Louis Philippe!

I bow to my King!

ALL

Louis Philippe is at our feet!

*(Schaunard wants to tell his adventure, but the others won't listen to him. They set the provisions on the table and put wood in the stove.)*

SCHAUNARD

Now I'll tell you: this gold,

this silver, rather,

has a noble history...

RODOLFO

Let's fire the stove!

COLLINE

It's hard to endure so much cold!

SCHAUNARD

An Englishman... a gentleman...

A lord...was looking for

a musician...

MARCELLO

Come! Let's set the table!

SCHAUNARD

And I? I flew to him...

RODOLFO

Where are the matches?

COLLINE

There.

MARCELLO

Here.

SCHAUNARD

...I introduce myself.

He hires me. I ask him...

COLLINE

Cold roast beef.

MARCELLO

Sweet pastry.

SCHAUNARD

When do the lessons begin?...

I introduce myself, he hires me,

I ask: When do the lessons begin?

He replies: "Let's start...

look!" and points to a parrot

on the first floor.

Then adds: "You play

until that bird dies!"

RODOLFO

The dining room's brilliant!

MARCELLO

Now the candles.

SCHAUNARD

And so it went:

I played for three long days...

Then I used my charm,

my handsome figure...

I won the serving-girl over...

We poisoned a little parsley...

MARCELLO

Eat without a tablecloth?

RODOLFO

No! I've an idea.

*(He takes a newspaper from his pocket.)*

MARCELLO and COLLINE

*The Constitutional!*

RODOLFO

Excellent paper...

You eat and devour the news!

SCHAUNARD

Lorito spread his wings,

Lorito opened his beak,

took a peck of parsley,

and died like Socrates!

COLLINE

*(to Schaunard)*

Who?

SCHAUNARD

Go to the devil, all of you...

Now what are you doing?

No! These delicacies

are the provender

for the dark and gloomy

days in the future.

Dine at home on Christmas Eve

when the Latin Quarter

has decked its streets with eatables?

When the perfume of fritters

is wafted through the ancient streets?

There the girls sing happily...

ALL

It's Christmas Eve!

SCHAUNARD

And each has a student echoing her!

Have some religion, gentlemen:

we drink at home, but we dine out.

*(They pour the wine. A knock at the door.)*

BENOIT

*(outside)*

May I come in?

MARCELLO

Who's there?

BENOIT

Benoit.

MARCELLO

The landlord!

SCHAUNARD

Bolt the door.

COLLINE

Nobody's home.

SCHAUNARD

It's locked.

BENOIT

Just one word.

SCHAUNARD

*(after consulting the others, opens the door)*

Just one!

*(Benoit enters.)*

BENOIT

*(showing a paper)*

Rent.

MARCELLO

Here! Give him a chair.

RODOLFO

At once.

BENOIT

Don't bother, I'd like...

SCHAUNARD

Be seated.

MARCELLO

Something to drink?

BENOIT

Thank you.

RODOLFO and COLLINE

A toast.

SCHAUNARD

Drink.

*(Benoit sets down his glass and shows the paper to Marcello.)*

BENOIT

This is the bill  
for three months' rent...

MARCELLO

That's fine...

BENOIT

Therefore...

SCHAUNARD

Another drop.

BENOIT

Thank you.

THE FOUR

A toast. To your health!

BENOIT

*(to Marcello again)*

I come to you  
because last quarter  
you promised me...

MARCELLO

I promised and I'll pay.  
*(He points to the money on the table.)*

RODOLFO

*(aside to Marcello)*  
What are you doing?

SCHAUNARD

Are you crazy?

MARCELLO

*(to Benoit, ignoring the others)*

You see? Now then  
stay with us a moment.  
Tell me: how old are you,  
dear Monsieur Benoit?

BENOIT

My age?...Spare me!

RODOLFO

Our age, more or less, I'd say.

BENOIT

More, much more.  
*(They refill his glass.)*

COLLINE

He said more or less.

MARCELLO

The other evening at Mabilie  
they caught him making love.

BENOIT

Me?

MARCELLO

They caught him at Mabilie the other  
evening...  
Deny it, then.

BENOIT

An accident.

MARCELLO

A lovely woman!

BENOIT

*(half-drunk)*  
Ah! Very!

SCHAUNARD, *then* RODOLFO

You rascal!

COLLINE

Seducer!  
He's an oak, a ball of fire!

RODOLFO

He's a man of taste.

MARCELLO

With that curly, tawny hair.  
How he swaggered, proud and happy!

BENOIT

I'm old but strong.

COLLINE, SCHAUNARD *and* RODOLFO

How he swaggered, proud and happy!

MARCELLO  
Feminine virtue  
gave in to him.

BENOIT  
I'm paying myself back now  
for my shy youth...  
my pastime, you know,  
a lively woman... a bit...  
well, not a whale exactly  
or a relief-map of the world  
or a face like a full moon,  
but not thin, really thin. No!  
Thin women are worrisome  
and often... a nuisance...  
always full of complaints,  
for example...  
...my wife!  
*(Marcello rises, feigning moral indignation.  
The others do the same.)*

MARCELLO  
This man has a wife  
and foul desires in his heart!

THE OTHERS  
Horrors!

RODOLFO  
He corrupts and pollutes  
our respectable home.

THE OTHERS  
Out with him!

MARCELLO  
Burn some incense!

COLLINE  
Throw out the scoundrel!

SCHAUNARD  
Our offended morality expels you!

BENOIT  
I say...I...

THE OTHERS  
Silence!

BENOIT  
My dear sirs...

THE OTHERS  
Silence...Out, sir...  
Away with you! And good evening  
to your worship! Ha! Ha! Ha!  
*(Benoit is thrown out. Marcello shuts the  
door.)*

MARCELLO  
I've paid the rent.

SCHAUNARD  
In the Latin Quarter Momus awaits us.

MARCELLO  
Long life to him who pays!

SCHAUNARD  
We'll divide my loot!

THE OTHERS  
Let's divide!  
*(They share the coins.)*

MARCELLO  
*(giving Colline a mirror)*  
Beauties are there, come from above.  
Now you're rich, you must look presentable.  
You bear! Trim your fur.

COLLINE  
I'll make my first acquaintance  
of a beard-trimmer.  
Lead me to the absurd,  
outrageous razor.

ALL  
Let's go.

RODOLFO  
I must stay to finish  
my article for  
*The Beaver.*

MARCELLO  
Hurry, then!

RODOLFO

Five minutes. I know my trade.

COLLINE

We'll wait for you downstairs.

MARCELLO

You'll hear from us if you dawdle.

RODOLFO

Five minutes.

SCHAUNARD

Cut that *Beaver's* tail short.

*(Rodolfo takes a light and opens the door.*

*The others start down the stairs.)*

MARCELLO

*(outside)*

Watch the stairs.

Hold on to the railing.

RODOLFO

*(raising the light)*

Careful.

COLLINE

It's pitch dark.

SCHAUNARD

That damn janitor!

COLLINE

Hell!

RODOLFO

Colline, are you killed?

COLLINE

*(from below)*

Not yet.

MARCELLO

Come soon.

*(Rodolfo closes the door, sets his light on the table and tries to write. But he tears up the paper and throws the pen down.)*

RODOLFO

I'm not in the mood.

*(There's a timid knock at the door.)*

Who's there?

MIMÌ

*(outside)*

Excuse me.

RODOLFO

A woman!

MIMÌ

I'm sorry...my light

has gone out.

RODOLFO

*(opening the door)*

Here.

MIMÌ

*(in the doorway, holding a candlestick and a key)*

Would you... ?

RODOLFO

Come in for a moment.

MIMÌ

There's no need.

RODOLFO

Please...come in.

*(Mimì enters, and has trouble breathing.)*

You're not well?

MIMÌ

No...it's nothing.

RODOLFO

You're pale!

MIMÌ

I'm out of breath...the stairs...

*(She faints, and Rodolfo is just in time to support her and help her to a chair. The key and the candlestick fall from her hands.)*



RODOLFO

Now what shall I do?

*(He gets some water and sprinkles her face.)*

So.

How ill she looks!

*(Mimì comes to.)*

Are you better now?

MIMÌ

Yes.

RODOLFO

It's so cold here.

Come and sit by the fire.

*(He helps her to a chair by the stove.)*

Wait...some wine.

MIMÌ

Thank you.

RODOLFO

Here.

MIMÌ

Just a little.

RODOLFO

There.

MIMÌ

Thank you.

RODOLFO

*(What a lovely creature!)*

MIMÌ

*(rising)*

Now, please,

relight my candle.

I'm better now.

RODOLFO

Such a hurry!

MIMÌ

Yes.

*(Rodolfo lights her candle for her.)*

Thank you. Good evening.

RODOLFO

Good evening.

*(Mimì goes out, then reappears at the door.)*

MIMÌ

Oh! foolish me!

Where have I left

the key to my room?

RODOLFO

Don't stand in the doorway:

the wind makes your light flicker.

*(Her candle goes out.)*

MIMÌ

Heavens! Will you relight it?

*(Rodolfo hastens to her with his light, but when he reaches the door, his candle goes out, too. The room is dark.)*

RODOLFO

There...Now mine's out, too.

MIMÌ

Ah! And where can my key be?

RODOLFO

Pitch dark!

MIMÌ

Unlucky me!

RODOLFO

Where can it be?

MIMÌ

You've a bothersome neighbor...

RODOLFO

Not at all.

MIMÌ

You've a bothersome neighbor...

RODOLFO

What do you mean? Not at all!

MIMÌ

Search.

RODOLFO

I'm searching.

*(They hunt, touching the floor with their hands.)*

MIMÌ

Where can it be?

RODOLFO

Ah!

*(He finds the key and pockets it.)*

MIMÌ

Did you find it?

RODOLFO

No.

MIMÌ

I thought...

RODOLFO

Truthfully!

MIMÌ

Are you looking for it?

RODOLFO

Yes, I am.

*(Guided by her voice, Rodolfo pretends to search as he draws closer to her. Then his hand meets hers, and he holds it.)*

MIMÌ

*(surprised)*

Ah!

*(They rise. Rodolfo continues to hold Mimì's hand.)*

RODOLFO

How cold your little hand is!

Let me warm it for you.

What's the use of searching?

We'll never find it in the dark.

But luckily

there's a moon,

and she's our neighbor here.

Just wait, my dear young lady,

and meanwhile I'll tell you

in a word who and what I am.

Shall I?

*(Mimì is silent.)*

Who am I? I'm a poet.

My business? Writing.

How do I live? I live.

In my happy poverty

I squander like a prince

my poems and songs of love.

In hopes and dreams

and castles-in-the-air,

I'm a millionaire in spirit.

But sometimes my strong-box

is robbed of all its jewels

by two thieves: a pair of pretty eyes.

They came in now with you

and all my lovely dreams,

my dreams of the past,

were soon stolen away.

But the theft doesn't upset me,

since the empty place was filled

with hope.

Now that you know me,

it's your turn to speak.

Who are you? Will you tell me?

MIMÌ

Yes.

They call me Mimì,

but my real name's Lucia.

My story is brief.

I embroider silk and satin

at home or outside.

I'm tranquil and happy,

and my pastime

is making lilies and roses.

I love all things

that have gentle magic,

that talk of love, of spring,

that talk of dreams and fancies —

the things called poetry...

Do you understand me?

RODOLFO

Yes.

MIMÌ

They call me Mimì —  
 I don't know why.  
 I live all by myself  
 and I eat alone.  
 I don't often go to church,  
 but I like to pray.  
 I stay all alone  
 in my tiny white room,  
 I look at the roofs and the sky.  
 But when spring comes  
 the sun's first rays are mine.  
 April's first kiss is mine, is mine!  
 The sun's first rays are mine!  
 A rose blossoms in my vase,  
 I breathe its perfume, petal by petal.  
 So sweet is the flower's perfume.  
 But the flowers I make, alas,  
 the flowers I make, alas,  
 alas, have no scent.  
 What else can I say?  
 I'm your neighbor, disturbing you  
 at this impossible hour.

SCHAUNARD

*(from below)*  
 Hey! Rodolfo!

COLLINE

Rodolfo!

MARCELLO

Hey! Can't you hear?  
 You slow-coach!

COLLINE

You scribbler!

SCHAUNARD

To hell with that lazy one!  
*(Rodolfo, impatient, goes to the window to answer. When the window is opened, the moonlight comes in, lighting up the room.)*

RODOLFO

I've a few more words to write.

MIMÌ

Who are they?

RODOLFO

Friends.

SCHAUNARD

You'll hear about this.

MARCELLO

What are you doing there alone?

RODOLFO

I'm not alone. There's two of us.  
 Go to Momus and get a table.  
 We'll be there soon.

MARCELLO, SCHAUNARD *and*

COLLINE

Momus, Momus, Momus.  
 Quietly, discreetly, we're off.  
 Momus, Momus.

He's found his poem at last.

*(Turning, Rodolfo sees Mimì wrapped in a halo of moonlight. He contemplates her, in ecstasy.)*

RODOLFO

Oh, lovely girl! Oh, sweet face  
 bathed in the soft moonlight.  
 I see in you the dream  
 I'd dream forever!

MIMÌ

(Ah! Love, you rule alone!...)

RODOLFO

Already I taste in spirit  
 the heights of tenderness!

MIMÌ

(You rule alone, o Love!)

RODOLFO

Already I taste in spirit  
 the heights of tenderness!  
 Love trembles in our kiss!

MIMÌ

(How sweet his praises  
 enter my heart...)

Love, you alone rule!)  
*(Rodolfo kisses her.)*  
 No, please!

RODOLFO  
 You're mine!

MIMÌ  
 Your friends are waiting.

RODOLFO  
 You send me away already?

MIMÌ  
 I daren't say what I'd like...

RODOLFO  
 Tell me.

MIMÌ  
 If I came with you?

RODOLFO  
 What? Mimì!  
 It would be so fine to stay here.  
 Outside it's cold.

MIMÌ  
 I'd be near you!

RODOLFO  
 And when we come back?

MIMÌ  
 Who knows?

RODOLFO  
 Give me your arm, my dear...

MIMÌ  
 Your servant, sir...

RODOLFO  
 Tell me you love me!

MIMÌ  
 I love you.

RODOLFO and MIMÌ  
*(as they go out)*  
 Beloved! My love! My love!

## ACT TWO

*In the Latin Quarter*

*(A square with shops of all kinds. On one side is the Café Momus. Mimì and Rodolfo move about with the crowd. Colline is nearby at a rag-woman's stand. Schaunard is buying a pipe and a trumpet. Marcello is pushed here and there by the throng. It is evening. Christmas Eve.)*

HAWKERS  
 Oranges, dates!  
 Hot roasted chestnuts!  
 Crosses, knick-knacks!  
 Cookies and candies!  
 Flowers for the ladies!  
 Pies for sale!  
 With whipped cream!  
 Finches and larks!  
 Dates! Fresh fish!  
 Coconut milk! Skirts!  
 Carrots!

THE CROWD  
 What a throng! Such noise!  
 Hold tight! Let's run!  
 Lisa! Emma!  
 Make way there!  
 Emma, I'm calling you!  
 Once more around...  
 We'll take Rue Mazarine.  
 I can't breathe here...  
 See? The café's right here.  
 What wonderful jewels!  
 Your eyes are more wonderful!  
 This crowd tonight  
 sets a dangerous example!  
 Things were better in my day!

Long live freedom!  
 AT THE CAFÉ  
 Let's go. Here, waiter!

Hurry. On the run.  
 Come here. My turn.  
 Beer! A glass!  
 Vanilla. Liqueur!  
 Well? Hurry.  
 Drinks! Coffee...  
 Quickly. Hey, there...

SCHAUNARD  
*(blowing on the trumpet, producing odd sounds)*  
 This D is out of tune.  
 How much for the horn and the pipe?

COLLINE  
*fat the rag-woman's, who is sewing up an enormous overcoat he has just bought)*  
 It's a little worn...

RODOLFO  
 Let's go.

MIMÌ  
 Are we going to buy the bonnet?

COLLINE  
 ...But it's cheap and dignified.

RODOLFO  
 Hold tight to my arm.

MIMÌ  
 I'll hold you tight.

MIMÌ and RODOLFO  
 Let's go!  
*(They go into the milliner's.)*

MARCELLO  
 I, too, feel like shouting:  
 which of you happy girls wants love?

HAWKERS  
 Dates! Trout! Plums from Tours!

MARCELLO  
 Let us make a bargain together —  
 for a penny I'll sell my virgin heart.

SCHAUNARD  
 Pushing and shoving and running,  
 the crowd hastens to its joys,  
 feeling insane desires —  
 unappeased.

HAWKERS  
 Trinkets! Brooches! *etc.*

COLLINE  
*(showing a book)*  
 A rare find, truly unique:  
 a Runic grammar.

SCHAUNARD  
 (What an honest fellow!)

MARCELLO  
 Let's eat!

SCHAUNARD and COLLINE  
 And Rodolfo?

MARCELLO  
 He went into the milliner's.  
*(Rodolfo and Mimì come out of the shop.)*

RODOLFO  
 Come, my friends are waiting.

MIMÌ  
 Is my pink bonnet becoming?

HAWKERS  
 Whipped cream! Coconut milk!  
 Pies! Whipped cream!

CAFÉ CUSTOMERS  
 Waiter! A glass!  
 Quick. Hey there...  
 Liqueur.

RODOLFO  
 You're dark,  
 that color suits you.

MIMÌ  
*(looking back at the shop)*  
 That lovely coral necklace.

RODOLFO

I've a millionaire uncle.  
If God acts wisely,  
I'll buy you a necklace  
much more beautiful...

URCHINS, MIDINETTES, STUDENTS

Ah! Ah! Ah! *etc.*

TOWNSPEOPLE

Let's follow these people!  
Girls, watch out!  
Such noise! What a throng!  
We'll take the Rue Mazarine!  
I'm stifling, let's go!  
See, the cafe's right here!  
Let's go there, to Momus!  
Ah!...

HAWKERS

Pies for sale! Whipped cream!  
Flowers for the ladies!

Knick-knacks, dates, hot roasted chestnuts!  
Finches, larks!  
Cream cakes!

RODOLFO

Whom are you looking at?

COLLINE

I hate the vulgar herd as Horace did.

MIMÌ

Are you jealous?

RODOLFO

The man who's happy must be  
suspicious too.

SCHAUNARD

And when I'm stuffing myself  
I want plenty of room about me.

MIMÌ

Are you happy then?

MARCELLO

*(to the waiter)*  
We want a prize dinner.

RODOLFO

Oh yes. Very.

MARCELLO

Quickly.

SCHAUNARD

And bring plenty.

RODOLFO

And you?

MIMÌ

Very.  
*(Marcello, Schaunard and Colline sit at a  
table in front of the café.)*

STUDENTS

There, to Momus!

MIDINETTES

Let's go! Let's go!

MARCELLO, COLLINE, SCHAUNARD

Quickly!

VOICE OF PARPIGNOL

*(in the distance)*  
Here are the toys of Parpignol!

RODOLFO

Two places.

COLLINE

At last!

RODOLFO

Here we are!  
This is Mimì, happy flower-girl.  
Her presence alone  
makes our company complete.  
For...for I am a poet;  
and she is poetry itself.

As songs flow from my brain,  
the flowers bloom in her hands,  
and in joyful spirits  
love blossoms also.

MARCELLO  
What rare imagery!

COLLINE  
*Digna est intrari.*

SCHAUNARD  
*Ingrediati si necessit.*

COLLINE  
I grant only one *accessit*.

VOICE OF PARPIGNOL  
*(closer)*  
Here are the toys of Parpignol!

COLLINE  
Salami...  
*(Parpignol arrives in the square, pushing a  
barrow covered with frills and flowers.)*

CHILDREN  
Parpignol! Parpignol! Parpignol!  
Here is Parpignol!  
With his cart all decked with flowers!  
Here is Parpignol!  
I want the horn, the toy horse!  
The drum! The tambourine!  
I want the cannon; I want the whip,  
I want the troop of soldiers.

SCHAUNARD  
Roast venison.

MARCELLO  
A turkey.

SCHAUNARD  
Rhine wine!

COLLINE  
Table wine!

SCHAUNARD  
Shelled lobster!

MOTHERS  
What a bunch of naughty rascals!  
What are you doing here now?  
Go home to bed, you noisy things.  
Slaps will be the least you'll get...  
go home to bed,  
you bunch of rascals, to bed!

A BOY  
I want the horn, the toy horse...

RODOLFO  
What will you have, Mimì?

MIMÌ  
Some custard.

SCHAUNARD  
The best.  
A lady's with us.

CHILDREN  
Bravo Parpignol!  
The drums! The tambourine!  
A troop of soldiers!  
*(They run off, following Parpignol.)*

MARCELLO  
Tell me, Mimì, what rare gift  
Rodolfo has given you?

MIMÌ  
An embroidered pink bonnet, all  
with lace. It goes well  
with my dark hair.  
I've longed for such a bonnet  
for months...and he read  
what was hidden in my heart...  
Anyone who can read the heart's secret  
knows love...he's such a reader.

SCHAUNARD  
He's a professor in the subject.

COLLINE

With diplomas, and his verses  
are not a beginner's...

SCHAUNARD

That's why what he says  
seems to be true!

MARCELLO

Oh, sweet age of false utopias!  
You hope and believe, and all  
seems beautiful.

RODOLFO

The sublimest poem, my friend,  
is the one which teaches us to love!

MIMÌ

Love is sweet, sweeter than honey.

MARCELLO

That depends: it's honey or gall!

MIMÌ

Heavens! I've offended him!

RODOLFO

He's mourning, Mimì!

SCHAUNARD *and* COLLINE

Cheer up! A toast!

MARCELLO

Something to drink!

ALL

Away with brooding,  
raise your glass.  
We'll drink.

MARCELLO

(*seeing Musetta enter, laughing*)  
I'll drink some poison!

SCHAUNARD, COLLINE *and* RODOLFO

Oh! Musetta!

MARCELLO

Her!

THE SHOPWOMEN

What! Her! Yes! Well! Her!

Musetta!

She's done well for herself! What a dress!  
(*Musetta stops, accompanied by the old and  
pompous Alcindoro. She sits at another  
table in front of the café.*)

ALCINDORO

Running like a porter  
back and forth...  
No, it's not proper.

MUSETTA

(*calling Alcindoro as if he were a dog*)  
Here, Lulu!

ALCINDORO

I can't take any more.

MUSETTA

Come, Lulu.

SCHAUNARD

That ugly old fool's all in a lather!

ALCINDORO

What? Outside? Here?

MUSETTA

Sit, Lulu.

ALCINDORO

Please, save these  
little nicknames of yours  
for when we're alone.

MUSETTA

Don't act like Bluebeard!

COLLINE

He's evil behind that front!

MARCELLO

With the chaste Susanna.

MIMÌ

But she's beautifully dressed.



RODOLFO  
Angels go naked.

MIMÌ  
You know her? Who is she?

MARCELLO  
Ask me that question.  
Her first name's Musetta.  
Her last name's Temptation.  
Her occupation is being  
a leaf in the wind...  
Always turning, changing  
her lovers and her loves...  
Like the screech-owl  
she's a bird of prey.  
Her favorite food  
is the heart...she devours them!  
And so I have no heart.

MUSETTA  
(Marcello's has seen me...  
But the coward won't look at me.  
And that Schaunard's laughing!  
They all make me livid!  
If I could just hit them!  
Scratch their eyes out!  
But I've got this old  
pelican on my hands.  
Just wait!)  
Waiter!

MARCELLO  
*(hiding his emotion)*  
Pass me the stew.

MUSETTA  
Hey! Waiter! This plate  
smells dirty to me!  
*(throwing the plate on the ground)*

ALCINDORO  
No, Musetta! Quiet, now!

MUSETTA  
(He won't look.)

ALCINDORO  
Quiet, now. Manners! Please!

MUSETTA  
(He won't look.)

ALCINDORO  
To whom are you speaking?

COLLINE  
This chicken is a poem!

MUSETTA  
(Now I'll hit him, I'll hit him!)

ALCINDORO  
Who are you talking to?

MUSETTA  
To the waiter. Don't be a bore!

SCHAUNARD  
The wine is excellent.

MUSETTA  
I want my own way!

ALCINDORO  
Lower your voice!

MUSETTA  
I'll do as I please!

ALCINDORO  
Lower your voice!

MUSETTA  
Don't be a bore!

MIDINETTES *and* STUDENTS  
Look, look who it is,  
Musetta herself!  
With that stuttering old man,  
it's Musetta herself!  
Ha ha ha ha ha!

MUSETTA  
(But could he be jealous of this mummy?)

ALCINDORO  
Decorum...my rank...my reputation!

MUSETTA

(Let's see if I still  
have enough power over him  
to make him give in.)

SCHAUNARD

The play is stupendous!

MUSETTA

(*looking at Marcello*)  
You aren't looking at me.

ALCINDORO

Can't you see I'm ordering?

SCHAUNARD

The play is stupendous!

COLLINE

Stupendous!

RODOLFO

(*to Mimì*)  
Let me tell you now:  
I'd never be forgiving.

SCHAUNARD

She speaks to one for the other to hear.

MIMÌ

(*to Rodolfo*)  
I love you so, and I'm  
all yours...  
Why speak of forgiveness?

COLLINE

(*to Schaunard*)  
And the other, cruel, in vain  
pretends he is deaf,  
but enjoys it all.

MUSETTA

But your heart is beating like a hammer.

ALCINDORO

Lower your voice.

MUSETTA

But your heart is beating like a hammer.

ALCINDORO

Lower your voice.

MUSETTA

As I walk alone  
through the streets,  
the people stop to look  
and inspect my beauty,  
examining me  
from head to toe.

MARCELLO

Tie me to the chair!

ALCINDORO

What will people say?

MUSETTA

And then I savor the subtle  
longing in their eyes  
when, from my visible charms,  
they guess at the beauty concealed.  
This onrush of desire  
surrounds me.  
It delights me, it delights me.

ALCINDORO

(This scurrilous song  
infuriates me!)

MUSETTA

And you who know,  
who remember and suffer,  
how can you escape?  
I know: you won't admit  
that you're in torment,  
but it's killing you.

MIMÌ

I can tell that the poor girl  
is head over heels in love with Marcello.

ALCINDORO

What will people say?

RODOLFO

Marcello loved her once...

SCHAUNARD

Ah! Marcello will give in!

RODOLFO

...The flirt ran off...

COLLINE

Who knows what'll happen!

RODOLFO

...to find  
a better life.

SCHAUNARD

The snare is equally sweet  
to hunter and hunted.

COLLINE

Gods above! I'd never land myself  
in such a situation!

MUSETTA

(Ah, Marcello's going mad!  
Marcello is vanquished!)

ALCINDORO

Lower your voice! Be quiet!

MIMÌ

I feel so sorry for the poor girl.

COLLINE

She's lovely — I'm not blind...

MIMÌ

(*nestling close to Rodolfo*)  
I love you!

SCHAUNARD

(The braggart is about to yield!  
The play is stupendous!  
Marcello will give in!)  
(*to Colline*)  
If such a pretty creature  
stopped and talked to you,  
you'd gladly send to the devil  
all your bearish philosophy.

RODOLFO

Mimi!

Love is weak  
when it leaves wrongs unavenged.  
Love, once dead, cannot be revived, *etc.*

MIMÌ

I feel so sorry for the poor girl.  
Love is sad when it's unforgiving.  
I feel so sorry, *etc.*

COLLINE

...but I'm much happier  
with my pipe and a Greek text.  
She's beautiful, I'm not blind, *etc.*

ALCINDORO

Mind your manners! Be quiet!

MUSETTA

I know: you won't admit your torment.  
Ah! but you feel like dying!  
(*to Alcindoro*)  
I'll do as I please,  
I'll do as I like,  
don't be a bore, a bore, a bore!  
(Now to get rid of the old man.)  
(*pretending a pain*)  
Ouch!

ALCINDORO

What is it?

MUSETTA

The pain! The pain!

ALCINDORO

Where?

MUSETTA

My foot!

MARCELLO

(My youth, you're still alive,  
your memory's not dead...  
If you came to my door,  
my heart would open it!)

MUSETTA

Loosen it! Untie it! Break it! Tear it!  
Please!

There's a shoemaker nearby.  
Run quickly! I want another pair!

Ah, how it pinches, this damn tight shoe!  
I'll take it off...here it is.  
Run, go on, run! Hurry, hurry!

MIMÌ

(I can see she's madly in love with  
Marcello.)

RODOLFO

(I can see: the play's stupendous!)

ALCINDORO

How unwise!  
What will people say?  
My reputation!  
Do you want to ruin it?  
Wait! Musetta! I'm going!  
(*He hurries off.*)

COLLINE and SCHAUNARD

(The play is stupendous!)

MUSETTA

Marcello!

MARCELLO

Siren!  
(*They embrace passionately.*)

SCHAUNARD

Here's the finale!  
(*The waiter brings the bill.*)

ALL

The bill!

SCHAUNARD

So soon?

COLLINE

Who asked for it?

SCHAUNARD

Let's see.

COLLINE and RODOLFO

It's high!  
(*Drums are heard approaching.*)

RODOLFO, SCHAUNARD and COLLINE

Out with the money!

SCHAUNARD

Colline, Rodolfo and you, Marcello?

CHILDREN

The Tattoo!

MARCELLO

I'm broke!

SCHAUNARD

What?

MIDINETTES, STUDENTS

The Tattoo!

RODOLFO

I've only got thirty *sous*.

TOWNSPEOPLE

The Tattoo!

MARCELLO, SCHAUNARD and

COLLINE

What? No more money?

SCHAUNARD

Where's my wealth?

URCHINS

Are they coming this way?

MUSETTA

(*to the waiter*)  
Give me my bill.

MIDINETTES, STUDENTS

No! That way!

URCHINS

They're coming that way!

MIDINETTES, STUDENTS  
They're coming this way!

URCHINS  
No, that way!

MUSETTA  
Good!

TOWNSPEOPLE, HAWKERS  
Make way! Make way!

CHILDREN  
I want to see! I want to hear!

MUSETTA  
Quick, add these two bills together...  
The gentleman who was with me will pay.

MOTHERS  
Lisetta, please be quiet.  
Tonio, stop that at once!

GIRLS  
Mamma, I want to see.  
Papa, I want to hear.

RODOLFO, MARCELLO, SCHAUNARD,  
COLLINE  
The gentleman will pay!

CHILDREN  
I want to see the Tattoo!

MOTHERS  
Please be quiet! Stop that at once!

MIDINETTES  
They're coming this way!

TOWNSPEOPLE  
They're coming that way!

TOWNSPEOPLE, STUDENTS,  
HAWKERS  
Yes, this way!

URCHINS  
When it comes by,  
we'll march with it!

COLLINE, SCHAUNARD, MARCELLO  
The gentleman will pay!

MUSETTA  
And here, where he was sitting,  
he'll find my farewell!  
*(putting the bill on the chair)*

TOWNSPEOPLE  
That drum-roll expresses  
our country's glory.

RODOLFO, COLLINE, SCHAUNARD,  
MARCELLO  
And here, where he was sitting,  
he'll find her farewell!

THE CROWD  
Make way, make way, here they come!

URCHINS  
Hey! Look out, here they are!

MARCELLO  
Now the Guard is coming!

THE CROWD  
All in line!

COLLINE, MARCELLO  
Don't let the old fool see us  
make off with his prize.

RODOLFO  
The Guard is coming!

MARCELLO, SCHAUNARD, COLLINE  
That crowded throng  
will be our hiding-place.

THE CROWD  
Here's the drum-major! Prouder  
than an ancient warrior! The drum-major!

MIMÌ, MUSETTA, RODOLFO,  
MARCELLO, SCHAUNARD, COLLINE  
Hurry! Let's run off!

THE CROWD

The Sappers! The Sappers, hooray!  
Here's the drum-major!  
Like a general!  
The Tattoo is here!  
Here he is, the handsome drum-major!  
The golden baton, all a-glitter!  
See, he looks at us as he goes past!

RODOLFO, MARCELLO, SCHAUNARD,  
COLLINE

Bravo Musetta! Artful minx!  
Glory and honor, the glory and honor  
of the Latin Quarter!

THE CROWD

All a-glitter!  
The handsomest man in France,  
the drum-major!  
Here he is! See, he looks at us as he goes  
past!  
*(Since Musetta cannot walk with only one  
shoe, Marcello and Colline carry her on their  
shoulders. They all follow the guards and  
disappear. Alcindoro comes back with a new  
pair of shoes, and the waiter hands  
him the bill. When he sees the amount and  
sees nobody around, Alcindoro falls,  
bewildered, onto a chair.)*

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## ACT THREE

### *The Barrière d'Enfer*

*(Beyond the tollgate is the main highway. At  
left, a tavern. A small square flanked by plane  
trees. Some customs officers are asleep  
around a brazier. Shouts and laughter issue  
from the cabaret. Dawn. February. The snow  
is everywhere. Some street-sweepers are  
beyond the gate, stamping their feet in the  
cold.)*

SWEEPERS

Hey, there! Guards! Open up!  
We're the sweepers from Gentilly.  
It's snowing. Hey! We're freezing here.

CUSTOMS OFFICER

*(yawning)*  
I'm coming.

VOICES FROM THE TAVERN

Some find pleasure  
in their cups,  
and on ardent lips  
find love.

VOICE OF MUSETTA

Ah! Pleasure is in the glass!  
Love lies on young lips.

VOICES FROM THE TAVERN

Tra la la la  
Eve and Noah.

VOICES FROM THE HIGHWAY

Houp-la! Giddap!

CUSTOMS OFFICER

Here come the milkmaids!  
*(He opens the gate. The milkmaids enter  
together with a string of peasants' carts.)*

MILKMAIDS

Good morning!

PEASANT WOMEN

Butter and cheese!  
Chickens and eggs!  
Which way are you going?  
To Saint Michel!  
Shall we meet later?  
Yes, at noon.  
*(They go off. Enter Mimì. When she reaches  
the first tree, she has a fit of coughing. Then  
recovering herself, she says to the sergeant:)*

MIMÌ

Excuse me, where's the tavern  
where a painter is working?

SERGEANT

There it is.

MIMÌ

Thank you.

*(A waitress comes out of the tavern. Mimi approaches her.)*

Oh, good woman, please...

Be good enough to find me

Marcello, the painter.

I must see him quickly.

Tell him Mimi's waiting.

SERGEANT

*(to someone coming in)*

Hey! That basket!

CUSTOMS OFFICER

Empty!

SERGEANT

Let him through.

*(Marcello comes out of the tavern.)*

MARCELLO

Mimi?!

MIMÌ

I hoped I'd find you here.

MARCELLO

That's right. We've been here  
a month, at the host's expense.

Musetta teaches  
the guests singing.

And I paint those warriors

by the door there.

It's cold. Come inside.

MIMÌ

Is Rodolfo there?

MARCELLO

Yes.

MIMÌ

I can't go in. No, no!

MARCELLO

Why not?

MIMÌ

Oh! Help me, good Marcello! Help me!

MARCELLO

What's happened?

MIMÌ

Rodolfo — he loves me

but flees from me, torn

by jealousy. A glance, a gesture,

a smile, a flower arouses

his suspicions, then anger, rage...

Sometimes at night I pretend

to sleep, and I feel his eyes

trying to spy on my dreams.

He shouts at me all the time:

"You're not for me.

Find another.

You're not for me."

I know it's his jealousy speaking,

but what can I answer, Marcello?

MARCELLO

When two people are like you two,

they can't live together.

MIMÌ

You're right. We should separate.

Help us, Marcello, help us.

We've tried again and again,

but in vain.

MARCELLO

I take Musetta lightly,

and she behaves like me.

We love light-heartedly.

Laughter and song — that's the secret

of a lasting love.

MIMÌ

You're right, you're right.

We should separate.

Do as you think best.

MARCELLO

All right. I'll wake him up.

MIMÌ

Is he sleeping?

MARCELLO

He stumbled in here  
an hour before dawn  
and fell asleep on a bench.  
Look at him...  
(*Mimì coughs.*)  
What a cough!

MIMÌ

I've been aching all over since  
yesterday. He fled during the night, saying:  
"It's all over."  
I set out at dawn and came here  
to find you.

MARCELLO

(*watching Rodolfo through the window*)  
He's waking up. He's looking  
for me...Here he comes.

MIMÌ

He mustn't see me.

MARCELLO

Go home now, Mimì.  
For God's sake, no scenes here.  
(*Mimì hides behind a tree, Rodolfo hastens  
out of the tavern.*)

RODOLFO

Marcello! At last!  
No one can hear us here.  
I've got to leave Mimì.

MARCELLO

Are you as fickle as that?

RODOLFO

Already once before I thought  
my heart was dead.  
But it revived at the gleam  
of her blue eyes.  
Now boredom assails it...

MARCELLO

And you'll bury it again?

RODOLFO

Forever!

MARCELLO

Change your ways!  
Gloomy love is madness  
and brews only tears.  
If it doesn't laugh and glow  
love has no strength or voice.  
You're jealous.

RODOLFO

A little.

MARCELLO

You're raving mad,  
a mass of suspicions,  
a boor, a mule!

MIMÌ

(He'll make him angry.  
Poor me!)

RODOLFO

Mimì's just a flirt  
toying with them all.  
A foppish Viscount eyes her  
with longing. She shows him  
her ankles, promising,  
luring him on.

MARCELLO

Must I tell you?  
You aren't being honest.

RODOLFO

All right, then. I'm not.  
I try in vain to hide  
what really torments me.  
I love Mimì more than the world.  
I love her! But I'm afraid...  
Mimì is terribly ill,  
weaker every day.  
The poor little thing  
is doomed...



MARCELLO  
Mimi?

MIMÌ  
(What does he mean?)

RODOLFO  
A horrible coughing  
racks her fragile chest...  
Her pale cheeks  
are flushed...

MARCELLO  
Poor Mimi!

MIMÌ  
(Am I dying? Alas!)

RODOLFO  
My room's like a cave.  
The fire has gone out.  
The wind, the winter wind  
roars through it.  
She laughs and sings;  
I'm seized with remorse.  
I'm the cause of the illness  
that's killing her.

MARCELLO  
What's to be done?

MIMÌ  
(Oh! my life! It's over!  
Alas! To die! *etc.*)

RODOLFO  
Mimi's a hothouse flower,  
blighted by poverty.  
To bring her back to life  
love's not enough.

MARCELLO  
Poor thing. Poor Mimi!  
(*Mimi sobs and coughs.*)

RODOLFO  
What, Mimi? You here!  
You heard me?

MARCELLO  
She was listening then.

RODOLFO  
I'm easily frightened,  
worked up over nothing.  
Come inside where it's warm.  
(*He tries to lead her inside.*)

MIMÌ  
No. It's so close. I'd suffocate.  
(*Musetta's laughter comes from inside.*)

RODOLFO  
Ah, Mimi!

MARCELLO  
That's Musetta laughing.  
And with whom?  
The flirt! I'll teach her.  
(*Marcello runs into the tavern.*)

MIMÌ  
(*to Rodolfo*)  
Goodbye.

RODOLFO  
What? You're going?

MIMÌ  
Back to the place I left  
at the call of your love,

I'm going back alone  
to my lonely nest  
to make false flowers.  
Goodbye...no hard feelings.  
But listen.  
Please gather up the few things  
I've left behind. In the trunk  
there's the little bracelet  
and my prayer book. Wrap them  
in an apron and I'll send  
someone for them...  
Wait! Under the pillow  
there's my pink bonnet.  
If you want...keep it in memory  
of our love. Goodbye, no hard feelings.

RODOLFO

So, it's really over.  
You're leaving, my little one?  
Goodbye to our dreams of love.

MIMÌ

Goodbye to our sweet wakening.

RODOLFO

Goodbye, life in a dream.

MIMÌ

Goodbye, doubts and jealousies...

RODOLFO

...That one smile of yours could dispel.

MIMÌ

Goodbye, suspicions...

RODOLFO

Kisses...

MIMÌ

...Poignant bitterness...

RODOLFO

...That, like a poet,  
I made rhyme with caress.

RODOLFO *and* MIMÌ

To be alone in winter is death!

MIMÌ

Alone...

RODOLFO *and* MIMÌ

But when the spring comes  
the sun is our companion.

MIMÌ

The sun is our companion.  
(*Marcello and Musetta come out,  
quarrelling.*)

MARCELLO

What were you doing and saying  
by the fire with that man?

MUSETTA

What do you mean? What do you mean?

MIMÌ

Nobody's lonely in April.

MARCELLO

When I came in  
you blushed suddenly.

MUSETTA

The man was asking me...  
"Do you like dancing, Miss?"

RODOLFO

One can speak to roses and lilies.

MIMÌ

Birds twitter softly in their nests.

MARCELLO

Vain, empty-headed flirt!

MUSETTA

I blushed and answered:  
"I could dance day and night!"

MARCELLO

That speech conceals  
infamous desires.

MUSETTA

I want complete freedom.

MARCELLO

I'll teach you a thing or two...

RODOLFO *and* MIMÌ

With the coming of spring,  
the sun is our companion!

MUSETTA

What do you think  
you're saying?  
We're not married, after all.

MARCELLO

...If I catch you flirting!

Keep in mind, no horns  
will grow under my hat.

MUSETTA  
I can't stand lovers  
who act just like husbands.

RODOLFO *and* MIMÌ  
The fountains whisper,  
the evening breeze heals the pain  
of human creatures...

MARCELLO  
I won't be laughed at  
by some young upstart.  
Vain, empty-headed flirt!  
You're leaving? I thank you,  
I'll be a rich man then.

MUSETTA  
I'll flirt with whom I please.  
You don't like it?  
I'll flirt with whom I please.  
Musetta goes her way.

MARCELLO *and* MUSETTA  
Goodbye.

RODOLFO *and* MIMÌ  
Shall we wait  
until spring comes again?

MUSETTA  
I bid you, sir,  
farewell — with pleasure!

MARCELLO  
Your servant, and I'm off!

MUSETTA  
*(leaving)*  
You house-painter!

MARCELLO  
Viper!

MUSETTA  
Toad!

MARCELLO  
*(re-entering the tavern)*  
Witch!

MIMÌ  
Always yours...all my life.

RODOLFO *and* MIMÌ  
We'll part when the flowers bloom!

MIMÌ  
I wish that winter  
would last forever!

RODOLFO *and* MIMÌ  
We'll part when the flowers bloom!

## ACT FOUR

### *The garret*

*(Marcello once more at his easel; Rodolfo at his table. They try to work, but instead they are talking.)*

MARCELLO  
In a coupé?

RODOLFO  
With footmen and horses.  
She greeted me, laughing.  
“So, Musetta,” I said, “your heart?”  
“It doesn't beat — at least I don't feel it,  
thanks to the velvet that covers it.”

MARCELLO  
I'm glad, really glad.

RODOLFO  
*(Faker, go on! You're laughing  
and fretting inside.)*

MARCELLO  
Not beating? Good.  
I also saw...

RODOLFO  
Musetta?

MARCELLO

Mimi

RODOLFO

You saw her?

*(with pretended unconcern)*

Really?

MARCELLO

She was in a carriage,  
dressed like a queen.

RODOLFO

That's fine. I'm delighted.

MARCELLO

*(The liar! Love's consuming him.)*

RODOLFO

Let's get to work.

MARCELLO

Yes, to work.

*(They start working, but quickly throw down  
brush and pen.)*

RODOLFO

This pen is terrible!

MARCELLO

So is this brush!

RODOLFO

*(O Mimi, you won't return!*

*O lovely days! Those tiny hands,  
those sweet-smelling locks,  
that snowy neck! Ah! Mimi!*

*My short-lived youth.)*

MARCELLO

*(I don't understand how my brush  
works and mixes colors  
to spite me.*

*Whether I want to paint  
earth or sky, spring  
or winter, the brush  
outlines two dark eyes  
and inviting lips,  
and Musetta's face appears...)*

RODOLFO

*(And you, little pink bonnet  
that she hid under the pillow  
as she left, you know  
all of our joy.*

*Come to my heart,  
my heart that died  
when our love died.)*

MARCELLO

*(Her face appears,  
so lovely and so false.  
Meanwhile Musetta is happy  
and my cowardly heart  
calls her, and waits for her.)*

RODOLFO

What time is it?

MARCELLO

It's time for dinner...  
Yesterday's dinner.

RODOLFO

And Schaunard's not back.

*(Schaunard comes in and sets four rolls on  
the table. Colline is with him.)*

SCHAUNARD

Here we are.

RODOLFO and MARCELLO

Well?

MARCELLO

Well? Just bread?

COLLINE

A dish worthy of Demosthenes:  
A herring...

SCHAUNARD

...salted.

COLLINE

Dinner's on the table.  
*(They sit down.)*

MARCELLO

This is like a feast day  
in wonderland.

SCHAUNARD

*(puts the water-bottle in Colline's hat)*

Now let's put  
the champagne on ice.

RODOLFO

Which do you choose, Baron,  
salmon or trout?

MARCELLO

Well, Duke, how about  
some parrot-tongue?

SCHAUNARD

Thanks, but it's fattening.  
I must dance this evening.  
*(Colline gets up.)*

RODOLFO

Full already?

COLLINE

I'm in a hurry.  
The King is waiting for me.

MARCELLO

Is there some plot?

RODOLFO, MARCELLO, SCHAUNARD

Some mystery?

COLLINE

The King has asked me  
to join his Cabinet.

MARCELLO, RODOLFO, SCHAUNARD

Fine!

COLLINE

So...I'll see Guizot!

SCHAUNARD

Pass me the goblet.

MARCELLO

Here. Drink. I'll eat.

SCHAUNARD

By the leave...  
of this noble company...

RODOLFO and MARCELLO

Enough!

MARCELLO

Weakling!

COLLINE

What a concoction!

MARCELLO

Get out of here!

COLLINE

The goblet, please!

SCHAUNARD

I'm irresistibly inspired  
by the Muse of poetry...

THE OTHERS

No!

SCHAUNARD

Something choreographic then?

THE OTHERS

Yes.

SCHAUNARD

Dance with vocal accompaniment!

COLLINE

Let the hall be cleared.  
A gavotte.

MARCELLO

Minuet.

RODOLFO

Pavane.

SCHAUNARD

Fandango.

COLLINE  
I suggest the quadrille.

RODOLFO  
Take your lady's arm.

COLLINE  
I'll call the figures.

SCHAUNARD  
La lera la lera la!

RODOLFO  
*(gallantly, to Marcello)*  
Lovely maiden...

MARCELLO  
Please, sir,  
respect my modesty.

COLLINE  
*Balancez.*

SCHAUNARD  
The *Rond* comes first.

COLLINE  
No, damn it.

SCHAUNARD  
What boorish manners!

COLLINE  
Your provoking me, I believe.  
Draw your sword.

SCHAUNARD  
Ready. Lay on.  
I'll drink your blood.  
*(Colline takes the fire-tongs and Schaunard the poker. They fight as the others sing.)*

COLLINE  
One of us will be run through!

SCHAUNARD  
Have a stretcher ready!

COLLINE  
And a graveyard too!

RODOLFO *and* MARCELLO  
While the battle rages,  
the dancers circle and leap.  
*(Musetta enters.)*

MARCELLO  
Musetta!

MUSETTA  
Mimi's here...she's coming  
and she's ill.

RODOLFO  
Where is she?

MUSETTA  
She couldn't find strength  
to climb all the stairs.

RODOLFO  
Ah!  
*(Rodolfo hastens out to Mimi, who is seated on the last step. Then they carry her into the room and place her on the bed.)*

SCHAUNARD  
We'll move the bed closer.

RODOLFO  
Here. Something to drink.

MIMÌ  
Rodolfo.

RODOLFO  
Rest now. Don't speak.

MIMÌ  
O my Rodolfo!  
You want me here with you?

RODOLFO  
Ah! My Mimi!  
Always, always!

MUSETTA

*(aside, to the others)*

I heard Mimì had fled  
from the Viscount and was dying.  
Where was she? I sought her...  
Just now I saw her in the street  
stumbling along. She said:  
“I can’t last long.  
I know I’m dying...  
But I want to die with him...  
Perhaps he’s waiting for me...”

MARCELLO

Sh!

MIMÌ

I feel much better...

MUSETTA

“...Please take me, Musetta?”

MIMÌ

Let me look around.  
How wonderful it is here.  
I’ll recover... I will...  
I feel life here again.  
You won’t leave me ever...

RODOLFO

Beloved lips,  
you speak to me again.

MUSETTA

What is there in the house?

MARCELLO

Nothing.

MUSETTA

No coffee? No wine?

MARCELLO

Nothing. Poverty!

SCHAUNARD

She’ll be dead within half an hour!

MIMÌ

I’m so cold.

If I had a muff!

Won’t these hands of mine  
ever be warm?

RODOLFO

Here. In mine. Don’t speak.  
You’ll tire yourself.

MIMÌ

It’s just a little cough.  
I’m used to it.  
Hello, Marcello,  
Schaunard, Colline...  
All of you are here,  
smiling at Mimì.

RODOLFO

Don’t speak, don’t...

MIMÌ

I’ll speak softly. Don’t fear.  
Marcello, believe me -  
Musetta is so good.

MARCELLO

*(holds Musetta’s hand)*  
I know. I know.

MUSETTA

*(gives her earrings to Marcello)*  
Here. Sell them. Bring  
back some cordial  
and send the doctor!

RODOLFO

Rest now!

MIMÌ

You won’t leave me?

RODOLFO

No! No!

MUSETTA

Listen!  
Perhaps it’s the poor thing’s  
last request.  
I’ll get the muff.  
I’m coming with you.

MARCELLO

How good you are, Musetta.  
*(Marcello and Musetta go out.)*

COLLINE

*(taking off his greatcoat)*  
Listen, my venerable coat,  
I'm staying behind, you'll  
go on to greater heights.  
I give you my thanks.  
You never bowed your worn back  
to the rich or powerful.  
You held in your pockets  
poets and philosophers  
as if in tranquil grottoes...  
Now that those happy times  
have fled, I bid you farewell,  
faithful old friend. Farewell.  
*(He puts the bundle under his arm, then  
whispers to Schaunard:)*  
Schaunard, each separately,  
let's combine two kindly acts;  
mine is this...and you...  
leave the two of them alone.

SCHAUNARD

Philosopher, you're right!  
I'll go along.  
*(They leave.)*

MIMÌ

Have they gone? I pretended to sleep  
because I wanted to be alone with you.  
I've so many things to tell you,  
or just one thing — huge as the sea,  
deep and infinite as the sea. ..  
I love you...you're all my life.

RODOLFO

Ah! my beautiful Mimì!

MIMÌ

Am I beautiful still?

RODOLFO

Beautiful as the dawn.

MIMÌ

You've mistaken the image:

you should have said,  
beautiful as the sunset.  
“They call me Mimì...  
but I don't know why.”

RODOLFO

The swallow has come back  
to her nest to twitter.  
*(He takes the bonnet from its place over his  
heart.)*

MIMÌ

My bonnet!  
My bonnet!  
Ah! do you remember  
when I came in here  
the first time?

RODOLFO

Do I remember!

MIMÌ

The light had gone out.

RODOLFO

You were so upset.  
Then you lost your key...

MIMÌ

And you knelt to hunt for it!

RODOLFO

I searched and searched...

MIMÌ

My dear sir,  
now I can tell you:  
you found it quick enough.

RODOLFO

I was helping Fate.

MIMÌ

It was dark. You couldn't  
see me blushing.  
“How cold your little hand is...  
Let me warm it for you...”  
It was dark. You took



my hand in yours...  
*(Mimì has another spasm, a fit of choking.)*

RODOLFO  
 Good God! Mimì!  
*(Schaunard enters at that moment.)*

SCHAUNARD  
 What's wrong?

MIMÌ  
 Nothing. I'm fine.

RODOLFO  
 Please...don't talk.

MIMÌ  
 Yes, yes forgive me.  
 Now I'll be good.  
*(Marcello and Musetta come back, then Colline. Musetta sets a candle on the table.)*

MUSETTA  
 Is she sleeping?

RODOLFO  
 She's resting.

MARCELLO  
 I saw the doctor.  
 He's coming. I made him hurry.  
 Here's the cordial.

MIMÌ  
 Who's speaking?

MUSETTA  
*(handing her the muff)*  
 Me. Musetta.

MIMÌ  
 Oh, how lovely and soft it is.  
 No more, no more...my hands all  
 ugly and cold...The warmth will heal them.  
*(to Rodolfo)*  
 Did you give it to me?

MUSETTA  
 Yes, he did.

MIMÌ  
 You spendthrift!  
 Thank you...but the cost...  
 You're crying? I'm well.  
 Why are you crying like this?  
 Here, beloved...with you always!  
 My hands...the warmth...to sleep.  
*(Silence.)*

RODOLFO  
 What did the doctor say?

MARCELLO  
 He's coming.

MUSETTA  
*(praying)*  
 Oh blessed Mother,  
 be merciful to this poor child  
 who doesn't deserve to die.  
*(breaking off, to Marcello)*  
 We need a screen here;  
 the candle's flickering.  
*(Marcello sets a book on the table which acts as a screen.)*

That's better.  
 Let her get well,  
 Holy Mother, I know  
 I'm unworthy of forgiveness,  
 but Mimì is an angel  
 come down from heaven.

RODOLFO  
 I still have hope.  
 You think it's serious?

MUSETTA  
 I don't think so.  
*(Schaunard approaches the bed.)*

SCHAUNARD  
*(softly to Marcello)*  
 Marcello, she's dead.

COLLINE  
*(enters, and gives money to Musetta)*  
 Here, Musetta.  
 How is she?

RODOLFO

You see, she's resting.

*(Rodolfo becomes aware of the strange expression of the others.)*

What does this mean?

This going back and forth?

Why are you looking at me like this?

MARCELLO

Courage.

*(Rodolfo runs over to the bed.)*

RODOLFO

Mimi! Mimi! Mimi!

*Curtain*

Libretto by William Fense Weaver