RUSALKA
by Antonín Dvořák

Cast
FIRST WOOD SPRITE (soprano)
SECOND WOOD SPRITE (soprano)
THIRD WOOD SPRITE (contralto)
THE WATER GNOME (bass)
RUSALKA, a water nymph (soprano)
JEZIBABA, a witch (mezzo-soprano)
A HUNTER (baritone)
THE PRINCE (tenor)
THE GAMEKEEPER (baritone)
THE TURNSPIRIT (soprano)
FOREIGN PRINCESS (soprano)
wood sprites, the Prince’s entourage, guests at the castle

Overture

ACT ONE

A glade at the edge of the lake, surrounded by forests in which, situated on the shore of the lake, stands Jezibaba’s cottage. Moonlit night. On an old willow tree reclining towards the lake sits Rusalka, deep in thought.

THREE WATER SPRITES
*dancing on the glade*
Ho, ho, ho!
There’s the moon above the lake!
Curiously she is peering
Till the bottom penetrating.
Water sprite his head is nodding,
Ho, ho, ho!
His old wise and greenish head.
Ho, ho, ho!
Who is coming through the night?
Water sprite, the moon is rising.
Through your window she is peeping,
Burglar-wise she will be breaking.
Ho, ho, ho!
Into your silvery hall!

Wood sprite from sleep arousing,
Water sprite, the water-clown!
Ho, ho, ho!
Bubbles rise from down below.

The water sprite emerges and wipes out his eyes.

THE WATER SPRITES
Ho, ho, ho!
Water sprite from sleep aroused!
Water sprite wants to get married.
Which of us will claim the merit.
To have combed him, to have loved him.
Ho, ho, ho!
In his underwater realm?

They dance gaily around the water sprite.

THE WATER SPRITE
Welcome, you forest dwellers, to the lake!
You, perchance, feel sad in the forest gloom?
I, down below, have splendors never seen
And quantities of playful goldfishes —
Now quickly through the reed
I’ll stretch my hand, indeed,
And seize one of the damsels
And grab her by her feet
And drag her down to me!

_He tries clumsily to catch one of the water sprites._

**THE WATER SPRITES**

Water sprite, ab, hey, hey,
Try to catch us if you may!

Whichever you catch, dear man,
Will give you a kiss for prize!
But your woman, hahaha,
Water sprite, oh, hahaha,
She will twist your ears for that!

_They disperse._

**THE WATER SPRITE**

Urchins, all of them!
Look how they are running
Uphill, down dale, across the fields —
Well, they’re young!

**RUSALKA**

Water sprite, my Father dear!

**THE WATER SPRITE**

Child, you’ve made me jump up —
Are you trying to dry up
In moon rays my fish nettings?

**RUSALKA**

Water sprite, my Father dear,
Till the waters claim me.
Stay with me a little while,
Ban the sadness from me!

**THE WATER SPRITE**

How is that you’re sad?

**RUSALKA**

You’ll learn my story!

**THE WATER SPRITE**

Sad down below, too?

**RUSALKA**

Yes, sad unto death!

**THE WATER SPRITE**

Down there where gaiety reigns?
Can’t believe it! What’s your tale?

**RUSALKA**

I want to leave here, get out of deep waters,
I want to be human, live in the sunshine!

**THE WATER SPRITE**

Is that your wish? Can I trust my ears?
To become mortal? To become a human being?

**RUSALKA**

I learned from you the tales I did not know
That they have souls of which we are deprived
And that to heaven rise these human souls
When men do die and vanish from the earth!

**THE WATER SPRITE**

As long as these waves serve you for a cradle
Wish not for a soul which is full of sin!

**RUSALKA**

And also full of love!

**THE WATER SPRITE**

By eternal waters!
Do you mean to say you love a human being?

**RUSALKA**

He comes here frequently,
Reposes in my embrace,
Leaves his clothes on the shore
And into my arms plunges.
Yet I’m only a wave,
He can’t perceive my being.
I know that a woman
I must be undoubtedly
For him to be allowed
To take me in his arms.
To kiss me passionately
Like I’m embracing him!
**THE WATER SPRITE**
Daughter, daughter! Night after night
Because of you, your sisters will shed tears!
There is no help, there’s nothing to be done
Once you’ve succumbed to a human creature!

**RUSALKA**
Water sprite, ah, Water sprite!
He must have a chance to see me! —
Tell me, tell me. Father dear,
What must I do to reach it!

**THE WATER SPRITE**
Doomed you are, doomed you are for all time,
Made over, made over to a man!
No sense to ask you to play down below!
Call on Ježibaba, the witch,
Pitiful Rusalka pallid!
*He submerges.*
Alas! Alas! Alas!

**RUSALKA**
He who sinks under the water.

**RUSALKA** ("Song to the Moon")
O, moon high up in the deep, deep sky,
Your light sees far away regions,
You travel round the wide, wide world
Peering into human dwellings.
O, moon stand still for a while.
Tell me, ah, tell me where is my lover!
Tell him, please, silvery moon in the sky.
That I am hugging him firmly.
That he should for at least a while
Remember me in his dreams!
Light up his far-away place,
Tell him, ah, tell him who is here waiting!
If he is dreaming about me,
May this remembrance waken him!
O, moon, don’t disappear, disappear!
*The moon hides behind a cloud.*
That water is cold! Oh, so cold!
*She trembles with anxiety.*
Ježibaba! Ježibaba!

**THE WATER SPRITE**
under the water

**JEZIBABA**
coming out of her cottage, looks around
Crying, sighing and lamenting
Who’s waking me before daybreak?

**RUSALKA**
Ježibaba, help me, help me,
From my captivity free me!

**JEZIBABA**
Hear I something? Smell I something?
Speak up! Tell me who you are!

**RUSALKA**
Rusalka, the water-fairy
Wants a philtre, dearest auntie!

**JEZIBABA**
If you’re a nymph, appear quickly,
Show yourself up, lovely child!

**RUSALKA**
Waves like fetters weigh me down.
Water lilies hold me tightly.

**JEZIBABA**
Tear yourself away and hurry.
Hasten to me, to the cottage!
Let her, wavelet, let her come here
As soon as her feet touch the ground!

*Rusalka jumps down and moves with difficulty toward the witch.*

**JEZIBABA**
Little feet, carry her, little feet, support her!
Look, look, how her little feet know to walk already!

**RUSALKA**
*falls to Ježibaba’s feet*
Ježibaba, help me!
Your ancient wisdom knows everything,
You’ve seen through Nature’s mysteries.
You dream about people on a dark night,
The elements are within your might,
The poisons of earth and the rays of the moon
You know how to concoct and make into drinks.
You know to connect, you know to destroy.
You know how to kill and you know to create.
Man into a monster and back again
Your age-long wisdom knows how to transform.
You make the nymphs tremble during the nights.
For human ailments you prepare strange drugs.
To us and to people in the far flung world
You’re both the element and the prototype man.
Mortal and immortal, you are both! —
Help me, ah, help me, you miracle’s work!

JEZIBABA
I know that. I know that,
That’s what everybody says!
Listen though, listen though
Ere you touch the drug you demand.
You’ve pearls, you have charm,
If I help you what get I?

RUSALKA
Take all that I have
But transform me into man!

JEZIBABA
Is that all? Nothing more?
That’s why you came crying here?

Water does no longer hold you,
Now you want a human body
To be loved and to return love,
To be kissed and to give kisses!
I know that. I know that.
That’s what everybody wants!

RUSALKA
Your wisdom guesses everything —
Give me human body, human soul!

JEZIBABA
I’ll do that!
By the devil, yes!
But you’ll give me in return
Your transparent water veil.
And should you fail to obtain love in the world.
You will have to live rejected
Cursed by the undersea world!
Should the love be wasted which you now desire
Angry water powers will drive you into mire.
And even now you’ll have to suffer, too.
To all human beings,
you’ll have to remain mute!
Do you want to be
Mute to him whose love you seek?

RUSALKA
If I’m allowed to know his love
My tongue I’ll gladly sacrifice!

JEZIBABA
Keep him, keep him
And know this too:
Should with a curse you return to your native waters.
Your lover also will find his end here!
Forever he will share with you
Your curse, eternal damnation!

RUSALKA
My human soul, my precious human soul,
My love will counteract this magic!

JEZIBABA
Then let’s go, quickly go,
To my cottage come with me!
Poisons shall we brew together,
Rusalka will drink the philtre.
Then she will be as good as mute,
Abracadabra!
They enter the cottage and a red glow pours out of its window. A stream of sparks bursts out of the chimney. In a while we hear the brew seething in the kettle. These sounds mingle with Jezioba’s incantations. The water sprites come running out of the woods and frightened peep in through the window.

JEZIBABA
in the cottage
Abracadabra!
Fog is lifting in the glade!
Dragon’s blood — one droplet,
Add ten drops of bile
A bird’s heart still beating
And the kettle’s brimming!
Jump, my tomcat, jump and jump,
Stir the brew a little bit!
Abracadabra!
There will be no greater pain
This will make you human
And you have to drink it.
When you drink what’s cooked in here,
Your tongue will become wooden!
Jump, my tomcat, hola, height!
Pour that brew into her mouth!
Abracadabra!
And from now on not a word!

The hissing sound from the cottage weakens.
the water sprites have dispersed. The sky clears and horns are heard from the distance.
Morning glow appears over the lake.

THE WATER SPRITE
from the depths
Pitiful Rusalka pallid!
Alas! Alas! Alas!

The horns became more distinct. The hunters are approaching. We hear the song of the hunter.

THE HUNTER
from distance
Rode a young hunter, rode and rode,
He saw a white doe in the woods.
She had a pair of deep-set eyes.
My arrow, will it strike her down?
Ride on, young hunter, do not stay
And do not at that white doe aim!
From her white body keep away!
My arrow, will it strike her down?

The horns are sounded again.

THE PRINCE
emerges from the woods, bow in hand
Here she appeared and again disappeared!
Uphill and down dale, through woods and fields
This strangest of games is roaming about —
And here now its tracks have vanished for good!
And rippling with secrets and mystery
These waters are inviting, luring me
As if all my hunting passion should
Cool off again in their wet embrace.
My step wavers, strange nostalgia I feel,
My tired hands refuse to carry arms.
The hunt just started, yet I have enough,
And that strange magic captured me again!

The hunters approach.

THE HUNTER
approaching
That was no doe — hunter, stop!
God protect your body and soul!
Your heart is all as good as dead!

The hunters emerge from the woods.

THE PRINCE
The hunt is over, return home at once,
Sinister magic haunts the woods today,
Still stronger magic chills my heart! -

Go home, my friends, and leave me alone!

The hunters depart. The prince sits down on the shore of the lake, but when he looks up he sees Rusalka standing before him. Rusalka left the cottage. She is barefoot and clad in a grey garment of a destitute child. Her beautiful
golden hair streams down along her body. She is mute.

THE PRINCE

jumps up
Beautiful vision, delightful.
Are you a woman or a fairy tale?
Want you to protect that precious game
Which I have just seen in the forest?

Are you come to beg her life,
You and the doe are kindred blood?
Or do you yourself, coming to me,
Intend to be the hunter’s trophy?

Unable to speak, Rusalka stretches out her hands towards him.

THE PRINCE

Secrets, perhaps, have closed your lips
Or are you forever mute?
If mute are your lips, I swear to God,
They will answer to my kiss!

Explain the mysteries that have allured me here,
That have been calling me over thorns, over rocks,
So that I finally on this blissful day
Could feel the enchantment of your lovely regard!

What is there hidden in your heart.
If you do love me, tell it me.
If you do love me, tell it me!

Rusalka throws herself into his arms.

THE WATER SPRITES

under the water
Uphill and down dale, through the woods!

THE WATER SPRITES

Sister, ah, sister, where are you?

Rusalka clings to the prince.

THE PRINCE

I know you’re but magic that will pass
And dissolve in the rolling mists —
But until our time expires
O, fairytale, do not vanish!

My hunting ends - why think of it?
You’re the most precious of my does!
Golden star shining in the night —
Fairytale mine, a, come with me!

He takes Rusalka away.

ACT TWO

A park surrounding the Prince’s castle. In the background a gallery and the banquet hall. In the foreground a pond under old trees. Late afternoon, dusk and later night.

THE GAMEKEEPER

comes in with the turnspit
Well then, well then, my dear boy,
Tell your story to the end!
What for are the festivities
Which are taking place today?
Guests are swarming in the hall.
There is bustle in the kitchen.
On the tables, on the racks
Utensils of every kind!

THE TURNSPIT

We are in a hurry,
Dearest Uncle Vanek,
From dawn to dusk and through the night
We work without respite or rest!
Think of it, just think of it.
Have you ever heard such a thing:
The prince has in the woods
Found a female creature? 
And the chances are 
He will marry her! 
He has found her in your woods. 
In your deep, deep, gloomy woods 
Wherever he might have found her, 
I would be afraid of her! 
Utters not a single word, 
Does not have a drop of blood, 
Moves around like without sense — 
That would be a fine, fine bride!

THE GAMEKEEPER
All this seems to confirm 
What I’ve heard as rumor! 
Like it or not, brother, 
It will be as you say! 
Lord keep us from evil. 
For my reason tells me 
That in this lovemaking 
There must be some magic! 
My forest is haunted 
By sinister powers. 
Stranger still the creatures 
Which at midnight meet there. 
Any weakling runs the danger 
To be enthralled by the witch, 
At the dam the Water sprite can 
Drag you quick down to his realm. 
And who gets to see the WATER SPRITEs 
Naked, without skirts or shirts 
He is bound to lose his head — 
Lord deliver us from that!

THE TURNSPIT
with anxiety 
Uncle, I am frightened!

THE GAMEKEEPER 
I can understand, 
May the Lord show mercy 
To your sinful soul!

THE TURNSPIT 
Handsome used to be the prince. 
See how transformed is he now! 
He’s no longer what he has been. 
Wanders around like bemused.

Auntie Háta pays for prayers 
Offered for him day by day. 
And the parson as he learned it 
Came to warn him of the danger 
But the prince: “No and no! 
She stays here! And that is all!”

THE GAMEKEEPER 
That’s why there are noble guests! 
Why supplies are running low! 
Why I had, and with speed, 
Killed and brought here so much game!

THE TURNSPIT 
With a bit of luck, though 
Nothing comes of it, 
And another woman 
Can thereby profit! 
Auntie Háta told us all 
That the prince is inconstant: 
That his love’s already vanishing. 
Another he has in mind. 
To a lovely foreign princess 
He began to turn his eyes!

THE GAMEKEEPER 
God be praised, God be praised, 
Bless him, keep him, give him peace! 
In his place I without ado 
Would chase out that foreign girl 
Ere she drags me into hell: 
Run her out, that gold-digger!

THE TURNSPIT 
suddenly 
Huh, there comes the prince and the monster too!

He runs away.

THE GAMEKEEPER 
Neither I shall await her arrival!

He runs in an opposite direction. Rusalka, beautifully attired, but always sad and pole, is coming with the prince.

THE PRINCE 
A week now do you dwell with me
And fairy-like you seem to be,
In vain do I search in your eyes
To understand your mystery!
When we are married shall I get
What love has long been seeking
That you should burn with passion
And be a whole, whole woman!
Why is your embrace always cold,
Why do you flee from passion?
Why anxiously I tremble must
When in my arms I hold you?
In vain, in vain I still this feeling sad,
From your embrace I cannot free myself —
And though you be as frigid as you are,
I must possess you, possess you at last!

THE PRINCESS
comes through the gallery, sees the prince and Rusalka
It is not love, but well an angry feeling
That another is where I should have been
But if I am denied to be his wife,
Neither the two shall live in happiness!
She comes forward.
I wonder if the prince will recollect
That though a lover he’s also a host!
seductingly
Shall all your guests silently contemplate
That happiness which you seem to enjoy?

She stands between the prince and Rusalka.

THE PRINCE
startles as soon as he sees the princess
Ah, your reproach is really timely
And from your lips I bear it gladly:
Even the bridegroom, beautiful princess,
Is above all, only your servant!

THE PRINCESS
regarding Rusalka
But say, this beauty, the lady of your heart,
How can she bear it and not to say a word?

Rusalka regards her with pain and anger.

THE PRINCESS
ironically

Or do her eyes have so much tenderness
That only through them you communicate?

THE PRINCE
embarrassed
Her eyes have though forgotten to remind me
That as a host I became negligent.
So with your leave I shall now compensate for
What for a while I neglected to do.

Offers the princess his hand. Rusalka steps forward and firmly takes hold of it.

THE PRINCE:
Why are you embarrassed? Why are you trembling so?
Now hasten to your room and prepare for the ball!

He takes the princess away.

THE PRINCESS
departing, to Rusalka
O, dress yourself in your most superb gown:
I have his gallantry, yet you possess his heart!

Rusalka stares after them as if she would like to restrain the prince from going, but then, sad and heartbroken, she departs through the gallery. Dusk sets in, night falls and later appears the moon. In the hall festive music is heard and lights are lighted. Festive milling is seen in the background, guests are arriving and forming circles. Later singing and dancing.

THE WATER SPRITE
emerges from the fishpond and looks into the gaily animated hall
Pitiful Rusalka pallid,
Caught in the web of wordliness!
Alas! Alas!
No one in this world can give you
What my own realm abounds in!
No matter you are human now,
An age-long bond is binding you,
Although a man seems to love you,
You won’t entice him forever!
Pitiful Rusalka pallid,
Caught in the web of wordliness!
Everywhere your sisters seek you,
Try in vain to embrace you!
When you’ll come back to your sisters,
Death will spread all around you,
You will come back sick of life
Eternal curse attached to you!

CHORUS

from the hall is heard
White blossoms all along the road,
Along the road all over,

A boy was riding to his maid
And the day smiled so brightly.
Do not wait, my lad, hasten there,
Soon you will attain manhood,
When you will come back by this way,
Red roses will be blooming.
All the white blossoms were the first
To succumb to the sun’s rays,
But all the roses fiery
Adorn the bridal chamber.

Now and then the prince appears among the guests, courting the foreign princess and neglecting Rusalka.

THE WATER SPRITE
Pitiful Rusalka pallid,
Caught in the web of wordliness!
Alas! Alas!
Waterlily’s blossoms white
Will be your sad companions —
No red roses will decorate
Ever your bridal chamber!

Rusalka, desperate, runs from the hall and flies through the park to the fishpond.

THE WATER SPRITE

surprised
Rusalka, daughter, I am here!

RUSALKA

suddenly regaining speech
Water sprite, my dearest father!

THE WATER SPRITE
So I came to your lovely place
To find you already crying?

RUSALKA
Father mine, Water sprite, save me, save,
A terrible fright has seized me!
Woe me that I’d have betrayed you,
Woe him who’s known the humans!
Alas! Alas!
Another’s charm has captured him,
Passionate human beauty —
Stranger am I again to him,
Rusalka from the waters!

THE WATER SPRITE
He did reject you who loved you so?
Now you must, you must persevere!

RUSALKA
O, useless, useless, useless it is,
And emptiness is in my heart,

And useless are now all my charms,
If I am only half a man!
He does not know me anymore,
Rusalka from the waters!
Her eyes are burning with a passion,
That human passion damnable,
I have been born of tepid water
And passion that I don’t possess!
Accursed by you, lost to him forever,
Of Nature’s wild forces an echo dull,
Neither a fairy, nor a woman,
I can neither die, nor can I live!

The prince and the princess come out of the banquet hall.

RUSALKA
See them, oh, see them! Here they are —
Father mine, Father mine, save me, save!

THE PRINCESS
accompanied by the prince
Strange fire in your eyes is burning,
Enchanted I listen to you,
You’re growing both sweeter and warmer —
O, prince, say what does all that mean?
Where has your chosen one disappeared,
She that is mute and without name?
Where has she fled? She ought to see
Her prince who is completely changed!

THE PRINCE
Where did she go? God only knows!
But you alone have caused this change —
This summer night will not reveal
That other charms have captured me.
Call it a whim or what you will
That for a while I have loved her
And be a blazing fire where
The moon’s pale light ruled up to now!

THE PRINCESS
But when my fire will have burnt you
And frightened all your passions wild
And when I’m gone far, far from you —
What will you do with that lunar shine?
When you’ll be embraced by the lovely
Arms of that mute sleepwalker yours —
Who will inflame your passions then?
O, pitty, pitty, passion that!

THE PRINCE
full of passion
And should the whole, whole world
Disapprove of my longing —
You are that blossom red
Though for a moment only!
It’s now I realize
What made my body dying
When with the help of love
It sought to become healthy!

THE PRINCESS
Why, only now I realize
That suddenly I’m being courted —
The bridegroom does not know himself
Whether he courts me or the other!

THE PRINCE
suddenly embraces the princess
What will remain of that love
Into whose trap I fell?
Its bonds I’ll gladly tear up
If I can but love you!

Rusalka, desperate, runs out of her hiding place and throws herself into the prince’s arms.

THE PRINCE
mortally frightened
Your shoulders are as cold as ice,
You, frigid beauty, cold and white!

He pushes Rusalka away.

THE WATER SPRITE
appears in full moonlight and shouts
Hasten into the other’s arms!
Rusalka’s embrace you can’t escape!

He drags Rusalka into the pond.

THE PRINCE
stupefied and not understanding anything
From the hand of this mysterious force
Save me, oh, save me, oh, save me!

He falls to the Princess’s feet.

THE PRINCESS
in an outburst of laughter
Into the nameless abyss of hell
Hasten to rejoin your chosen one!

She departs.

ACT THREE
The glade on the shore of a lake. Night is descending, the sky is overcast, yet later evening glow appears and finally, there is a moonlit night. Rusalka sits above the lake where she sat previously. She is all white and pale. Her hair has turned ashen, her eyes are extinguished.

RUSALKA
Insensible water power,
You’ve dragged me into the depth —
Why can’t I in your cold embrace
Pass away, ah, pass away?
Deprived of my youthfulness.
Of my sisters’ company,  
For my love for ever banished  
Grieve in these cold currents bleak.  
Having lost my erstwhile sweet charm,  
Cursed by my beloved,  
In vain do I seek my sisters,  
In vain long I for the world.  
Where’s the charm of summer nights  
When the waterlilies bloomed?  
Why can’t I in this cold embrace  
Pass away, ah, pass away?

JEZIBABA  
 comes out of her cottage  
Ah, ah! Already you have come back?  
Well, you have not been away long!  
And your cheeks, they have turned so pale,  
And how you lament here, all alone!  
Say, have not kisses tasted so well  
And human bed failed to warm you up?

RUSALKA  
 Woe me, woe me, my dear auntie,  
All betrayed me and I have lost everything!

JEZIBABA  
 Short has been your honeymooning,  
Long will be your lamenting,  
After kissing human lips  
Fasting will be infinite!  
A man is a man, outcast by Nature,  
His roots were severed since time out of mind,  
Woe him who after his love was longing,  
By his betrayal who now is condemned!

RUSALKA  
 Auntie, my wise one, auntie, say,  
Cannot I, cannot I be helped?

JEZIBABA  
 Your lover has turned on you,  
ceased to love you  
And now Jezibaba should again help you?  
After wordly pleasures, my daughter unwise,  
You would like to return to your sisters gay?

Well, I have a counsel, very good indeed  
Whether you will like it, that’s another thing!  
Only human blood can cleanse you  
From the Nature’s curse,  
From the love which you were seeking  
In a man’s embrace!  
You shall be ‘gain what you have been  
Ere this deception —  
Yet warm human blood is only  
The means of your health.  
Every pain will abandon you,  
Happy you’ll be ‘gain  
If by your own hand will perish  
Who has seduced you!

RUSALKA  
 frightened  
Jezibaba, woe me, much you ask!

JEZIBABA  
 offers her a knife  
Take this knife and vow that you will obey!

RUSALKA  
 throws the knife into the lake  
You inspire horror, let me go!  
I’ll rather suffer anxieties,  
I’ll rather be forever cursed.  
All of my unrequited love  
All of my despair I’ll rather live  
But he, he must, must happy be!

JEZIBABA  
 bursting into a wild laughter  
Into silly human life you  
Have through longing been enticed —  
And now you seem to lack the strength  
To spill a drop of human blood!  
Mind you, man attains to manhood only  
When he has dipped his hand in blood,  
When moved by passion till blood spilling  
He became drunk with his neighbor’s blood.  
To say that you wished to be human  
To impress him with your passion!  
You’re just an empty water bubble  
A lunar, pallid good-for-nothing!  
Go then and suffer through all ages —  
Dry up in longing for your man!
She hobbles back to her cottage.

RUSALKA
Uprooted and banished
Into deep solitude
Without my sisters must I go —
Beloved, I know it, know,
I’ll see you nevermore!
Woe me, a woe me hundred times!

She submerges in the lake.

THE NYMPHS
under water
You have left us for the world.
You have fled from our games —
Now that there’s a curse on you,
Don’t descend to us!
He is banned from our dance
Who has been by man embraced,
We’ll disperse, yes, we’ll disperse
If you approach us!
From your sadness emanates
Fright into our joyful games.
With the will-o’the-wisps you play
At night on the moors!
Entice people with your light,
At the crossroads make them stray,
With your flimsy, bluish light
Lead them to their graves!

At the crossroads, at the tombs,
You will find yourself new friends,
To the dance of water nymphs
Do not dare come back!

Silence. Evening glow in the west.

THE GAMEKEEPER
brings in the turnspit
That you’re afraid? Don’t be silly,
Other people used to come here!
Knock at the door and say gently
What you’ve been ordered to say:
Our prince that sick is gravely,
That he is out of his senses.
That a hellish creature cursed
Was on visit at his home,
And that therefore Auntie Háta
Begs Jezibaba’s advice!

THE TURNSPIT
refusing
Ah, my legs are failing,
Foggy is my eye —
For the sake of heaven,
Uncle, you go there!

THE GAMEKEEPER
Many times I’ve passed by here
During the dark hours of night —
You’re a coward if there’s one
Who’s afraid of an old woman!

THE TURNSPIT
Last time when you came to us,
Yourself have put fright in me,
Don’t be therefore surprised, uncle,
That I feel frightened in the woods!

THE GAMEKEEPER
Idle talk, idle talk —
I do overstate sometimes!
Quickly now see to it,
Get an answer from the witch!
Rise up quick, go and knock,
Ask the old hag for her wit!

THE TURNSPIT
I would surely mumble,
I have such a fright —
Better yourself ask her
What she thinks of it!

THE GAMEKEEPER
Blushing I’d be, blushing
If you were my son!
But to show you that I
Have no fright at all!
Jezibaba! Hola, hola!

JEZIBABA
comes out of the cottage
Who is noisy? Who is calling?

The turnspit hides behind the gamekeeper.
THE GAMEKEEPER
Auntie Háta sends us to you here,
To you, Jezibaba, for advice!

JEZIBABA
For that advice, for a bit of reason
Does she send me this here boy for breakfast?
*She touches the turkspit.*
He needs to be fattened as I see,
Then he’ll make a tasty, juicy roast!

THE TURNSPIT
*defends himself desperately*
Let go! Let go! Let me flee from here!
Uncle, Uncle, she wants to eat me!

JEZIBABA
*shaking with laughter*
Ha, ha, ha, Ha,
Ah, you tiny dwarf, you,
Silly creature, you,
You would be a bad bit
For my digestion!
May the hell but swallow
Your accursed clan!
And now quickly tell me
What you have to say!

THE TURNSPIT
*with anxiety*
Our prince is gravely, gravely sick indeed,
He’s under the spell of, of a mighty witch!
He’s brought her to the castle, gave her all,
He did love her, I say, like he does himself.
Easily she might have been today his wife —
But the lovely witch has not waited till the wedding day.
When her sway was firmly established,
That unfaithful witch has suddenly disappeared.
The castle is still now under her spell —
The devil himself must have taken the witch to hell!

THE WATER SPRITE
*suddenly emerges from the lake*
Who, you say, she betrayed?
Accursed the man
Who has dispatched you here,
You wretched creatures,
You begetters of lies.
It’s he betrayed her,
Subjected her to curse!

THE GAMEKEEPER
*takes to his heels*
Water sprite! Water sprite!

THE TURNSPIT
*follows close after him*
Uncle! Uncle! For heaven’s sake, uncle!

THE WATER SPRITE
*in a frightful voice*
I’ll take my revenge with all the might I have!

JEZIBABA
Ha, ha, ha, Ha! Ha, ha, ha, ha!

*She hobbles back to her cottage. The evening glow vanished, night has fallen and the moon is rising. Water sprites dance in the glade.*

FIRST WATER SPRITE
*dancing*
Hair, golden hair have I,
Glowworms like to whirl around them at night,
My alabaster hand has now untied my hair,
And the moon is combing them with silver rays.

SECOND WATER SPRITE
*dancing*
Feet, white feet have I,
Using them I have run all around the glade,
I’ve been running barefoot and dew has washed my feet
And the moon has shod them with slippers of gold.

SECOND WATER SPRITE
*dancing, together with the other*
White, my body is white,
In the glade it glistens with all loveliness,
Wherever I move to, there my lovely body
Finds beautiful dresses made of moonlight beams.

THE WATER SPRITES
Let us dance, sisters, ah, let us dance
In the fine nocturnal breeze!
It’s about time for the Water sprite
To call us up from the reeds!

Seeing the Water sprite.

There he is, there he is
Already mending his nets!

dancing around him

Water sprite, ah, heya, hey.
Try to catch us if you may!
Whichever you catch, dear man,
Will give you a kiss for prize.
But your woman, hahaha,
Water sprite, ah, hahaha,
She will twist your ears for that!

THE WATER SPRITE
sadly
Stop your gaily romping,
My dear children golden-haired —
Our native water
Alas has been soiled by man.

THE WATER SPRITES
stand still
What is it that mars our gay dance?
Tell your tale, Water sprite, tell your tale!

THE WATER SPRITE
At the deep bottom laments
Rejected by her sisters
Pitiful Rusalka pallid!
Alas! Alas! Alas!

He submerges. The moon hides behind clouds.

FIRST WATER SPRITE
Tears are rising to my eyes,
Suddenly I feed cold.

SECOND WATER SPRITE
Behind clouds of grey and black
The moon has now hidden.

THIRD WATER SPRITE
Darkness oppresses my head.
Sisters, sisters, let us flee!

They disperse.

THE PRINCE
like a madman runs out of the wood
Where are you, my white doe?
Fairytale! My silent image!
To my lamentations,
to my constant searching
Will there nevermore be an end?
Day after day be longing urged,
Breathless I seek you in the woods,
When night approaches I sense you there,
Look for you in the moonlit mist.
Search for you all over the earth —
Fairytale, fairytale, come to me!

He stops.

Here it has happened! Speak, silent forests!
Sweet apparition, beloved. Where are you?
By all that still lives in my heart
I entreat both heaven and earth,
I entreat God and the demons too —
Speak to me, speak up, where are you?

The moon emerges from the clouds.

RUSALKA
appears in the moonlight above the lake
Do you still know me, lover?
Do you still recall me to mind?

THE PRINCE
startled
If you are dead now, kill me quick!
If you are alive, save me, save!
RUSALKA
Living nor dead I, woman nor fairy,
Accursed I wander through the night!
In vain in your arms have I been dreaming
My poor love, my poor, wretched love —
Once in the past I have been your sweetheart,
Now I can only be your death!

THE PRINCE
Without you I can nowhere live —
Can you, oh, can you forgive me?

RUSALKA
Why did you hug me in your arms,
Why did your lips lie to me?
Now I’m but a lunar vision
Destined ever to torment you.
Now I am luring you at night,
Dishonored is my lap,
With the will-o’-the-wisps I must
Drag you down to the depths.
You sought after passion, do I know
Which I have never had —
But if I give you a kiss now,
You are lost for all time!

THE PRINCE
staggering towards her
Kiss me, just kiss me, give me peace,
Never shall I turn to the world,
Kiss me if need be till I’m dead!

RUSALKA
And you have given me so much —
Why did you, my dearest, betray me?
Do you know, my lad, do you know,
From my embrace there’s no return,
In my embrace you’ll find your death?

THE PRINCE
All that I’ll give you once again —
Kiss me, but kiss me a thousand times!
I don’t want to return, let me die,
Kiss me, just kiss me, give me peace,
I don’t think, I don’t think of the past!

RUSALKA
embraces him and kisses him

My love will freeze all sentiments —
I have to, have to make you die,
Yet I must take you into my arms!

THE PRINCE
Kiss me, just kiss me, give me peace!
Your kisses, I know, will redeem my sin —
I’m dying happy in your embrace!

He dies.

THE WATER SPRITE
deep under water
In vain shall he die in your arms,
In vain is any sacrifice,
Pitiful Rusalka pallid!
Alas! Alas! Alas!

RUSALKA
kisses the dead prince for the last time
Because you loved, because you were good,
Because you were humanly fickle,
Because of all which makes up my fate —
God have mercy on you, human soul!

She submerges in the lake.

Curtain