

TURANDOT

by Giacomo Puccini

Cast

PRINCESS TURANDOT (soprano)
THE EMPEROR ALTOUM, her father (tenor)
TIMUR, the deposed King of Tartary (bass)
THE UNKNOWN PRINCE (Calaf), his son (tenor)
LIÙ, a slave girl (soprano)
PING, Lord Chancellor (baritone)
PANG, Majordomo (tenor)
PONG, Head chef of the Imperial Kitchen (tenor)
A MANDARIN (baritone)
THE PRINCE OF PERSIA (tenor)
THE EXECUTIONER (Pu-Tin-Pao) (silent)

Imperial guards, the executioner's men, boys, priests, mandarins, dignitaries, eight wise men, Turandot's handmaids, soldiers, standard-bearers, musicians, ghosts of suitors, crowd

ACT I

*The walls of the great Violet City
(The Imperial City.)*

Massive ramparts form a semi-circle that enclose most of the scene. They are interrupted only at the right by a great loggia, covered with carvings and reliefs of monsters, unicorns, and phoenixes, its columns resting on the backs of gigantic turtles. At the foot of this loggia, there is a huge bronze gong, held up by two arches. On the ramparts are set some stakes, which bear the skulls of the executed. At left and in the back, three enormous gates open in the walls. When the curtain rises, the sunset has reached its most colorful point. Peking, which we see in the distance, is all gleaming and golden. The palace yard is filled with a picturesque Chinese crowd, which is listening to the words of a Mandarin. From the top of the rampart, where red and black Tartars stand guard, he is reading a tragic decree.)

MANDARIN
People of Peking!

This is the law:
Turandot, the Pure, will be the bride
of the man, of royal blood,
who solves the three enigmas
that she will ask him.
But whoever faces the trial
and is defeated,
must bow to the axe
his haughty head!

THE CROWD
Ah! Ah!

MANDARIN
The Prince of Persia
had Fate against him:
when the moon rises,
at the executioner's hand
he must die!

THE CROWD
He must die! Yes, die!
We want the executioner!
Quickly, quickly!
Death! Death!
The punishment!
If you don't appear,
we'll waken you,

Pu-Tin-Pao! Pu-Tin-Pao!
To the palace! To the palace!

GUARDS
*(thrust back the crowd. In the mêlée many
people fall.)*
Stand back, dog!

THE CROWD
Ah, cruel ones!
Stop, by Heaven!

GUARDS
Stand back, dogs!

THE CROWD
Oh, my mother!
Ah, my babies!
Stop, cruel ones!
Be human! Don't hurt us!

LIÙ
This old man has fallen!
Who can help me lift him up?
This old man has fallen!
Have pity! Pity!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE
*(Hurries over. He recognizes, with a cry, his
father.)*
Father! My father!
Oh, father, yes, I've found you!
Look at me! It's not a dream!

GUARDS
Stand back!

LIÙ
My lord!

THE CROWD
Why are you striking us? Alas!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE
Father! Listen to me!
Father! It's I!
And may my grief itself be blessed,
for this joy given us
by a pitying God.

TIMUR
Oh my son! You! Alive?

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE
Silence!
The usurper of your crown
seeks me and pursues you!
There's no hiding-place for us
in the world, father!

TIMUR
I sought you, my son,
and I thought you were dead!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE
I wept for you, father;
now I kiss these sainted hands!...

TIMUR
Oh, my son, found again!

THE CROWD
Here are the executioner's men!
To the death!

TIMUR
When the battle was lost,
an old King without realm, fleeing,
I heard a voice
saying to me:
"Come with me, I'll be your guide..."
It was Liù!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE
Bless her!

TIMUR
When I fell exhausted,
she would dry my tears,
and she begged for me!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE
Liù, who are you?

LIÙ
I'm nothing...
A slave, my lord.

THE CROWD (*within*)

Hone the blade!
Hone the blade!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

Why did you share such anguish?

LIÙ

Because, one day...in the palace,
you smiled at me.

(A group of the executioner's men comes in, preceded by the bearers of the hone to sharpen the executioner's great scimitar.)

THE CROWD

Grind the whetstone! Grind it! *etc.*

EXECUTIONER'S MEN

Oil it, sharpen it,
let the blade gleam, spatter
fire and blood!
Work is never dull for us
where Turandot reigns!

THE CROWD

Where Turandot reigns!
Sweet lovers, come forward! Come!

EXECUTIONER'S MEN

With our hooks and our knives,
we're ready to embroider
your skins!

THE CROWD

Whoever strikes that gong
will see her appear!
White as jade,
cold as that sword
is the beautiful Turandot!

EXECUTIONER'S MEN

When the gong clangs,
the executioner is happy!

THE CROWD

Love is in vain
if Luck isn't there!

CROWD and MEN

The enigmas are three;
death is one!

When the gong clang's, *etc.*

(As the executioner's men go off to take him the sharpened sword, the crowd looks at the sky that has gradually grown dark.)

THE CROWD

Why does the moon delay?
Wan face!

Show yourself in the sky!

Quickly! Come! Rise!

Oh, lopped-off head!

Oh, mean one! Come!

Bloodless, taciturn!

Pale lover of the dead!

How the cemeteries await
your funeral light!

There's a gleam over there!...

Come quickly, *etc.*

Over there a glimmer
is spreading out in the sky
its deathly light!

Pu-Tin-Pao!

The moon has risen! *etc.*

BOYS

There, on the Eastern mountains,
the stork sang.

But April blossomed no more,
and the snow didn't thaw.

From the desert to the sea,
can't you hear a thousand voices
sighing: "Princess,
come down to me!"

All will blossom again,
all will be resplendent! Ah!..."

(A group of people come in, leading the young Prince of Persia to the scaffold. At the sight of the pale, dazed young victim, the crowd's ferocity is changed into pity.)

THE CROWD

O the youth!
Mercy! Mercy!

How steady is his step!
 How sweet is his face!
 Ecstasy is in his eyes!
 Joy is in his eyes!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE
 Ah, mercy on him!

THE CROWD
 Have pity on him! Pity!
 Princess!
 Mercy! Pity! *etc.*

UNKNOWN PRINCE
 Let me see you, and curse you!
 Cruel one!

THE CROWD
 Princess, have pity on him! *etc.*

(The people are facing the balcony where Turandot will appear. She comes forth, like a vision. A moonbeam lights her form. The crowd prostrates itself. Only the Prince of Persia, the Unknown Prince and the executioner remain standing. Turandot makes a decisive, imperious gesture: the death-sentence. The cortège moves off.)

Princess! Have pity on him! Have mercy!
etc.

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE
(blinded by this vision of Turandot)
 O divine beauty, o marvel,
 o dream!
(The cortège has gone out.)

WHITE PRIESTS
 O great Kouang-tze!
 May the dying man's spirit
 come to you!

(Now in the semi-darkness of the square only the Prince, Timur, and Liù are left. The father in anguish goes over to his son, shakes him, calling him back to himself.)

TIMUR
 My son, what are you doing?

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE
 Can't you feel it?
 Her perfume is in the air!
 It's in my spirit!

TIMUR
 You're lost!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE
 O divine beauty, o marvel!
 I'm suffering, father, suffering!

TIMUR
 No! No! Let me clasp you!
 Liù, you speak to him!
 There's no safety here!
 Take his hand in your
 hand!

LIÙ
 My lord, let's go...far away!

TIMUR
 Life is awaiting us there!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE
 This is Life, father!

TIMUR
 Life is awaiting us there!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE
 I'm suffering, father, suffering!

TIMUR
 There's no safety here!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE
 Life is here, father!
 Turandot! Turandot! Turandot!

THE PRINCE OF PERSIA *(within)*
 Turandot!

THE CROWD
 Ah!

TIMUR

Do you want to die thus?

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

To conquer, father,
in her beauty!

TIMUR

Do you want to end thus?

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

To conquer, gloriously,
in her beauty!

(He rushes towards the gong. But suddenly three mysterious figures set themselves between him and the luminous dusk. These are Ping, Pang, and Pong, the emperor's three ministers: the Grand Chancellor, the Grand Purveyor, and the Grand Cook. The Unknown Prince steps back.)

THE MINISTERS

Wait! What are you doing? Stop!

Who are you?

What are you doing?

What do you want?

Go away! Go! This is the door

to the great butcher's shop!

Madman, go away!

They garrotte you here!

They impale you!

Cut your throat!

Skin you alive!

They knife you and pollard you!

Saw you up and disembowel you!

Quickly, hastily,

go back to your country

and look for a door-post

to break your head on!

But here, no! Not here!

Madman, go away!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

Let me by!

PONG

Here the graveyards are full!

PANG

Our local madmen are quite enough!

PING

We don't want any more foreign madmen!

PONG and PANG

Run off, or else your funeral
will be prepared for you!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

Let me by!

PONG and PANG

For a Princess! Pooh!

PONG

What's that?

PANG

A female with a crown on her head!

PONG

And a cloak with some fringe!

PING

But if you strip her naked –

PONG

She's flesh!

PANG

She's raw flesh!

THE MINISTERS

It's inedible stuff!

Ha! ha! ha!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

Let me by!

PING

Give up woman!

Or else take a hundred wives, after all

the most sublime Turandot

in the world has a face,

two arms and two legs, yes,

lovely, imperial, yes, yes,

lovely, but still only legs!

With a hundred wives, you fool,
you'll have a surplus of legs!
Two hundred arms,
and a hundred soft bosoms
scattered in a hundred beds!

THE MINISTERS

In a hundred beds! Ha! ha!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

Let me by!

THE MINISTERS

Madman, go away! Go! etc.

*(A group of handmaidens comes out of the
balustrade of the loggia; they hold out their
hands.)*

THE HANDMAIDENS

Hola, silence!

Who's talking down there?

Silence! This is the sweet hour

for sleeping!

Sleep is grazing her eyes!

The darkness breathes forth her fragrance!

THE MINISTERS

Go away, chattering females!

(The maidens withdraw.)

Watch out for the gong!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

The darkness breathes forth her fragrance!

THE MINISTERS

Look at him, Pong!

Look at him, Ping!

Look at him, Pang!

He's gone deaf! He's dazed!

He's bedazzled!

TIMUR

He's not listening to them, alas!

THE MINISTERS

Come! Let's all three speak to him!

A night without a bit of light...

...a chimney's blackened throat...

are still clearer
than Turandot's enigmas!
Iron bronze, walls, rock...
...your obstinate hard head...

are less hard
than Turandot's enigmas!

So then, go!

Bid us all goodbye!

Scale the mountains, ford the streams!

And stay well away

from Turandot's enigmas!

*(The Prince barely has the strength to react.
Now suddenly vague calls, not voices but the
shadows of voices, fill the darkness below the
ramparts. Here and there, at first barely
perceptible, then gradually more livid and
phosphorescent, the phantoms appear. They
are those who loved Turandot and, failing in
the test, have lost their lives.)*

THE PHANTOMS

Don't hesitate!

If you call, she'll appear – she

who makes us dream, though we are dead!

Make her speak!

Let us hear her!

I love her! I love her!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

No! I, only I love her!

THE MINISTERS

You love her? What? Who?

Turandot? Ha, ha, ha!

PONG

O mad boy!

PANG

Turandot doesn't exist!

PING

Only the Nothingness exists,

in which you annihilate yourself!...

PONG and PANG

Turandot doesn't exist!

PING

Turandot! Like all those blockheads
who went before you!
Man! God! The Ego!
Peoples! Kings...Pu-Tin-Pao...

THE MINISTERS

Only the Tao exists!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

I want the triumph!

I want love!

*(He starts to throw himself on the gong, but
the executioner appears high on the bastion
with the head of the Prince of Persia.)*

THE MINISTERS

Fool! There's love!

That's how the moon will kiss
your face!

TIMUR

Oh, son, do you want me then
to drag along through the world
my tortured old age, all alone?

Help! Isn't there any human voice
that can move your fierce heart?

LIÙ *(weeping, approaches the Prince)*

My lord, listen, ah! Listen!

Liù can bear it no more!

My heart is breaking!

Alas, how long have I travelled

with your name in my soul,

your name on my lips!

But if your Fate

is decided tomorrow

we'll die on the road to exile!

He will lose his son...

And I...the shadow of a smile!

Liù can bear it no more!

Ah, have pity!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

Don't weep, Liù

If one far-off day,

I smiled at you,

then for that smile,

my sweet girl,

listen to me: your master tomorrow
will be perhaps alone in the world...

Don't leave him!

Take him away with you!

LIÙ

We'll die on the road to exile!

TIMUR

We'll die!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

Soften for him the road to exile!

O my poor Liù, this, this
is what he who smiles no more
asks of your unfailing heart...
he who smiles no more!

TIMUR

Ah, for the last time!

LIÙ

Overcome this horrible spell!

THE MINISTERS

Life is so beautiful!

TIMUR

Have pity on me!

LIÙ

Have pity on Liù

Pity, lord!

THE MINISTERS

Don't destroy yourself like this!

Seize him, carry him away!

Restrain that raging madman!

You are mad!

Life is beautiful!

TIMUR

Have pity, have pity on me!

I can't tear myself from you!

I don't want to tear myself from you!

Pity! I throw myself at your feet,

moaning! Have pity!

Don't make me die!

LIÙ
Pity, lord!
Lord, have pity on Liù!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE
I'm the one who asks for pity!
I can't listen to anyone anymore!
I see her radiant face!
I see her! She calls me!
She is there!
I ask your pardon,
as one who smiles no more!

PING
Come, a last effort:
Let's carry him away!

THE MINISTERS
Let's carry him away!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE
Leave me alone!
I've suffered too much!
Glory awaits me there!
No human strength exists
that can restrain!
I'm following my destiny!
I'm in a fever,
a delirium!
My senses are all fierce torture!

Every fiber of my soul
has a voice that shouts:
Turandot! Turandot! Turandot!

TIMUR
You're treading on a poor heart
that bleeds for you in vain!
Nobody has ever won, nobody!
The sword has struck them all!
I throw myself at your feet!
Don't put me to death!
Death! Death!

LIÙ
Ah, have pity, pity on us!
As if your torment weren't enough,
lord, we are lost! With you!

Let us flee, lord, flee!
Death! Death! Death!

THE MINISTERS
The face you see is an illusion!
The light that shines is fatal!
You're gambling your own destruction!
You're gambling your head! Death!
The executioner's shadow is there!
You're hastening to your ruin!
Don't risk your life!
Death! Death! Death!

CHORUS
We're already digging your grave,
you who would challenge love!
In the darkness, alas,
your destiny is written! Ah!

(As he invokes Turandot, the Unknown Prince rushes to the gong, seizes the hammer, and strikes it three times.)

THE MINISTERS
Well, let him go!
There's no use shouting
in Sanskrit, Chinese, or Mongolian!
When the gong clangs,
Death is happy!
Ha, ha, ha!
(They run away, snickering.)

ACT II

Scene 1 *A pavilion*

(It is formed by a huge tent, all strangely decorated with symbolic and fantastic Chinese figures. There are three openings: in the center and at the sides. Ping appears at the center. Turning first to the right, then to the left, he calls his companions. They are followed by three servants, who are carrying a red lantern, a green lantern, and a yellow lantern, which they then set on a low table, surrounded by three stools. The servants then

*retire to the background, where they remain,
huddled on the ground.)*

PING

Hola, Pang! Hola, Pong!
Since the fatal gong is waking
the Palace and walking city,

let's be ready for any event:
if the stranger wins,
for the wedding;
and if he loses,
for the burial.

PONG

I'll prepare the wedding!

PANG

And I, the funeral!

PONG

The red, holiday lanterns!

PANG

The white, mourning lanterns!

PANG and PONG

Incense and sacrifices...

PONG

Gilded coins of paper...

PANG

Tea, sugar, nutmeg!

PONG

The fine scarlet palanquin!

PANG

The great, well-made bier!

PONG

The singing priests...

PANG

The moaning priests...

PONG and PANG

And all the rest,

as the ceremony requires...
in its infinity of details!

PING

O China, o China, who now
starts and leaps restlessly,
how happily you used to sleep
filled with your seventy thousand
centuries!

THE MINISTERS

Everything was going along
according to the world's ancient law.
Then Turandot was born...

PING

And for years now our holidays
have become joys of this order:

PONG

...three strokes of the gong,

PANG

...three riddles,

PING

...and off with the heads!

PONG

and off with the heads!

PANG

The Year of the Mouse there were six.

PONG

The year of the Dog, eight.

THE MINISTERS

And during the current year,
the terrible Year of the Tiger,
we've reached thirteen already,
counting the one about to go!
What work! What boredom!
What have we become?
We're the executioner's Ministers!

PING

I have a house in Honan
with a little blue lake

all surrounded with bamboo.
And here I am, wasting my life,
wearing out my brain
over the sacred books...
When I could go back there
to my little blue lake
all surrounded with bamboo!

PONG
Go back there!
I have forests, near Tsaing,
than which none are lovelier,
but their shade is not for me.
I have forests
than which none are lovelier!

PANG
To go back there!
I have a garden near Kiù,
that I left to come here,
that I'll never see again!

THE MINISTERS
And here we are,
wearing out our brains
over the sacred books!

PONG
And I could go back to Tsaing...

PING
And I could go back there...

PANG
And I could go back to Kiù...

PING
...to enjoy my blue lake...

PONG
Tsaing...

PANG
Kiù...

PING
Honan...
all surrounded with bamboo!

PONG
...and I could go back to Tsaing!

PANG
...and I could go back to Kiù!

THE MINISTERS
O world, filled with mad lovers!
We have seen the suitors arriving!
Oh, so many! So many!
We've seen all those suitors arriving!
O world, filled with mad lovers!

PING
Do you remember the regal
Prince of Samakand?
He made his application,
and how joyfully
she sent him the executioner!

THE CHORUS
Oil and sharpen the blade
till it shines and splatters
fire and blood!

PONG
And the bejewelled Indian Sagarika,
with ear-rings like little bells?
He sought love,
and was beheaded!

PANG
And the Burmese?

PONG
And the Prince of the Kirkhiz?

THE MINISTERS
Killed! Killed!

PING
And the Tartar
whose bow was six cubits high!
who wore rich skins?

THE CHORUS
Oil and sharpen, *etc.*

PONG and PANG
Executed!

PING

Beheaded...

THE CHORUS

Where Turandot reigns,
work never is lacking!

THE MINISTERS

Kill...execute...

Slaughter...

Farewell to love!

Farewell to our race!

Farewell, divine lineage!

And China comes to an end!

But should the night

of surrender come...

PONG

I will shake up for her
the soft feathers!

PANG

I want to perfume her chamber!

PING

I will lead the bridal pair,
holding the lamp!

THE MINISTERS

Then the three of us in the garden
will sing of love
until morning...
like this...like this:

No longer is there in China,
luckily for us,

a woman who refuses love!

There was only one,

and she who was ice

is now flame and ardour!

Princess, your empire

extends from the Tse-Kiang
to the immense Yangtze!

PING

But there, within the filmy hangings,
is a husband who reigns over you!

THE MINISTERS

You smell already the aroma of kisses,
already you're a woman,

you're filled with languor!

Everything whispers in the garden,
and golden bells tinkle...

They whisper amorous words,
as the flowers are pearled with dew!

Glory to the lovely, exposed body
that now knows the mystery it ignored!
Glory to their ecstasy and to Love,
which has conquered and has given
peace to China again!

PING

We're dreaming, while the palace
is already swarming with lanterns,
servants and soldiers!
You hear the great drum
of the green temple!
Already the infinite clogs of Peking
are clattering!

PONG

You hear the trumpets!
Peace, indeed!

PANG

The ceremony is beginning!

THE MINISTERS

Let's go and enjoy
this umpteenth torture!

Scene 2

A vast square inside the Palace walls

*At the center there is a great marble stairs,
whose summit is lost among lacy arches.
There are three broad landings. Numerous
servants set vari-colored lanterns
everywhere. Gradually the crowd invades the
square. The mandarins arrive, dressed in
blue and gold.*

*The Eight Sages go by, tall and pompous.
They are enormous old men, almost the same
size. Their gestures are slow and
simultaneous. Each is carrying three sealed
silk scrolls in his hand. These scrolls contain
the answers to Turandot's enigmas.*

THE CROWD

Grave, enormous, and imposing,
with the sealed mystery of the enigmas,
the Sages already come forward.
Here's Ping. Here's Pong. Here's Pang.

(Among the clouds of incense appear the white and yellow banners of the Emperor. Then at the top of the stairs, seated on a vast ivory throne, the Emperor Altoum is seen. He is very old, all white, venerable. He appears among the clouds like a god.)

Ten thousand years' life our
Emperor! Glory to you!

(The crowd prostrates itself, face on the ground, in attitudes of great respect. The square is bathed in a vivid red light. The unknown Prince is at the foot of the stair. Timur and Liù, at left, are lost in the crowd.)

THE EMPEROR

A ghastly oath forces me
to keep faith with the horrid pact.
And the holy scepter I clasp
is steeped in blood!
Enough of this blood!
Young man, go!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

Son of Heaven, I ask
to undergo the trial!

THE EMPEROR

Let me die
without bearing the burden
of your young life!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

Son of Heaven! I ask
to undergo the trial!

THE EMPEROR

Don't fill with horror again
the palace, the world!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

Son of Heaven! I ask
to undergo the trial!

THE EMPEROR

Stranger, intoxicated with death!
So be it!
Let your destiny be fulfilled!

THE CROWD

Ten thousand years to our Emperor!

MANDARIN

People of Peking!
This is the law:
Turandot; the pure, will be the bride
of the man, of royal blood,
who solves the enigmas
she asks him.
But whoever faces the trial
and is defeated,
must bow to the axe
his haughty head!

BOYS

From the desert to the sea
can't you hear a thousand voices
sigh: "Princess, come to me!
And all will be radiant!"

(The Mandarin withdraws. Turandot advances and stands before the throne. Beautiful and impassive, she looks at the Unknown Prince with icy eyes.)

TURANDOT

In this Palace,
thousands of years ago,
a desperate cry rang out.
And that cry,
after many generations,
took shelter in my spirit!
Princess Lo-u-Ling,
sweet, serene ancestress,
who ruled in your dark silence
with pure joy,
and challenged, sure and unyielding,
the harsh mastery of others,
today you live in me again!

THE CROWD

It was when the King of the Tartars
unfurled his seven flags!

TURANDOT

Still in the time all can recall,
there was alarm, terror, the rumble of arms!
The Kingdom defeated! Defeated!
And Lo-u-ling, my ancestress,
dragged off by a man,
like you, like you, stranger,
there in the horrid night,
where her sweet voice was stilled!

THE CROWD

She's slept for centuries
in her huge tomb!

TURANDOT

O you Princess,
with your long caravans
from every part of the world,
who come her to try your fate,
in you I avenge
that purity, that cry,
and that death!
No one will ever possess me!
The horror of her assassin
is still vivid in my heart!
No, no one will ever possess me!
Ah, in me is reborn the pride
of such purity!
Stranger, do not tempt Fate!
The enigmas are three,
but death is one!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

No, no! The enigmas are three,
and life is one!

THE CROWD

Offer the supreme test
to the foreign Prince,
O Turandot! Turandot!
*(The trumpets blare. Silence. Turandot asks
the first riddle.)*

TURANDOT

Stranger, listen!
"In the dark night flies a many-hued phantom
It soars and spreads its wings above the gloomy
human crowd.
The whole world calls to it
The whole world implores it
At dawn the phantom vanishes
To be reborn in every heart
And every night it is born anew
And every day it dies."

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

Yes! It's reborn!
It's reborn and, exulting,
it carries me with it, Turandot;
it is *Hope!*

THE SAGES

(open the first scroll)
Hope!

TURANDOT

Yes! Hope which always deludes!
"It kindles like a flame, but it is not a flame
At times it is a frenzy
It is a fever, force, passion.
Inertia makes it flag
If you lose heart or die it grows cold,
but dream of conquest and it flares up.
Its voice you heed in trepidation
It glows like the setting sun."

THE EMPEROR

Don't destroy yourself, stranger!

THE CROWD

Your life is at stake! Speak!
Don't destroy yourself, stranger!
Speak!

LIÙ

Your love is at stake!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

Yes, Princess!
It flames and languishes, too,
if you look at me,
in my veins:
it is *Blood!*

THE SAGES

(open the second scroll)

Blood!

THE CROWD

Courage, solver of enigmas!

TURANDOT

(points to the crowd, to the guards)

Lash those wretches!

(She comes down the stair. She bends over the Unknown Prince, who falls to his knees.)

“Ice which gives you fire,
and which your fire freezes still more
Lily-white and dark
If it allows you your freedom,
it makes you a slave
If it accepts you as a slave,
it makes you a king.”

Come, stranger!

You're pale with fright!

And you know you are lost!

Come, stranger, what is the frost
that gives off fire?

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

(leaps to his feet, exclaiming)

My victory now

has given you to me!

My fire will thaw you:

Turandot!

THE SAGES

(open the third scroll)

Turandot!

THE CROWD

Turandot!

Glory, victor!

May life smile on you!

May love smile on you!

Ten thousand years to our Emperor!

The Light, the King of the world!

TURANDOT

Son of Heaven!

August father! No!

Don't cast your daughter
into the stranger's arms!

THE EMPEROR

The oath is sacred!

TURANDOT

No, don't say it!

Your daughter is sacred!

You can't give me to him, to him
like a slave, ah no!

to die of shame!

(to the Prince)

Don't look at me like that!

You, who mock my pride!

I shall not be yours! No, I will not!

THE EMPEROR

The oath is sacred!

THE CROWD

The oath is sacred!

TURANDOT

No, don't look at me like that;

I shall not be yours.

THE CROWD

He won, Princess!

He offered his life for you!

TURANDOT

No one will ever possess me!

THE CROWD

You are the reward of his daring!

He offered his life for you!

The oath is sacred!

TURANDOT

Would you have me in your arms
by force, reluctant and enraged?

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

No, no, haughty Princess!

I want you ardent with love!

THE CROWD

Bold, courageous man!
Strong one!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

You asked me three riddles,
and I solved all three!

I will propose

only one to you:

You do not know my name!

Tell me my name,

tell me my name

before dawn!

And at dawn I will die!

(Turandot, agreeing, nods.)

THE EMPEROR

May heaven will
that as the sun rises
you will be my son!

THE CROWD

We prostrate ourselves at your feet,
The Light, the King of all the world!

For your wisdom,
for your goodness,

we give ourselves to you,
happy in our humility!

My our love rise to you!

Ten thousand years to our Emperor!

To you, heir of Hien Wang,

we cry: ten thousand

year's life to our great Emperor!

Hold high, high, the banners!

Glory to you! Glory to you!

ACT III

Scene 1

The garden of the Palace

(At right a pavilion which is reached by five steps, beyond which are richly embroidered hangings. The pavilion is the entrance to one of the wings of the Palace, which contains the rooms of Turandot. It is night. From the remote distance come the voices of Heralds,

who are going around the immense city, proclaiming the royal command. Resting on the steps is the Prince. In the great silence of the night, he listens to the cries, as if no longer in the real world.)

HERALDS

Turandot commands thus:

“Tonight no one must sleep
in Peking!”

DISTANT VOICES

No one must sleep!

No one must sleep!

HERALDS

“Under the pain of death, the name
of the Stranger must be revealed
before morning!”

DISTANT VOICES

Under pain of death!

HERALDS

“Tonight no one must sleep
in Peking!”

DISTANT VOICES

No one must sleep!

No one must sleep!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

No one must sleep!

No one must sleep...

You, too, o Princess,

in your cold room

look at the stars, that tremble

with love and with hope!

But my mystery is shut within me;

no one will know my name!

No, I will say it on your mouth

when the daylight shines!

And my kiss will break the silence

that makes you mine!

WOMEN'S VOICES

No one will know his name...

And, alas, we must die!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

Vanish, o night!
Set, you stars!
At dawn I will win!
I will win! I will win!

(Slipping through the shrubbery come the three Ministers, leading a small crowd that, gradually, becomes more numerous.)

PING

You who look at the stars,
lower your eyes.

PONG

Our life is in your power!

PANG

Our life!

PING

Did you hear the proclamation?
In the streets of Peking, at every door
Death knocks and cries:
his name!

THE MINISTERS

His name, or your blood!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

What do you want of me?

PING, PANG and PONG

You say what you want!
Is it love you seek?
Well: take it!

(He thrusts forward, at the Prince's feet, a group of girls, lovely and half-naked.)

Look, they are beautiful
in their shimmering veils!

PONG and PANG

Their lithe bodies...

PING

All ecstasy and promises
of stupendous passions!

WOMEN

Ah, ah!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

No! No!

PONG and PANG

What do you want? Wealth?
all these treasures are for you!
(At a sign, porters bring in baskets, coffers, sacks filled with gold and jewels.)

PING

They shatter the dark night...

PONG

Blue fires!

PING

...these gleaming gems!

PANG

Green splendours!

PONG

Pale hyacinths!

PANG

The red flames of the rubies!

PING

They are tear-drops of the stars!

PONG and PANG

Blue fires!
Red flames!

PING

Take them! They're all yours!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

No! No riches! No!

THE MINISTERS

Do you seek glory?
We will have you flee...

PONG and PANG

...and you'll follow the stars afar
towards fabulous empires!

ALL

Flee! Flee!
Go, go far away!
And we will all be saved!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

Come, dawn!
Dissolve this nightmare!

PING

Stranger, you don't know
what the Cruel One is capable of:
you don't know!

THE MINISTERS

You don't know the horrible tortures
China will invent
if you stay and do not reveal
your name!

ALL

The Sleepless One does not forgive!
We are lost!
It will be a horrible torture!
The sharp irons!
The spiky wheels!
The hot grip of the pincers!
Death, little by little!
Don't make us die! *etc.*

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

Your prayers are in vain!
Your threats are in vain!
If the world should collapse,
I want Turandot!

THE CROWD

You won't have her. No!
You will die before we do!
A curse on you!
Speak! The name! The name!
*(A group of guards bring in old Timur and
Liù, tattered, bruised, broken, and bleeding.)*

GUARDS

Here's the name!
It's here! It's here!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

They don't know it!
They don't know my name!...

PING

It's the old man and the girl
who were talking to you last night!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

Let them go!

PING

They know the secret!
Where did you catch them?

GUARDS

As they were wandering about there,
near the walls!

MINISTERS and CROWD

Princess! Princess!
*(Turandot appears at the edge of the
pavilion. All prostrate themselves on the
ground, except Ping, who comes forward
with extreme humility and speaks.)*

PING

Divine Princess!
The stranger's name is closed
within these silent mouths.
But we have instruments
to wrench out those teeth.
and we have pincers
to drag out that name!

TURANDOT

You are pale, stranger!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

Your fear
sees the pallor of dawn
on my face!
They don't know me!

TURANDOT

We shall see!
Come, speak, old man!
I want him to speak!
The name!

LIÙ

The name you seek –
only I know.

THE CROWD

Our lives are saved;
the nightmare has vanished!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

You know nothing, slave!

LIÙ

I know his name...
My supreme pleasure
is to keep it secret and to have it
for myself alone!

THE CROWD

Have her bound and tortured!
Until she speaks! Until she dies!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

(Sets himself in front of Liù to protect her)
You will pay for her tears!
You will pay for her torments!

TURANDOT

Seize him!

LIÙ

Lord, I won't speak!
*(The Prince is seized by the soldiers and
shackled, Liù seized by her torturers, has
fallen on her knees to the ground.)*

PING

His name!

LIÙ

No!

PING

His name!

LIÙ

Your servant asks your pardon,
but she cannot obey!
(A soldier twists her wrists.)
Ah!

TIMUR

Why are you crying?

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

Let her go!

LIÙ

No...no...I'm not crying now!
They aren't hurting me!
No, nobody's touching me.
(to the guards)
Harder...
but shut my mouth
so he can't hear me!
I can't stand it any longer!

THE CROWD

Speak! His name!

TURANDOT

Let her go!
Speak!
(Liù is freed.)

LIÙ

I'd rather die!

TURANDOT

Who gave your heart
such strength?

LIÙ

Love, Princess!

TURANDOT

Love?

LIÙ

Such love, secret and unconfessed,
so great that these torments
are sweet for me,
because I make a gift of them
for my lord...

because, keeping silent, I give him
your love...

I give you him, Princess,
and I lose everything!
Even my impossible hope!...
Bind me! Torture me!
Give me torments and pain!
Ah! the supreme gift
of my love!

TURANDOT
Wrest the secret from her!

PING
Call Pu-Tin-Pao!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE
No, curse you! Curse you!

THE CROWD
The executioner!

PING
Put her to the torture!

THE CROWD
Torture! Yes, the executioner! Make her
speak!

LIÙ
I can bear it no longer!
I'm afraid of myself!
Let me by!

THE CROWD
Speak, speak!

LIÙ
Yes, Princess, listen to me!
You, who are enclosed in ice,
conquered by such flame,
you will love him, too!
Before the dawn,
I will wearily close my eyes,
so he can win again...
And I'll never see him more!

*(Suddenly she seizes a dagger from a soldier
and stabs herself to death. She casts her*

*dazed eyes around, looks at the Prince, who
is still held by the Guards. She stumbles over
to him and falls headlong at his feet, dead.)*

THE CROWD
Ah, speak! Speak!
His name! His name!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE
Ah! You are dead,
O my poor little Liù...

*(A great silence falls, filled with terror.
Turandot stares at Liù, lying on the ground;
then with an enraged gesture she seizes a lash
from one of the executioner's men beside her
and whips the face of the soldier who allowed
Liù to seize his dagger. The Prince is freed.
Then old Timur, as if out of his mind, rises.
He goes over to the little dead body, kneels
down and speaks.)*

TIMUR
Liù...Liù...get up!
It's the bright hour
for all awakening!
It's the dawn, my Liù..
Open your eyes, my dove!

*(Everyone feels pity and remorse. An
expression of torment passes over Turandot's
face. Ping notices it, and goes roughly
towards the old man to drive him away. But
as he nears Timur, his natural cruelty is
overcome, and the usual hardness of his
voice is softened.)*

PING
Get up, old man! She's dead!

TIMUR
Ah! horrible crime!
We will all pay for it!
The offended spirit will take revenge!

*(Then a superstitious terror seizes the crowd:
the fear that the dead girl will become an evil
spirit, because she was the victim of injustice,
and that she will change, as the popular*

belief has it, into a vampire. As two handmaidens cover Turandot's face with a white veil embroidered in silver, the crowd supplicates.)

THE CROWD

Grieving shade, don't harm us!
Scornful shade, forgive us!

(With religious pity, the little body is raised up amidst the profound respect of the crowd. The old man comes over, tenderly takes the dead girl's hand and walks along beside her.)

TIMUR

Liù...goodness!
Liù...sweetness!
Ah! we are walking together again,
This, your hand in mine!
I know well where you're going.
And I will follow you
to rest near you
in the night that has no morning.

PING

Ah! for the first time
I don't snicker at seeing Death!

PONG

That old machine
my heart, has wakened inside me
and is tormenting me!

PANG

That dead child weighs
on my heart like a stone!
(As the cortège goes off, the crowd speaks.)

THE CROWD

Liù...goodness...forgive!
Liù...Sweetness, sleep!
Forget! Liù...Poetic spirit!
(All have left. Only the Prince and Turandot remain.)

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

Princess of death!
Princess of ice!

Come down to earth
from your tragic heaven!
Ah! Raise that veil...
Look...look, cruel one,
at that purest blood
that was shed for you!
(He rushes to her and tears away her veil.)

TURANDOT

How do you dare, stranger!
I am not human...

I am the daughter of heaven...
free and pure.
You clasp my cold veil,
but my spirit is there, aloft!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

Your spirit is on high!
But your body is near.
With burning hands I'll clasp
the gold border of your starry cloak...
My trembling mouth
will be pressed on yours...

TURANDOT

Do not profane me!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

Ah! To feel you alive!

TURANDOT

Stand back!
Do not profane me!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

Your iciness is a lie!

TURANDOT

No, no one will ever possess me!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

I want you to be mine!

TURANDOT

My ancestress's torment
will not be repeated! Ah, no!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

I want you to be mine!

TURANDOT

Touch me not,
it is a sacrilege!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

No, your kiss gives me eternity!

TURANDOT

Sacrilege!

(And as he speaks, the Unknown Prince, filled with the sense of his right and with his passion, seizes Turandot in his arms and kisses her in a frenzy. Carried away, Turandot has no more resistance, no more strength, no more will power. This unbelievable contact has transfigured her. In a pleading, almost childish voice, she now murmurs:)

What has become of me?

I'm lost!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

My flower!

Oh, my morning flower!

My flower, I breathe you in!

Your lily breasts,

ah! they tremble against my chest!

Already I feel you faint with sweetness,

all white in your silver cloak!

VOICES WITHIN

Ah! Ah!

TURANDOT

How did you win?

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

You weep?

TURANDOT

It's the dawn! Dawn!

Turandot's sun has set!

VOICES WITHIN

Dawn! Light and Life!

Princess, all is pure!

All is holy!

What sweetness in your weeping!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

It's dawn! The dawn!

And Love is born with the sun!

TURANDOT

No one must see me...

My glory is ended!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

No! It has begun!

TURANDOT

I am ashamed!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

Miracle!

Your glory is radiant

in the magic of a first kiss,

of your first tears.

TURANDOT

My first tears...ah!

My first tears, yes,

stranger, when you arrived,

with anguish I felt

the fatal shudder of this great illness.

How many I've seen die for me!

And I scorned them;

but you, I feared!

In your eyes there was

the light of heroes!

In your eyes there was

haughty certainty...

And for that I hated you...

And I loved you for that,

tormented and torn

between two equal fears:

to defeat you or be defeated...

And I am defeated... Ah!

Defeated, not so much by the trial

as by his fever

that comes to me from you!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

You're mine! Mine!

TURANDOT

This, this is what you sought.
Now you know.
Don't seek a greater victory...
go, stranger...
with your mystery!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE

My mystery?
I no longer have one!
You are mine!
You who tremble if I touch you!
You who pale when I kiss you,
can destroy me if you will.
My name and my life
I give you together.
I am Calaf, son of Timur!

TURANDOT

I know your name!

CALAF

My glory is your embrace!

TURANDOT

Listen! The trumpets blare!

CALAF

My life is your kiss!

TURANDOT

Lo, the hour has come!
It's the hour of the trial!

CALAF

I do not fear it!

TURANDOT

Ah, Calaf! Come with me before the people!

CALAF

You have won!

Emperor is surrounded by his court, dignitaries, sages, and soldiers. At either side of the square, in a vast semi-circle, is the enormous, acclaiming crowd.)

THE CROWD

Ten thousand years to our Emperor!

(The three Ministers spread a golden mantle on the ground as Turandot goes up the stairs. Suddenly there is silence.)

TURANDOT

August father...I know the name
of the stranger!
His name is...Love!

(Calaf rushes up the steps. The two lovers are locked in an embrace.)

THE CROWD

Love!
O Sun! Life! Eternity!
Love is the light of the world!
Our infinite happiness
laughs and signs in the Sun!
Glory to you! Glory to you!

Curtain

Scene 2

Outside the Imperial Palace

(It is all white, of carved marble, over which the rosy reflections of dawn play like blooming flowers. At the top of a high stairway, in the center of the scene, the