TURANDOT
by Giacomo Puccini

Cast

PRINCESS TURANDOT (soprano)
THE EMPEROR ALTOUM, her father (tenor)
TIMUR, the deposed King of Tartary (bass)
THE UNKNOWN PRINCE (Calàf), 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 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?

LIÜ
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;
dead is one!
When the gong clanged, 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!

LIÚ
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?

PING
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 MINISTERS
Go away, chattering females!
(The maidens withdraw.)

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?

LIÛ (weeping, approaches the Prince)
My lord, listen, ah! Listen!
Liu 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!
Liu can bear it no more!
Ah, have pity!

THE UNKNOWN PRINCE
Don’t weep, Liu
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!

LIÛ
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 Liu, 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!

LIÛ
Overcome this horrible spell!

THE MINISTERS
Life is so beautiful!

TIMUR
Have pity on me!

LIÛ
Have pity on Liu
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,
wear 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!

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 trumpets blare. Silence. Turandot asks the first riddle.)
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 glistening 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
you 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!

TURANDOT
Princess of death!
Princess of ice!

TURANDOT
No, no one will ever possess me!

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!

**Scene 2**

*Outside the Imperial Palace*

*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!
Lobe is the light of the world!
Our infinite happiness
laughs and signs in the Sun!
Glory to you! Glory to you!

*Curtain*