

Rusalka

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ACT I

A lakeside glade surrounded by forests. By the lake's edge lives Ježibaba in her cottage. Moonlight. Rusalka is seated in an old willow tree that leans towards the lake. She is pensive.

(The curtain rises.)

(Wood Nymphs, hand in hand, move about downstage with a light dance step.)

THREE WOOD NYMPHS

Heiyaho.

Moonlight on the lake below!

CHORUS (offstage)

(echo)

Moonlight on the lake below!

WOOD NYMPHS

Silver moon her vigil keeping,
from the sky she's slyly peeping,
sees the Water Spirit sleeping,
heiyaho,

in his kingdom far below.

(they dance)

Heiyaha,

who comes stealing from afar?

Best be wary while you're sleeping,

thro' the waters she is peeping

like a burglar she'll come creeping.

Heiya, heiya,

thro' a window left ajar!

(dance)

Heiyahei.

She is watching from the sky!

CHORUS (offstage)

(echo)

(distant) From the sky!

WOOD NYMPHS

In the breeze the waves are breaking,

while below his ease he's taking.

Softly, softly, see him waking,

heiyahei.

Bubbles winking on the lake

tell us that he is awake,

heiyaho.

(The Water Spirit emerges, rubs his eyes, and watches the dance.)

WOOD NYMPHS

Spirit from the lake below.

(They sing this stanza even more frolicsomenly than the previous two, approaching the Water Spirit while still dancing lightly.)

Tell us quickly, do not tarry,

which of us you mean to marry,

under water, which you'll carry,

heiya, heiya,

which of us is it to be?

(They prance around the Water Spirit, who cannot leave the water, which is up to his waist.)

Heiyaha, heiyaha, ha! *(whoop!)*

WATER SPIRIT

(affably with apparent good humour)

I bid you welcome, you are welcome to my kingdom.

What? Do you find this place too dull for you?

Come, and I'll show you all the glorious treasures
that are hidden here within my realm.

(snatches at the Wood Nymphs, who evade him each time)

And if that would please you,

come a little nearer,

so you see it clearer,

so that I can seize you,

drag you down below!

(snatches at them)

WOOD NYMPHS

Water Spirit, naughty man,

try and catch us if you can.

Heiya, heiya, heiyahei.

(The Wood Nymphs withdraw from the lake while singing, still prancing and frolicking. Towards the end of the song, they laugh and run away.)

Catch me and I promise you

I will give a kiss to you,

if I kiss you, who can tell,

I may box your ears as well!

(laughter) Ha, ha, ha, ha,

if I kiss you, who can tell,

you may get a smack as well!

WATER SPIRIT

(shaking his fist good humouredly)

Crazy little creatures, goodness, they exhaust me.

Wildly racing, madly chasing.

Well, they're young and carefree.

(Rusalka, who has been sitting in the lakeside willow from the start, calls pensively to the Water Spirit.)

RUSALKA

(pensively) Father dear, please wait for me.

(The Water Spirit, not having noticed her before, turns in surprise and asks merrily.)

WATER SPIRIT

Goodness you surprised me.
Out here in the moonlight?
It is long past bedtime.

(Rusalka's tone is woeful and lovesick; the Water Spirit asks gently at first, but becomes animated when he hears that Rusalka loves a human.)

RUSALKA

Father dear, I beg of you,
don't send me away.
Won't you let me stay with you,
I am so unhappy!

WATER SPIRIT

Why so unhappy?

RUSALKA

Let me talk to you!

WATER SPIRIT

My child, I'm listening.

RUSALKA

But I can't explain.

WATER SPIRIT

Aren't you happy playing here?
Living life without a care?

RUSALKA

Free me from the darkness, hateful and unseeing,
I long for *(fervently)* light, I long to be a human.

WATER SPIRIT

I can't believe you, are you teasing me?
(as though bemused) You would be human,
(with full voice) would seek mortality?

RUSALKA

You have told us such wondrous stories,
that men have souls, souls denied to us,
and how their souls up to the heavens fly
while their bodies vanish into nothingness,
(whisper) nothing.

WATER SPIRIT

By the holy waters that bore you,
shun these humans, shun them,
know that their souls are sinful...

RUSALKA

(fervently) ... and full of love!

WATER SPIRIT

(alarmed) What is love to you,
you never have seen mortal men before.

RUSALKA

(longingly and fervently)
Often he comes here
and he swims where the stream's flowing;
naked and innocent
he lies in my arms unknowing.
For I'm invisible,
I'm just a wave to him;
he'd be aware of me
if only I were human,
(with passion) and then he'd care for me,
and know me as a woman,
he'd take me in his arms
to hold and to caress me,
he'd take me in his arms
to kiss me and possess me.

WATER SPIRIT

Daughter, daughter, think of the rest of us,
of your sisters weeping as they lose you.
There'll be nothing left of you
once the man discovers how to use you.

RUSALKA

(plaintively)
If you love me, if you care,
help me make him see me.
Use your power, father,
and cast a spell to free me.

WATER SPIRIT

(in despair)
Lost to us, lost to us for evermore.
Abandoned, abandoned to humankind!
(bitterly, with trembling voice)
What's the use keeping you here with us.
Ježibaba the forest witch,
she will teach you human sorrow.
(almost in tears) Sorrow! *(sinking)* Sorrow! Sorrow!
(disappears beneath the water)

(Rusalka sings, gazing at the moon, which now illuminates the landscape. It is a beautiful summer's night.)

RUSALKA

Glistening moon in the velvet sky
watching the world as it's sleeping,
floating above, you shimmer by,
into men's homes slyly peeping.
O moon, please stay here, stay with me.

Where can I find the one I love?
Tell him, O moon, with your silver beam,
say to him when you have found him,
I can be more than a fleeting dream,
wrapped in my love I'll surround him.
Tell him, oh silvery moon far away,
tell him, oh tell him I am here waiting.
If by chance he should dream of me,
let my form fix in his mem'ry.
Moonlight, please stay with me,
oh moon, please stay with me.
(The moon disappears behind clouds.)
The water's icy, icy.
Ježibaba! Ježibaba!

(A fire is lit in Ježibaba's hut.)

WATER SPIRIT
(deep beneath the water, very distant)
She will teach Rusalka sorrow! Sorrow.

RUSALKA
(plaintively) Ježibaba! Ježibaba!

(Ježibaba comes out of her hut to the right and peers round.)

JEŽIBABA
Creeping, weeping, without warning,
waking me ere day is dawning.

RUSALKA
Ježibaba, Ježibaba,
free me from my wat'ry prison.

JEŽIBABA
Something's creeping, something's weeping,
show yourself – who is it? Speak up!

RUSALKA
Rusalka, 'tis I who call you,
come and help me, pray show me pity.

JEŽIBABA
Quickly, quickly, let me see you,
out you come now, come my pretty!

RUSALKA
How can I come? I am trapped here
by the magic of the water.

JEŽIBABA
Out you come and hurry, hurry,
I will help you, don't you worry.
(gently) Water, from your magic free her,
let her go so I can see her!

(Rusalka alights from the willow and walks falteringly to the right.)

JEŽIBABA
(as if casting a spell)
Little feet carry her, on the land ferry her.
Steady, it isn't far. One more step, there we are.

RUSALKA
(plaintively) Ježibaba, help me!
(Rusalka falls exhausted at Ježibaba's feet.)
Your age-old wisdom sees over all,
all nature's secrets you hold in thrall.
The hearts of humankind you can see through.
Their hopes and fears are known to you.
The magic potions you brew by moonlight
grant you the power to heal, the power to blight,
pow'r of destruction, pow'r of creation,
pow'r over death itself, pow'r of damnation,
man into monster, monster to man again,
all by your magic spells are transformed as you ordain.
Even the water sprites tremble before you,
just as mere mortals worship and adore you.
To all you represent dreams and reality,
you are illusion, you are mortality.
You, to whom all creation must bow,
help me now. Show me your magic.

JEŽIBABA
(with a wicked laugh)
That is so, that is so,
true enough and I should know!
Tell me though, tell me true,
ere I hasten to my brew;
you are young, pearls to spare,
if I help you, what's my share?

RUSALKA
All I have and more.
(resolved) Make me a woman, I implore!

JEŽIBABA
(mocking) Is that all? Nothing more?
Is that all you're whining for?
(with humour, but still sarcastically)
So the Water Spirit's daughter
is no more content with water,
longs for loving, longs for kisses,
seeks the fleshly joys she misses,
that I know, that I know,
all the world would have it so!

RUSALKA
(plaintively)
You who have the pow'r of healing,
grant me human features, human feeling.

JEŽIBABA
(in a terrible, enigmatic tone)
P'haps I will,

with my dev'lish skill!
But before I show the way,
pay good heed to what I say.
If on earth you find no man
with love to give,
you'll return to water,
deep beneath the lake condemned to live.
If you are betrayed by human love up yonder,
you will be an outcast ever more to wander;
furthermore, I warn you ere you make your choice,
that tho' a human, you'll have no human voice,
but dumb you'll be, dumb,
dumb to him, your beloved one.

RUSALKA

To win his love I'll pay the price,
gladly will I make the sacrifice!

JEŽIBABA

Cherish him well,
there's more to tell.
If he fails and condemns you 'neath the water to dwell,
(with ever more relish)
he will be cursed and share your fate as well,
suffering for his perfidy
damnation for eternity.

RUSALKA

As my soul will be my salvation,
so my love will save him from damnation.

JEŽIBABA

Now you know what's at stake,
there's a potion I must make.
Double, double, toil and trouble,
fire burn and cauldron bubble.
Once a woman you've become,
dumb you'll be, always you'll be dumb! *(squeal)*

(Ježibaba leads Rusalka into her hut. Pause. The stage is clear.)

*(They enter the hut, and the window glows red afresh.
A cloud of sparks shoots up the chimney.)*

JEŽIBABA

(The cauldron is heard to hiss.)
Hocus pocus one, hocus pocus two,
round the pot there's work to do!

(The Wood Nymphs, hearing noise from the hut, come running out of the forest during the song and peep sideways into the hut.)

JEŽIBABA

Dragon's blood is heating,
and a snakeskin sliwer,
sparrow's heart still beating
and a spider's liver.

Come, my cat, come skip and hop,
stir the brew and taste a drop!
(The cauldron is heard to hiss.)
Hocus pocus three, hocus pocus four,
ponder well what lies in store.
If you drink it bravely,
you will be a woman,
but from then you will be
dumb to ev'ry human.
Come, my cat, come hop and skip,
bear the potion to her lip!
Hocus pocus five, hocus pocus six,
drink the magic brew your tongue to fix!

(The violent hissing in the hut slowly abates. The sky begins to clear, hunting horns sound afar. Dawn glows red above the lake.)

(The Wood Nymphs depart.)

(The hissing stops.)

WATER SPIRIT

(deep in the water)
She has taught Rusalka sorrow.

*(Hunting horns resound offstage.)
(sunrise)*

HUNTSMAN

(offstage)
See through the wood the hunter ride,
foll'wing the milk white deer he spied.
Shyly her glances call to him,
will she as victim fall to him?
Hunter, ride on and do not stay,
far from the forest haste away.
Lest some misfortune befall you,
heed not the eyes that call to you.

(Hunting horns call again.)

(The Prince, crossbow in hand, runs out downstage from the forest to the left and peers around.)

PRINCE

She led me here and then she disappeared!
Hither and thither, evermore onward,
white as milk with the darkness around her,
but here beside the lake no trace of her.
Oh why does she lead me here ev'ry day,
to where the cool of the water beckons me
as though enticing me to its edge
and to plunge into its mystery.
How tired I feel. My footsteps falter,
the weight of my weapon oppresses me.
I am sick of hunting, even from the start.
What deep enchantment comes to haunt my heart?

(The huntsmen approach, this song is heard ever closer.)

HUNTSMAN

Hunter, that is no mortal deer,
God guard your soul if she be near.
Hunter, why is your heart bleeding?
Where did you send your arrow speeding?

(Several huntsmen enter from the forest.)

PRINCE

The hunt is over, to the castle go.
Magic and myst'ry haunt the woods today.
This magic fills my heart with fear;
be off home with you, and leave me here!

(The huntsmen exit.)

(The Prince sits down on the lake's edge.)

(Rusalka comes out of the hut, barefoot, in the pale dress of a poor child. Her wondrous golden hair flows deep down her back. She is mute.)

(As he looks up, the Prince notices Rusalka standing before him.)

PRINCE

(jumps up)

Beautiful vision fair to see,
by what enchantment are you sent to me?
Are you my milk white deer's defender,
you who outshine her far in splendour?
Have you come here to save her
from those who would enslave her?
Or as the prize of the hunter's chase,
do you yourself intend to take her place?

(Rusalka stretches her arms towards him in silence, unable to speak.)

PRINCE

What is the secret in your heart,
say by what spell your lips are sealed?
God be my witness this magic art
freely to my kisses will yield.
Then you will speak to me, say what has brought you
here,
luring me onward thro' secret ways, thro' forests,
until I find you here, beautiful as the day,
silently telling me all your lips cannot say.
Yet thro' your eyes, I ask of you.
Say could you love me, tell me true!

(Rusalka falls into his arms.)

CHORUS

(chorus of water nymphs under the water)

Sisters! One of us has not come home.

(Rusalka, startled, pulls herself together and listens.)

CHORUS

Rusalka, sister, say, where do you roam?

(Rusalka trembles, hesitating and timid.)

WATER SPIRIT

(beneath the water)

Lost to us, stolen, abandoned!

CHORUS

(The water nymphs' cries are heard from multiple sides.)

Rusalka, Rusalka, come home.

(more voices) Stolen!

(very distant) Where, oh where? Where are you?

(Rusalka, terrified, cowers in the Prince's arms.)

PRINCE

Though but a vision that will leave me
and with the mists of morning fade,
until that moment stay with me
and here at my side be not afraid.
The hunt is done, before my eyes
I find at last the fairest prize.
Oh golden star shining above me,
come down to earth and love me.

(Having enfolded Rusalka in his cloak, the Prince leads her into the forest.)

ACT II

An orchard in the castle. Upstage a terrace with pillars and a ballroom. Downstage a pond overshadowed by old trees. It is afternoon, getting on towards evening and then night. The ballroom is noisy, with occasional dancing.

(The curtain rises.)

(Enter the Kitchen Boy and the Gamekeeper from the side.)

GAMEKEEPER

Quickly, quickly, just a word
to keep me up with all you've heard.
For this unexpected party
something special must have occurred.
What can be the reason
for entertaining out of season?
Such a crowd has come to call.
There's chaos in the servants' hall.
People, when they come to call,
cause chaos in the servants' hall.

KITCHEN BOY

(smiling naively)

Not a word of warning,
up since five this morning,

drawing chickens, gutting fishes,
scouring pans and dirty dishes.
Since the day I came here,
never been the same here,
and without a word of warning,
we've been up since five this morning.
(surprised) And the reason for this frenzy,
have you heard what they are saying?
(mysteriously) Our Prince has met a creature
out in the countryside,
and means, would you believe,
to make her his bride!
In those woods you know so well,
there he fell beneath her spell.
No-one knows who she may be,
but I know she frightens me!
(mysteriously) Not a word she's spoken,
seems her tongue is frozen,
wanders round as *(shouts)* if in a haze.
What a wife with whom to wish to spend your days.

GAMEKEEPER

All these rumours, all of them are true then,
true and no mistaking.
Must say I don't like it,
rash the step he's taking,
makes me feel uneasy,
dubious and queasy.
To a forest ranger
(pompously) watching while he's working,
woodland folk spell danger:
magic may be lurking!
(The Gamekeeper speaks ever more mysteriously.)
At the midnight hour
many'a ghou and fairy
exercise their power
over the unwary.
Witches lie in wait to meet you,
slice you up and roast and eat you;
if too near the lake you wander,
water spirits drag you under.
You can see, there, that is certain,
nymphs without a blouse or skirt on,
woe to those whom they enthrall.
Heaven save us from them all!

KITCHEN BOY

(terrified)
Heavens! I'm so frightened!

GAMEKEEPER

Rightly, I should say.
May the Good Lord
guard your soul from such as they,
guard our souls from such as they!

KITCHEN BOY

Our Prince once so full of cheer,
how he's changed since she's been here.
Wand'ring like a soul in torment,
numbed by some mysterious pain,
ev'ry day we offer prayers
just to make him well again.
Parson warned him of the danger
if he wed this woodland stranger,
but the Prince turned and cried:
"She will stay and be my bride!"

GAMEKEEPER

For a wedding, that is clear,
all these guests are gathered here:
That is why since they came,
(abruptly) I've been slaught'ring all this game!

KITCHEN BOY

Yet if we are wary
all will not be lost,
as this scheming fairy
may discover to her cost!
For you know as well as I,
princes have a roving eye.
They do say his thoughts are straying,
he'll forget his ties to her.
There's a foreign princess staying
and he's making eyes at her.

GAMEKEEPER

(warmly)
Saints be praised, all is well,
she will save his soul from hell!
As for her, this apparition,
I would treat her with suspicion,
and lest she cause more distress,
send her packing, sorceress.

KITCHEN BOY

(alarmed)
Look! I can see them coming through the hall!
(flees)

GAMEKEEPER

Ha, ministers of grace defend us all!
(flees in other direction)

*(The stage is empty for a moment. Then enter the Prince with Rusalka, who is festively attired but still sad and pale.)
(Enter the Prince with Rusalka.)*

PRINCE

For seven days you've dwelt with me,
and still a dream you seem to be,
in vain I gaze thro' your eyes to see
the secret of your mystery!

Once we are married will you give
the love that's still denied me,
as woman will you then start to live
with passion melting beside me?
Why *(plaintively)* are you still so cold to me,
(animatedly) why tremble when I'm near you?
And though I hold you close to me,
say, why do I still fear you?
(ever more fervently)
In vain, in vain, these fears that trouble me,
from your enchantment ne'er will I be free,
and tho' your body be cold as ice to me,

(During his last words, the Duchess enters upstage; she watches the Prince with angry resentment.)

PRINCE
I must possess you utterly,
and tho' you start to tremble, shrink from me,
I must possess you utterly.

DUCHESS
(passionately)
No! How can I love him, he who humbles my pride,
takes in my place, this stranger for his bride?
My love is swallowed up in jealousy,
in vengeance, I'll destroy them utterly.
(approaches downstage)
Forgive me, Prince, if I presume to say,
that you neglect the guests who've come today.
(seductively) Or from a distance must we contemplate,
silently envy one so fortunate?
(stands between the Prince and Rusalka)

(The Prince is excited upon seeing the Duchess.)

PRINCE
(embarrassed)
Forgive me if I fail in my duty,
if I forget the laws of courtly observance;
although the bridegroom, fairest beauty,
I am the lowliest of your servants.

DUCHESS
(snidely, glancing at Rusalka)
This charming lady whom you bring to meet us,
why is she silent, not a word to greet us?

(Rusalka looks at the Duchess with anger and pain.)

DUCHESS
(scathingly)
Can she be so shy that she still prefers
to do her talking through those lovely eyes of hers?

PRINCE
(embarrassed)
Those lovely eyes of hers have made me forget
all that a gentle host should owe to you,
a host who begs forgiveness, respectfully,
and will return if you permit him to.
(holds out his hand to the Duchess)
(brusquely to Rusalka)
Say why are you trembling? And why the fevered glances?
Go, go to your room now, get ready for the dance.
(leads the Duchess away)

DUCHESS
(exiting, to Rusalka)
(with a triumphant sneer)
Yes, and be sure to choose your prettiest dress;
his heart is yours, mine his hand and courtesy.

(Rusalka is alone, gazing after them in shock.)
(Rusalka starts out after them in despair, as if wanting to stop the Prince, but then she exits sad and broken through the terrace alone.)
(Rusalka exits sad and broken through the terrace. The sun is setting, dusk falls, and later the moon appears.)
(dusk falls)
(the moon appears)

Ceremonial Music

(Lights are lit.)
(The guests promenade and form groups. Much activity in the hall.)
(The Water Spirit rises from the pond and gazes into the hall.)

WATER SPIRIT
Sorrow!
Caught in toils of human sorrow,
sacrificed to their perfidy!
Sorrow!
(with sadness)
Seek not from humans, my daughter,
love that was yours beneath the water.
Hark to the waters calling you,
mourning the fate befalling you.
For all the promises he swore
you will not keep him for evermore!
(in despair)
Caught in toils of human sorrow.
Sacrificed, cheated and deceived!
Water at last will receive you,
gently a web of oblivion weave you.
Water your living grave will be,
cradle you for eternity.
Scorned and rejected by the earth,
cursed by the water that gave you birth.
Caught in toils of human sorrow,
sacrificed to their perfidy.

CHORUS

White are the roses by the way,
brightly the sunshine beating,
handsome the boy who rides this way,
fair is the bride he's meeting.
Hasten away and do not wait,
ride to the bridal bower,
when you have reached a man's estate,
roses of red will flower.
Roses of white so soon are dead,
fade in the heat of morning.
Soon you will find a bridal bed,
roses of red adorning.

WATER SPIRIT

They have taught Rusalka sorrow,
trapped her with human perfidy.
(with pained expression) Sorrow!
(with full voice)
Garlands of lilies for the dead,
crowning your head in mourning,
never to find a bridal bed,
roses of red adorning.

*(Rusalka runs out of the ballroom into the orchard in despair;
confused, not knowing where to go, she rushes to the pond.)*

WATER SPIRIT

(surprised) Rusalka, do you know me still!

*(Rusalka struggles to speak, unable at first, and then
suddenly cries out.)*

RUSALKA

(suddenly cries out) Father, oh father, please help me!

WATER SPIRIT

Have I then sought you here on earth,
to find you shaking with terror?

RUSALKA

(in despair) Father, please save me, save your child.
(plaintively) Save me from all that I have learned here.
Why did I choose to betray my birth?
Why did I seek human sorrow.
Sorrow!
(plaintively) Another's charms have captured him,
captured by human beauty,
to him I'm nothing, nothing now.
Rusalka is forgotten!

WATER SPIRIT

Could he forget you, who loved you so?
You must try to win him back again.

RUSALKA

I cannot! *(despairingly, without hope)* I have not the will,
my heart is empty and resigned,
my beauty useless, cold as ice.
I stand apart from humankind.
I have not the will.
I am nothing, nothing now,
Rusalka is forgotten.
Her glances speak to him of passion,
of passion from the world above,
but in the water where I was born
I never, never learned to love.
Cursed by the water, cast out by humankind,
caught between water and the earth am I,
no longer living, yet cannot die!
(kneels down by the pond)

*(The Prince in a state of excitement enters from the ballroom
with the Duchess.)*

RUSALKA

(distressed, aside) Oh see them, see them. They are here.
Oh father help me please! *(crying out)* Help your child!

DUCHESS

Your eyes are filled with thoughts unspoken.
The warmth of your glances troubles me.
You grow so amorous yet so tender.
Oh, Prince, what do you want of me?
Your bride to be, where can she have gone,
who has no name and still no word to say.
Where is she when she ought to see
her Prince is not the same today?

PRINCE

Where is she? *(ruminates)* Only God can tell.
But it is you who come to change me.
This summer night has cast a spell
that quickens my heart so strangely,
that stirs my heart so strangely!
(with growing passion)
Her love was but a whim to me,
to while away a passing hour.
A blazing sun has set me free
from the moonlight's icy power!

DUCHESS

And if I set your heart on fire,
with all the warmth of love consume you,
remember I soon must leave you,
will then the moon assuage your desire?
Held in the icy embraces
of your speechless beauty, what will you do?
Can she fire your heart with passion?
How sad, how sad a fate for you!

PRINCE

What if the whole wide world
condemn me, I'll not hear it.
Oh blood red rose of love,
you shall be mine, I swear it.
For now at last I see
why I was slowly dying.
For warmth of human love
my stricken heart was sighing.
From her who did bewitch me
I am forever free,
and in my freedom cherish
the love (*suddenly embraces the Duchess*) you have for me!

DUCHESS

Were I to choose he could be mine,
by fear and doubt his soul is riven;
this bridegroom still cannot decide
to which of us his heart is given!

(Rusalka suddenly tears herself from the Water Spirit and, with a desperate dash, throws herself into the Prince's arms.)

PRINCE

(horror struck) Your arms are cold, as cold as ice,
your lifeless beauty frightens me!
(pushes Rusalka away)

(The Water Spirit rises above the pond in full moonlight and cries in a terrible voice.)

WATER SPIRIT

(in a terrible voice)
Go to your new love while you may,
Rusalka's arms you will never escape.

(Rusalka staggers towards the pond.)
(The Water Spirit grasps Rusalka and drags her into the depth of the pond.)

PRINCE

(dazed and utterly confused)
Powers of darkness threaten me,
rescue me, rescue me, rescue me.

(He throws himself at the Duchess's feet and drops to the ground unconscious.)

DUCHESS

(with wild laughter)
Down to the bitter darkness of hell,
there with your loved one ever to dwell!
(exits)

ACT III

A lakeside glade as in Act I. Evening, the sky is cloudy; later red sunset; finally bright moonlight. Rusalka is seated above the lake as at the opening of Act I. She is all pale. Her hair is ashen, her eyes extinguished.

(The curtain rises.)

RUSALKA

(painfully) Pitiless power, cruel water,
drawn to your depths once more am I,
here in the darkness, say, oh say,
why can't I die, why can't I die?
Am I to live life without end,
young no more, yet not grown old,
only for loving am I condemned
to dwell in the water's icy cold?
Faded my beauty, lost forever,
he whom I love curses me,
longing vainly for my sisters,
longing for humanity.
Lost the peace of summer evenings
there among the lilies.
Here in darkness say, oh say,
why can't I die, why can't I die?
Ah, pitiless power, cruel water,
drawn to your depths once more am I,
in the darkness here I long to end my life,
here I long to die!

(Ježibaba comes out of her hut.)

JEŽIBABA

Well, well, have you come back here so soon?
Brief was your earthly honeymoon!
Your cheeks are pale, your eyes red,
the picture of an unwanted wife.
Did kisses fail to melt your heart
and marriage bed not warm you to life?

RUSALKA

Have mercy, for he has deserted me:
I have been betrayed, and all is lost to me.

JEŽIBABA

Short and sweet your earthly pleasure,
now you must repent at leisure.
Those who feast on love alone
with much fasting must atone.
Humans are humans, man is steeped in sin,
disowned by nature for his infamy,
woe be to you who sought to win his love,
for he has damned you for eternity!

RUSALKA

In your own wisdom, hear my heartfelt plea.
Is there then nothing left for me?

JEŽIBABA

Now that he's forgotten ev'rything he swore
for Ježibaba's help you beg once more.
Having tasted pleasure in the world above,
would you now rejoin the sisters whom you love?
If that's all you long for, here is my advice,
it is easily done if you pay the price!
Human blood alone will cleanse the curse
that nature laid on you
for love that you bore a human
who was false to you,
and restore the childlike beauty
that your lover dared to desecrate,
just a drop of human blood
will save you from your fate.
Once more happy with your sisters,
all your sorrows you will shed,
if you strike with your own hand
the traitor who abandoned you,
if you strike with your own hand
the traitor, strike him dead!

RUSALKA

Ježibaba, mercy, I beg you.

JEŽIBABA

(passes her a knife from her bosom)
Here is the knife, now swear obedience!

RUSALKA

You are a monster, let me go!
(throws the knife into the lake)
I'd *(painfully)* rather sorrow evermore,
I'd rather suffer living death!
Though he betrayed my love for him,
my fate I will gladly fulfil,
but he must be happy still!

(Ježibaba starts cackling.)

JEŽIBABA

You who sought to live among men
out of childish vanity,
did you really learn nothing
of the ways of humanity?
Man has ever been a predator,
his hands are red with blood of others,
man only reaches maturity
when he has murdered his brothers.
You would aspire to be a man's wife,
but you won't shed blood to save your life?
Cold as the waters where you were born,
pale, good for nothing, object of scorn,

go, live for all eternity,
a dried up, frigid human mockery.
(hobbles into her hut)

RUSALKA

(painfully) Farewell to life and light,
now I greet eternal night.
(despairingly) All alone in the dark grieving in vain,
(warmly) my darling, *(ever more warmly)* never more,
never more shall we meet again.
Oh sorrow, sorrow, evermore.

(Rusalka sinks into the lake.)

CHORUS

(chorus of water nymphs under the water)
You forsook the games we played,
chose to roam the world above,
now on you a curse is laid,
you have lost our love!
Those who mortal man have known
in our dances have no place,
you will always play alone,
banished from our race.
With your sadness fear descends,
driving pleasure far away.
You must seek out other friends,
at the close of day.
Luring humans with your glow,
at the crossroads lift the gloom,
as your light sways to and fro,
lead them to their doom!
By the tombstones make your home,
always for your sisters yearn,
to the waters whence you roamed,
never dare to return!

GAMEKEEPER

(bringing the Kitchen Boy)
Still so frightened? Are you really?
Hurry up, for time is short.
Ring the bell and speak out clearly,
and remember what you've been taught.
That our Prince's health is failing,
that our cures are unavailing,
that the creature which he harboured
has cast a spell on him.
So we've come to ask advice of Ježibaba,
to implore her help for him.

KITCHEN BOY

(backing away)
(nervously) As I am so frightened,
I might lose my head,
you are so much older,
won't you go instead?

GAMEKEEPER

Many times I've come here on my own,
even at the dead of night.
She's a wizened harmless crone,
and there's no need to take fright.

KITCHEN BOY

Only yesterday you said
things that filled my heart with dread,
(fearfully) little wonder I'm so nervous,
from witches may the saints preserve us,
little wonder I'm afraid!

GAMEKEEPER

Only talk, only talk,
even I exaggerate.
Have no fear, I am here,
come, before it is too late.
Ring the bell, don't delay,
find out what she has to say.

KITCHEN BOY

Now I've clean forgotten
what I have to ask,
don't think that I'm equal
to the fearful task!

GAMEKEEPER

If I were your father
I'd make sure you obeyed.
So I'll have to show you
that I'm not afraid.
Ježibaba! Hello? Hello?

(Ježibaba comes out of her hut.)

JEŽIBABA

(in a terrible voice)
Who disturbs me? What a racket!

(The Kitchen Boy hides behind the Gamekeeper.)

GAMEKEEPER

(talking) We've been sent to ask advice of you,
if you helped it would be nice of you!

JEŽIBABA

For my wisdom how will you reward me?
Is this *(touches the Kitchen Boy)* all the gentry can afford me?
Not a lot of flesh on which to sup,
he will take a week to fatten up.

KITCHEN BOY

(desperately defending himself)
Heavens! Heavens! Come and rescue me!
Quickly, quickly, she wants me for her tea!

JEŽIBABA

(laughing) Ha, ha, ha, ha!
Not a nice suggestion,
there's no meat on you.
I'd get indigestion
when I'd eaten you.
Never had much taste for children of your kind;
tell me what you've come for, what is on your mind?

(The Kitchen Boy is frightened.)

KITCHEN BOY

Our young Prince is wasting under a spell,
ever since his heart was stolen by her, that demon from hell.
In the woods he found her all alone,
fell in love at once with her and brought her home.
Planned to wed her, nothing could dissuade him.
But upon their wedding day the fiend betrayed him.
Once she'd cast her spell, as we all feared,
this mysterious creature simply disappeared,
all of us are caught in her web of evil,
tho' the fiend herself has vanished, taken by the devil!

(The Water Spirit suddenly rises from the lake.)

WATER SPIRIT

Why did she vanish, and whom did she betray?
The man who sent you, he is the traitor,
you human vermin,
your Prince betrayed her and laid his curse on her.

GAMEKEEPER

(flees in haste)
Water Sprite! Water Sprite!

KITCHEN BOY

(following suit)
Heavens! Heavens! Heaven protect us!

WATER SPIRIT

(in a terrible voice)
I will have vengeance on all humanity!

JEŽIBABA

(laughing) Ha, ha, ha, ha!

(Ježibaba hobbles into the hut.)

(The sunset fades meanwhile, it grows dark, soon the moon rises. Wood Nymphs gather swiftly in the glade.)
(The Wood Nymphs come forward.)

1ST WOOD NYMPH

Mine, golden hair is mine.
Glow-worms dance around it at the close of day.
Now my hands untie it, let my tresses fall free,
see the moon caress it with her silver rays.

2ND WOOD NYMPH

Mine, snow white feet are mine,
dancing thro' the forest, wheresoe'er I choose,
bathed in dew of morning when the day is dawning,
see how in the moonlight I have silver shoes!

3RD WOOD NYMPH

Mine, milk white breasts are mine,
gleaming in the moonbeams as I greet the night.
And where'er I wonder in the silent forest
I am dressed in silver by the pale moonlight.

WOOD NYMPHS

Dance with me, sisters, come dance with me,
dance in the evening breezes.
(merrily) Now is the hour when the Water Sprite
calls from the shore to greet us.
(seeing the Water Spirit)
There he is, there he is.
There he is in wait for us.
(dancing round him)
Water Spirit, naughty man,
try and catch us if you can,
catch me and I promise you,
I will give a kiss to you,
Water Spirit, heiyahei,
try and catch us if you can!
(dancing round the Water Spirit)

WATER SPIRIT

(sadly) Dance no more my daughters,
never dance again.
For our holy waters
are despoiled by mortal men.

WOOD NYMPHS

Never more dance here, do tell us why.
Tell us why, please Water Spirit, tell us why.

WATER SPIRIT

Beneath the icy waters,
scorned by the sisters she loves,
all alone Rusalka suffers
sorrow, oh sorrow, oh sorrow!

(He sinks beneath the water. The moon passes behind clouds.)

1ST WOOD NYMPH

Tears unbidden fill my eyes,
in the chill of morning.

2ND WOOD NYMPH

See the moon high in the sky,
hiding her face in morning.

3RD WOOD NYMPH

There is nothing more to say,
sisters, sisters, come away.
(they disperse)

(The Prince runs out from the forest, distraught, calling plaintively in all directions.)

PRINCE

(calling plaintively)
Milk white deer, where are you? Milk white deer,
where are you?
My vision, silent fantasy.
To my ceaseless longing, to my endless searching,
is there never to be an end?
Day after day I roam in vain,
restlessly searching thro' the woods,
always at dusk I feel you are near,
silently by moonlight waiting here;
oh hide no longer, end my pain,
(as though calling) my vision, come, oh come again!
(he stops)

(The Prince stops. He recognises the landscape from Act I. He slowly comes to his senses.)

PRINCE

Here I first saw her; tell me silent forest,
is she here waiting, is she still here?
Milk white deer, where are you? Appear.
How can a soul in torment tell
if it be heaven, if it be hell,
angels or demons who guard you?
Speak to me, speak, where are you?
Speak to my heart.

(Rusalka appears in the moonlight above the lake.)

RUSALKA

My love, you know me still?
(fervently) My darling, do you still remember?

PRINCE

(amazed)
If you are dead then kill me too,
if you're alive then rescue me.

RUSALKA

Sentenced to wander ever in darkness,
caught between life and death am I.
Vainly remember, mourn you and miss you,
long for the love you swore was true.
Now if I love you, hold you and kiss you,
I will bring only death to you!

PRINCE

(passionately) Without your love I will not live...
(kindly) O gentle heart, will you forgive?

RUSALKA

Why did you have to lie to me,
why swear your love was true?
Betrayed by you, a ghost you see,
a mem'ry evermore accusing you!
Now I am just a flick'ring light,
by treachery condemned
to hover here at dead of night,
to be the death of you!
You wanted passion, now I know,
that was not mine to give.
If I were to kiss you now,
I'd lose you,
if I were now to kiss you,
you'd be lost for evermore.

PRINCE

Kiss me, oh kiss me, set me free.
Life on this earth has nothing for me,
grant me oblivion, come and kiss me!

RUSALKA

You who once offered me ev'rything,
you who were false when I loved you so,
do you know, dear one, do you know
from my kiss there is no return,
beloved, these lips must spell death for you?

PRINCE

Let me perish, let me end my life,
kiss me, oh kiss away the past,
I seek release from life on earth,

kiss me, release my *(no shouting!)* suff'ring heart,
I seek release from life on earth,
kiss me, oh kiss me and grant me peace.

RUSALKA

In my arms your life will ebb away,
come to your final resting place,
welcome your death in my embrace!
(embraces and kisses him)

PRINCE

(fainting)
Kiss me, oh kiss me, set me free!
(with ever weaker voice, as if only speaking)
You have redeemed me, washed my sins away,
I die contented, I die in peace thro' your love for me!
(dies)

WATER SPIRIT

(from beneath the lake, mournfully)
Vain is this mortal sacrifice.
Still must his victim pay the price.
Endless is Rusalka's sorrow!
Sorrow!

(Rusalka kisses the Prince for the last time.)

RUSALKA

For your passion for the love we shared,
tho' it lasted only fleetingly
since my fate is cruelly bound to yours,
mortal soul, may God be merciful,
may he pardon you.

(Rusalka sinks into the lake.)