

SCENE 1

Scrim/traveler is drawn to reveal the Roman opera set in the center that includes an enchanting garden of cypresses; a waterfall gushes forth in the center which runs into a brook. On stage right is a tomb with several steps leading down.

Surrounding the opera set is a Steampunk stage with early 19th century theatre paraphernalia; i.e. columns of candles, footlights, wrought iron floor candles. A “harmonium” with candelabrum is down stage left with its keyboard upstage. A free-standing coat rack and props table are upstage right.

CARL and JOHANNA enter. Johanna carries handbasket with little dog.

JOHANNA

So if I understand correctly your brother writes the music and you do his bookkeeping?

CARL

(offended)

I handle his business affairs.

JOHANNA

(looks to dog)

That’s a little vague. Boo-Boo wants to know if you pay rent?

CARL

I work for my keep.

JOHANNA listens to dog.

JOHANNA

(shocked)

What’s that? Boo-Boo tells me Carl van Beethoven is squatting in a theatre.

CARL

Inform Johanna I am not a squatter. I am the glue keeping this operation together.

JOHANNA

Do you sleep on a cot in the back of a theater?

CARL

I reside at the housing unit next door. That's where Ludwig is.

JOHANNA

I see.

CARL

Quickly, before anyone arrives.

JOHANNA

What, now?

CARL

You promised.

They pull out folded pieces of paper and read while mimicking operatic singing and gestures.

JOHANNA

This is so stupid. Fine!

(sung)

*Mars, you've tricked young Venus,
too curious for her own good,
Unto a gossamer of falsehood..*

(spoken)

Gossamer?

CARL

(spoken)

Web of lies.

(sung)

*Venus, for this puppy's heart.
You gave of your free will.
Unveil to me your maiden parts.
A debt you must fulfill.*

JOHANNA

(spoken)

But what if someone should walk in?

CARL

(sung extempore)

*The longer you delay;
The likelier someone may.*

JOHANNA

*Caught in a lace filament
Of bronze; firm and intricate!*

CARL points to raised platform.

CARL

*Rise yonder sweet virginity
And forthwith bare them unto me!*

JOHANNA hands CARL handbasket.

JOHANNA

*You're a potent and handsome deity
Charming, clever but very naughty.*

CARL

*Naughty perhaps but never boringly
Upon your gifts I gaze adoringly.*

JOHANNA

*I am vanquished, now you'll see
The ankle revealed daintily.*

JOHANNA on raised platform lifts dress and
petticoat to expose a single ankle and knee.

CARL applauds.

CARL

Brava! Bravissima!

JOHANNA gives a theatrical curtsey.

JOHANNA

And with that I have upheld my end of our bargain.

