

ACT II
IN THE LATIN QUARTER
CHRISTMAS EVE

A conflux of streets; where they meet, a square, flanked by shops of all sorts; on one side the Café Momus.

Aloof from the crowd, RUDOLPH and MIMI; COLLINE is near a rag-shop, SCHAUNARD stands outside a tinker's, buying a pipe and a horn, MARCEL is being hustled hither and thither.

A vast, motley crowd; soldiers, serving maids, boys, girls, children, students, work girls, gendarmes, etc. It is evening. The shops are decked with tiny lamps; a huge lantern lights up the entrance to the Café Momus. The café is so crowded that some of the customers are obliged to seat themselves outside.

HAWKERS. (outside their shops)

Come, buy my oranges!
Hot roasted chestnuts!
Trinkets and crosses!
Fine hardbake!
Excellent toffee!
Flowers for the ladies!
Try our candy!
Cream for the babies!
Fat larks and ortolans!
Look at them!
Fine salmon!
Look at our chestnuts!
Who'll buy my carrots?
THE CROWD.

CITIZENS. What a racket!

WOMEN. What uproar!

STUDENTS and WORK GIRLS.
Hold fast to me; come along!

A MOTHER. (calling her children) Lisa! Emma!

CITIZENS. Ho! make way there!

THE MOTHER. Emma, don't you hear me?

STUDENTS and WORK GIRLS. Rue Mazarin's the nearest.

WOMEN. Let's get away, I'm choking!

CITIZENS. See! the café is near!

(At the Café)

CITIZENS.
Come here, waiter!
Come along!
Come along!
Come here!
To me!
Some beer!
A glass!

Vanilla!
Come along!
Come along!
Some beer!
Some coffee!
Hurry up!

SCH. (blowing the horn)
D! D! D! what a dreadful D!

(Haggling with the tinker.)

What's the price of the lot?

COL. (to the clothes dealer, who has been mending a jacket for him)
It's rather shabby, but sound and not expensive.

(He pays, and then carefully consigns the books to the various pockets of his long coat.)

(MARCEL alone in the midst of the crowd, with a parcel under his arm, making eyes at the girls who jostle against him in the crowd.)

MAR. I feel somehow as if I fain must shout:
Ho! laughing lassies, will you play at love?
Let's play together, let's play the game of buy and sell:
Who'll give a penny for my guileless heart?

(Pushing through the crowd, RUDOLPH and MIMI, arm in arm, approach a bonnet shop.)

RUD. Let's go!

MIMI. To buy the bonnet?

RUD. Hold tightly to my arm, love!

(They enter the bonnet shop.)

(SCHAUNARD strolls about in front of the Café Momus, waiting for his friends, and, armed with his huge pipe and hunting horn, he watches the crowd curiously.)

SCH. Surging onward—eager, breathless—
Moves the madding crowd,
As they frolic ever
In their wild, insane endeavor.

COL. (comes up, waving an old book in triumph)
Such a rare copy! well-nigh unique,
A grammar of Runic!

SCH. (who arrives at that moment behind COLLINE, compassionately)
Honest fellow!

MAR. (arriving at the Café Momus, and finding SCHAUNARD and COLLINE)
To supper!

SCH. and COL. Ho! Rudolph!

MAR. He's gone to buy a bonnet.

(MARCEL, SCHAUNARD and COLLINE try to find an empty table outside the café, but there is only one, which is occupied by townsfolk. At these latter the three friends glare furiously, and then enter the café. The crowd disperses among the adjacent streets. The shops are crowded and the square becomes densely thronged with buyers who come and go. In the café there is much animation. RUDOLPH and MIMI come out of the shop.)

RUD. (to MIMI)
Come along! my friends are waiting.

MIMI. Do you think this rose-trimmed bonnet suits me?

RUD. The color suits your dark complexion.

MIMI. (looking into the window of a bonnet shop) O what a pretty necklace!

RUD. I have an aunt a millionaire.
If the good God wills to take her,
Then shall you have a necklace far more fine.
(suddenly seeing MIMI look round suspiciously)
What is it?

MIMI. Are you jealous?

RUD. The man in love is always jealous, darling.

MIMI. Are you then in love?

RUD. (squeezing her arm in his)

Yes, so much in love!
Are you?

MIMI. Yes, deeply.

(Enter from the café, COLLINE, SCHAUNARD and MARCEL carrying a table. A waiter follows with chairs. The townsfolk seated near seem vexed at the noise which the three friends are making, for they soon get up and walk away.)

COL. The vulgar herd I hate, just as I did Horace.

SCH. And I, when I am eating,
I can't stand being crowded.

MAR. (to the waiter) Smartly!

SCH. For many!

MAR. We want a supper of the choicest!

(MIMI and RUDOLPH joining their friends.)

RUD. (accompanied by MIMI) Two places.

COL. Let's have supper.

RUD. So we have come. (introducing Mimi)
This is Mimi,
The merry flower girl;
And now she's come to join us.
Our party is completed—
For I shall play the poet,

While she's the muse incarnate.
Forth from my brain flow songs of passion,
As, at her touch the pretty buds blow;
As in the soul awaketh beautiful love!

MAR. (ironically) My word, what high falutin'!

COL. Digna est intrari.

SCH. Ingrediati si necessit.

COL. I'll grant only an accessit!

(RUDOLPH makes MIMI sit down. All being seated, the waiter returns with the menu.)

COL. (with an air of great importance) Some sausage!

PAR. (faintly in the distance) Who'll buy some pretty toys from Parpignol?

(Boys and girls running out from the shops and adjoining streets.)

BOYS and GIRLS. Parpignol! Parpignol!

(Enter PARPIGNOL from the Rue Dauphin, pushing a barrow festooned with foliage, flowers and paper lanterns.)

PAR. (crying) Who'll buy some pretty toys from Parpignol?

CHILDREN, (crowding and jumping round the barrow)
Parpignol! Parpignol!
With his pretty barrow bright with flowers!

(admiring the toys)

I want the horn! and I the horse!
Get away, they are mine!
I want the gun! and I the whip!
No, the drum shall be mine!

(At the cries of the children, the mothers try, but without success, to lead them away from PARPIGNOL, scolding loudly.)

MOTHERS.

Ah! wait a bit, you dirty little rascals.
What can it be that sets you all a-gaping?
Get home to your beds, get home, lazy rascals,
Or you shall all have a tidy beating.

(The children refuse to go. One of them cries for Parpignol'S toys and his mother pulls his ear. The mothers, relenting, buy some. Parpignol moves down the street, followed by the children, pretending to play on their toy instruments.)

PAR. (in the distance) Who'll buy some pretty toys of Parpignol!

(The waiter presents the menu, which the four friends carefully scrutinize in turn.)

SCH. Bring some venison.

MAR. I'll have turkey.

RUD. (in an undertone to MIMI) Mimi, what would you like?

MIMI. Some custard!

SCH. And some Rhenish!

COL. Bring some claret, too!

SCH. And some lobster, only shell it!
The best you've got—for a lady!

MAR. (disconcerted at the sight of MUSETTA; to the waiter)

And I'll have a phial of poison! (throwing himself on a chair)

SCH., COL. and RUD. (turning on hearing MARCEL'S exclamation)

Oh! Musetta!

(the friends look pityingly at MARCEL, who turns pale)

(The shopwomen are going away, but stop to watch the fair stranger, and are astonished to recognize in her MUSETTA; they whisper among themselves, pointing at her.)

Look! 'tis Musetta!

She!

Musetta!

'Tis she!

Yes!

Yes!

'Tis Musetta!

Oh! what swagger!

My! she's gorgeous.

(entering their shops)

STUDENTS and WORK GIRLS (crossing the stage)

Only look! why, there she is!

Some old stammering dotard's with her, too!

Yes, 'tis she!

Tis she!

Musetta!

(Enter from the corner of the Rue Mazarin an extremely pretty coquettish-looking young lady. She is followed by a pompous old gentleman, who is both fussy and over-dressed.)

ALCINDORO DE MITONNEAUX. (_joining MUSETTA, out of breath_)

Just like a valet

I must run here and there.

No, no, not for me!

I can stand it no more.

(MUSETTA_ without noticing_ ALCINDORO_, takes a vacant seat, outside the café.)
How now? Outside? Here?

MUS. (without noticing his protests, he fearing to remain outside in the cold)
Sit down, Lulu!

ALC. (in great irritation, sits down, and turns up his coat collar)

Such a term of fond endearment
Pray do not apply to me!

MUS. Now, don't be Blue Beard, pray!

(A waiter approaches briskly, to prepare the table and begins to serve. SCHAUNARD and COLLINE furtively watch MUSETTA. MARCEL feigns the greatest indifference. RUDOLPH devotes all his attention to MIMI.)

SCH. (at the sight of the old gentleman with his decorations)
He's had a pretty good dose, I reckon.

COL. (_scrutinizing _ALCINDORO) The naughty, naughty elder!

MAR. (contemptuously) With his good young Susanna.

MIMI. (_to _RUDOLPH) And her clothes are smart, too!

RUD. The angels can't afford them.

(A piquet of the National Guard passes across the square; some shop-keepers go home; at the corner of the street the chestnut-seller does a thriving trade; the old clothes dealer fills her barrel with clothes, and goes away with it over her shoulder.)

MUS. (disconcerted at not being noticed by her friends)
Marcel can see me,
But he won't look, the villain!
And Schounard!
They provoke me past bearing!
Ah! could I but beat them!
If I could, I would scratch!
But I only have to back me
This old pelican!
No matter! (calls the waiter who has gone away)
Hi! waiter, here! (the waiter hurriedly approaches)
See, this plate has a horrid smell of onions!
(dashes the plate on the ground; the waiter picks up the pieces)

ALC. Don't, Musetta! do be quiet!

MUS. (irritated, still watching MARCEL) He won't look round! Now I could beat him!

ALC. What's the matter?

MUS. (sharply) I meant the waiter!

ALC. Manners! Manners! (Takes the bill from the waiter and orders the supper.)

MUS. (more irritated)
Such a bore!
Just let me have my own way.
If you please; I won't be ruled by you!

MIMI. (looking curiously at RUDOLPH) Do you know who she is?

MAR. You had better ask me.
Well, her name is Musetta
Her surname is Temptation.
As to her vocation:
Like a rose in the breezes,

So she changes lover for lover without number.
And like the spiteful screech owl,
A bird that's most rapacious,
The food that most she favors is the heart!
Her food the heart is;
Thus have I now none left!
(to his friends, concealing his agitation)
So pass me the ragout!

SCH. (to COLLINE)
Now the fun's at its climax,
To one she speaks because the other listens.

COL. (to SCHAUNARD)
The other will not hear,
Feigns not to see the girl: which makes her mad.

RUD. (to MIMI)
Now let me tell you
I never would forgive you.

MIMI. (to RUDOLPH)
I love you, love you fondly,
Am wholly yours, my dearest! (eating)

COL. What's that about forgiveness?

(coquettishly watching MARCEL, who becomes agitated)

MUS. (watching MARCEL; in a loud voice to MARCEL) Why, don't you know me?

ALC. (thinking MUSETTA spoke to him) Well, I'm giving the order, dear.

MUS. (as above) But your heart is a-throbbing!

ALC. (as above) Not so loud.

MUS. (to herself) But your heart is a-throbbing!

ALC. Do be quiet!

MUS. As through the streets I wander onward merrily,
See how the folk look round,
Because they know I'm charming,
A very charming girl.
And then 'tis mine to mark the hidden longing,
And all the passion in their eyes;
And then the joy of conquest overcomes me,
Every man is my prize!

And thus their hearts, their hearts I capture,
As if by magic all my own, ah! rapture!
Tis mine alone!
Now you that once your love for me betrayed,
Why should you be dismayed?
Yet though deep in your heart
Rankles the smart.
You'd ne'er confess—but rather die!

(SCHAUNARD and COLLINE rise and stand aside, watching the scene with interest, while RUDOLPH and MIMI remain seated and continue their talk. MARCEL nervously quits his seat, and is about to go, but is spell-bound by MUSETTA'S voice.)

ALC. This odious singing upsets me entirely!

(ALCINDORO vainly endeavors to induce MUNETTA to resume her seat at the table where the supper is ready.)

MIMI. (to RUDOLPH)
Oh! now I see that this unhappy maiden
Adores your friend Marcel madly!

RUD. She once was Marcel's love;
She wantonly forsook her fate,
And rarer game she thought to capture!

MIMI. The love that's born of passion ends in grief;
That poor, unhappy girl!
She moves me to tears!

RUD. Who can revive a love that's dead?

MAR. Hold me back! hold me back!

COL. Who knows what will happen now?
Goodness me! 'tis most unpleasant!
Anyhow, it is for me!
She is pretty, I don't doubt it;
Yet I would rather have
My pipe and a page of Homer!

SCH. See the braggart in a moment will give in;
The snare for some is pleasant,
For the biter and the bit.

(to COLLINE)

If such a pretty damsel
Should but make eyes at you,
You'd forget your mouldy classics,
And run to fetch her shoe.

MUS. Ah! Marcel you are vanquished!
And though your heart is breaking,
You'd never let us know, (feigning great regret)
(I must try to get rid of the old boy.)
Oh! dear!

ALC. What now?

MUS. How it pains me! how it pains me!

ALC. Let's see!

MUS. My foot!
Break it, tear it,
I can't bear it,
Do, I implore you!

ALC. (bending down to untie her shoe) Gently, gently!

MUS. Close by there is a boot-shop; hasten! quickly!
He may have boots to please me.

ALC. What imprudence!

MUS. Ah! the torture!
How these horrid tight shoes squeeze me!
I'll take it off! So let it lie!

ALC. What will people say?
What imprudence!

SCH. and COL.
Now the fun becomes stupendous
In truth, 'tis better than a play!

MUS. Hasten, hasten! Bring another pair! Go!

ALC. What imprudence!
Nothing short of scandal!
Musetta, shame!

(Hides her shoe under his coat, which he hastily buttons up; hurries off the stage.)

MAR. (greatly agitated)
Ah! golden youth! you are not dead, not dead for me,
For love revives again in me;
If at my door you came to greet me,
My heart would straight go out to meet thee!

(MUSETTA and MARCEL embrace with much fervor.)

MUS. Marcel!

MAR. Enchantress!

SCH. This is the final tableau! (A waiter brings in the bill.)

RUD., COL. and SCH. The bill!

SCH. What a bother!

COL. Who bade him bring it?

SCH. Let's see.

(Drums heard in the distance)

RUD. and COL. Out with your coppers!

SCH. Out with your coppers,
Colline, Rudolph, and you, Marcel.

MAR. We've not a rap!

SCH. I say!

RUD. I've thirty sous, no more.

MAR., SCH. and COL. I say! no more than that?

STREET ARABS, (hastening from the right) 'Tis the Tattoo!

WORK GIRLS, (hastening out of the café) 'Tis the Tattoo!

STUDENTS and CITIZENS. 'Tis the Tattoo!

(Hastening from the left. As the Tattoo is still a long way off, the folk run hither and thither, as if uncertain from which quarter the band will appear.)

SCH. But who has got my purse?

(They all feel their pockets which are empty; none can explain the sudden disappearance of SCHAUNARD'S purse, and they look at each other in surprise.)

STREET ARABS. Will they come along this way?

WORK GIRLS and STUDENTS. No; from there.

STREET ARABS. They are coming down this way.

WORK GIRLS and STUDENTS. Here they come!

CITIZENS. Way there!

HAWKERS. Way there!

SOME BOYS. Oh! let me see!

OTHERS. Oh! let me hear!

BOYS. Mother, do let me see!

OTHERS. Papa, do let me hear!

MOTHERS. Lisette, do be quiet!
Tony, do have done! do be quiet!

MUS. (to the waiter)
And my bill, please, bring to me.

(To waiter who brings the bill)

Thank you.
Just make one bill of the two.
The gentleman will pay
Who came to sup with me.

RUD., MAR., SCH. and COL. Yes, he will pay!

MAR. (aside) He will pay!

SCH. and COL. Yes, he will pay!

MUS. (placing both bills at ALCINDORO'S place)
And, after this pleasant meeting,
This shall be my greeting!

RUD., MAR., SCH. and COL. And, after our pleasant meeting,
This shall be her greeting!

(The crowd fills the stage and the patrol advances gradually.)

WORK GIRLS. They will come along this way.

STUDENTS, CITIZENS and HAWKERS. Yes, this way!

STREET ARABS. When it gets nearer,
We'll march along beside it.

(Several windows are opened at which mothers and their children appear and eagerly await the coming of the patrol.)

HAWKERS. In that patrol perceive
The country's noble might!

STREET ARABS. Now, look out! they're coming!

STUDENTS, WORK GIRLS and CITIZENS. Do stand back, for here they come!

MAR. See, the patrol is coming!

COL. Look out that old boy
Don't catch you with his darling!

RUD. See, the patrol is coming!

MAR. and SCH. Now the crowd is tremendous:
T' escape will be so easy.

(The patrol enters, headed by a gigantic drum-major, who dexterously twists his baton, showing the way.)

STREET ARABS and WORK GIRLS. And there's the drum-major!

CITIZENS and SHOP-KEEPERS. As proud as a warrior of old!

MIMI, MUS. and RUD. Quick, or you will miss them!

MAR., SCH. and COL. Quick, or you will miss them!

STREET ARABS and HAWKERS. The drum-major, look! what a dandy!

STUDENTS and WORK GIRLS. What swagger! What a figure!

STREET ARABS. There go the sappers!

CITIZENS. What a dandy!

STUDENTS and CITIZENS. Like a general he appears!
He passes by and heeds us not!

WORK GIRLS. Like a general he appears!
Of all our hearts the conqueror!

(MUSSETTA being without her shoe, cannot walk, so MARCEL and COLLINE carry her through the crowd, as they endeavor to follow the patrol. The mob, seeing her borne along in this triumphal fashion, give her a regular ovation. MARCEL and COLLINE with MUSSETTA follow the patrol; RUDOLPH and MIMI follow arm in arm; SCHAUNARD goes next, blowing his horn; while the students, work-girls, street-lads, women and towns-folk merrily bring up the rear.)

(Marching in time with the music, the whole vast crowd gradually moves off as it follows the patrol. Meanwhile ALCINDORO, with a pair of shoes carefully wrapped up, returns to the café in search of MUSSETTA. The waiter by the table takes up the bill left by MUSSETTA and ceremoniously hands it to ALCINDORO, who, seeing the amount, and perceiving that they have all left him there alone, falls back into a chair, utterly dumbfounded.)

