

Christmas Eve In Dikanka

A New Musical
Based on the story by Nikolai Gogol

Book, Music & Lyrics by Kit Goldstein Grant

11/20/23

Kit Goldstein Grant
Email: kitgoldsteingrant@gmail.com
Website: www.kitgoldstein.com

© Kit Goldstein Grant 2023

CHARACTERS – 2 Women, 3 Men

Woman 1 (Alto/Mezzo)

...SOLOKHA, a comfortably plump, attractive woman. Self-assured, confident, warm and loving, can be sharp-tongued, matter-of-fact. Also, happens to be a witch. 40 - 50. Comedy chops needed. Any ethnicity.

...DEMON

...CZARINA

Woman 2 (Soprano)

...OKSANA, a vain, pretentious young woman. All the men are in love with her, and she knows it. A bit of an airhead, though she is convinced she is a strong female character. 18 – early 20s. Comedy chops needed. Any ethnicity.

...DEMON

MAN 1 (Bari-tenor)

...NARRATOR, has a warm, hearty voice that reminds you of the narrator from a Rankin Bass Christmas special. 50s. Any ethnicity. Comedy chops needed.

...PANAS, a shoemaker

...CHUB, Oksana's father. A nebbish.

...OSIP THE MAYOR, a pompous fellow.

...FATHER CHEREVIK, the priest.

MAN 2 (Baritone)

...VAKULA, a blacksmith, with the brawny body to go with the job. Early 20s, a hothead, quick to anger and resentment. His brows are always lowered, and he always suspects someone is making fun of him. Comedy chops needed. Any ethnicity.

MAN 3 (Tenor)

...DEVIL, a thin, devious, scheming man, with a chip on his shoulder. He has a childish sense of grievance, and is a bit whiny. 20s – 50s. Comedy chops needed. Any ethnicity.

TIME PERIOD/SETTING

Dikanka, a town in Ukraine. 1830s.

SONGS

- 01 IN DIKANKA/CHRISTMAS EVE... NARRATOR, VAKULA, SOLOKHA, OKSANA,
DEVIL, ENSEMBLE << TRACK 1 >>
- 02 A BLACKSMITH IN LOVE... VAKULA << TRACK 2 >>
- 03 THE BOOT... OKSANA, VAKULA << TRACK 3 >>
- 04 A DEVIL DISGRUNTLED... DEVIL, DEMONS << TRACK 4 >>
- 05 A WOMAN OVER FORTY... SOLOKHA << TRACK 5 >>
- 06 THE ONLY MAN... CHUB, OSIP, FATHER CHEREVIK << TRACK 6 >>
- 07 MY SOUL FOR A SOLE... VAKULA, CHUB, DEVIL << TRACK 7 >>
- 08 THE FINER THINGS... OKSANA, VAKULA, CHUB, DEVIL
- 09 A DEVIL DISGRUNTLED [REPRISE 1]... DEVIL << TRACK 8 >>
- 10 A BOY LIKE ME... VAKULA
- 11 VAKULA'S PLEA (or SHE SHOULDN'T BE SHODDILY SHOD)... VAKULA,
ENSEMBLE << TRACK 9 >>
- 12 A DEVIL DISGRUNTLED [REPRISE 2]... DEVIL
- 13 I'LL FIND YOU...SOLOKHA << TRACK 10 >>
- 14 IN DIKANKA [REPRISE]... ENSEMBLE << TRACK 11 >>
- 14.5 THE BOOT [CHURCH MUSIC]... INSTRUMENTAL
- 15 JUST YOUR SIZE... SOLOKHA, VAKULA << TRACK 12 >>
- 16 IN DIKANKA [FINALE] ... NARRATOR, ENSEMBLE << TRACK 13 >>

LOGLINE:

A blacksmith must find fancy shoes like those worn by the Czarina by Christmas Day or lose the heart of his lady love. But when the Devil comes to town, will he give up his soul for a sole?

SYNOPSIS:

It's Christmas Eve in Dikanka, and blacksmith must find fancy shoes like those worn by the Czarina in the next few hours or lose the heart of his lady love. But when the Devil comes to town, will he give up his soul for a sole? And what will he do about his mother, who is a promiscuous witch? No really, an actual witch. This loosely adapted take on Nikolai Gogol's story sets the show in a meta-theatrical universe which combines a Ukrainian 19th century absurdist tone and a modern sensibility, plus a lotta slapstick.

DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY:

Christmas Eve in Dikanka was presented in an industry reading in at Pearl Studios in New York, NY in December 2023, produced by Broadway producer Judith Manocherian LLC (Broadway: PICTURES FROM HOME, THE GREAT SOCIETY, THE PROM (*Drama Desk*), THE LIFESPAN OF A FACT and ONCE ON THIS ISLAND (*Tony*)) in association with Multicultural Sonic Evolution and Theatre Now New York.

It has previously received developmental readings at The Playground Experiment in New York, NY, and has been developed in Theatre Now New York's Musical Writers Lab, where it was recently featured in their First Look industry presentation. It was also featured at the Verse Intro Cabaret at the SoHo Playhouse.

Dates and Locations:

- Industry Reading, produced by Judith Manocherian LLC in association with Multicultural Sonic Evolution and Theatre Now New York; Pearl Studios, NYC: December 11, 2023
- Verse Intro Cabaret, SoHo Playhouse, NYC: July 16, 2023
- First Look, Theatre Now NY (The Gural Theatre, NYC): February 3, 2023
- The Playground Experiment: January 24, 2022 (Virtual); August 22, 2022 (Virtual); November 28, 2022 (Marjorie S. Dean Little Theatre, NYC); January 23, 2022 (Marjorie S. Dean Little Theatre, NYC)

SCENE ONE

(A small town in Ukraine, 1800s. Early evening. We can see the moon and stars. We see the silhouette of a witch on a broomstick flying past the moon. A NARRATOR enters. HE observes the sky for a moment, watching the progress of the witch as she disappears, then turns to the audience.)

[MUSIC: 01 IN DIKANKA/CHRISTMAS EVE] << Track 1 >>

NARRATOR

ON A NIGHT IN THE SKY OF DIKANKA
THERE'S A WITCH FLYING OVER THE MOON!
AND NO ONE CAN SEE
THAT THE DEVIL IS FREE
AND THE STARS WILL BE DARKENING SOON

AND THE LIGHT WILL GO OUT IN DIKANKA
TILL YOU CAN'T TELL SOUTH FROM NORTH
FOR THE DEVIL IS LOOSE IN DIKANKA
ON DECEMBER TWENTY-FOURTH...

This is a tale of a small town on Christmas Eve. It is a heartwarming tale, a moral tale, a wholesome tale.

(VAKULA the blacksmith enters.)

VAKULA

My mother is a slut.

NARRATOR

Yes, well, there is that aspect to it as well. Villages do have their little intrigues and seamier sides, but at Christmas time -

VAKULA

My mother is a rapacious slut.

NARRATOR

Yes, well, if perhaps you would let me -

VAKULA

My mother's sluttiness is ruining my life. It is appalling what a slut she is, for a woman of her age. She is forty-one.

NARRATOR

This is Vakula, the blacksmith.

VAKULA

Romance is for the young. Those past their prime have no business frittering away time on such affairs, time which could be better spent preparing my suppers or tending the geese. We have the biggest flock in all of Dikanka, no thanks to my mother.

NARRATOR

ON A NIGHT IN A HUT IN DIKANKA
THERE'S A BLACKSMITH WHO'S WEARING A FROWN.
HE'S GOT TO CONFESS
THAT HIS LOVE LIFE'S A MESS
WHILE HIS MOTHER'S THE TOAST OF THE TOWN!

ALL

AND THE LIGHT WILL GO OUT IN DIKANKA
TILL YOU CAN'T TELL SOUTH FROM NORTH

VAKULA

AND A BLACKSMITH WILL SULK IN DIKANKA

ALL

ON DECEMBER TWENTY-FOURTH...

NARRATOR

Perhaps this would be a good time for us to meet his mother, Solokha.

(SOLOKHA, a zaftig woman, enters.)

SOLOKHA

(To VAKULA.)

Little one! Did you punch my good friend Chub in the face?

VAKULA

He was getting to be *too good* a friend.

SOLOKHA

(What will she *do* with this child?)

Oh good Lord.

ON A NIGHT IN THE TOWN OF DIKANKA
THERE'S A MOTHER WHO'S LOSING HER WITS
SHE'S READY TO PLAY
BUT HER SON'S IN THE WAY
AND HE'S KNOCKING HER FELLAS TO BITS!

FOR I'VE OPENED MY ARMS TO DIKANKA!
LIT THE LAMP! UNLOCKED THE DOOR!
BUT HE'LL PUNCH OUT YOUR LIGHTS IN DIKANKA
ON DECEMBER TWENTY-FOUR...

VAKULA

Humph.

NARRATOR

And he doesn't even know that she's a witch! And now, to meet the lovely Oksana. Every young man in the village is in love with her, including Vakula.

(OKSANA appears. VAKULA approaches her.)

VAKULA

I throw myself at your feet!
(HE does so.)

OKSANA

From up here, all I can see is your bald spot.

(VAKULA quickly covers his head in a dingy hat.)

VAKULA

Marry me!

OKSANA

I shan't marry any man with such an unattractive hat. You are wasting your time.

FOR I KNOW WHAT I'M WORTH IN DIKANKA
AND MY CHARM'S ON FULL DISPLAY!

OKSANA & MEN

THERE ARE MEN WHO'LL PROPOSE IN DIKANKA

OKSANA

ON THE DAWN OF CHRISTMAS DAY...

(VAKULA retreats, defeated.)

OKSANA

Perhaps you are thinking that I am an airhead, a bimbo concerned only with fripperies and pretty things, but the fact is that I am a strong female character with dreams and ambitions. Also, I like pretty things, and I want a husband who will bring me pretty things. What, can't a strong female character like pretty things? Do we all need to want to be astronauts?

SOLOKHA

She is an airheaded bimbo. *I'm* the only strong female character in this play.

OKSANA

You're one to talk! You're a slutty witch!

SOLOKHA

My sluttiness is in fact an embodiment of female empowerment.

OKSANA

Pffft!

(SHE huffs and stamps in annoyance and exits. SOLOKHA exits the other way. The silhouette of the witch returns, zipping around for the last chorus.)

NARRATOR & ALL

ON A NIGHT IN THE SKY OF DIKANKA
THERE'S A WITCH FLYING OVER THE MOON!
AND NO ONE CAN SEE
THAT THE DEVIL IS FREE
AND THE STARS WILL BE DARKENING SOON

AND THE LIGHT WILL GO OUT IN DIKANKA
TILL YOU CAN'T TELL SOUTH FROM NORTH
FOR THE DEVIL IS LOOSE IN DIKANKA
ON DECEMBER TWENTY-FOURTH...
ON DECEMBER TWENTY-FOURTH...

(VAKULA and SOLOKHA exit.)

NARRATOR

Now, before I leave you, there's one more fellow you ought to meet, a certain fellow in a red suit. When you're naughty he doesn't leave a lump of coal in your stocking - he sticks you with a flaming hot poker.

[PAUSE TRACK]

(The DEVIL flies through the sky and lands on stage.)

DEVIL

Damnation!

NARRATOR

He has horns on his head and a chip on his shoulder.

DEVIL

I have been wronged.

NARRATOR

He is angry.

DEVIL

I have been grievously wronged.

NARRATOR

We have a belief here that on Christmas Eve the devil is free to roam the earth, causing what mischief he will until the dawn of Christmas Day.

DEVIL

And I have a plan.

NARRATOR

A devilish plan, no doubt.

DEVIL

A devilish plan!

NARRATOR

Perhaps he shall take his revenge.

DEVIL

I shall take my - now look here, will you stop it? Yes, I shall take my revenge. I shall steal the moon!

NARRATOR

And this gets revenge... how?

DEVIL

It's complicated - wait and see.

[RESUME TRACK]

IT'S CHRISTMAS EVE AND THE DEVIL IS OUT!
IT'S MY ONE LAST DAY TO PLAY
TILL THE MORNING BELLS SEND THE DEVIL AWAY

WOMEN

SEND THE DEVIL AWAY!

MEN

THEN THE DEVIL CAN'T STAY.

DEVIL

BUT BEFORE I HAVE TO LEAVE

THERE'S TROUBLE TO CAUSE ON CHRISTMAS EVE.

(HE flies up in the air and snatches the moon.)

ENSEMBLE

IT'S CHRISTMAS EVE AND IT'S DARKER THAN SIN
AND THERE'S MISCHIEF UP A SLEEVE.
THERE'S FUN AND GAMES AND CAROLS TO SING
AND LAUGHTER FLOATS AND SLEIGH BELLS RING

DEVIL

AND THERE ARE BLACKSMITHS TO DECEIVE!

DEVIL & ENSEMBLE

THERE'S TROUBLE TO CAUSE ON CHRISTMAS EVE!

(THEY all sing in overlapping chaos!)

NARRATOR

ON A NIGHT IN THE SKY OF
DIKANKA
THERE'S A WITCH FLYING OVER
THE MOON!
AND NO ONE CAN SEE
THAT THE DEVIL IS FREE
AND THE STARS WILL BE
DARKENING SOON

ON A NIGHT IN THE DARK OF
DIKANKA
THERE ARE FIENDISH-Y BATTLES
TO WIN
AND HEARTS OVERFLOW
AND IT'S STARTING TO SNOW
AND THERE'S CHAOS ABOUT TO
BEGIN!

AND THE LIGHT WILL GO OUT IN
DIKANKA

TILL YOU CAN'T TELL SOUTH
FROM NORTH
FOR THE DEVIL IS LOOSE IN
DIKANKA
ON DECEMBER TWENTY-
FOURTH...

DEVIL & ENSEMBLE

IT'S CHRISTMAS EVE AND THE
DEVIL IS OUT!
IT'S MY/HIS ONE LAST DAY TO
PLAY
TILL THE MORNING SUN DRIVES
THE DEVIL AWAY

WOMEN

DRIVES THE DEVIL AWAY!

MEN

THEN THE DEVIL CAN'T STAY.

DEVIL & ENSEMBLE

Ahhh....

Ahhh...

STARS WILL BE DARKENING,
DARKENING SOON

IT'S CHRISTMAS EVE AND IT'S
DARKER THAN SIN
AND THERE'S MISCHIEF UP A
SLEEVE.

THERE'S FUN AND GAMES AND
CAROLS TO SING

AND LAUGHTER FLOATS AND
SLEIGH BELLS RING

Ahhh....

Ahhh...

CHAOS ABOUT TO BE-
'BOUT TO BEGIN!

AND THE LIGHT WILL GO OUT IN
DIKANKA

TILL YOU CAN'T TELL SOUTH
FROM NORTH

FOR THE DEVIL IS LOOSE IN
DIKANKA

ON DECEMBER TWENTY-FOURTH

DEVIL

BUT BEFORE I HAVE TO LEAVE
THERE'S TROUBLE TO CAUSE ON
CHRISTMAS EVE

DEVIL, NARRATOR, & ENSEMBLE

THERE'S TROUBLE TO CAUSE ON CHRISTMAS EVE!

(ALL except the NARRATOR exit.)

NARRATOR

And now we turn to our story proper. As the devil stole the moon from the sky, Vakula was on his way to see his lady love Oksana, clutching a canvas in his arms and fighting against the swirling snow.

(A huge snowstorm suddenly starts. VAKULA blows onstage, pushing against the wind. HE clutches a well-wrapped canvas.)

[MUSIC: 02 A BLACKSMITH IN LOVE] << TRACK 2 >>

VAKULA

A BLACKSMITH IN LOVE
PUSHES INTO THE WIND
WHEN HE MIGHT BE HOME WARM IN HIS BED.
A BLACKSMITH IN LOVE
WILL NEVER GIVE UP!
A BLACKSMITH WILL FORGE AHEAD.

A BLACKSMITH IN LOVE
WITH A BEAUTIFUL GIRL
HAS A SNOW-COVERED PATH HE MUST TREAD.
THOUGH PEOPLE MAY LAUGH
HE'LL PROVE THEM ALL WRONG!
A BLACKSMITH WILL FORGE AHEAD.

AND YES, I KNOW THAT I'M NOT SUCH A LOOKER
AND I'M MAYBE TOO FAST WITH A FIST
BUT IF NO ONE WILL MARRY A BLACKSMITH
HOW COULD OTHER BLACKSMITHS EXIST?

SO HATERS MAY SCOFF
AND MY MISTRESS MAY MOCK
BUT I'LL HAVE THE LAST LAUGH WHEN WE'RE WED!
A BLACKSMITH IN LOVE
HAS LITTLE TO LOSE
AND THE PASSION TO RIGHT ALL HIS WRONGS
SO I'LL GO AT ROMANCE HAMMER AND TONGS
A BLACKSMITH WILL FORGE AHEAD!

(A big gust of wind almost knocks him over. If this were an animated film,
he'd fall into the snow and have a big pile of snow on his head for the next
line.)

VAKULA (CONT'D.)

A BLACKSMITH WILL FORGE AHEAD.

(The scene changes to...)

SCENE TWO

(OKSANA's father CHUB'S house. OKSANA is admiring herself in the mirror. The DEVIL watches from the side. VAKULA knocks and bursts in. HE shakes off huge amounts of snow onto the floor. HE carries his canvas.)

VAKULA

You always tell me not to call, since I can't bring you pretty things, so this Christmas I have brought you a pretty thing: a portrait of yourself. What could be prettier?

OKSANA

(Eagerly.)

Was it expensive?

VAKULA

I painted it myself.

OKSANA

Does it have gold paint?

VAKULA

It doesn't have gold paint.

OKSANA

Does it have rubies and sapphires on the frame?

VAKULA

(Growing frustrated.)

Don't you want to see it?

OKSANA

If it doesn't have rubies and sapphires on the frame, I don't want to see it. I can see a lovely portrait of myself right here.

(SHE resumes viewing herself in the mirror.)

VAKULA

Will you at least glance at it? I labored for hours to capture your likeness, your vitality,
your sweetness -

OKSANA

Is it true your mother is a witch?

VAKULA

What?

OKSANA

They all say your mother is a witch. Is it true?

VAKLUA

I -

OKSANA

She has so many callers - for a woman without *my* charms, and at her age, well, one can
only assume...

VAKULA

Good god, if you won't look at my picture, I'm leaving!

OKSANA

Of course I won't waste my time on your silly picture. I would only marry you on one
condition.

[MUSIC: 03 THE BOOT] << TRACK 3 >>

BRING ME A SHOE, A BEAUTIFUL SHOE
OR ELSE I HAVEN'T GOT TIME FOR YOU
GIVE ME A SLIPPER THAT'S DAINTY AND SMART
AND I'LL GIVE YOU MY HEART!
I'LL GIVE YOU MY HEART!
AND NO, DON'T SAY THAT IT'S SILLY
I DON'T WANT ANY DISPUTE
AND IF YOU DON'T GET ME THAT SLIPPER
THEN YOU SHALL GET THE BOOT.

[PAUSE TRACK]

VAKULA

(Starting to exit.)

A beautiful shoe, no problem, I'll be right back.

OKSANA

A slipper just like the one worn by the czarina.

VAKULA

...That's an oddly specific request.

OKSANA

(Rationally explaining.)

I like her slippers. Slippers exactly like them would do as well.

VAKULA

How do you even know what they look like?

OKSANA

I saw a painting -

VAKULA

Oh, *that* painting you'll look at!

[RESUME TRACK]

A BLACKSMITH IN LOVE!

A BLACKSMITH IN LOVE!

A BLACKSMITH IN LOVE!

A BLACKSMITH IN LOVE!

OKSANA

I DON'T WANT TO HEAR PROTESTATIONS!

YOU SIMPLY ARE WASTING YOUR BREATH,

JUST GET ME THAT SHOE, AND I MEAN A

SLIPPER FIT FOR A CZARINA!

GIVE ME A CHANCE

TO GIVE YOU A CHANCE

YOU'LL SEE THAT SLIPPERS CAN SPARK ROMANCE
GIVE ME A TOE THAT IS SPLASHY AND GRAND
AND I'LL GIVE YOU MY HEART -
I'LL GIVE YOU MY HAND!
AND NO, DON'T CALL ME AN AIRHEAD
JUST GO AND GET ME THE LOOT
FOR IF YOU DON'T GET ME THAT SLIPPER
THEN YOU SHALL GET THE BOOT.

DA, DA
DA DA,
DA DA DA DA DA
DA, DA,
DA DA,
DA DA DA DA DA

VAKULA

A BLACKSMITH IN LOVE!
A BLACKSMITH IN LOVE!
A BLACKSMITH IN LOVE!
A BLACKSMITH IN LOVE!

OKSANA

(Simul., covering her ears and singing over him.)

DA, DA
DA DA,
DA DA DA DA DA
DA, DA,
DA DA,
DA DA DA DA DA

OKSANA (CONT'D.)

I DON'T WANT TO HEAR HOW YOU'RE FEELING
YOU'RE LIKELY TO BORE ME TO DEATH
IN MATTERS OF LOVE NOTHING BEATS A
SLIPPER FIT FOR A CZARITZA!

[PAUSE TRACK]

VAKULA

But how on earth am I to find slippers like the czarina's?

OKSANA

You have until the dawn of Christmas Day. After that the offer is rescinded.

VAKULA

But it's impossible!

OKSANA

I like those slippers and I want those slippers and if you want to marry me you will get me those slippers. Now get out of here, you witch's spawn!

(Aside)

Look at me, ordering him around. Talk about a strong woman!

[RESUME TRACK]

BRING ME A SHOE,
A BEAUTIFUL SHOE
OR ELSE I HAVEN'T GOT TIME FOR YOU
GIVE ME A SLIPPER THAT'S DAINTY AND SMART
AND I'LL GIVE YOU MY HEART!
I'LL GIVE YOU MY HEART!

AND NO, DON'T SHOW ME YOUR PAINTING
I ALREADY KNOW THAT I'M CUTE
NOW GO OFF AND GET ME THAT SLIPPER
OR YOU SHALL GET THE BOOT.

VAKULA

If that's what it takes to win you, Oksana, I'll bring you those slippers.

OKSANA

You do that.

OR YOU SHALL GET THE BOOT.

(HE takes his painting and exits. The NARRATOR steps forward.)

SCENE THREE

(The scene changes to the snowy way home for VAKULA.)

NARRATOR

And so the blacksmith made his way home, cursing at the woman he professed to love.

VAKULA

May she stick her foot into a pot of boiling turnips!

NARRATOR

And when he reached his mother's house his mood had not improved.

(And now we are at SOLOKHA's house, which she shares with her son VAKULA. It is empty. VAKULA bursts in, still grumbling to himself.)

VAKULA

The czarina's slippers! Who does she think she is? How am I supposed to get slippers like the czarina's? If only my mother really was a witch, maybe she could help me.

(HE sets down the covered painting. SOLOKHA enters from another room.)

SOLOKHA

What was that, Vakulka?

VAKULA

I was only saying I wished you could help me, Mother.

(Laden with meaning.)

But I'm sure you are too busy with your own affairs.

SOLOKHA

I always have time for you, Valushka, but you must try not to be so angry always. Perhaps Oksana would be more welcoming if you hadn't struck her father in the face.

VALUKA

(Grumpy, ashamed and defensive.)

Yes, well, he shouldn't have such an offensive face. And he shouldn't call on you so often.

SOLOKHA

You must start thinking with your head instead of your fists, malysh. You need to be big and strong to be a blacksmith, but to win a woman you need brains.

VAKULA

(Insulting.)

Yes, well, you should know.

SOLOKHA

(Seeing the painting.)

She didn't take your painting?

VAKULA

(Gruffly.)

I decided not to give it to her. It isn't finished.

SOLOKHA

Still needs the horn and the tail?

VAKULA

Mother! You ought not to talk lightly of the devil. There is too much talk in the town already.

SOLOKHA

What did she say about me?

VAKULA

You know, the old rumor.

(Abruptly.)

I'm going to the church.

SOLOKHA

To pray?

VAKULA

To finish the painting for the nave. I told Father Cherevik I would finish it by Christmas. Oksana may not need a horn and tail, but Lucifer needs another wart.

(HE exits. The DEVIL comes out from some clever hiding place – maybe he was transformed into a chair? – and addresses the audience.)

DEVIL

You see! You see why I come for revenge? Every time he is angry he takes it out on me. He paints religious pictures that depict me as the most hideous of creatures, covered in warts and pimples! Pimples! Hah! Me, I am a handsome devil – do I look anything like *that?!?!?*

(Lights up on the church. VAKULA stands, paintbrush in hand, in front of a painting featuring a very unattractive devil having some bad thing happen to him.)

VAKULA

Now, he already has a fair number of warts, but I am thinking Mister Beelzebub could use a pimple or three, perhaps one here, and here, and -

(Indicating the devil's rear...)

- one on his bony little -

[MUSIC: 04 A DEVIL DISGRUNTLED] << TRACK 4 >>

DEVIL

HIDEOUS, LIBELOUS CARICATURES!

AM I SKINNY AS A RAT?

IS MY VISAGE FULL OF WARTS?

NO PAL O' ME

WOULD SPREAD SUCH CALUMNY!

IS IT PROPER? CAN YOU BLAME ME IF I'M SORT OF OUT OF SORTS?

A DEVIL DISGRUNTLED IS A CLEVER KIND OF CHAP

HE PUTS AWAY THE PITCHFORK AND PUTS ON HIS THINKING CAP.

HE'S GOT A FLARE FOR DRAMA AND FOR HITTING WHERE IT HURTS

AND THOSE WHO TRY TO MOCK HIM

WILL GET THEIR JUST DESERTS!

(Several DEMONS – his retinue – enter.)

DEMONS

A DEVIL DISGRUNTLED IS A FELLOW TO AVOID
HE STARTS UP SPITTIN' SULPHUR EVERY TIME HE GETS ANNOYED.

DEVIL

I'VE GOT A KNACK FOR BRIMSTONE AND I HANDLE FIRE WELL
AND IF YOU TRY TO CROSS ME, WELL THEN YOU CAN GO TO HELL.

IT'S NOT THAT I MEAN TO BE PETTY
IT'S JUST THAT I'VE GOT MY PRIDE
AND TO HEAR THE BLACKSMITH LAUGHING
WHILE I'M DOWN THERE BURNING SOULS
WELL IT BURNS MY SOUL UP INSIDE.

A DEVIL DISGRUNTLED IS A CRAFTY KIND OF CAT
I COULD SMITE HIM WITH SOME LIGHTNING, BUT I'M CLEVERER THAN
THAT.

I'VE STUDIED EVERY AVENUE OF GETTING IN HIS WAY
AND BY BUSTING UP HIS ROMANCE I COULD REALLY MAKE HIM PAY!

DEMONS

BY BUSTING UP HIS ROMANCE YOU COULD REALLY MAKE HIM PAY!

DEVIL

BY THE RULES OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
IF VAKULA'S MOTHER SOLOKHA
MARRIES OKSANA'S FATHER, CHUB,
THEN VAKULA AND OKSANA COULD NEVER BE WED
AND THAT WOULD BUST UP THEIR ROMANCE PRETTY GOOD.
YES IT WOULD!

DEVIL & DEMONS

YES IT WOULD.

DEVIL

(What a clever little Beelzebub I am!)

A CANNY NEW CUPID, I CAN HELP THE OLDER PAIR
IF CHUB WOULD STAY A BACHELOR, WELL SORRY, LIFE'S NOT FAIR.

WHAT BETTER NIGHT THAN THIS ONE TO DISPLAY SOLOKHA'S CHARMS?
I'LL SEND A STORM, AND IN THE DARK, I'LL BLOW HIM TO HER ARMS!

HE'LL SEE THERE'S A LIGHT IN THE WINDOW
HE'LL SMELL THAT SHE'S ROASTING GOOSE!
AND THOUGH SINGLE MEN MAY FEAR IT
HE'LL FEEL THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT
AND HIS PASSIONS WILL LET LOOSE!

HE'S SURE TO BE QUICK IN PROPOSING
SHE'LL ACCEPT WITHOUT A DOUBT
I'LL BE HIDING NEAR THE PLACE
TO SEE THE LOOK UPON HIS FACE
WHEN VAKULA FINDS OUT!

A DEVIL DISGRUNTLED HAS GOT MAGIC ON HIS SIDE
AND I'LL BE ENGINEERING WHO'S THE GROOM AND WHO'S THE BRIDE!
I'LL TAKE THE SWEETEST VENGEANCE, SO EXCUSE ME IF I KVELL
FOR DESPITE MY DIRTY DEALINGS
EVEN DEVILS HAVE THEIR FEELINGS
AND IF YOU THINK THIS PICTURE'S FUNNY, WELL THEN YOU CAN GO TO
HELL.

And here's my card. Tell them I sent you.

DEMONS

YOU CAN GO TO HELL!

(The DEVIL and DEMONS disappear.)

VAKULA

(Still painting.)

And one more pockmark here... and perhaps a burr caught in his cloven hoof....
There! It is finished. A more repulsive creature I never saw. Father Cherevik will love it.

(The NARRATOR appears.)

NARRATOR

It was now that our hero Vakula turned his thoughts to the Slipper Situation.

VAKULA

Slippers! Where does one get slippers? Fancy slippers?

NARRATOR

Perhaps the shoemaker...?

VAKULA

Good idea!

(VAKULA sets off, and the scene begins to transition...)

NARRATOR

And off Vakula trotted to the shoemakers, where he pulled Panas, the shoemaker, away from a nice, warm dinner to make his demands.

(The scene has changed to:

SCENE FOUR

(The SHOEMAKER'S. The NARRATOR changes into PANAS, the shoemaker, and ducks into the scene. VAKULA is talking animatedly to PANAS.)

VAKULA

...And I need it by tomorrow and it should look like the Czarina's slippers.

PANAS

What do the Czarina's slippers look like?

VAKULA

How should I know?

PANAS

Do you have a picture?

VAKULA

How should I have a picture?

PANAS

So how should I know what her slippers look like? Anyway it's impossible to do by tomorrow. I would have to stay up all night and what could you pay me? Peanuts. And for peanuts I should stay up all night?

VAKULA

I'll shoe your horse for a year.

PANAS

No.

VAKULA

I'll shoe your horse for five years.

PANAS

No.

VAKULA

I'll shoe your horse for *ten* years.

No. PANAS

(Getting frustrated.)
Why not?! VAKULA

I don't have a horse. PANAS

(PANAS exits.)

(Calling off.)
I'll get those slippers, you'll see! You're not the only shoemaker in town!

NARRATOR
(Re-entering.)
But the unfortunate fact was, Panas was the only shoemaker in town.

VAKULA
Well, I forgot about that. But who needs a shoemaker? I'm a blacksmith! I make shoes for horses - why not women?

NARRATOR
I hope you're not comparing the two...?

VAKULA
Of course not. You are always trying to make me sound bad. But a shoe is a shoe.

NARRATOR
(With a warm chuckle.)
Ah, good luck, young Vakula. May your forge produce dainty results.

VAKULA
(Curtly)
Thank you.

(HE exits. The scene begins to change...)

NARRATOR

Meanwhile, the storm has picked up, and in her warm, cozy kitchen Solokha stood preparing a goose.

(And now we are in...)

SCENE FIVE

(SOLOKHA's house. SOLOKHA stands tending the stove. Empty coal sacks lie by the fire. We can see the outside as well, including a snowman on the road.)

SOLOKHA

(At stove.)

What, an emancipated woman can't cook? I like to cook.

NARRATOR

I didn't say you couldn't cook! Everyone is so touchy!

SOLOKHA

I'll make it up to you.

(Patting her hair.)

Stop by for dinner sometime, and I'll give you more than a goose.

(OKSANA appears at the side.)

OKSANA

(To audience.)

See, what did I tell you? A slutty witch.

SOLOKHA

Did I do witchcraft? Did you see me casting a spell?

OKSANA

No, but he is attracted to you, and you are old. Proof positive.

(SOLOKHA makes a sound of frustration, as OKSANA and the NARRATOR exit.)

[MUSIC: 05 A WOMAN OVER FORTY] << TRACK 5 >>

SOLOKHA (CONT'D.)

WHEN A WOMAN'S OVER FORTY
THEN SHE'S GARBAGE TO THE WORLD.
BETTER KICK HER TO THE CURB.

BETTER THROW HER IN A DITCH.
AND A WOMAN OVER FORTY WITH A SEX DRIVE?
BETTER CHAIN HER UP AND BURN HER
FOR SHE'S GOT TO BE A WITCH!

NOW, IT JUST SO HAPPENS THAT I AM A WITCH
WITH A CAULDRON, CAT AND BROOM
BUT THAT'S NO REASON WHY YOU SHOULD ASSUME

THAT A WOMAN OVER FORTY
WHO'S ATTRACTIVE TO THE MEN
MUST BE EVIL TO THE CORE,
MUST BE CAPABLE OF HARM
AND A WOMAN OVER FORTY WITH A SEX DRIVE
IF SHE'S SENSUAL AND CHARMING
THAN SHE MUST HAVE USED A CHARM

NOW IT JUST SO HAPPENS THAT I USED A CHARM
TO MAKE PHEROMONES INCREASE
BUT I USE THAT CHARM EXCLUSIVELY ON GEESE!

That's why I have the biggest flock this side of Dikanka.

AND FOR A WOMAN OVER FORTY,
IT'S SO PLEASANT TO BE RICH
WHEN YOU'RE BEWITCHING
WHILE BEING
- COINCIDENTALLY AND NOT NECESSARILY –
A WITCH.

(SOLOKHA returns to her cooking. The DEVIL pops his head out of the snowman.)

DEVIL

I already knew she was a witch, so no big surprises there. But look -

(CHUB, OKSANA's father, enters on the road to SOLOKHA's, pushing against the wind and snow. HE is a round little red-faced fellow of about 50.)

DEVIL (CONT'D.)

Oksana's father Chub is on his way home, expecting to spend a quiet Christmas Eve with his daughter. But what's this? The snow is getting worse?

(It does.)

The wind is picking up?

(It does.)

With no moon and the snow and the wind, it is impossible to find your way? Will poor Chub die out here in the storm? What's that? A light in a window?

(CHUB sees the light from SOLOKHA's house.)

Warmth! Salvation!

(HE notices his choice of words.)

... I don't like the way that sounds

(HE fixes it.)

Warmth! Supper!

(Dramatically.)

Delicious smells of roasting goose waft from within as Chub drags himself through the bitter snow to the door. I'd better get closer to see what happens!

(HE exits. CHUB reaches the door and knocks.)

SOLOKHA

Who is it?

CHUB

Chub!

(SOLOKHA opens the door. HE falls inside.)

SOLOKHA

Good heavens, you're almost frozen!

CHUB

I lost my way. Until some heavenly winds blew me to your door!

(The DEVIL pops out from behind a wall in SOLOKHA's house.)

DEVIL

(Disgusted.)

Heavenly! Forsooth . Give credit where credit is due.

(HE pops back out of sight.)

SOLOKHA

Come, warm yourself by the fire. Vodka?

CHUB

You are an angel.

SOLOKHA

Well, not quite, but I'll still get you a vodka.

(As SHE gets it, HE sits and makes himself comfortable.)

CHUB

Ahh, a warm kitchen on Christmas Eve, a roaring fire, a glass of vodka, a goose roasting in the oven with a beautiful woman tending it... I haven't felt like this since my wife passed on, rest her soul. This, *this* is a real home.

SOLOKHA

(With a little acid.)

Your daughter doesn't cook?

CHUB

(Chuckling.)

She cooks up trouble. I tell you, Solokha, this is bringing the old days back to my mind.

(HE starts weeping. SHE goes to comfort him.)

SOLOKHA

There there.

CHUB

In fact, it makes me think... it makes me think there might be hope for a new future. In fact... in fact... Solokha -

(HE drops to his knees. The DEVIL pops out of the middle coal sack and snaps his fingers to freeze the action.)

DEVIL

Here he goes! What ingenious mastermind could have set this chain of events in motion?

(HE snaps again and the others unfreeze.)

CHUB

You know, some say that you are a witch, with a furry little tail on your back, and that you're responsible for last year's cattle plague, but me... well, I'm getting on in years, and... well...

[MUSIC: 06 THE ONLY MAN] << TRACK 6 >>

A FELLOW OVER FIFTY ISN'T QUITE THE MAN HE WAS
ESPECIALLY WHEN HE'S KIND OF GONE TO SEED.
I FEEL PUSH-UPS GETTING HARDER
AND SPEND HOURS IN THE LARDER...
WAKING UP TOMORROW'S NEVER GUARANTEED

BUT I'M WITH YOU
AND I FEEL YOUNG AGAIN.
YOU MAKE ME GLOW.
YOU MAKE ME FEEL SO ALIVE!

I'M UNDER YOUR SPELL!
(SHE glares at him. HE corrects.)
...BUT JUST METAPHORICALLY.
AND I CAN TELL
THAT I'M THE ONLY MAN FOR YOU

NOW I'M NO PRIZE.

SOLOKHA

You're not.

CHUB

AND I'M NO PEACH.

SOLOKHA

You're *definitely* not.

CHUB

MY HALITOSIS PROBLEM COMES AND GOES...

SOLOKHA

(Agreeing – it's a problem.)

Mmm.

CHUB

BUT YOU'RE A STAR
WITHIN MY REACH

SOLOKHA

You think so?

CHUB

AND SO I HOPE YOU WOULDN'T MIND IF I PROPOSE?

SOLOKHA

Well, when you put it like that it *is* kind of cute. And you do have a very big farm.

CHUB

FOR I'M WITH YOU
AND I FEEL STRONG AGAIN.

SOLOKHA

(Ironic.)

ISN'T THAT NICE?

CHUB

YOU MAKE ME KNOW
THAT I CAN FLOURISH AND THRIVE!

SOLOKHA

IT'S TRUE, I'M INCREDIBLE!

CHUB

YOU MAY HAVE A TAIL
OR CAUSE ALL THE COWS TO DIE.

SOLOKHA

Again with the witch thing?

CHUB

THOSE MATTERS ALL PALE
IF YOU SAY THAT YOU CARE FOR ME, TOO,

SOLOKHA

Well...

CHUB

AND THAT I'M THE ONLY MAN FOR YOU!

(HE is back on his knees, and SHE is poised to answer him, when there is a knock on the door.)

[PAUSE TRACK]

CHUB

Who could that be?

SOLOKHA

It must be Vakula.

CHUB

(Turning pale.)

Vakula hates me! Last time he saw me, he gave me a poke in the snoot. He'll kill me if he finds me here.

SOLOKHA

Vakula doesn't *hate* you, he just...

(SHE can't figure out how to finish the sentence.)

...okay, you're right, he hates you.

(Another knock, louder and more insistent.)

CHUB

Where can I hide?

SOLOKHA

There are some empty coal sacks by the fire. No matter what, be completely silent. I'll try to get rid of him.

(The DEVIL has been watching this scene, growing increasingly upset at the interruption. Now HE sees CHUB turning toward him, and hastily disappears back in his coal sack. CHUB finds the coal sacks and starts to climb into the one containing the DEVIL.)

CHUB

I think there is something in this one.

SOLOKHA

Get in, get in!

(CHUB hastily climbs in and pulls the sack over his head. SOLOKHA opens the door. OSIP, the Mayor, falls inside.)

SOLOKHA

Osip! Good heavens, you're almost frozen!

(The DEVIL pops out from the sack.)

DEVIL

What the devil is the mayor doing here?

OSIP

I lost my way. Until some heavenly winds blew me to your door!

DEVIL

(Disgusted.)

Heavenly?! Maybe. I certainly didn't send this one!

(To the heavens.)

Can't I just have this one night?

SOLOKHA

As a matter of fact, now is not a good time. Perhaps tomorrow...?

OSIP

Ahh, a warm kitchen on Christmas Eve, a roaring fire, a goose roasting in the oven... I haven't felt like this since my wife, rest her soul, called me a philandering heap of rotting fish eggs and told me I could get my own supper from now on. This, *this* is a real home.

SOLOKHA

That may be, but I'm afraid that at the moment...

[RESUME TRACK]

OSIP

(Starts crying and sits heavily.)

And I was a philandering heap of rotting fish eggs. But you, Solokha, you make me want to be better. In fact... in fact...

WHEN I'M WITH YOU
YOU MAKE ME TRY AGAIN

SOLOKHA

Here we go...

OSIP

YOU MAKE ME GROW
YOU MAKE ME BETTER INSIDE.

SOLOKHA

YES, YES, I'M A MIRACLE...

OSIP

SO FLY ON A BROOM

SOLOKHA

Osip!

OSIP

IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL TO ME
BECAUSE - I PRESUME -
THAT I'M THE ONLY MAN FOR YOU!

(HE is down on his knees, ready to propose.)

OSIP

Solokha, though I have always enjoyed our time together, I have never thought of marrying again, but tonight, Solokha, I ask you, would you do me the greatest honor -

SOLOKHA

(To the audience.)

Doesn't anyone just want a roll in the hay anymore?

OSIP

Solokha, would you do me the honor of becoming my –

(There is a knock at the door.)

[PAUSE TRACK]

OSIP (CONT'D.)

Who could that be?

SOLOKHA

It's probably Vakula.

OSIP

He's so jealous of you – he would murder me! Why, just last week he gave me a mighty swipe upside the head for mentioning your name.

SOLOKHA

I *need* to have a talk with that boy.

OSIP

Where can I hide?

SOLOKHA

There are some empty coal sacks by the fire, just avoid the one in the -

(But OSIP has picked up the middle coal sack. HE disappears into the coal sack. SOLOKHA shrugs and opens the door. FATHER CHEREVIK, the local priest, enters.)

SOLOKHA

Father Cherevik! What a surprise! Good heavens, you're almost frozen!

FATHER CHEREVIK

I lost my way.

SOLOKHA & FATHER CHEREVIK

...Until some heavenly winds blew me to your door!

FATHER CHEREVIK

How did you know?

SOLOKHA

Womanly intuition.

(Trying to get him out the door.)

Perhaps I could offer you a lantern for the trip home?

FATHER CHEREVIK

(Sniffing, in heaven.)

Is that... goose?

SOLOKHA

Yes, it's my goose, and I think it may be cooked.

(SHE sinks down into a chair in resignation.)

[RESUME TRACK]

FATHER CHEREVIK

I SMELL A GOOSE
AND I FEEL GOD AGAIN
I'VE SUNK SO LOW
WITHOUT A WIFE AS MY GUIDE

SOLOKHA
YES, YES, LET'S GET ON WITH IT!

FATHER CHEREVIK
YOU MAY BE A WITCH

SOLOKHA
Even *you*, Father Cherevik?

FATHER CHEREVIK
I MAY GIVE THE SACRAMENTS
BUT ALL THAT COULD SWITCH
IF YOU'D MAKE ALL MY PRAYERS COME TRUE
AND TELL ME THAT I'M THE ONLY -

(From the sack we hear voices... These are prerecorded, since the
NARRATOR cannot sing harmony with himself.)

CHUB
(From the sack.)
I'M THE ONLY -

OSIP
(From the sack.)
I'M THE ONLY -

FATHER CHEREVIK, CHUB, and OSIP
MAN FOR YOU!

(And FATHER CHEREVIK is down on his knees. A knock on the door.)

[PAUSE TRACK]

SOLOKHA
(Matter of fact, by this point. SHE knew it was coming.)
Get in the sack.

FATHER CHEREVIK
What sack?

SOLOKHA

It's over there. Just avoid the middle –
(HE gets in the middle sack.)

Too late.

(SHE opens the door. VAKULA enters.)

SOLOKHA (CONT'D.)

Vakula! Finally!

VAKULA

Am I late?

SOLOKHA

Not at all. In fact, you're early. Get out for a couple more hours.

(SHE shepherds him toward the door.)

VAKULA

I'll go in a minute, I'm heading to my workshop. I just need to get some coal for the forge.

SOLOKHA

You'll have to get it from the shed. All the sacks in here are empty.

VAKULA

(Getting around her and going for the middle sack.)

This one isn't. In fact, it looks nice and full.

(HE lifts it onto his back.)

This sack is unusually heavy. Is there a pig in here?

SOLOKHA

(Head in her hands.)

In a manner of speaking, there are three of them.

VAKULA

(Joking.)

Don't worry, these fat pigs will get a roasting when I throw them on my forge's fire!

DEVIL

(Sticking his head out of the bottom of the sack.)

Hey! I am not liking the role reversal which is happening here.

(HE sticks his head back in. From the sack we hear voices...)

[RESUME TRACK]

CHUB

I'M THE ONLY -

OSIP

I'M THE ONLY -

FATHER CHEREVIK

I'M THE ONLY -

FATHER CHEREVIK, CHUB, and OSIP
MAN FOR YOU!

(As VAKULA is confused, then shrugs and exits. SOLOKHA sinks down into a chair. The scene changes to...)

SCENE SIX

(VAKULA's smithy. HE enters and, with a heavy grunt, sets down the sack. There is a little fire going. HE pumps the bellows. HE picks up his hammer and tongs. HE puts them down and picks up a block of steel. HE looks down at his boots. HE looks back at the steel. HE looks at the boots again. HE checks the steel again. Still not a shoe.)

[MUSIC: 07 MY SOUL FOR A SOLE] << TRACK 7 >>

VAKULA

MAKING A SHOE OUT OF PASSION ALONE
IS NOT THE IDEAL MATERIAL.
MY HAMMER'S MUCH BETTER AT HAMMERING GOLD
FOR PASSION IS FLUID AND TRICKY TO HOLD
AND THE HEART IS TOO HARD TO CONTROL
OH, I'D GIVE UP MY SOUL FOR A SOLE!
I'D GIVE UP MY SOUL FOR A SOLE.

(The DEVIL pops his head out of the sack.)

DEVIL

Well, my first plan may have gone phut, but *now* we're getting somewhere!

(HE pops his head back in.)

VAKULA

WHEN I BOUGHT IRON
I NEVER THOUGHT IRON
COULD BE FRAUGHT IRON
AND OVERWROUGHT IRON.

WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT COPPER
WOULD COME A CROPPER,
AND THAT BRONZE AND BRASSES
WOULDN'T PLEASE THE LASSES?

EMBROIDERY!
I THINK I NEED EMBROIDERY!

AND CLOTH!
BUT AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT ON CHRISTMAS EVE
WHERE ON EARTH DO YOU GET CLOTH...?

(His eyes fall on the sack of coal.)

Ah!

(HE holds the sack, ready to open it.)

MAKING A SHOE OUT OF ROMANCE ALONE
IS NOT REALLY KNOWN AS PRACTICAL.
YOU STAND IN THE SMITHY, YOU'RE SHAPING THE STEEL,
BUT FOOTWEAR WON'T COME FROM THE FEELINGS YOU FEEL,
AND WELL, FOOTWEAR IS KIND OF THE GOAL!
OH, I'D GIVE UP MY SOUL FOR A SOLE
I'D GIVE UP MY SOUL FOR A SOLE.

(HE goes to pour out the sack. The bottom breaks, and the DEVIL falls out.)

[PAUSE TRACK]

VAKULA (CONT'D.)

What?!

DEVIL

What?!

VAKULA

What the Devil?

DEVIL

What the Blacksmith?

VAKULA

Beelzebub?

DEVIL

(Hysterical and defensive.)

This is your own fault! Stop painting those ugly pictures of me! They hurt my feelings. There, I said it.

VAKULA

Get out of my smithy, Satan!

(HE grabs a cross and holds it up.)

DEVIL

(Recovering some aplomb.)

Not so fast, my fine feathered friend. I heard that you're ready to bargain and I've got a proposition for you.

VAKULA

Too late. I've already seen *Faust*.

DEVIL

Well dammit! This evening is *not* going my way.

VAKULA

In fact, *I* have a proposition for *you*: get out of my smithy or I'll punch you in the snoot.

DEVIL

But you said –

VAKULA

You cannot trick me so easily. I may be a blacksmith, but I am not an idiot. Now get out of here. I have fancy shoes to make out of a coal sack.

(VAKULA picks up the DEVIL and throws him out of the smithy. HE returns to his work, shaking his head. CHUB sneezes from the coal sack.)

[RESUME TRACK]

VAKULA

(Automatically.)

God bless you.

(HE takes a couple of stabs at making the slipper. HE is flummoxed.)

MAKING A SHOE OUT OF BURLAP AND HOPE
MAY NOT REALLY LEAD TO EXCELLENCE.

I MAY HAVE BEEN WRONG WITH MY HOT HEADED PRIDE...
THE DEVIL'S IN DETAILS!... THE DEVILS OUTSIDE...
WELL, THEN WHO'S IN THIS SACKFUL OF COAL?

(The music finishes the phrase as VAKULA goes to the sack and opens it,
and finds CHUB.)

VAKULA

Chub!

[PAUSE TRACK]

CHUB

Don't hit me!

VAKULA

What the hell?!

CHUB

It's not my fault! There was a foot ticking my face, or I never would have sneezed!

VAKULA

A foot?! The devil's?

CHUB

No. I think it was the mayor's.

VAKULA

The mayor's in there?

CHUB

And Father Cherevik.

VAKULA

What are the mayor and Father Cherevik doing in a sack?

CHUB

Dancing the Macarena, as far as I can tell.

(Displaying a smushed hat.)

Just look what they did to my -

VAKULA

Why are you all in a sack?

CHUB

I can explain. I was visiting your mother, when –

VAKULA

(Exploding.)

Visiting my mother?! I'm going to roast you! I'm going to turn you into a pretzel! I'm going to –

CHUB

You touch me and I'll tell Oksana!

VAKULA

You wouldn't!

CHUB

I would.

VAKULA

(Pulling his fist back for the punch.)

I'll take my chances.

CHUB

I know where to get the shoes you want!

VAKULA

(Pausing the punch.)

You do?

CHUB

Indeed, I know someone with shoes exactly like the czarina's.

VAKULA

Who?

CHUB

The czarina.

VAKULA

Get back in that sack, I'm going to throw it into the river, I'm going to –

CHUB

I'm serious! The devil is right outside. He could fly you to Petersburg to see the czarina.

VAKULA

Why should he do me any favors?

CHUB

Tell him you're going to mash him! Tell him you're going to turn him into a pretzel!

VAKULA

I have a better idea.

(Calling off.)

Oh Lucifer!

(The DEVIL enters.)

DEVIL

Have you changed your mind about the soul? I can offer you a really good deal.

VAKULA

No. I want you to fly me to Petersburg.

DEVIL

...Why should I fly you to Petersburg?

VAKULA

I won't make a deal with the devil, but I *will* make a promise. If you will fly me to Petersburg tonight and help me get an interview with the czarina, I will paint over all of the pimples on your portrait.

DEVIL

What about the warts?

Just the pimples. VAKULA

All of the pimples and five warts. DEVIL

No warts. The warts give the picture artistic integrity. VAKULA

Three warts. DEVIL

Three warts, that's a pretty good bargain! CHUB

One wart. VAKULA

Two warts. DEVIL

Okay, fine, two warts. VAKULA

It's a deal. DEVIL

It's not a deal. Just a promise. VAKULA

When do we leave? CHUB

You're not coming. VAKULA & DEVIL

(Whining.) CHUB

Of course I'm coming. It was my idea. Besides, I want to see the big city!

VAKULA

Okay, but if you get motion sick...

DEVIL

Grab ahold, fellows! Let's go!

(During the following, VAKULA and CHUB place a hand on the DEVIL, and all three rise up into the air. Or do something that resembles flying. Whatever's in the budget.)

[RESUME TRACK]

VAKULA, DEVIL, & CHUB

FINDING A SHOE WITH THE DEVIL HIMSELF
AND FLYING AWAY TO PETERSBURG!
IT MAY BE IMMORAL, IT MAY BE A SIN
BUT STILL IT'S WAY BETTER THAN POUNDING ON TIN

VAKULA

I'LL BE DAMNED IF I ALTER A MOLE
BUT I'D GIVE UP A WART
FOR A TRIP TO THE COURT
FOR PASSION IS CERTAIN TO GRIP 'ER
WHEN I BRING OKSANA THE SLIPPER!

VAKULA, DEVIL, & CHUB

THOUGH EVIL IS TAKING ITS TOLL

VAKULA

I'D GIVE UP MY ARTISTIC INTEGRITY

VAKULA, DEVIL, & CHUB

FOR A SOLE!
FOR A SOLE!
FOR A SOLE!

VAKULA

Away, to Petersburg!

VAKULA, DEVIL, & CHUB

FOR A SOLE!

(THEY fly off. CHUB becomes the NARRATOR and returns.)

NARRATOR

And so away they flew to Petersburg. Meanwhile, it is now that Oksana comes back into our story.

(OKSANA enters.)

OKSANA

For a strong female character, I have had a surprisingly small part in this play. It's been kind of a sausage fest.

NARRATOR

She went to call at Vakula's forge, to check on the progress of her slippers.

OKSANA

(Rapturous.)

My beautiful slippers!

NARRATOR

But she found the forge cold and dark.

(The NARRATOR exits.)

OKSANA

Vakula! Vakula! Are you here?

(No answer. SHE pokes around and finds a piece of steel. SHE fits it against her foot, checking if it could be a nice shoe. It could not. FATHER CHEREVIK cautiously pops his head out of the sack.)

FATHER CHEREVIK

Are we alone?

OKSANA

Father Cherevik! What were you doing in that sack?

FATHER CHEREVIK

(Matter-of-fact.)

Hiding. The mayor is still in there, but he's sleeping so peacefully I didn't want to disturb him. Good day.

(HE begins to exit.)

OKSANA

Wait! Do you know where Vakula is?

FATHER CHEREVIK

I think he said something about going to Petersburg. But it's kind of hard to hear with Mayor Osip's rear end in your ear.

(FATHER CHEREVIK exits.)

OKSANA

Petersburg! But he could never make it back with my shoes in time, not unless he could fly.

(The NARRATOR enters.)

NARRATOR

Fly? That's ridiculous.

OKSANA

I wish *I* could fly.

NARRATOR

Ohho! Big plans for a little lady.

OKSANA

I'd fly to Petersburg and get those shoes myself!

NARRATOR

(Flatly.)

People can't fly.

OKSANA

And you know what?

NARRATOR

What?

OKSANA

I'm not too sure I'd come back.

NARRATOR

(Scornfully.)

Not enough pretty shoes for you here?

OKSANA

Too many people like *you* around here.

[MUSIC: 08 THE FINER THINGS]

NO ONE IN TOWN UNDERSTANDS ME
THEY THINK ME PRETENTIOUS AND VAIN
THEY SWOON AT MY BODICE
BUT SMIRK TO MY FACE
AND TELL ME I'M LACKING IN BRAIN.

BUT I KNOW THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO'D LIKE ME
AWAY FROM THIS SWINE-RIDDEN STY
THE CITY IS WHERE I'D FLY TO
IF ONLY I COULD FLY!

(The NARRATOR exits.)

OKSANA

FROM THE SKIES OF PETERSBURG
YOU'D SEE THE LIGHTS
LIKE A THOUSAND GLITTERING GEMS
IT'S A CITY THAT'S SWIRLING WITH SATIN AND SILK
AND LADIES WITH LACE AT THEIR HEMS.

AND I'D FLY THROUGH THE SKY JUST TO SEE IT
IF ONLY MY SHOULDERS HAD WINGS!
FOR THERE THERE IS BEAUTY
AND THERE THERE'S A CHANCE
TO FIND THE FINER THINGS.

(Lights up on VAKULA, CHUB, and the DEVIL, as they fly above
PETERSBURG.)

VAKULA, CHUB, DEVIL
FROM THE SKIES OF PETERSBURG
YOU'D SMELL THE SMELLS
OF A THOUSAND FRAGRANT PERFUMES!

OKSANA
NOW I KNOW THAT THE CITY WAS BUILT ON A SWAMP
BUT THAT'S ALL COVERED UP, ONE ASSUMES...

VAKULA, CHUB, & DEVIL
(Smelling the swamp.)

Eh...

OKSANA
AND I'D GIVE UP DIKANKA IN SECONDS
I'D CUT ALL MY TIES AND MY STRINGS
IF I COULD ESCAPE FROM THIS BACKWATER TOWN
TO FIND THE FINER THINGS

VAKULA, CHUB, & DEVIL
ON THE STREETS OF PETERSBURG
YOU THE FEEL THE STEP OF A THOUSAND ELEGANT SHOES

OKSANA
IF A HIGH-MINDED SUITOR SHOULD BRING ME A PAIR
WELL, HOW COULD A LADY REFUSE?

OKSANA
AND I'D FLY THROUGH THE SKY JUST TO BE THERE

IF ONLY MY SHOULDERS HAD WINGS!
FOR THERE THERE IS BEAUTY
AND THERE THERE'S A CHANCE

OXSANA, CHUB, DEVIL
TO FIND THE FINER THINGS.

VAKULA
THE FINER THINGS!

OXSANA
THE FINER THINGS!

VAKULA
THE FINER THINGS!

OXSANA, CHUB & DEVIL
THE FINER THINGS!

VAKULA
AND HERE WE GO TO PETERSBURG

ALL
TO FIND THE FINER THINGS!

VAKULA, CHUB, DEVIL
FLYING AWAY OVER HILL, OVER DALE
AND SEEKING THE LIGHTS OF PETERSBURG!

OXSANA
THE FINER THINGS!

VAKULA
OXSANA WILL SEE I'M A MAN AMONG MEN!

CHUB
AND I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING THE SEINE!

OXSANA

THE FINER THINGS!

VAKULA

Wrong city.

CHUB

(Hopefully.)

The Louvre?

DEVIL

(Pointing to lights ahead.)

There it is!

CHUB

The Seine or the Louvre?

DEVIL, VAKULA & OKSANA

Petersburg!

DEVIL

Put out your landing gear, men, we're going down!

(THEY begin their descent toward the lights.)

VAKULA, CHUB, DEVIL, & OKSANA
TO FIND THE FINER THINGS!

(OKSANA exits. The MEN's descent becomes bumpy, and THEY veer wildly.)

CHUB

Watch out!

VAKULA

Careful there!

CHUB

Who's driving this thing?

DEVIL

We may be experiencing some turbuleeeeeeeAHHHH!!!!

(THEY all scream as THEY come in for a bumpy landing. The music continues until THEY land, and then there is silence as we transition to...)

SCENE SEVEN

(A street in Petersburg. VAKULA, the DEVIL, and CHUB are looking around. CHUB is very much enjoying sightseeing, when VAKULA abruptly says....)

DEVIL

(Anticlimactically.)

Well, now that we've landed, what's next?

VAKULA

Now get me an interview with the czarina.

DEVIL

That'll be another two warts.

VAKULA

You're ruining the whole picture!

DEVIL

Plus the burr on my cloven hoof.

VAKULA

Be gone, evil being! I will get an interview on my own.

DEVIL

And how will you do that?

CHUB

I could pretend to be a young and handsome captain of the Cossack military forces.

VAKULA

No one would believe that.

CHUB

Then what's your idea?

VAKULA

Do I always need to have an idea???

CHUB

...If you want to be an active protagonist.

VAKULA

Fine, fine, fine, we'll sneak up on the palace guards in the dark and bang heads together. Then we steal into the czaritza's bedroom and snatch her slippers.

CHUB

...That's the stupidest idea I've ever heard.

VAKULA

And this from a man I found hiding in a sack.

DEVIL

I could make you the size of a fly.

VAKULA

If I wanted to be the size of a fly I wouldn't eat so many dumplings.

CHUB

(Mournfully regarding his paunch.)

I would. I can't resist your mother's curd dumplings.

VAKULA

You leave my mother out of this!

DEVIL

I could make you as small as a fly and you could fly in through the window!

VAKULA

But how could a fly carry a slipper?

DEVIL

After you're inside I'll make you big again, and you can petition the czarina for her slippers.

VAKULA

Hah! Me, beg! Vakula never begs! I like my plan better.

CHUB

Malysh, your fists are not always the answer.

VAKULA

You sound like my mother.

DEVIL

Why is everything with you about your mother?

CHUB

Why not give his plan a try?

VAKULA

All right, all right. Turn me into a fly.

(The DEVIL snaps his fingers. Lights! Smoke! Confusion! When we can see again, VAKULA is gone, but we hear a tiny sound, like a fly. The DEVIL has turned VAKULA into a fly.)

DEVIL

Well, if you paint any nasty pictures now, they will be really tiny pictures. Hasta la vista, blacksmith.

(HE starts to exit.)

CHUB

Wait!

DEVIL

Yes?

CHUB

You can't leave him like that.

DEVIL

You're right. I should get a fly swatter.

CHUB

If you leave him like that, he can't paint over the warts. You will be immortalized grotesquely forever.

DEVIL

That's true.

CHUB

Besides, think of your honor!

DEVIL

(Scoffing.)

Honor!

CHUB

That's right. I admit I am not always the most upstanding of fellows. I may have engaged in extramarital activities with Vakula's mother on more than one occasion.

(The tiny sound increases in shrillness.)

DEVIL

Did you just hear a fly screaming?

CHUB

But every man must have a sense of honor. In fact, before the mayor arrived, I was about to make an honest woman of Solokha.

(More tiny sounds.)

DEVIL

Now I think the fly is choking.

CHUB

(Addressing something we cannot see.)

That's right, Vakula, I mean to marry your mother. Do you hear me? I will be your new papa!

(The tiny sounds stop.)

DEVIL

What's the matter?

CHUB

I think I just swallowed a fly.

(HE coughs, and the DEVIL pounds him on the back till something comes flying out. The tiny sound returns.)

DEVIL

Well, what is a devil about, if not honor? I'll keep my end of the bargain.

CHUB

I knew you'd come around! I can't wait to see the palace!

(The DEVIL snaps his fingers. CHUB freezes.)

[MUSIC: 09 A DEVIL DISGRUNTLED (REPRISE)] << TRACK 8 >>

DEVIL

A DEVIL DISGRUNTLED WILL BE SURE TO FIND A WAY!
IF CHUB STILL WANTS SOLOKHA, THAN THAT PLAN IS STILL IN PLAY!
AND MAYBE AS A BONUS THERE'S AN EGO I CAN BRUISE
I'LL BUG VAKULA'S BRAIN SO MUCH HE'LL NEVER GET THOSE SHOES!

(The DEVIL snaps his fingers. Lights! Smoke! When it clears, HE is gone, too, but the tiny sounds are louder. The DEVIL has turned himself into a fly.)

CHUB

Wait! You can't just leave me here!

(The tiny sounds exit.)

CHUB (CONT'D.)

I am an integral part of this operation! ...Don't leave me here! ... Ah well, I tried. Good thing I brought a snack.

(HE takes a giant Russian pretzel out of his pocket and settles down on a bench to eat. Transition to...)

SCENE EIGHT

(An ante-chamber in the palace. VAKULA and the DEVIL enter – they are both flies. Lights! Smoke! VAKULA turns back into a person. The DEVIL buzzes.)

VAKULA

I told you to wait outside! I need to do this on my own. Go on, get!

(VAKULA watches the fly exit as the buzzing sounds get quieter and gradually disappear.)

VAKULA (CONT'D.)

Well, this is it, Vakula. In a few minutes, your fate will be sealed. There's no backing out now.

[MUSIC: 10 A BOY LIKE ME]

NOW IS MY CHANCE
TO PROVE THAT I'M WORTHY!
TO PROVE I'M NOT REALLY A DOPE.
I'VE DEALT WITH THE DEVIL, I'VE FLOWN WITH THE BIRDS
BUT NOW IT'S TIME TO USE MY WORDS

AND THE DEVIL WAS SENT BY HEAVEN ABOVE
TO HELP ME PROVE
THAT A CLOUD LIKE ME
COULD EVER BE WORTHY OF LOVE!

MOTHER ALWAYS WANTED
A BOY WHO DIDN'T FIGHT
A BOY WHO WAITED PATIENTLY
A BOY WHO WAS POLITE.

MOTHER ALWAYS TOLD ME
TO BE WHO I WANTED TO BE
BUT MOTHER NEVER WANTED
A BOY LIKE ME.

SHE NEVER SAID I TURNED OUT WRONG
OR CALLED ME A DISGRACE
BUT EVERY TIME I THREW A PUNCH
I'D SEE THE DISAPPOINTMENT ON HER FACE

MOTHER SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN
A TRULY PERFECT KID
WHO DIDN'T SCOFF AT POETRY
OR DO THE THINGS I DID

SHE TOLD ME THAT SHE LOVED ME
BUT THROUGH IT I ALWAYS COULD SEE
THAT MOTHER NEVER WANTED
A BOY LIKE ME.

BUT NOW'S MY CHANCE.
TO START AFRESH
AND SHOW THAT I BELONG.
I'LL USE MY BRAINS AND NOT MY FISTS
AND PROVE MY MOTHER WRONG!

MOTHER ALWAYS TOLD ME
TO STOP AND USE MY HEAD
I WASN'T ALWAYS LISTENING
TO EVERYTHING SHE SAID

IF I CAN KEEP MY TEMPER
AND ENTER A PASSIONATE PLEA
THEN I'LL KNOW
AT LAST I'LL KNOW
THAT MOTHER COULD BE PROUD OF
A BOY LIKE ME.

NOW I'LL KNOW
AT LAST I'LL KNOW
THAT MOTHER COULD BE PROUD OF
A BOY LIKE ME!

(VAKULA braces himself, then boldly throws the doors open, light floods in, and we transition to...)

SCENE NINE

(The throne room. The CZARINA stands, preparing to leave the throne. VAKULA approaches and falls to his knees.)

VAKULA

Your majesty, I beg you, I supplicate you! I -

CZARINA

What are you doing here? How did you get in? Who are you?

VAKULA

I am Vakula, and I am a blacksmith -

CZARINA

A blacksmith?! Be gone! On your way! Get out! Guards!

VAKULA

I'm also a painter -

(The CZARINA abruptly sits back down in the throne and gives him her full attention.)

CZARINA

(In a throaty voice.)

I'm intrigued.

VAKULA

I have come to ask you, to beg you, for your slippers!

CZARINA

My slippers?! You mean these?

(SHE sticks her feet out from under her long dress. SHE is wearing giant bunny slippers.)

VAKULA

Please, have some respect, we're not doing children's theater here, this is a grown up play.

CZARINA

Sorry, you mean these?

(SHE pulls out a pair of beautiful shoes.)

VAKULA

That's more like it.

Yes, those! My sweetheart desperately desires a pair like those, and I desperately desire to fulfill her desperate desires.

CZARINA

Are you a magician?

(Unexpectedly Jewish.)

What does she want, you should make a deal with the devil?!

VAKULA

(Angry.)

It's not a deal, just a promise!

(Calming himself.)

So I thought perhaps if I came to see you, and asked ever so nicely -

(There is buzzing around VAKULA's head.)

Quiet!

(Sotto voce.)

I thought I told you to wait outside!

CZARINA

What's that?

VAKULA

Nothing, nothing, I was just saying, if I asked ever so nicely, if I begged -

CZARINA

I hate begging, reminds me of poor people. Tell me about your Art.

VAKULA

Yes, well, my horseshoes are fine and delicate, but also sturdy and strong and will last you -

CZARINA

No one cares about that. Tell me about your painting. I am a connoisseur.

VAKULA

Yes, well, I paint religious art.

CZARINA

(As if this is a brand new concept.)

Religious art?! Why *religious* art? I want to know your inspiration, your perspiration, your *process*.

VAKULA

Well, first I squeeze some paint out of the tubes...

CZARINA

No, your *mental* process. Why do you paint religious art?

(The tiny sound is whizzing around VAKULA's head, and he jumps around, trying to swat it.)

VAKULA

(Directed at the tiny sound.)

Well, I figure the devil is an evil creature that could use to be stomped on, crushed, smushed!

CZARINA

Stop dancing around, you look like you're possessed.

VAKULA

I'm not possessed - get out my ear, you hideous demon!

CZARINA

It must be the artistic temperament. You amuse me, blacksmith. Go ahead, make your case.

VAKULA

...I thought I already made it.

CZARINA

You are an artist, a *painter*! Have you no poetic words to say of why your lady-love's dainty foot deserves to wear my slipper?

(VAKULA struggles, then begins.)

VAKULA

Of course I have poetic words.

(HE tries to speak. Nothing happens.)

I have many poetic words to say.

(HE tries to speak. Nothing happens.)

Blacksmiths are *known* for their poetic words!

(Tiny buzzes in VAKULA's ear.)

Shut up, shut up, shut up!

CZARINA

That was not very poetic.

VAKULA

No, no! I apologize. Please give me another chance, please!!!

CZARINA

I'm waiting.

(During the following song, the tiny sound keeps buzzing around VAKULA and driving him crazy throughout.)

[MUSIC: 11 VAKULA'S PLEA] << TRACK 9 >>

VAKULA

(HE starts uncertainly, searching for words.)

THE WINSOMEST WOMAN WHO WALKS IN THE WORLD
HER EYEBROWS ARE PLUCKED, AND HER LASHES ARE CURLED
THE FAIREST OF CREATURES CREATED BY GOD
SHE SHOULDN'T BE SHODDILY SHOD.

(To the tiny sound.)

Pretty good, eh?

(Another critical buzz.)

Oh shut up, you're distracting me.

(With growing confidence.)

THE PRETTIEST PICTURE A PERSON COULD PAINT
HER POUTING IS PERFECT FOR EVERY COMPLAINT
SHE'LL TELL YOU TO WORSHIP THE GROUND THAT SHE'S TROD
SHE SHOULDN'T BE SHODDILY SHOD.

AND OH, THE EXPLODING EMOTIONS
THE MOMENT SHE WALKS IN THE ROOM!
THE FOMENTING FEAR AND FRUSTRATION
WHICH IS LOVE!
WHICH IS LOVE... I PRESUME

I'VE CRAWLED ON MY KNEES TILL MY TROUSERS WERE TORN
AND WHAT HAS SHE GIVEN ME? SNICKERS AND SCORN
SHE'S CRUEL AND UNCARING, BUT LOOK AT THAT BOD
SHE SHOULDN'T BE SHODDILY SHOD!
SHE SHOULDN'T BE SHODDILY SHOD.

CZARINA

You realize you are not making a very convincing case.

VAKULA

It's not my fault! Something keeps –
(Swat!)
- distracting me.

(The NARRATOR appears on the side, watching the action.)

NARRATOR

THERE'S A FLY IN THE OINTMENT, THERE'S A FLEA IN AN EAR
AND THE BUZZ, BUZZ, BUZZING IS ALL YOU CAN HEAR
AND NO CZAR OR CZARINA WOULD EVER SUPPOSE
THAT THE DEVIL JUST LANDED ON YOUR NOSE.

VAKULA

SHE'S FLOWING WITH FEATURES ON WHICH I COULD DWELL
(Buzz!)

Shut up!

HER HAIR IS WELL COIFFURED, HER PITS NEVER SMELL
(Buzz!)

Stop it!

WITH GROOMING AND HYGIENE DESERVING A NOD
SHE SHOULDN'T BE SHODDILY SHOD.

AND OH, THE INTENSE AGGRAVATION
THE MOMENT SHE FLIES IN YOUR EYES
THE FOMENTING FEELING OF FURY
WHICH IS LOVE!
WHICH IS LOVE, I SURMISE...

THOUGH LIFE WITH OKSANA MIGHT SEEM LIKE A CURSE
TO LINGER ON LONELY HAS GOT TO BE WORSE!
I TELL YOU I LOVE HER!
I KNOW IT SOUNDS ODD
BUT SHE SHOULDN'T BE SHODDILY SHOD!

(The fly buzzes the last line of the music.)

NARRATOR

THERE'S A FLY IN THE OINTMENT, THERE'S A BUG IN YOUR BRAIN
AND THE BUZZ, BUZZ, BUZZING WILL DRIVE YOU INSANE
WHILE YOU'RE FIGHTING THE DEVIL, HOW COULD IT OCCUR
THAT THE FLY IN THE OINTMENT COULD BE... HER?

(OKSANA appears at the side. SHE addresses the NARRATOR.)

OKSANA

Wait, wait, wait, hold up a second – are you comparing me to the devil? Are you comparing me *unfavorably* to the devil?

(The NARRATOR ducks the question, and VAKULA responds.)

VAKULA

Of course not! I'm singing your praises in an unbiased manner. Now *where. is. that.*
fly?!?!?!?!?!?

(HE takes off his shoe and devotes most of his attention during the following to chasing the moving buzzing sounds and trying to get them with his shoe.)

NARRATOR

THERE'S A FLY IN THE OINTMENT, THERE'S A NIT IN YOUR HAIR

VAKULA

SHE'S FLOWING WITH FEATURES ON WHICH I COULD DWELL

NARRATOR

AND THE ITCH, ITCH, ITCHING CAN LAY THE TRUTH BARE,

VAKULA

HER HAIR IS WELL COIFFURED, HER PITS NEVER SMELL

NARRATOR

(Simul.)

FOR IT'S SUPER ANNOYING WHEN TRYING TO BEG
AND BEELZEBUB BITES YOU ON THE LEG.

THERE'S A FLY IN THE OINTMENT, THERE'S A BUG IN YOUR BRAIN
AND THE BUZZ, BUZZ, BUZZING WILL DRIVE YOU INSANE
WHILE YOU'RE FIGHTING THE DEVIL, HOW COULD IT OCCUR
THAT THE FLY IN THE OINTMENT COULD BE... HER?
UGH.

VAKULA

(Simul.)

SHE SHOULDN'T BE SHODDILY SHOD!

THOUGH LIFE WITH OKSANA MIGHT SEEM LIKE A CURSE
TO LINGER ON LONELY HAS GOT TO BE WORSE.
I TELL YOU I LOVE HER!
I KNOW IT SOUNDS ODD
BUT SHE SHOULDN'T BE SHODDILY -

CZARINA

(Simul.)

OH, GOOD HEAVENS.
NO, REALLY?
YOU'RE BANANAS!
MEN.
UGH.

OKSANA

AHHHH!
(etc.)

(VAKULA gets the open part of his shoe over the fly and quickly cups his hand on top)

VAKULA

Gotcha!

(Triumphantly)
YOUR HIGHNESS, YOUR MAJESTY, YOUR GRACE
I REST MY CASE!

ALL

AHH!

(Music concludes. NARRATOR and OKSANA disappear.)

CZARINA

And that's your case?

VAKULA

That's my case. Thank you for listening.

CZARINA

Of course. What are women characters for if not to help men sort out their feelings. Never mind that I am the ruler of the entire Russian Empire and a grossly inaccurate depiction of Catherine the Great, the important thing is that you've had some kind of realization and worked through your thinly veiled misogynistic tendencies. So, did you still want these slippers?

(SHE holds up the bunny slippers.)

VAKULA

Not those, it was -

CZARINA

Just kidding. Hasta la vista, Blacksmith.

(SHE picks up her fancy slippers and exits.)

VAKULA

There is a surprising amount of Spanish in this play.

(Buzz.)

No, they didn't look comfy, I am not getting you the bunny slippers.

(Angry buzz.)

That's right! And I may paint out four warts, but for your behavior today I am going to add a little curly pig tail coming out of your nose!

(Angry buzzing, crash, VAKULA vanishes in smoke. Lights down.)

SCENE TEN

(Back on a street in Dikanka. Poof! The DEVIL, VAKULA and CHUB appear.)

CHUB

So you didn't get the slippers – the important thing is that we had a fun adventure together and you didn't beat me up. I feel like we've bonded. I want you to call me Papa.

(VAKULA growls at CHUB.)

CHUB (CONT'D.)

Then again, maybe not.

(CHUB scurries off.)

DEVIL

Well, here we are home. Time to go and fix my painting!

VAKULA

You distracted me. You didn't help me get the shoes. I'm not doing a thing to the painting except adding the tail.

DEVIL

What about honor? A deal is a -
(Thinks better of it.)
A promise is a promise.

VAKULA

I don't care. I have one more hour to get a pair of shoes like the Czarina's, and I can't be bothered with pesky little bugs like you.

(VAKULA exits.)

DEVIL

"Pesky little bugs?!" "Pesky little bugs?!" That's it! We've had the mother getting married plot, we've had the shoe plot, it's time to raise the stakes. Forget "mischief," If

he doesn't destroy all of his paintings by midnight tonight, I'm going to poke him with a red-hot poker!

(NARRATOR enters at the side.)

NARRATOR

Are you allowed to use your red-hot poker outside of hell?

DEVIL

Do you think the devil cares about "rules"?

NARRATOR

Good point. About this plan of yours, I know a red-hot poker would hurt -

DEVIL

It sure would!

NARRATOR

...But why not get him where it really hurts?

DEVIL

What are you, my advisor? Why should I think you're on my side?

NARRATOR

He doesn't know his mother is a witch.

DEVIL

He doesn't know his mother is a witch?

NARRATOR

He doesn't know his mother is a witch.

DEVIL

He's out there painting religious paintings and scornfully refusing to make a deal with the devil, and he doesn't know his mother is a witch?

NARRATOR

Just saying.... Maybe the whole town seeing her fly through the night sky might cool down his religious fervor.

DEVIL

Genius! First I poke him with a red-hot poker, then I show the whole town his mother is a witch!

NARRATOR

Do you have to use the red-hot poker?

DEVIL

Just a little poke?

NARRATOR

I'm squeamish.

DEVIL

Teeeeny little poke.

NARRATOR

If you must. I'll cover my eyes.

(The NARRATOR exits.)

[MUSIC: 12 THE DEVIL DISGRUNTLED (REPRISE 2)]

DEVIL

THE DEVIL DISHEARTENED HAS BEEN KNOWN TO WEEP AND WAIL
HE SAYS HE'LL FIX MY PAINTING AND HE ADDS A PIGGY TAIL!
I TRIED TO DO SOME MISCHIEF, BUT THE MISCHIEF'S DONE TO ME
BUT IS THIS WHERE WE END IT?
JUST YOU WAIT AND SEE!

(The NARRATOR pops his head back in.)

NARRATOR

We just told them the whole plot. This is hardly a cliffhanger.

DEVIL

(Ignoring him, operatic.)
JUST YOU WAIT AND SEE!

(HE runs offstage. Lights down.)

SCENE ELEVEN

(SOLOKHA's house. SOLOKHA is stirring a witch's brew in a vat. There is a knock on the door.)

SOLOKHA

Who is it?

(SHE opens the door. OKSANA stands there.)

SOLOKHA (CONT'D.)

Oh, it's you.

OKSANA

What are you brewing?

SOLOKHA

Some ice tea.

OKSANA

There, now we passed the Bechdel test, where's Vakula?

SOLOKHA

He's not in his workshop?

OKSANA

No, it's cold and dark and the fire in the forge is out. There's nothing there but an empty coal sack.

SOLOKHA

Perhaps he's in the church working on his painting?

OKSANA

He's not there either. I'm worried about him. The mayor said he was acting crazy, talking to himself in different voices and shouting at the Devil. I think he's gone mad for love of me.

SOLOKHA

Well, that may be...

OKSANA

Nobody's seen him for hours. Everybody thinks he drowned himself in the lake.

SOLOKHA

A pious boy like him?! He would never.

OKSANA

Men in love do strange things.

SOLOKHA

(Under her breath.)

And men fall in love with strange things.

OKSANA

I heard that.

SOLOKHA

Oh, so it has ears.

OKSANA

It has feelings too. Solokha, why don't you like me?

SOLOKHA

Like, don't like, what's the difference? Where could Vakula be?

OKSANA

Do you care?

SOLOKHA

Of course I care! He's my son.

OKSANA

It's just you're always running around with all these men even though it embarrasses him, so I thought maybe you didn't care. I wonder if he really has thrown himself into the lake. Do you know, nothing makes a man so attractive as the possibility of his death. I think I might be falling in love with him. Well, let me know if you hear anything.

SOLOKHA

It couldn't be!

(The NARRATOR enters at the side.)

NARRATOR

Or could it?

SOLOKHA

He's only been gone a few hours!

NARRATOR

Stranger things have happened.

SOLOKHA

What time is it?

NARRATOR

Almost midnight.

SOLOKHA

(With satisfaction. Heading toward broom.)

The witching hour.

NARRATOR

Not on Christmas Eve.

(Bells begin sounding. SOLOKHA stops.)

NARRATOR (CONT'D.)

There are the bells, calling everyone to midnight mass. The streets will be full of people who might see you. It isn't safe.

SOLOKHA

Safe shmafe, we're talking about my son here!

[MUSIC: 13 I'LL FIND YOU] << TRACK 10 >>

THEY SAY THAT YOU'VE GONE MISSING
IT'S EVERY MOTHER'S FEAR
BUT HOW COULD YOU BE MISSING WHEN YOU'RE HERE?

(SHE indicates her heart.)

WHAT GOOD ARE ALL MY POTIONS?
WHAT GOOD IS WITCH'S BREW
IF I CAN'T USE MY POWERS TO FIND YOU?

AND THOUGH THE THREATS OF MIDNIGHT MASSES LOOM
IT'S TIME THIS WITCH WENT FLYING TO HER BROOM

(SHE gets her broom. NARRATOR exits.)

TO THE FAR CORNERS OF THE UNIVERSE
I'LL FLY
I'LL FLY!
LET THE MOON WITHER AND THE LIGHTNING STRIKE
I'LL FIND YOU!
I'LL FIND YOU!

I'D SEE YOU IN HAYSTACK
OR AT THE BOTTOM OF A LAKE
BUT IF THEY THINK YOU'RE IN YOUR GRAVE
THEY'VE MADE A GRAVE MISTAKE

TO THE FAR FRINGES OF THE WILDERNESS
I'LL FLY
I'LL FLY!
IF THE PRIEST SEES ME, HE CAN TAKE A HIKE
I'LL FIND YOU!
I'LL FIND YOU!

THROUGH CLOUDS OF RAGING THUNDER
I'D HEAR MY CHILD'S CRY
AND ANYWHERE THAT YOU MAY BE
I'LL FLY!
I'LL FLY!
I'LL FLY!

AND A MIDNIGHT MASS WILL NOT STOP ME
THOUGH THE BELLS HAVE ALREADY BEGUN
NO CALL TO THE CHURCH
COULD HAMPER MY SEARCH
OR STOP ME FROM FINDING MY SON

TO THE FAR CORNERS OF THE UNIVERSE
I'LL FLY
I'LL FLY!
LET THE WIND WHISTLE AND THE DEVIL WAIL
I'LL FIND YOU!
I'LL FIND YOU!

NO TIDE COULD PULL YOU UNDER
I'D PLUNDER EARTH AND SKY!
TO FIND YOU SAFE AND BRING YOU HOME
THERE'S NAUGHT I WOULDN'T TRY!
SO ANYWHERE THAT YOU MAY BE
ANYWHERE THAT YOU MAY BE
I'LL FLY!
I'LL FLY!
I'LL FLY!
I'LL FLY!

(SHE rises up into the air and zips out the door, or trots out on her broom,
whatever the budget allows. The DEVIL steps in front of the house.)

DEVIL

You'll fly... right into my trap!

(HE throws the moon up into the sky. The stage is flooded with light. We
see SOLOKHA's silhouette against the bright sky, and the DIKANKANs –
including OKSANA, and the NARRATOR, prepared to play numerous
roles at the drop of – or the putting on of – a hat.)

[MUSIC: 14 IN DIKANKA (REPRISE)] << TRACK 11 >>

OKSANA

A witch!

CHUB

Who is that?

FATHER CHEREVIK

Is that... Solokha?

(VAKULA enters, disbelieving.)

VAKULA

Mother? Mother?! MOTHER!!!!!!!!!!

(HE falls to his knees in despair. The DEVIL sneaks up behind and jabs his backside with a poker.)

VAKULA

Ow!!!!

DEVIL

Teeeeeeny little poke!

VAKULA

Stop that! Can't you see I'm in the middle of a dark night of the soul here?!?!

(Turns his attention back to SOLOKHA.)

Mother!!!!!!!! Mother!!!! MOTHER!!!!

(HE falls to his knees again in despair. In the following song, the NARRATOR quickly changes between various DIKANKANS before our eyes! A hat on and a stoop and HE sings one line! A shawl on and HE sings the next! Etc.!)

[MUSIC: 14 IN DIKANKA (REPRISE)] << TRACK 11 >>

DIKANKANS

ON A NIGHT IN THE SKY OF DIKANKA
THOUGH IT MIGHT APPEAR QUIET AND CALM
YOU'VE GOT TO BEWARE
THERE'S A WITCH IN THE AIR
AND THAT WITCH MAY BE SOMEBODY'S MOM!

AND THE MOON LIGHTS THE SKY OF DIKANKA
AND SHE'S FLYING BOLD AS BRASS
FOR THE DEVIL IS LOOSE IN DIKANKA
ON THE WAY TO MIDNIGHT MASS

AND A HEART WILL BE HURT IN DIKANKA
WITH THE BREAK ON FULL DISPLAY
FOR THE DEVIL IS FREE IN DIKANKA
TILL IT TURNS TO CHRISTMAS DAY
TILL IT TURNS TO CHRISTMAS DAY!

(A bell has been tolling, and now we hear it one last time, as our
NARRATOR returns to his main role.)

NARRATOR

What's that? The final bell, tolling midnight? Does this mean it's Christmas Day?

DEVIL

(With dawning realization.)

No, not yet!

NARRATOR

And once it's Christmas Day, pardon my ignorance, but doesn't the devil have to go
back to hell?

DEVIL

You fiend! You set me up!

NARRATOR

...By controlling the time?

DEVIL

I could have poked him with a bigger poker! I could have done more!

A DEVIL DISGRUNTLED –

(The NARRATOR motions in DEMONS, who start to drag the DEVIL away.)

DEVIL (CONT'D.)

Ahhh! You won't resolve me so easily! I never even got to do any mischieeeeeeffffffff!

(And the DEMONS and DEVIL are gone.)

NARRATOR

But that was the last we'll see of him, unless there's a sequel.

DIKANKANS

BUT THE WITCH IS STILL HERE IN DIKANKA
SILHOUETTED BY THE MOON!
AND I'D STILL RUBBERNECK IN DIKANKA
BUT THE MASS IS STARTING SOON...

(The DIKANKANS start to wander off toward the church.)

VAKULA

Are you all leaving? She's a witch! Didn't you see?! My mother's a witch!

OKSANA

(With an anticlimactic shrug.)

I already thought she was a witch, so no big surprises there.

FATHER CHEREVIK

When you talk to her, could you ask her to stop by one of these days with a potion? I have quite a crick in my back.

VAKULA

(Shocked.)

Father Cherevik!

FATHER CHEREVIK

(Jewish.)

What, it really hurts!

VAKULA

Doesn't anybody care that my mother's a witch? Doesn't anyone care about my total and utter humiliation?

DIKANKANS

(Ignoring VAKULA and filtering into the church.)
THE MASS IS STARTING SOON...

(FATHER CHEREVIK and the last remaining DIKANKANS go into church.
SOLOKHA lands.)

VAKULKA! You're all right?!

SOLOKHA

And you're a witch?!

VAKULA

That doesn't matter, the only thing that matters is you're okay.

SOLOKHA

That is NOT the only thing that matters! How could you *do* this to me?! And in front of everyone?

VAKULA

Oh, maylsh, you take things too seriously. Everyone's parents embarrass them.

SOLOKHA

By being a *witch*?!

VAKULA

Do you think I don't care about you?

SOLOKHA

(Uncomfortable, changing the topic.)
Since when have you been a witch?

VAKULA

Since forever.
(Stubbornly returning to the topic.)
Do you think I don't care about you?

SOLOKHA

So you've been lying to me all these years? When I asked you why you had a cauldron?

VAKULA

SOLOKHA

And I said it was for cooking a really big pot of soup.

VAKULA

When I asked you why you always had a black cat?

SOLOKHA

And I said white cats get dirty too easily.

VAKULA

When I asked you why you had a saddle on your broom?

SOLOKHA

And I said it was for playing horsey with my grandchildren.

VAKULA

Those were all lies? You were just making up stories to pull the wool over my eyes?!

SOLOKHA

(Shrugs.)

I don't even *have* any grandchildren.

VAKULA

(Hopefully.)

Perhaps you do not even have numerous lovers coming to call, they are just witch's familiars.

SOLOKHA

No, I really have a lot of lovers.

VAKULA

(Overwrought, this is the final straw.)

How could you, Mother? Here I am, a god-fearing man, spending my spare time at the church painting religious pictures, and all the time you have been flying around the skies, humiliating me.

SOLOKHA

(Truly sorry.)

I'm so sorry. Come here, malysh. I never meant to hurt you. I want to help you.

VAKULA

You want to help me?

SOLOKHA

I do.

VAKULA

Then will you help me make a slipper just like the czarina's by tomorrow?

SOLKHA

And how should I do that?

VAKULA

Wave your wand, and poof!

SOLKHA

Do you see a wand?

VAKULA

You don't have a wand?

SOLKHA

I'm more of an herbs and potions kind of witch.

VAKULA

So you can't make my slippers?

SOLOKHA

Not that way.

VAKULA

(Back to being a sulky teenager.)

You never do anything for me! Why can't you be like everyone else's parents, instead of running around being a witch and sleeping with everyone?

SOLKHA

Malysh, I've been sleeping with the shoemaker. He'll stay up all night to make any pair of shoes I want, or his wife will be hearing from me.

VAKULA

Perhaps. But they still won't look right.

SOLOKHA

And you, Vakula, you're a painter. Will Oksana know the difference if they're embroidered or painted?

VAKULA

You're right! She'll never know the difference.

SOLOKHA

In fact, a few days ago I noticed some newly finished slippers which would do quite nicely in Panas's bedroom.

VAKULA

Why were you in Panas's - never mind.

(PANAS enters, hurrying to church.)

SOLOKHA

Panas! Those slippers I admired. Give them to me -

PANAS

Those were a special Christmas order -

SOLOKHA

...or else...

PANAS

Here are the slippers.

(HE hands them over and rushes off.)

SOLOKHA

There! Now you've got slippers, they just need a little paint. You could have them ready by the time Oksana gets out of mass. Do you still think I don't care about you?

VAKULA

Mother, you're a marvel.

(HE kisses her and exits to church with the shoes.

The lights shift and we see inside the church. OKSANA is in a back pew.

We hear "THE BOOT," but now as church music. VAKULA enters the church. OKSANA sees him...)

[MUSIC: 14.5 THE BOOT (CHURCH MUSIC)]

OKSANA

(Loudly.)

Vakula! You're alive?!

FATHER CHEREVIK

Shh!

OKSANA

—————(Quieter.)

You're alive?!

VAKULA

Of course I am, and I got you the shoes!

OKSANA

You got me the shoes?

VAKULA

I got you the shoes!

OKSANA

Hooray!

(SHE jumps in his arms, legs around his waist. Awkward beat. They suddenly both speak at once, overlapping with each other.)

OKSANA

This feels weird/

VAKULA
Let's not do this/

OKSANA
Kind of prostitute-y...?/

VAKULA
Perhaps a handshake?/

OKSANA
A handshake sounds good./

VAKULA
Agreed.

(SHE jumps down. THEY shake hands, formally and awkwardly.)

OKSANA
(Stiffly, trying to be gracious.)
I do thank you for your present.

VAKULA
(Just as stiffly.)
And I do "your welcome" you for your "thank you."

(Beat.)

OKSANA
(Formally.)
I am ready to fulfill my obligations and wed you immediately.

VAKULA
Perhaps we should kiss?

OKSANA
I suppose we ought to.

VAKULA

On the cheek?

OKSANA

(Selecting a cheek location.)

Right here should be acceptable.

(Beat. Nervously, HE approaches and gives her a quick peck, then backs off.)

OKSANA

Well, that wasn't so bad.

(SHE scrubs the kiss off. Beat, then THEY speak together again in a rush, almost overlapping.)

OKSANA

I don't want to marry you!

VAKULA

I don't want to marry *you*!

OKSANA

How wonderful!

VAKULA

Glorious!

OKSANA

The perfect romance!

VAKULA

A happy ending!

OKSANA

I thought you killed yourself for love of me. You were much more appealing dead.

VAKULA

I can appreciate that.

OKSANA

(Suddenly remembering.)

Your mother!

VAKULA

(Good God, when will it end???)

Does my mother have to be part of even *this*????

OKSANA

I told her you were dead - she was flying to rescue you. We should let her know you're not dead. It's only common courtesy.

VAKULA

She was flying to rescue me?

OKSANA

At extraordinary personal risk to herself.

VAKULA

At the risk of exposure of her long-held secret? To rescue ME?

OKSANA

Pretty goofy, huh?

VAKULA

I can't believe she would do that for me.

OKSANA

Yes, yes, most remarkable, I still get to keep the shoes, right?

VAKULA

I've got to talk to her!

(VAKULA runs out. OKSANA calls after him.)

OKSANA

I still get to keep the shoes, right? ... Right??

(Lights shift back to the street and SOLOKHA. The music swells as VAKULA enters and approaches SOLOKHA.)

SOLOKHA

Well, my little Vakulka, should I congratulate you?

VAKULA

In a manner of speaking...

SOLOKHA

She turned you down? Even after you gave her the shoes? Why that little -

VAKULA

I didn't give her the shoes.

SOLOKHA

You didn't give her the -

VAKULA

I had a better idea.

[MUSIC: 15 JUST YOUR SIZE] << TRACK 12 >>

SHE TOLD ME WHAT YOU DID FOR ME,
THE REASON FOR YOUR FLIGHT
THE CHANCES THAT YOU TOOK FOR ME
TO LOOK FOR ME
TONIGHT

IT MADE ME SORT OF THINK I MAY HAVE BEEN A LITTLE GRUFF
A LESSER MAN MIGHT EVEN SAY SOME SENTIMENTAL STUFF

(VAKULA struggles to find the next words without getting too sappy.
SOLOKHA jumps in to help.)

SOLOKHA

NO MATTER WHAT YOU SAY, MALYSH, IT'S SURE TO BE ENOUGH.
IT'S JUST A MOTHER'S JOB TO CARE
AND FIND HER OFFSPRING ANYWHERE

AND SO OKSANA'S STORY REALLY GOT ME OFF MY DUFF
I'M SORRY THAT YOU WOULDN'T THINK IT WOULD
I LEFT TOO MUCH UNSAID
I THOUGHT WAS UNDERSTOOD

VAKULA

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY
WITH NO DEVIL BUZZING IN MY EAR
BUT EVERYTHING IS CHANGED
AND EVERYTHING IS CLEAR!

I FIND THAT I'VE BEEN FOOLISH,
AND I FIND TO MY SURPRISE
THESE SHOES, I THINK THESE SHOES MIGHT BE
JUST YOUR SIZE.

SOLOKHA

I GUESS I'VE NEVER SAID
ALL THE MANY THINGS A MOM SHOULD SAY
HOW MUCH YOU MAKE ME PROUD...
I'LL TRY TO START... TODAY...

(Now it's her turn to struggle, and VAKULA jumps in to help.)

VAKULA

NOW LET'S NOT GET TOO MUSHY

SOLOKHA

YES, IT'S BEST IF NO ONE CRIES
BUT STILL, I THINK THOSE SHOES MIGHT BE
JUST MY SIZE

SOLOKHA & VAKULA

SO MAYBE WE CAN SPEND SOME TIME
TO TRY TO WORK THINGS OUT

VAKULA

I THINK I CAN STOP THINKING WITH MY FIST

SOLOKHA
I'LL BE A LITTLE SUBTLER WHEN SETTING UP A TRYST...

SOLOKHA & VAKULA
AND TRY NOT TO THINK OF ALL THE YEARS WE'VE MISSED...

VAKULA
I WON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO
WITHOUT YOUR HONOR TO DEFEND!

SOLOKHA
YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN A SON
YOU'VE NEVER BEEN A FRIEND.

SOLOKHA & VAKULA
BUT NOW IT'S TIME TO START AGAIN
WITH LOVE - AND FEWER LIES

VAKULA
I'M THINKING THAT THESE SHOES MIGHT BE

SOLOKHA
I'M HOPING THAT THESE SHOES MIGHT BE

SOLOKHA & VAKULA
JUST YOUR/MY SIZE.

(SHE tries on the shoes.)

SOLOKHA
Well, they pinch a bit, but I'll live.

(THEY hug. OKSANA and the NARRATOR enter at the sides.)

OKSANA
What kind of ending is this?! I don't even get my shoes?!

NARRATOR
No.

OKSANA

Well screw him and screw you all. I'm going to Paris to become a fashion designer.

(The DEVIL enters.)

DEVIL

And what about me? I barely got to cause any trouble at all, and my portrait –

SOLOKHA & VAKULA

You can go to –

DEVIL

Yeah, yeah, I've heard that one before.

(The NARRATOR quickly changes into CHUB.)

CHUB

And what about me? Solokha, will you marry me?

SOLOKHA

No thanks, but 3 AM at the old barn?

CHUB

(Thoroughly chuffed.)

I'll be there!

(And he's the NARRATOR again!)

NARRATOR

And so Oksana learned that sometimes it's not worth getting involved with a mama's boy, and the devil learned that you shouldn't mess with a blacksmith. Solokha learned that embarrassing your children is all well and good, but there are limits, and the blacksmith learned that sometimes it can be useful to have a mother who's a slut. And me? Well, I learned the true meaning of Christmas, but it was when I was offstage, so we won't be getting into it now. Fare thee well, Dikanka – until next Christmas Eve.

[MUSIC: 16 IN DIKANKA (FINALE)] << TRACK 13 >>

ON A NIGHT IN THE SKY OF DIKANKA
THERE'S NO LUCIFER UP IN THE HAZE
BUT FATTEN YOUR GOOSE
HE'LL BE BACK ON THE LOOSE
IN THREE HUNDRED SIXTY-FOUR DAYS!

ALL
AND THE LIGHT WILL GO OUT IN DIKANKA
TILL YOU CAN'T TELL SOUTH FROM NORTH
FOR THE DEVIL IS FREE IN DIKANKA
ON DECEMBER TWENTY-FOURTH...
ON DECEMBER TWENTY-FOURTH!

(Blackout.).

THE END