

# ELISABETH

*ORIGINAL MUSIC & LYRICS BY MICHAEL KUNZE & SYLVESTER LEVAY*

*Translated from the German by Christina Lowry '14, Washington & Lee University*

---

## *AKNOWLEDGEMENTS*

Like any honors thesis project, translating 80 pages of text and over 300 pages of music has been a labor of love, but I could not have done it without the help and support from the W&L community. I have only deepest gratitude for the people who (whether they realized it or not) contributed to this project:

- First to the Girard family who first introduced me to this musical, especially my dear friend Mardi and her little brother Cal, who played Young Rudolf in the 2005-2006 production at the Apollo Theater in Stuttgart Germany.
- To the Washington & Lee University German department. The project was only a pipe dream until, in the span of just one short afternoon, my proposal was approved, my advisor signed on, and the materials ordered from the library. Thank you to Professors Roger Crockett, Debra Prager, Daniel Kramer, and Paul Youngman for your constant support for all your students.
- And on that note, a special thanks to Herr Timothy Berg, my German teacher through middle and high school, without whom I would never have developed the passion for the German language and culture that has become such a big part of my life.
- To Sarah Gorman, my Pi Beta Phi “Big Sister,” who gave Elisabeth a voice
- To Austin Pierce and Renata Carlson who offered to lend me their time, voices, and incredible talent in presenting the show.
- And especially to Connor Perkins, who fell in love with the musical before he could even understand it, and was my constant reminder why I was translating the show: so English-speakers could have a chance to fall in love with Elisabeth too.

## PROLOGUE

### EVERYONE DANCED WITH DEATH<sup>i</sup>

*The nocturnal world of the dead and dreamers – the graveyard of the past. Tattered flags, wilted flowers, mossy stones, and moldering memories. A hanged man dangles from a rope – Luigi Lucheni, Elisabeth's assassin. Nothing is heard but the Voice of the judge. Lucheni comes onstage and cuts his dead body down.*

VOICE OF THE JUDGE: But why, Lucheni? Why did you murder the empress Elisabeth?

LUCHENI: Alla malora! [Go to hell!]

VOICE OF THE JUDGE: Answer, Luigi Lucheni!

*From the stage floor the sunken world of the old Hapsburg empire emerges. Between relics of the past the Ensemble (except Elisabeth and Death) appear at first apparitional. It forms a tableau of the characters of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which stirs out of the darkness of forgetfulness into the light of memory.*

LUCHENI: Why, why... Night after night the same question, for a hundred years! To hell with the questions! Merda. [Shit.] I'm dead!

VOICE OF THE JUDGE: The despicable assassination attempt on the empress of Austria...

LUCHENI: Va a farti fottere! [Go fuck yourself!]

VOICE OF THE JUDGE: Explain yourself!

LUCHENI: Explain myself? I killed her, because she wanted it.

VOICE OF THE JUDGE: Don't talk nonsense!

LUCHENI: She wanted it. There's honest evidence for it.

VOICE OF THE JUDGE: What evidence is that?

LUCHENI: Her contemporaries, here! They haven't all come to rest...and still talk about...Elisabeth!

THE DEAD (ENSEMBLE): Lost and sunk, the royal world,  
our rotted flesh and lifeless breath.

And faded shine, where ghosts abide,  
there still we dance, the dance of death  
Joy, pain - Madness that divides us  
Envy, lust - Madness here that drives us  
Drunk on dreams - All that we have left  
Wishes, hopes, that leave the world bereft  
Elisabeth, Elisabeth,  
You alone from us, are set apart  
A riddle that no spirit knows  
How you avoided death's cold dart  
Shy, quick- sudden and unplanned  
Wild, tame- so lucky and so damned  
Poor, rich- what more could you need?

Hard, soft- won't you intercede

LUCHENI: No one was as proud as her!  
She despised you all!  
She only laughed at you!  
No one completely understood her, no one gave her freedom.  
She wanted to look into the darkness.

THE DEAD (*overlapping*): We, the dead, accursed.  
Shadows at the edge of time.  
So rich, so rare.  
She saw the curse that followed us, what frightened us was what she loved  
Everyone will dance with death but no one like Elisabeth.  
Everyone will dance with death but no one like Elisabeth.  
Everyone will dance with death but no one like Elisabeth.  
Everyone will dance with death but no one like Elisabeth.

*The music stops. "Death's Theme" is heard. The Dead freeze. Suddenly Death is standing in their midst. Lucheni remains unfazed. He plays the master of ceremonies.*

LUCHENI: Attenzioni! [Attention!] His majesty, Death!

*Death is young, attractive, and sexy. He resembles an androgynous pop-star and takes after a young Heinrich Heine. He also reflects on Elisabeth.*

DEATH: What is the meaning of this, this ancient song,  
That ever since I first saw her has warmed my soul?  
Devils call it torture. Joy say those above.  
Men can only guess it must be love.  
My duty is destruction. I'll do it cold.  
I seize what's mine, I take them, the young or the old.  
Not sure how it happened, to this grim reaper  
But in the end it's true I did love her.

*Change in tempo. Death frees the Dead from their rigor through a gesture. Instantly, with sharp angular movements, they begin the dance of death. Only Lucheni remains uninvolved. He looks again over the audience in the direction the Voice of the Judge came from. The interrogation continues.*

VOICE OF THE JUDGE: You avoid the question Lucheni! Love, death... Don't tell fairytales!

LUCHENI: Perche non? [Why not?] She loved this rockstar!

VOICE OF THE JUDGE: For the last time Lucheni: Who were your supporters?

LUCHENI: Death! Only Death...

VOICE OF THE JUDGE: The motive, Lucheni!

LUCHENI: Love. Un grande amore [a great love]...Ha, ha, ha...!

CHORUS (*except Lucheni and Death*): Elisabeth – Elisabeth!

LUCHENI (*overlapping*): Elisabeth – Elisabeth!

DEATH (*overlapping*): Elisabeth – Elisabeth!

*Blackout. Scene change.*

---

## ACT I

### SCENE 1. HALL OF POSSENHOF

#### LIKE YOU

*June, 1853. The hall of Castle Possenhof on Lake Starnberger. It is late afternoon. As the scene brightens we see Elisabeth's father, Duke Max. He prepares his Sunday best, because he is about to travel to Munich, where he will spend the night with an actress. Fifteen-year-old Elisabeth has run after him, because she wants to come along.*

ELISABETH: Mama has guests tonight, it'll be horrible  
All my aunts and uncles visiting  
And I wish that I could sneak away  
From their pretense and their chat  
But my old governess just won't have that  
Dear Father, why can't I go with you?

*Duke Max plucks his beard in front of the mirror. He straightens his tie.*

DUKE MAX: Because it isn't proper!

ELISABETH: Everything you like, I like it even more!

DUKE MAX: In this case...it isn't proper!

ELISABETH: Fantasy and writing poems, or riding like the wind.  
I only want to be like you.

DUKE MAX: Life is too short, for one to have to be bored for an hour. And I hate family reunions like the plague.

ELISABETH: Me too...  
Why won't you all let me climb up the cherry tree?

DUKE MAX: Just be glad you aren't you sister...

ELISABETH: Or to practice balance on the roof?

DUKE MAX: ...Helene will be groomed to be the empress...

ELISABETH: Or to tumble with my brothers

In the meadow by the house

DUKE MAX: I'm not part of this!

ELISABETH: But no, the old governess,  
She won't let me out!

DUKE MAX: I can't help you there.

ELISABETH: Father, why can't I just leave with you?

DUKE MAX: Maybe I'll be back tomorrow afternoon...-

ELISABETH: To Egypt, Spain, or maybe Catmandu!...

DUKE MAX (*looks at his pocket watch*): ... I'll be late!

*Duke Max puts on his hat and takes his zither under his arm. He is ready to leave.*

ELISABETH: Living free as a gypsy, with my cares to the wind.  
Only doing what I want

*Duke Max give Elisabeth a fleeting kiss on the forehead...*

DUKE MAX: Adieu, Sisi...

ELISABETH: ... And loving what I do.

DUKE MAX: Be good...

*Duke Max briskly leaves. Elisabeth watches him go.*

ELISABETH: Someday I want to be like you!

*Elisabeth's governess enters.*

GOVERNESS: Je vous en pris, princesse [I caught you, princess]... You must change.

ELISABETH: I hate changing clothes. I hate being a princess.

GOVERNESS: Mais, princesse [But princess]...

ELISABETH: If I weren't a princess, I'd run away to the circus...as a trick rider or performer...I can already dance on the tightrope. And first my trapeze number! That you should see, Madame...

GOVERNESS: S'il vous plait! Venez maintenant [Please! Come now]...

*Elisabeth unwillingly follows the governess.  
Both exit. Scene change.*

## SCENE 2. ON THE SHORE OF LAKE STARNBERGER

### NICE TO SEE YOU ALL

*Duchess Ludovika's party on the evening of the same day. The guests enter in groups, predominantly relatives of the ducal family, from the agrarian and middling nobles of Bavaria. Duchess Ludovika, who for the occasion is especially dressed up, greets them. Next to her stands Helene, who can hardly breathe in her tight dress. The arriving guests greet each other and form little groups. Lucheni, off to the side, introduces the family to the audience. Finally Duchess Ludovika asks for quiet and gives a short welcoming speech.*

LUCHENI<sup>ii</sup>: Elisabeth's home. Molto romantico [very romantic]. Ecco! [There!] Questa bellezza [this beauty]...the lovely Helene, Elisabeth's elder sister. And the proud mother, Ludovika. She's received a letter from her sister Sophie, the mother of the Austrian emperor...Mhmm. For that the whole family had to come waltzing in!

DUCHESS LUDOVIKA: Nice to see you all,  
I'd like you all to hear  
The reason that I called  
Great things for us are near

A GREAT UNCLE OF ELISABETH: What makes her so important?

AN AUNT OF ELISABETH: Why is she putting on airs?

DUCHESS LUDOVIKA: Our family it seems is on the rise.

TWO BROTHERS OF LUDOVIKA: If it weren't for Max!

DUCHESS LUDOVIKA: Helene I've always had only great hopes for you  
Why look at the girl yourself: lovely, bright, and poised.

A MARRIED COUPLE: Not as lovely as our girl!

VARIOUS RELATIVES: Why is she boasting so?

DUCHESS LUDOVIKA: I will travel with Nene, to Bad Ischl we embark!

A NIECE OF LUDOVIKA: For all I care!

A BROTHER-IN-LAW OF LUDOVIDA: Very momentous...!

A DISTANT RELATIVE: Is that all?

VARIOUS RELATIVES: Bad Ischl!?

AN AUNT OF ELISABETH: And that is why we've come here?

DUCHESS LUDOVIKA: And then in August we'll meet, Helene's Aunt Sophie  
She wrote she wants to see us, and it's important you'll agree

A DISTANT RELATIVE: That's the emperor's mother!

AN UNCLE OF ELISABETH: Then he must be coming too!

DUCHESS SOPHIA: She would like Franz Joseph and Helene to meet. -  
My Helene will be empress of Austria!

*The guests are genuinely surprised. They talk excitedly with each other while Duchess Sophia proudly presents Helene.*

VARIOUS RELATIVES: What!?

THE MARRIED COUPLE (*overlapping*): Helene? Empress? Unthinkable!

TWO BROTHERS OF LUDOVKA (*overlapping*): Such good fortune!

VARIOUS RELATIVES (*overlapping*): Congratulations! Bravo!

A GREAT UNCLE OF ELISABETH: With her father? Embarrassing!

AN AUNT OF ELISABETH (*overlapping*): Then the dukes will soon be too fine for the likes of us...

VARIOUS RELATIVES: Bravo!

A GREAT UNCLE OF ELISABETH (*overlapping*): What prospects!

A NIECE OF LUDOVKA (*overlapping*): That doesn't mean that he'll take her!

A BROTHER-IN-LAW OF LUDOVKA (*overlapping*): Can't hurt, such a union...!

HELENE (*overlapping*)<sup>iii</sup>: Me and the emperor? I can't believe it.

*A circus fanfare is heard. More and more guests look with astonished faces to the upstage backdrop, behind which the outline of Elisabeth swinging on the Trapeze is seen.*

AN AUNT OF ELISABETH (*looking up to the balustrade*): What is the meaning of this?

THE MARRIED COUPLE: That is Sisi!

A GREAT UNCLE OF ELISABETH: A circus presentation!

A BROTHER-IN-LAW OF ELISABETH: Her father taught her that.

A GREAT UNCLE OF ELISABETH (*overlapping*): Completely neglected, that child! A scandal!

A NIECE OF LUDOVKA: In tights!

SEVERAL RELATIVES (*nearly overlapping*): Shocking! Scandalous!

AN AUNT OF ELISABETH: My god, if she falls down from there!

AN UNCLE OF ELISABETH (*overlapping*): She'll break her neck!

THE MARRIED COUPLE (*overlapping*): For heaven's sake!



*Finally Duchess Ludovika also notices her daughter's appearance...*

DUCHESS LUDOVIKA: Sisi! Stop! This instant!

*Elisabeth swings higher and wilder.*

AN UNCLE OF ELISABETH: Don't distract her, she'll fall!

*At this moment, the swinging changes direction, the ropes become twisted, the trapeze with Elisabeth rips the backdrop and she crashes down.*

*A scream goes through the guests. Death catches Elisabeth and carries her through the rip in the backdrop to center stage. The two spin in slow motion in a short "Dance of Death."*

*For the first time the "Love Theme" is heard. While holding her, Death moves to kiss Elisabeth, but stops himself. Lucheni comments from outside of the scene...*

LUCHENI: It is love. Per Dio! [By God!]

*He lays Elisabeth in her bed and takes a few steps back, as Duchess Ludovika and some of her guests hurry in. Stunned, Elisabeth sits up.*

#### LIKE YOU (REPRISE)

DUCHESS LUDOVIKA: For heaven's sake!

VARIOUS RELATIVES (*talking over each other*): She's alive!-  
A true miracle, with the fall-  
She could have broken her neck!-  
What a fright!

DUCHESS LUDOVIKA: My god, Sisi! Are you hurt?

HELENE: Nothing's happened to her!

ELISABETH: Mama, when I'm older, don't look for a husband for me.

AN UNCLE OF ELISABETH: She's hallucinating...

ELISABETH: Everything, that makes me happy, I can do alone...

A BROTHER-IN-LAW OF LUDOVIKA: She's talking like her father!

ELISABETH: Fantasy and writing poems, or riding with the wind...

AN AUNT OF ELISABETH: She's feverish!

ELISABETH: I don't want to be bound!

DUCHESS LUDOVIKA: It's alright, Sisi. First lie down in bed. –Leonhard, send for the doctor!

*Duchess Ludovika, Helene, and Elisabeth exit. The valet, Leonhard, hurries off opposite. The guests, commenting on the situation with muffled voices, draw away. Death is exiting when Elisabeth, seeing him, sits up and calls to him.*

ELISABETH<sup>iv</sup>: Where are you going, my black prince  
Why aren't you staying here?  
I felt so whole and well in your arms.  
And I felt a yearning to leave all I've ever known.  
Like a great black falcon, proud and alone.  
Yes, I know, that you are death and they're afraid of you.  
Though I'll think of you, whatever I may do.  
Fantasy and writing poems,  
Or riding like the wind.  
No one understands me like you!

### 3. AUDIENCE CHAMBER OF THE IMPERIAL PALACE IN VIENNA

TO EACH MAN HE GIVES HIS OWN

*Lucheni stands in spotlight downstage. He has been reading a newspaper, which he closes.*

LUCHENI: It is the year eighteen hundred fifty-three. The young emperor Franz Joseph rules in Vienna. His reign is based on a standing army of soldiers, a sitting army of civil servants, a kneeling army of clergy, and a slinking army of informers. And – on the advice of his mother, of whom it is said, she is the only man at court.

*Light change. Franz Joseph sits at his desk. Next to him stands his mother, the archduchess Sophia. She lays documents for his signature in front of him. Somewhat aside stands his adjutant general Count Gruenne.*

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIA (to Franz Joseph): Be strict! Be strong! Be cold! Be hard!

ALL: To each he give his own time,  
Petitions all in proper line  
So may God keep and God protect  
For us our dear young Kaiser!

*With a staff hitting the floor, Count Gruenne announces a visitor.*

COUNT GRUENNE: The cardinal-archbishop!

*Archbishop Rauscher enters. In his hand he holds a portfolio.*

ARCHBISHOP RAUSCHER: Majesty, the holy church is resisted by all manner of fools...

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIA: Outrageous!

ARCHBISHOP RAUSCHER: Majesty the church humbly requests administration of the schools!

*Archduchess Sophie takes the file from Archbishop Rauscher, studies the prepared document and with a nod lays it in front of Franz Joseph.*

FRANZ JOSEPH: Granted!

*Franz Joseph signs.*

ALL: To each he give his own time,  
Petitions all in proper line  
So may God keep and God protect  
For us our dear young Kaiser!

LUCHENI (*mockingly imitating the adjutant*)<sup>v</sup>: A mother!

*The Angels of Death bring in the mother of a condemned man. She falls on her knees before Franz Joseph.*

THE MOTHER OF THE CONDEMNED: Majesty they heard my son whisper treason under his breath –

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: Delightful!

THE MOTHER OF THE CONDEMNED: Mercy, mercy! - Anything else, please, he doesn't deserve death!

*Franz Joseph stands up. He wrestles with himself.*

FRANZ JOSEPH: If it was in my power, if I could,  
Do as I wished instead of as I should.  
Then I'd be merciful and good.

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE (*partially overlapping*): Be strict! Be strong! Be cold! Be hard!  
Be cold! Be hard!

FRANZ JOSEPH: Denied!

*The mother of the condemned cries out despairingly. She is dragged from the stage by the Angels of Death. Franz Joseph seats himself back at the desk.*

ARCHBISHOP SOPHIE: What else is left?

COUNT GRUENNE: A discussion of the political situation.

*A liveried footman has in the meantime unrolled a map of the eastern Mediterranean. Prince Schwarzenberg explains the current crisis situation.*

PRINCE SCHWARZENBERG: Majesty, the Crimean threatens to soon escalate.  
If we ally with Russia there's no time to wait.  
We thank Russia for the rescue, from the revolution.  
Besides that: we receive our reward, Turkey as our portion!

*Franz Joseph looks helplessly to his mother. Archduchess Sophie shrugs her shoulders. Franz Joseph turns to his adjutant.*

FRANZ JOSEPH: How to assess the situation, Count Gruenne?

COUNT GRUENNE: If we stand with Russia, England resents us.  
If with England, Russia resents us.

In each case – an alliance would end us.

PRINCE SCHWARZENBERG: We must decide!

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: The emperor of Austria must not do anything!

ALL: To each he give his own time,  
Petitions all in proper line  
So may God keep and God protect  
For us our dear young Kaiser!

ALL (*except Franz Joseph and Archduchess Sophie*): To each he give his own time,  
Petitions all in proper line  
So may God keep and God protect  
For us our dear young Kaiser!

FRANZ JOSEPH (*overlapping, his principles summarized*): Never too early to decide,  
Yes and no evading,  
See to Hapsburgs interests and stay in line.

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE (*overlapping*): Be smooth! Be false! Be clever!

COUNT GRUNNE: If I may humbly remind Majesty, the coach to Bad Ischl is waiting.

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: The audience is ended, gentlemen!

PRINCE SCHWARZENBERG: But... what should I tell the Russian ambassador...?

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: Wars should be conducted by others. The happy Austria is marrying...

*Archduchess Sophie gives Franz Joseph an encouraging glance. He rises and exits with her, followed by Count Gruenne. All of the others form a row, bowing...*

PRINCE SCHWARZENBERG, ARCHBISHOP RAUSCHER, BARON KEMPEN, BARON HUEBNER,  
FOOTMAN: So may God keep and God protect  
For us our dear young Kaiser!

*Blackout. Scene change.*

#### 4. BAD ISCHL

##### IT ISN'T MEANT TO BE

*Lucheni takes a baggage cart.*

LUCHENI<sup>vi</sup>: August, 1853. In front of the Villa Eltz in Bad Ischl. The emperor of Austria meets a principessa Contadina [peasant princess] from the rural lesser nobles. Why? His mother wants it...She has planned a rendezvous far from Vienna in the foothills of the Alps. Ah, perche no [why not]?  
A summer in Bad Ischl is worth the trip,  
And the heart is so full of hope.

Sophie has explained it all to her daughter,  
But does she care to listen, nope.

*A coach drives onstage, out of which Duchess Ludovika, Helene, Elisabeth, and the governess alight. From the other side enters Archduchess Sophie, accompanied by Countess Esterhazy-Liechtenstein. Servants take care of the luggage.*

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: Why did you only just arrive?

DUCHESS LUDOVIKA: The weather kept us delayed! We need just a little rest...

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: What are you thinking? The emperor expected you at four –

DUCHESS LUDOVIKA: What?

HELENE: Already?

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: How does Helene look?

DUCHESS LUDOVIKA: Max asks to be please excused... Though I brought Sisi with us.

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: The dress is completely impossible! The hairstyle, terrible!

HELENE: I'll change!

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: That won't do anymore! One doesn't keep an emperor waiting!

*All exit. Scene change. In the interior of the villa the young Franz Joseph, visibly nervous, waits for the guests. Servants set armchairs and prepare a table.*

LUCHENI: What good is a plan -- no matter how clever!?

It remains ever theory.

And the only thing you know for sure

Much as you plan and think, it isn't meant to be!

Que bel progetto! [This beautiful project!] Sarebbe bello cosi! [It would be nice as well!] Ma attention signore, signori [But attention ladies and gentlemen]:

As much as you plan and think, it isn't meant to be!

Ma che cazzo vuoi? [What the fuck do you want?]

*Archduchess Sophie, Duchess Ludovika, Helene, and Elisabeth enter the salon of the villa. Franz Joseph greets the relatives. All take their seats.*

LUCHENI: The mothers are talkative,

The young emperor is not.

The bridal candidate is anxious.

The case is getting awkward,

Cause now the Franz Joseph shows,

That he has a touch of stubbornness.

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: Now, Franz, say straight out, how she appeals to you -

FRANZ JOSEPH: Who?

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: Your charming cousin –

FRANZ JOSEPH: Like a fresh almond, just bursting.

*Archduchess Sophie throws Duchess Ludovika a meaningful glance.*

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: That is almost poetry!

FRANZ JOSEPH: She has such lovely, gentle eyes... and lips as red as strawberries.

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: And an orderly pelvis!

DUCHESS LUDOVIKA: So?

FRANZ JOSEPH: At the ball tonight I'll dance...

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: Yes?

FRANZ JOSEPH: ...only with her!

LUDOVIKA: He likes her!

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: Well, then invite her...*(to Helene:)* Stand up! *(to Franz Joseph:)* Go to her! Take her by the arm!

*Franz Joseph rises, visibly embarrassed. Smiling, Helene poses, offering Franz Joseph her hand. He takes a step back and ultimately turns abruptly, grasping Elisabeth's hand to pull her to him. Elisabeth is as surprised as the others.*

DUCHESS LUDOVIKA: How?

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: Her?

*Duchess Ludovika and Archduchess Sophie look at each other, aghast.*

LUCHENI: What good is a plan -- no matter how clever!?

It remains ever theory.

And the only thing you know for sure

Much as you plan and think, it isn't meant to be!

*Archduchess Sophie, Duchess Ludovika, and Helene have jumped up, horrified. Franz Joseph holds Elisabeth's hands and looks at her adoringly.*

HELENE: Three years tested – speaking French, studying manners.

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE & DUCHESS LUDOVIKA: Three years admonishing, education, our planning ...for nothing! All for nothing!

ALL: What good is a plan -- no matter how clever!?

It remains ever theory.

And the only thing you know for sure

Much as you plan and think, it isn't meant to be!

LUCHENI: And the only thing you know for sure  
Much as you plan and think, it isn't meant to be!

*All exit. Light change. Scene change.*

## 5. BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH

### NOTHING IS DIFFICULT

*On March 13, 1854, the young emperor Franz Joseph meets his bride in Possenhofen. For the first time the lovers are alone.*

FRANZ JOSEPH: One thing you must know,  
An emperor is never for himself alone.  
A life with me, will often not be an easy home.

ELISABETH: What others find important,  
Is nothing I can't do...

FRANZ JOSEPH: Much will change...

ELISABETH: But I have you!

ELISABETH & FRANZ JOSEPH: Nothing is difficult,  
As long as you're with me.  
When I have you, there's nothing,  
That disturbs our harmony.  
And if my courage I should lose  
I'll find it again with you.  
There's nothing more I'll need  
When you're just with me.

FRANZ JOSEPH: In the yoke of many duties, sometimes dreams are marred...

ELISABETH: But our dream remains near!

FRANZ JOSEPH: We are not like the others who are born to happier stars.

ELISABETH: But for each other here!

ELISABETH & FRANZ JOSEPH: You will soon see life through my eyes.  
And each day we'll grow a little more wise

*Meanwhile Franz Joseph has a necklace in his hands, which he hangs around Elisabeth's neck. The orchestra takes over the chorus melody.*

FRANZ JOSEPH: Here take this chain...as a sign, that you're now with me.

ELISABETH: How precious!

FRANZ JOSEPH: I live you...I need you!

ELISABETH: How heavy the chain is...

ELISABETH & FRANZ JOSEPH: And if my courage I should lose  
I'll find it again with you.  
There's nothing more I'll need  
When you're just with me.

FRANZ JOSEPH: I love you.

ELISABETH: I love you.

ELISABETH & FRANZ JOSEPH: I need you...never leave me alone!

*Slowly the scene sinks into darkness. Scene change.*

## 6. AUGUSTINIAN CHURCH IN VIENNA

### ALL QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ASKED

*Lucheni continues his story.*

LUCHENI: Six-thirty in the evening in the Vienna Augustinian Church. Peculiar time for a wedding. But suitable on this April 24, 1854. Very suitable, porca miseria! [dammit!]

*Organ music. Ten thousand candles illuminate the festively decorated church. Grotesque wedding guests – Austria's high nobility and dignitaries from throughout Europe – process into the church.*

WEDDING GUESTS: All the questions have been asked  
And all the phrases well rehearsed  
Of this old world we are the last  
With no way out, too deep immersed.  
Though all the sins are risky now  
And all our virtues have been learned  
All the curses and the vows  
And all the blessings that we've earned.  
Ugliness does not engage us  
Beauty appears to us banal  
Evil deeds will not outrage us  
A good deed's nothing at all.  
All the miracles we've witnessed  
As all the borders disappear  
We've seen pictures to excess  
Heard music till we're bored to tears.  
All the questions have been asked  
And all the chances gone to waste  
Of this old world we are the last



And to it's suicide we haste.  
And all your joy or all your pain  
Simply helps us endure time  
It's all a show to entertain  
As we await our shared decline  
Elisabeth...  
Elisabeth.

*The couple has in the meantime come before the alter. Archbishop Rauscher in the framework of the marriage ceremony addresses Elisabeth.*

ARCHBISHOP RAUSCHER: ..if so, then answer I do!

*A moment of breathless silence.*

ELISABETH: I do!

*Threatening bells and the bang of cannon fire from outside echo inside. The couple exchange rings. Upstage Death pulls the rope of a giant funeral bell.  
Scene change.*

## 7. BALLROOM OF SCHOENBRUNN PALACE

### SHE DOESN'T FIT IN

*A backdrop falls in front of the church scene, showing an oversized cabinet. In the style of an advent calendar, it is full of doors, which little by little open to gradually show the full view of the ballroom, where the wedding guests and bride and groom dance.*

*Duke Max steps out of the first door of the cabinet, followed a moment later by Archduchess Sophie. Independently from one another they express their dissatisfaction with the wedding.*

DUKE MAX: This wedding was your work, Ms. Mother-in-law. Are you happy now?

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: No. But I congratulate you, Mr. Father-of-the-bride.

DUKE MAX: Don't congratulate me.  
Love makes you stupid!  
Sisi gives up life for him, when love glamorizes.  
Vienna murders her.  
She should flee, before court terrorizes.

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: Love makes you blind!  
Franz didn't listen to me.  
He doesn't know what he's doing.

DUKE MAX: Why did it have to be him?

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: When I see the child, so angry, I'm stewing.  
She ruined all my plans.  
The child lacks almost everything...

DUKE MAX (*overlapping*): The emperor lacks almost everything...

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: ...that an empress needs.

DUKE MAX: ...that my Sisi needs.

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: I see her...

DUKE MAX & ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: ...and all I can think:

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: He doesn't fit with her!

DUKE MAX: She doesn't fit with him!

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: He doesn't fit...

DUKE MAX & ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: ...he doesn't fit, he doesn't fit with her!

*Light change. Wedding guests stand in groups around the edge of the dance floor while others continue to dance. They discuss the theme of the day – the young bride and new empress. Archduchess Sophie and Duke Max are lost in the company.*

AN OLD ARISTOCRAT: What a beautiful wedding!

A YOUNG ARISTOCRAT: Old Rauscher talked too long.

THEIR WIVES: As always!

WEDDING GUESTS (*First group, overlapping*): Genuinely sweet! Pathetically naïve! As pliant as wax! Doesn't say much.

A COUNTESS: How do you like the new empress?

TWO ARISTOCRATIC WOMEN: She looks nice.

THREE ARISTOCRATIC WOMEN: She is genuinely sweet-natured.

WEDDING GUESTS (*Second group, overlapping*): New to the palace, easy to control. With her we'll have an easy game!

AN OLD MAN: Indeed her family tree has blights...

A YOUNG PRINCE: We want to ignore that!

ARISTOCRATIC WOMEN: Still a child!

ARISTOCRATS: There are bad omens...

COUNTESS (*overlapping*): She is friendly...

ARISTOCRATS: ...in the treasury...

SEVERAL ARISTOCRATIC WOMEN (*overlapping*): She is timid!

ARISTOCRATS: ...the crown fell to the floor...

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: She is naïve!

ARISTOCRATIC WOMEN: And as she stepped out of the carriage...

ARISTOCRATS: Somewhat clumsy!

ARISTOCRATIC WOMEN: ...the empress almost lost...

ARISTOCRATS: She still...

ARISTOCRATIC WOMEN: ...her brand new diadem.

ARISTOCRATS: ...finds it difficult!

WEDDING GUESTS (*First group, overlapping*): It's almost like in the fairytales: A child becomes the empress! Something like that isn't possible anymore.

WEDDING GUESTS (*Second group, overlapping*): Eyes red from crying! Inept and honest! So delightfully helpless as a lamb. She has no importance, she's a small light.

ARISTOCRATIC WOMEN: She fits in well here!

ARISTOCRATS: She fits in well here!

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: She doesn't fit in here!

DUKE MAX: She doesn't fit in here!

ALL ARISTOCRATS: She fits in well...

DUKE MAX & ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: She doesn't fit in...

ALL: ...she fits in well/doesn't fit in here!

*Light change. In the meantime the organ has been completely dismantled, leaving a view of the bright ballroom. Once again the wedding guests take part in the dancing. The wedding waltz becomes increasingly more dissonant as Death and his Angels appear. He walks through the dancers, who fall down lifelessly. Only the emperor and empress dance on. Death greets Elisabeth, and she smiles at him.*

## THE FINAL DANCE

*The music changes. Franz Joseph is frozen in the dance. Death pulls her from his arms and dances with her himself.*

DEATH: It's an ancient story, though new for me  
When two love the same woman, it's plain to see

You've made your decision, though I did my best  
Now at your wedding, I'm only the guest

You turned away, though, but what a sham  
You want to be faithful to him, but dear madam  
Even in his arms, your thin smile isn't true  
Where this all will lead, I know well and so do you!

The final dance, the final dance, belongs to me alone.  
The final dance, the final dance, can only be your own.

Time grows old and tired, the wine goes sour  
The air is hot and sticky at this late hour  
Unseen eyes are watching to see what we may choose  
Everyone awaits the rendezvous

The final dance, the final dance, belongs to me alone.  
The final dance, the final dance, can only be your own.

And so I wait in darkness, haunting you like a sin  
I may be the loser here, but in the end, I win!

The final dance, the final dance, belongs to me alone.  
The final dance, the final dance, can only be your own.

DEATH & BALL GUESTS: The final dance, the final dance, belongs to him it's true.  
The final dance, the final dance, can only be with you.

OTHER BALL GUESTS (*overlapping*): Vienna is at her end.  
The turning point, the curtain rend.  
All questions have been asked.

DEATH: Only with you, only with you!

*Death exits. Light change. The royal couple is apparently alone. With hesitant tenderness Elisabeth touches Franz Joseph's cheek.*

*Gawking figures from every social class emerge from the dark on both sides of the stage. With a gesture Lucheni urges them to draw closer to the couple.*

*Franz Joseph and Elisabeth embrace each other. Their "Love Theme" plays. The onlookers crane their necks. Lucheni mimics a carnival barker. With an inviting hand gesture he encourages the gawkers to forgo any tactfulness.*

LUCHENI: Step right up, ladies and gentlemen! Witness, how the emperor of Austria makes his bride a wife. The consummation of the marriage is the precondition for the birth of the heir to the throne. Therefore, ladies and gentlemen, this embrace is in the public interest...!

*Elisabeth breaks the embrace. Shocked, she looks at the gaping faces. Hastily she pulls Franz Joseph away, to be with him undisturbed elsewhere. But already other gawkers are standing there. She then forgoes any further tenderness.*

ELISABETH: If you were simply not an emperor, then there would be nothing that could separate us.

*Elisabeth pushes Franz Joseph to go. The gawkers follow, sneering. Lucheni watches the couple go.*

LUCHENI: The little bird has flown into the cage, the barred door is closed. Can you blame the people for wanting to see the little creature? A rarity, born in freedom and still untrained!

*Light change. Scene change.*

## 8. ELISABETH'S APARTMENTS IN LAXENBURG PALACE

### AN EMPRESS MUST BE GLOWING

*It is early morning. The archduchess pays her daughter-in-law an unannounced visit at Laxenburg. Attended by a court lady and a troop of lady's maids, the archduchess sweeps into the empress's apartment. Elisabeth's chief governess, Countess Esterhazy-Liechtenstein, approaches Archduchess Sophie with a submissive face.*

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: Where is the empress?

COUNTESS ESTERHAZY-LIECHTENSTEIN: She's still sleeping, highness!

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: Then it's high time that she wakes up!

*The Countess Esterhazy-Liechtenstein exits. Archduchess Sophie explains the purpose of the visit to her attendants.*

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: The empress is still so young.  
Time for her education.  
Time that she learned,  
What pertains to her.  
Time someone taught her to obey.  
She is altogether countrified.

CHAMBERMAIDS: Quite so!

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: Already lets her duties slide

CHAMBERMAIDS: Very poor!

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: She has no humility,  
Thinks she's pretty  
And no discipline.  
An empress must be glowing  
In fulfillment of her duties,  
The dynasty she's growing  
Just on beauty

CHAMBERMAIDS: In earnest!

*Elisabeth and Countess Esterhazy-Liechtenstein come out of the bedroom. Elisabeth is only wearing a robe over her nightdress. She is still seemingly sleepy.*

ELISABETH: What's the matter?

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: My child, one doesn't sleep so long here.

ELISABETH: Why?

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: I won't tolerate any idleness!

ELISABETH: I was so tired...

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: The day begins at five o'clock, punctually each morning with with the chime of the clock.

ELISABETH: But Franz Joseph told me I should rest today.

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: Rest from what? I asked him. I know that last night you abstained.

ELISABETH: That can't be...

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: That's what I said too –

ELISABETH: ...He wouldn't tell on me to you!

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: My son keeps nothing secret from me.

ELISABETH: That's not true!

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: Then ask him yourself...

*She gives her attendants a sign. They exit to fetch Franz Joseph.*

ELISABETH: I will –

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: He came here with me! (*She tries to remain objective.*) Believe me child, I mean well.

ELISABETH: Naturally.

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: I don't wish to have any disputes whatsoever.

ELISABETH: I don't either.

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: Act in line with all ceremony, and I will soon be satisfied with you.

ELISABETH: I want to go riding today –

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: Uncouth!

COUNTESS ESTERHAZY-LIECHTENSTEIN: And too risky!

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: An empress does not trot around.

COUNTESS ESTERHAZY-LIECHTENSTEIN: How disgusting!

ELISABETH: Why not then?

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: Because one shouldn't do what protocol says isn't sound.

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE & COUNTESS ESTERHAZY-LIECHTENSTEIN: An empress must be glowing  
In fulfillment of her duties,  
The dynasty she's growing  
Just on beauty

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: Come show me your teeth!

COUNTESS ESTERHAZY-LIECHTENSTEIN: With good reason.

ELISABETH: My teeth?

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: Yes! Is that so hard?

COUNTESS ESTERHAZY-LIECHTENSTEIN: Open your mouth!

*Elisabeth shows Archduchess Sophie her teeth.*

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: They're too yellow, that won't do.

ELISABETH: Am I a horse? –

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: Oh no! But you're a role model –

ELISABETH: They only criticize me. What I want to do is forbidden –

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: I want you to become an empress. You still won't do as you're bidden!

ELISABETH: I think you're only jealous of me...

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: Jealous of you?! That's really funny!

*Franz Joseph and the ladies enter the room.*

ELISABETH: I want... --

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: First learn to be more modest.

ELISABETH: I wish to... --

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: No!

ELISABETH: Help me, Franz Joseph! See how your mother tortures me!

CHAMBERMAIDS & COUNTESS ESTERHAZY-LIECHTENSTEIN: An empress must be glowing  
In fulfillment of her duties,

The dynasty she's growing  
Just on beauty

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE (*overlapping*): Leave her to me, my son! I'll train, I'll train her yet. Leave her to me, my son! I'll train her yet.

ELISABETH (*overlapping*): She tortures me, she imprisons me! Help me, don't leave me alone!

FRANZ JOSEPH: I would gladly take your side...but it would be better for us both if you followed my mother's counsel...

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: Be strict! Be strong!

ELISABETH: So, you abandon me...

*She turns abruptly and walks alone to the ramp. Franz Joseph makes a motion to follow her, but is turned back by Archduchess Sophie.  
Lightchange.*

## I BELONG ONLY TO ME

ELISABETH: I won't be submissive, tamed, and obedient  
I can't be coerced to be modest and radiant.  
How can you treat me like your property?  
While I answer only to me.  
I'd like to look down on this world from a great high wire  
I'd like to dance on thin ice or run through a fire  
What should you care what risks I seek?  
I answer only to me.

If you try to teach me, then I'm simply forced, to escape from this terrible plight,  
If you want to alter me, then I'll run away, and fly like a bird into the light!  
And if I want the stars then I'll touch the sky and never land.  
I'll grow and I'll learn and stay exactly who I am.  
Before I lose myself I'll flee  
Then I'll answer only to me.

(Musical interlude)

I won't be your puppet, I won't be crowned just for show  
Probed and examined and critiqued from head to toe  
The stares of strangers' eyes gives me chills  
I answer only to me.  
And if you want to change me, then don't hold me down. I won't give my freedom away.  
And if you want to bind me, then I'll flee your nest, and dive like a gull to the waves.  
I long to be happy and be rid of these fears  
I share my joys and I openly I show my tears.  
So don't hinder how I live,  
That's the one thing, I can't give  
While I answer only to me.  
To me!



*Scene change.*

## 9. POINTS OF A MARRIAGE

### POINTS OF A MARRIAGE

*The park view of Shoenbrunn Palace on a screen. Lucheni appears as a film projectionist, and setting up his projector and stand, he projects scenes from the early recordings of the Austrian empire on the screen.*

LUCHENI: It annoys Death to see Elisabeth at the Vienna court. Really, he has been rebuffed, and you can understand his spite. Well then: if despite the milk and honey her life here doesn't taste so sweet, then could it be quite possible he's behind the deceit? In the first year of marriage the emperor often leaves alone. What does it matter? Her parrot always has time for her at home. In the second year of marriage she has her first little daughter, and is promptly freed from motherly care by the archduchess, and her plotters.

*The screen opens, and in the opening shows a look at a scene inside the palace: Elisabeth stands in front of her parrot cage, opposite Archduchess Sophie with her ladies and chambermaids. Between them stands Franz Joseph.*

ELISABETH: Where is my little one?

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: I took her! It's fine!

ELISABETH: I want my child back!

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: You will see her from time to time.

ELISABETH: Without asking me, you christened her Sophie. – Of all people your name, not me!

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: I will take care of her!

ELISABETH: Franz Joseph, your mother tortures me incessantly! Now she has stolen my child – Say something!

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE & LADIES (*overlapping*): She's only still a child! She can't raise one herself!

FRANZ JOSEPH: Calm down my angel! Mama knows what she's doing! She has much experience with children, and she means it well.

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE & LADIES (*overlapping*): You yourself must be the strong hand in the Vienna court!

ELISABETH: I understand, you are siding...

FRANZ JOSEPH: I don't want to fight...

ELISABETH: ...against me!

FRANZ JOSEPH: Don't misunderstand me. It can't be helped.

ELISABETH: My child! I want my child!

*The cut in the screen closes and the scene changes. Lucheni continues his film presentation.*

LUCHENI: In the third year of marriage comes another baby girl.  
The mother cries in vain – the child is requisitioned.  
And slowly it becomes clear, that what only she can achieve,  
Is when she's needed she negotiates her position.

*Once again the screen opens. We see the couple's dining room. On the other side of the stage the court cabinet advises.*

FRANZ JOSEPH: Your beauty can be politically useful for us.

CABINET (*except Count Gruenne*): Your beauty can be useful for us...

COUNT GRUENNE (*overlapping*): You must crush rebellion under your heel...

FRANZ JOSEPH: Come with me to Hungary, work your magic for me there.

CABINET (*except Count Gruenne, overlapping*): ...can support the emperor's power.

COUNT GRUENNE (*overlapping*): ...and afterward beguile them with charm, to bring them out of hate.

ELISABETH: I would like my children. Bring them back and quick.  
Then I will happily escort you in the service of your politics.

CABINET (*overlapping*): Hungary and Italy are smitten with beautiful women...

ELISABETH: They must travel with me.

FRANZ JOSEPH: They are still too small for that.

CABINET (*overlapping*): Austria is more than ever...

ELISABETH: With them or nothing!

FRANZ JOSEPH: Please, then so it will be.

CABINET (*overlapping*): ...building on charm and grace.

*The screen closes, the scene changes. The court cabinet exits. Lucheni packs his projector up.*

LUCHENI: So in the fourth year of marriage the two children travel with the couple to Hungary, where someone is waiting for them!  
You already know who? -- Don't you...?

*Lucheni exits. The screen rises and reveals the Debresin palace yard in the evening. Franz Joseph and Elisabeth greet a group of Hungarian Magnates. Three aristocrats comment on the appearance of Elisabeth in hushed voices.*

## THE SHADOWS ARE GROWING LONGER

A YOUNG HUNGARIAN: The empress is beautiful.

A FORMER REVOLUTIONARY: How does she feel about Hungary?

AN OLDER ARISTOCRAT: She loves everything that her mother-in-law hates.

A FORMER REVOLUTIONARY: Then she will support us.

A YOUNG HUNGARIAN: She looks sad.

AN OLDER ARISTOCRAT: Her children are sick. Little Sophie is said to have a high fever.

A YOUNG HUNGARIAN: The worry makes her even more beautiful.

*Death's coach drives onstage. Death steps out and goes to Elisabeth. At his signal an Angel of Death opens the door of the carriage. Inside an open child's coffin where the body of two-year-old Sophie can be seen.*

ELISABETH: No!!

*Death commands Elisabeth with a lascivious gesture to follow him.*

DEATH: Do you remember how we trembled  
As we together danced and spun?  
You need me. Yes, you need me.  
Admit that you love me more,  
Than the man at your side.  
Even when you appear to give him more love  
You pull him into darkest night.

*The lighting has so far through this concentrated completely on Death. The group in the background changes in the dark.*

DEATH: The shadows are growing longer.  
It was evening, before your day was light.  
The shadows are growing longer.  
This world is sinking, don't hold on so tight!

*Elisabeth appears for a moment undecided, before she flees from Death to Franz Joseph. She holds on to him tightly. Blackout. Scene change.*

## 10. A VIENNA COFFEEHOUSE

### THE MERRY APOCALYPSE

*Lucheni is dressed as a coffeehouse waiter on the way from the kitchen to the tables.*

LUCHENI: Ma che cazzo voi! [What the fuck do you want?] The world is going under, indubbiamente [undoubtedly]. At the palace no one has noticed it yet. But in the coffeehouses of Vienna everyone knows.

*The scene brightens. At round tables sit assorted coffeehouse customers. They read newspapers, smoke cigars, write, play chess, are bored and converse. Luchen serves and takes orders.*

PROFESSOR: What's in the Feuilleton?

JOURNALIST: How does the bouillon taste today?

STUDENT: Will anyone play Skat with me?

BOHEMIAN: My god, I'm bored again!

POET: Our young empress cries all day long. She doesn't eat anymore since she lost her child.

BOHEMIAN: Another mélange!

LUCHENI: Another mélange.

PROFESSOR: She is probably pregnant too!

JOURNALIST: She doesn't show her stomach anymore.

LUCHENI & POET: Too long we've lacked an heir to the royal throne.

JOURNALIST: She recently went to the Renz Circus.

PROFESSOR: She's inconvenient for the emperor's mother.

ALL (*except Lucheni*): And so what –  
We sit around in the coffeehouse  
And yawning, await the apocalypse.

LUCHENI: Gossips! Knowing everything and nothing. Squatting there per ingannare il tempo [to pass the time]. Killing time. Day in and day out.

POET: Another year over!

BOHEMIAN: It's all the same to me!

PROFESSOR (*reading in the paper*): We have concordat!

STUDENT: Who will play Skat with me today?

JOURNALIST: Our young emperor doesn't show much aptitude. In any case not in politics.

BOHEMIAN: Another liquor!

PROFESSOR: The last war around the Crimean neutralized us.

JOURNALIST: And now Austria is totally politically isolated.

PROFESSOR: France, England, Russia, stand in a front.  
And now there's war with Piedmont.

ALL (*except Lucheni*): And so what –  
We sit around in the coffeehouse  
And yawning, await the apocalypse.

STUDENT: This time we believed it was a son.

POET: And the mother was soon robbed of him too.

JOURNALIST: I heard she likes the Magyars!

PROFESSOR: Is she liberal?

BOHEMIAN: Is she radical?

ALL (*except Lucheni*): She is a strange woman!  
And so what, good for the apocalypse.

LUCHENI: When Rudolf came into the world,  
The mother in the birthing bed  
Had a terrible vision.  
She saw red flags,  
Masses of people at Ballhausplatz  
Threatening with fists.  
She saw barricades  
And on it her own son  
As the leader of the revolution!

POET: Delightfully eccentric!

BOHEMIAN: Beautifully decadent!

STUDENT & PROFESSOR: Austria needs a parliament now!

ALL: And so what –

We sit around in the coffeehouse  
And yawning, await the apocalypse.

And so what –

We sit around in the coffeehouse  
And yawning, await the apocalypse.

FIRST GROUP: Because we're bored, because it doesn't hurt anyone.

SECOND GROUP (*overlapping*): Staring, shooting the bull, chatting, smoking, grousing, dithering, reading, dozing over coffee!

THIRD GROUP (*overlapping*): Because we're bored, because it doesn't hurt anyone.

*Lighting change and scene change.*

## 11. ELISABETH'S BEDROOM

ELISABETH, OPEN UP, MY ANGEL

*A night in the Palace in 1865. Franz Joseph stands in his housecoat in front of Elisabeth's bedroom door, knocks, and tries to enter. The door is locked. Elisabeth sits in her bedroom at the desk and writes. She hears Franz Joseph, but makes no move to let him in.*

FRANZ JOSEPH: Elisabeth? Open up, my angel.

I, your husband, yearn for you.

Don't make me wait!

Behind me lies a day full of problems.

France begins to openly threaten me.

Scandals that never end.

State bankruptcy, war and revolution..

A wave of suicides, new typhoid cases.

Let me sleep away from disorder

Like a ship in a safe harbor,

Guarded by your tenderness

And without cares for a night.

*He can't understand why she won't open the door for him. He listens at the door before he makes a new appeal...*

Just open up, don't leave me waiting.

Be the wife, who understands me, Elisabeth!

*Elisabeth has stopped writing. She turns in her chair in the direction of the door.*

ELISABETH: Why don't you go to your mother?  
She was always your preference otherwise...

FRANZ JOSEPH: Angel!

ELISABETH: Spare me!

FRANZ JOSEPH: What did I do?

ELISABETH: You're allowing Rudolf to be tortured.

FRANZ JOSEPH: Rudolf? Tortured?

ELISABETH: I saw it all. Your mother gave him to her minions.

FRANZ JOSEPH: She's been allowed to have him educated? He's still too weak

ELISABETH: He can't fight back. I won't stand by and watch any longer! Either her or me!

*Elisabeth stands and goes to the door with her letter.*

I have written down a formal ultimatum. If you don't want to lose me, satisfy it! I would like to determine for myself how my children are educated. And from now on I want to decide what I do and don't do. Read my letter and decide: your mother or me! And now leave me alone.

*She opens the door and hands Franz Joseph the paper with her ultimatum. Before he can come in she slams the door in his face. Dazed, Franz Joseph considers the letter, turns, and exits into the darkness. On a divan in the bedroom sits Death. Elisabeth starts when she sees him.*

DEATH: Elisabeth please don't despair.  
Rest yourself in my arms.  
I want to comfort you.  
Flee, and you'll be with your lover  
And all the fighting will be over.  
I'll lead you, you'll be free  
To a better reality  
Elisabeth! Elisabeth! I love you...

ELISABETH: No! I want life.  
I'm too young to give up in strife  
I know, I can free myself.  
Now I'll have my beauty help

Go! I don't want you!  
I don't need you! Go!

*With a decisive gesture Elisabeth shows death out. He turns back and disappears into nothing.  
Scene change.*

## 12. VIENNA MARKETPLACE

### MILK!

*An early fall morning. Workers, housewives and servants wait between the closed market stalls for the opening of the milk shop. The door finally opens a crack and a hand hangs a well-used sign on a nail. The door immediately closes again. The waiting crowd grows restless. Lucheni reads aloud what the sign says.*

WOMEN: When will there be finally be milk? Why won't he open up for us?

LUCHENI: No Deliveries Today!

MEN: Nothing again.  
The cans empty, like so often.  
Frozen and hoping, half the night!

CROWD: Someone's cheating us.  
Someone's feeding us.  
Feeding nothing but lies.  
We must starve, while the others live in fluff.  
Around the palaces...Enough!

*Lucheni incites the crowd.*

LUCHENI: You want to know who takes your milk?

CROWD: Say who?

LUCHENI: All the milk is just for her!

CROWD: For who?

LUCHENI: For your empress! She needs it for...

CROWD: For what?

LUCHENI: ...her bath!



CROWD: What?

LUCHENI: Yes!

WOMEN: What a scandal!

LUCHENI: A scandal!

WOMEN: I would never have believed that from her!

LUCHENI: You would never have believed that from her!

MEN: Children are dying, because there's no milk for them...

LUCHENI: No milk for the children!

MEN: ...because she's bathing in it...

LUCHENI: She bathes in it!

MEN: ...and steals from us us!

CROWD: What use is complaining,  
When liars are reigning,  
Down with those liars, parasites!

LUCHENI: Down with those liars, parasites!

CROWD: Down with the royal thieves  
Down with those who deceive  
Now the people will rise!

LUCHENI: Now the people will rise!

CROWD: Enough!

LUCHENI: You want to hear what pains the empress?

CROWD: Tell us!

LUCHENI: When she counts the hairs in her comb...

CROWD: What?

LUCHENI: ...she cries from worry, and mourns the loss of...

CROWD: Of what?

LUCHENI: ...her hair!

CROWD: What?

LUCHENI: Yes!

CROWD (*first group*): Time to fight back!

LUCHENI: High time!

CROWD (*second group, overlapping*): No more poor and rich!

CROWD (*first group*): We want to teach them...

LUCHENI: We want to teach them!

CROWD (*second group, overlapping*): Hear the signal...

CROWD (*first group*): ...that you don't laugh at us.

LUCHENI: Don't let yourselves be mocked anymore!

CROWD (*second group, overlapping*): ...to the last battle!

CROWD (*first group*): Bread for the poor!

LUCHENI: Fight for your human dignity!

CROWD (*second group, overlapping*): Now it's coming and he who doesn't want to work...

CROWD (*first group*): Justice instead of pity!

LUCHENI: Wage war on the palaces!

CROWD (*second group, overlapping*): ...who has no rights over us...

CROWD (*first group*): Down with every power!

LUCHENI: Freedom for the people!

CROWD (*second group, overlapping*): ...and no power!

CROWD & LUCHENI: Brothers get ready,  
It's time! Have no fear!  
Enough of the suffering! Say yes!  
The new era is here!

*Light change, scene change.*

### 13. ELISABETH'S DRESSINGROOM

#### OUR EMPRESS MUST BE BALANCED

*Mirror, vanity, open closets. In the background stands a large folding screen, behind which Elisabeth bathes and completes her beauty regimen. The Countess Esterhazy-Liechtenstein gives the hairdressers and chambermaids instructions. Two of the maids carry milk cans behind the screen. Another maid prepares the towels, while the hairdressers mix a selection of shampoos to wash the empress's hair.*

COUNTESS ESTERHAZY-LIECHTENSTEIN: The empress is already in her bath. Lower your eyes when you approach!  
And gently and carefully pour the hot milk into the tub.

*The Countess Esterhazy-Liechtenstein clasps her hands.*

Are her towels perfumed?

FIRST MAID (*presenting the towels*): And pressed!

COUNTESS ESTERHAZY-LIECHTENSTEIN: Is the shampoo mixed?

HAIRDRESSER (*presenting the shampoo*): By the recipe: first the cognac, then the eggs, three in each glass...

COUNTESS ESTERHAZY-LIECHTENSTEIN: As she commands it!  
Our empress should balance,  
Comb, groom, and take care,  
Instead of interfering in state affairs.  
The archduchess finds that sensible too...

*Maids and hairdressers hurry between the screen and the dressers.*

The strawberry mouse is for her skin –

SECOND MAID: I'll start her massage right away.

THIRD MAID: Here, the sauerkraut for the complexion.

HAIRDRESSER: I have to touch-up her brows.

FIRST MAID: Here comes the veal for her skin.

COUNTESS ESTERHAZY-LIECHTENSTEIN: Lay it in a thick layer on her cheeks! The rosewater, wonderful!

HAIRDRESSER: Six hours I'll need to style her.

COUNTESS ESTERHAZY-LIECHTENSTEIN: That makes the eyes bright and clear.

SECOND MAID: She's manicured daily.

COUNTESS ESTERHAZY-LIECHTENSTEIN: The gravy, which she drinks at noon, must be from a filet.

COUNTESS ESTERHAZY-LIECHTENSTEIN, HAIRDRESSER & MAIDS: Our empress should balance,  
Comb, groom, and take care,  
Instead of interfering in state affairs.

*Franz Joseph enters the dressing room by surprise, through a door unseen by the audience.*

COUNTESS ESTERHAZY-LIECHTENSTEIN: The emperor!

FIRST MAID: What?

SECOND MAID: The emperor?

THIRD MAID: Here – in the empress's chambers?

COUNTESS ESTERHAZY-LIECHTENSTEIN & FIRST AND SECOND MAIDS: At this hour?

*All bow.*

FRANZ JOSEPH: Where is the empress? I must speak with her!

COUNTESS ESTERHAZY-LIECHTENSTEIN: She hasn't finished her routine yet, majesty. But you can speak with her. She is behind the screen. You can hear her.

*The Countess Esterhazy-Liechtenstein gives the maids a sign, to distance themselves. The maids, hairdresser, and countess exit.*

### I BELONG ONLY TO ME (REPRISE)

FRANZ JOSEPH: I came to admit it,  
I'll do what you and your letter say  
I can't bear for a minute,  
To go without your love, not even for a day.  
Whatever you want, I'll give it to you,  
Before it's you I lose.  
And if you want the right,  
To raise Rudolf to be a man,  
I'll tell my mother, I agree to your plan.  
She doesn't stand between us I swear it's true  
Because I belong to you.

I rule and direct, overcoming my feelings.  
Feelings are forbidden for a king  
But when I think of my sweetling  
It silences every political thing  
I'll be untrue to myself for you!

*The audience sees Elisabeth in a mirror. Her pose parallels a famous painting by Franz Xaver Winterhalten from 1864. She steps out of the mirror's frame... the most beautiful woman in the world!*

ELISABETH: If I am I to agree,  
Then don't understand me wrong.  
I will go with you but you can't bind me,  
So don't hold me back any longer.  
You don't need to give anything to me,  
Just let me live free  
Because I belong only to me!

*Elisabeth holds out her hand for Franz Joseph as if for him to take it, but as he reaches for it she lets it fall with a decisive motion and turns back to her mirror-painting.*

I belong only to me!

*Black-out.*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

---

## ACT II

### 1. IN FRONT OF THE BUDAPEST CATHEDRAL

#### KITSCH!

*Organ music. Lucheni appears as a surprise from behind the audience. He has strapped on vendor's tray and acts as a souvenir seller. Down an aisle in the theater he goes to the front of the stage, while he sings to the audience.*

LUCHENI: Come closer, ladies and gentlemen!  
While inside the cathedral there on this memorable 8<sup>th</sup> of June, 1867,  
the emperor of Austria and the unearthly beauty Elisabeth  
are crowned king and queen of Hungary,  
you have the unique opportunity  
to purchase a valuable souvenir.  
Everything very cheap! Please, step closer!

*Tempo change.*

How about this picture:  
Elisabeth as mother with Rudolf her son –  
And here, isn't this nice?  
The family celebrating Christmas in a festive salon.  
In this picture you can see  
The royal couple quite in love.  
A plate I have too,  
That shows Elisabeth at prayer appealing to God above.  
Take a cool souvenir with you  
From the imperial might!  
All intimate, dear, practical, any way you like:  
Kitsch! Kitsch! Kitsch!  
Don't purse your lips! That simply won't do,  
As if the truth would impress you.  
The truth plain to see, but none will have it,  
Because it will only depress you.  
Elisabeth is "in",  
They've talked of her for over a hundred years.  
Though as she really was,  
You won't find that in any book or movie –only here  
What good was the resentment,  
what good to call her sublime?  
What remains from her life  
except the dregs of the time?  
Kitsch! Kitsch! Kitsch!  
Let me tell you something:

Your Sisi in reality was a bad-tempered egotist.  
She fought for her son, to prove to Sophie,  
That she the stronger woman is  
And then of course she pushed him away.  
With independence even her son couldn't surmount.  
She lived off the monarchy  
and opened herself a Swiss bank account.  
You only hear what you want to hear,  
And what remains from the time  
Of shit and beauty,  
Of dreams and reality  
Only kitsch. Kitsch! Kitsch! Kitsch!

*With a gesture Lucheni raises the curtain. On a giant kitsch postcard we see the Hungarian people in the sunny square in front of the cathedral, as on June 8, 1867 Franz Joseph and Elisabeth are crowned in their Hungarian coronation.*

ELJEN

A HUNGARIAN GIRL: The doors are opening!

A YOUNG HUNGARIAN: The service is over!

A BURGESS WOMAN: They're coming!

*One begins to sing, and the others quickly join in.*

A YOUNG HUNGARIAN: Hungary's misery is at an end – Eljen, Eljen Erzsebet!

MEN: She defeated the opposition - Eljen, Eljen Erzsebet!

CROWD: Hungary's misery is at an end – Eljen, Eljen Erzsebet!  
Away with anything that would divide us – Eljen, Eljen Erzsebet!

*Lucheni comments on the excitement as a critical observer.*

LUCHENI: Hungary, Elisabeth has freed you!  
She pulled your card from the world's house of cards.  
The new empire belongs to nationalism.  
It will see that the empire comes crashing down hard!

CROWD: She will heal Hungary's wounds...

LUCHENI: Anarchy and chaos!

CROWD: ... Eljen, Eljen Erzsebet!

LUCHENI: Austria crumbles!

CROWD: Hungary's rebirth, the Hapsburgs end...

LUCHENI: The end of the old world!

CROWD: ... Eljen, Eljen Erzsebet!

*The crowd backs away. The Angels of Death escort Elisabeth and Franz Joseph to Death's carriage. The angels protect the royal pair from the crowd as though it were hostile.*

MEN: Elisabeth! Elisabeth! Elisabeth! Elisabeth!

WOMEN: Elisabeth! Elisabeth!

LUCHENI: Elisabeth!

*Blackout.*

## 2. \*vii IN THE BUDAPEST MAIN SQUARE

### WHEN I WANT TO DANCE

## 2. A BEDROOM IN THE PALACE

### MAMA, WHERE ARE YOU?

*The coach of death from the previous scene, but in grotesque disproportion. It is night. The coach opens along the entire side. Inside is nine-year-old Rudolf. He sleeps in an unrealistically large royal bed, tossing and turning as if feverish, he sits up scared and awake. He calls for his mother.*

RUDOLF CHILD: Mama? ...Mama!

Mama, where are you? I call, can you hear me?

Please I'm so cold, take me in your arms.

I know what they all say, why you can't be near me.

You aren't to be disturbed.

Mama, my room at night is so dark.

Now I'm awake and I'm frightened.

No one strokes my hair, I cry on my own.

Why must you leave me alone?



*Suddenly Death stands near Rudolf.*

DEATH: She can't hear you. Don't call for her!

RUDOLF CHILD: Who are you?

DEATH: I'm a friend. When you need me, I'll come to you-

RUDOLF CHILD: Stay there!

DEATH: I'll stay close!

RUDOLF, CHILD: When I make the effort,  
I can be a hero.  
Yesterday I killed a cat.  
I can be hard and cruel like the world,  
Though sometimes I would rather be mild.

*Death takes Rudolf in his arms.*

RUDOLF, CHILD: Ah, Mama,  
I want to always be with you.  
When you go out, you don't take me with you.  
And when you're here, you shut me out.  
Why do you leave me alone.

*Rudolf collapses, crying, into Death. Death is taken aback by this. The coach turns. Scene change.*

### 3. A MENTAL CLINIC NEAR VIENNA

#### THE ASYLUM

*A lone violin player stands in a spotlight on the otherwise dark stage. Lucheni stands in another spotlight.*

LUCHENI: Stupido Bambino! [Stupid child!] You can't ask an empress to care of her children. She has duties. She has to tend to the sick and the poor. Her favorite is to visit the sick...in the mad house.

*Light change. Doctors, attendants, the chaplain, nurses, and a number of patients wait in the visitor's room of the state mental hospital for the arrival of the empress, which she announced on short notice. Elisabeth enters the room with her entourage of court ladies. The doctors and attendants bow deeply. The director and the chaplain make efforts to demonstrate their gratitude to the empress. The patients are occupied with various handiworks.*

DIRECTOR: Majesty!

CHAPLAIN: What an honor...

*The insane Miss Windisch, in the back row of patients, takes a special interest in the visitor. A resolute nurse watches her mistrustfully. Elisabeth impatiently interrupts the ritual greeting...*

ELISABETH: I'd like to see the patients.

*The director and chaplain take over the tour. Selected patients are presented to Elisabeth. Attendants ensure the presentation goes smoothly. The insane Artist Kratky shows Elisabeth a painting, portraying that everything living sustains itself from the death of other beings. Miss Windisch observes the visit with increasing disapproval and soon steps in...*

MISS WINDISCH: Insolence! This is unheard of. Who does this woman think she is! That isn't the empress. How can she be so bold? She is crazy! I am Elisabeth!

*The insane woman restrained by a straightjacket. She struggles against it, outraged.*

ELISABETH: Let her free! I'd like to speak with her...  
Look at me! Do you not recognize the empress Elisabeth?

MISS WINDISCH (*echoing, almost overlapping*): Look at me! Do you not recognize the empress Elisabeth?

ELISABETH: Bow before me!

MISS WINDISCH: Shameless liar, imposter!

THE OTHER PATIENTS (*almost overlapping*): Liar! Imposter!

MISS WINDISCH: On your knees!  
Take her to a mad house! Get her out of here!

THE OTHER PATIENTS (*partially overlapping*): To a madhouse! Madhouse!

MISS WINDISCH: I order it!

THE OTHER PATIENTS (*partially overlapping*): She must be crazy, she acts as if there was sense to her madness!

*The patients are getting out of control. Doctors and attendants try to maintain control of the situation. The director and the chaplain call for Elisabeth to distance herself. But she refuses to go. The patients are removed. Elisabeth stays behind.*

#### NOTHING (MAD HOUSE BALLAD)

ELISABETH: I wish, that I really were you.  
In a straightjacket instead of a corset.  
Yours only binds the body, mine fetters the soul.  
I – I fought and  
Defied the odds.  
And what did I achieve?  
Nothing, nothing, just nothing!

Because the only solution would be madness  
And the only rescue would be to fall.  
It lures me to the abyss.  
I want to let myself fall –  
Why do I shudder at the leap?  
If I weren't dammed to be Elisabeth,  
Then I would be Titania.  
And would laugh, when they say: she is crazy!  
I stand on the wire and the fear makes me sick,  
Because when I look down I see  
Nothing, nothing just nothing.  
I grope further with seeking steps  
Always afraid of the nothing,  
Nothing, just nothing.  
Only insanity makes you truly free.  
Though I lack the courage for insanity.  
So I play the strong woman and do what I do,  
As if this life were more than  
disappointment, falseness, and deceit.  
As if it was nothing, nothing, just not enough.

*Elisabeth exit. The lights slowly go down.*

#### 4. ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE'S SALON IN THE PALACE

##### TRANSITION SONG

*Lucheni in a spotlight.*

LUCHENI: Other than all that, she's doing well.  
The emperor listens to her advice.  
His power in the game rests in the queen before the rook.  
The mother-in-law considers the course of the game quite bleak  
And collects her true troops for the final storm.

*In the Archduchess's chambers the largely disenfranchised royal cabinet – Archbishop Rauscher, Prince Schwarzenberg, Baron Hueber, Baron Kempen and Count Gruenne – have convened for a strategy meeting.*

##### US OR HER

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: I am indignant!  
The woman is malignant  
Franz Joseph doesn't listen to me anymore.  
Elisabeth is becoming stronger in her store.  
The question is: us or her!

COUNT GRUENNE: The situation is serious like never before.

ARCHBISHOP RAUSCHER: Something must be done –

PRINCE SCHWARZENBERG: And soon ...

ALL: ...or else the empress will be our doom.

PRINCE SCHWARZENBERG: It's unbearable, how she stirs up Hungary trouble. The minister of state is now occupied with a rebel.

BARON KEMPEN: She's liberal, and reads forbidden literature.

PRINCE SCHWARZENBERG: Where will that lead, she rules like a pompadour.

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE, COUNT GRUENEE, PRINCE SCHWARZENBERG & ARCHBISHOP RAUSCHER: Us or her!

The situation is serious like never before.

Something must be done and soon.

Or else the empress will be our doom.

BARON HUEBNER (*overlapping*): Her influence endangers the both business and the royal purse.

BARON KEMPEN (*overlapping*): Instead of Goethe or Schiller she recites Heine Verse.

GRAF GRUENNE: I can understand the emperor.

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: How?

GRAF GRUENNE: Well just as a man...

GRAF GRUENNE (*meaningfully*): She is simply quite beautiful.

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: Beautiful? There are other beautiful women.

PRINCE SCHWARZENBERG: Oh, I understand...

GRAF GRUENNE: Is that an idea?

ARCHBISHOP RAUSCHER: A plan?

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: We must fight fire with fire!

BARON HUEBNER: And a woman...

ALLE: ...with a woman...?!

ARCHDUCHESS SOPHIE: We must free the emperor from his sexual dependence!

BARON HUEBNER: He must discover, she's not the only one who'll catch his eye.

COUNT GRUENNE: It's about time, that he gave another's love a try.

PRINCE SCHWARZENBERG: We must arrange something quite intimate for two.

COUNT GRUENNE: I'll undertake it myself to find a Circe to lead him to.

ARCHBISHOP RAUSCHER: From a moral standpoint I must strongly protest this proposal.  
But on political grounds I find it excellent.

ARCHDUCHESS: The question is:

ALL: It's us, or she, will destroy the monarchy. Something must be done, and soon, or else the empress will be our doom...

SOPHIE: But with discretion, Gruenne!

COUNT GRUENNE: Don't worry your majesty. I will personally select the woman myself. In Frau Wolf's Salon!

ALL: Us or she? Who is for the monarchy? Something must happen!

*The scene darkens as the lords take leave of Archduchess Sophie.  
Scene change.*

## 5. FRAU WOLF'S ESTABLISHMENT IN VIENNA

### TRANSITION SONG

*Lucheni stands in a spotlight downstage.*

LUCHENI: Every nobleman adores culture.  
He likes it true and good and beautiful.  
It elevates and enchants the manly nature  
To go out in Vienna in the evenings.  
Luckily there are enough theaters in the city,  
And it is not quite the season,  
And when he's had his fill of the royal ballet girls,  
Then he goes to Ms. Wolf's Salon.  
Fetenti coglioni! [Stinking bastards!] Cazzo di merde! [Hot shit!]

*The most famous brothel in the city – only for high class customers. Overseen and managed by Frau Wolf, several girls present themselves for the johns in the plush salon. Ms. Wolf greets the guests.*

DON'T BE SHY

FRAU WOLF: Don't be so shy!  
Nothing to hide, in this establishment!  
Out with your money, and don't blush now honey!  
We're here for your entertainment!

FRAU WOLF & GIRLS: In Frau Wolf's Salon, no need to say "Pardon." When you have urges or needs

FRAU WOLF: ...my girls aim only to please!

LUCHENI: So many pretty girls here  
Pass by in a whirl here

FRAU WOLF: Here you'll find the girls you've been dreaming of.  
Marie here is dumb and droll,  
Tatjana's round as a bread roll,  
Helen likes to curse in bed.  
For men who need a cuddle,  
Yvonn's great breasts will muddle,  
And here Madeleine I recommend for any man...

LUCHENI: a man who likes a taste of danger,  
Risking infection from a stranger...

FRAU WOLF & GIRLS: Don't be so shy!  
Nothing to hide, in this establishment!  
Out with your money, and don't blush now honey!  
We're here for your entertainment!  
In Frau Wolf's Salon, no need to say "Pardon."  
When you've urges and needs...

MS. WOLF: ...we'll put you at ease!

*The johns disappear with various girls. Count Gruenne appears. Frau Wolf greets him, the noblest of customers, with special submissiveness. She shows him several available girls. He goes from one to another. Lucheni commentates.*

LUCHENI: Not everyone comes in person  
To pick out their perversion.  
That trust is left to his man  
He can't risk being seen,  
And so his man is keen  
To pick the best and take her by the hand  
This sir's name you know it  
Though you don't dare to show it  
As he makes the selection with an expert's eye...

*Count Gruenne decides on the on the infected Madeleine, gives Frau Wolf a banknote and leaves with Madeleine.*

... The girl will be so hot in bed, but with a secret he'll regret instead...

LUCHENI, GIRLS, FRAU WOLF, & JOHNS: Don't be so shy!  
Nothing to hide, in this establishment!  
Out with your money, and don't blush now honey!  
We're here for your entertainment!  
In Frau Wolf's Salon, no need to say "Pardon."  
When you've urges and needs,  
The girls aim to please.

LUCHENI: Sometimes the result is a shock!

*Light change. Scene change.*

## 6. ELISABETH'S GYMNASTICS ROOM IN THE PALACE

### THE MALADY

*Under the gymnastics rings Elisabeth lies lifeless on the floor. Countess Esterhzy-Liechtenstein discovers the accident and screams in horror.*

COUNTESS ESTERHAZY-LIECHTENSTEIN: Help, a doctor! Hurry, hurry. Her majesty, the empress! She's fallen!

*Two ladies in waiting hurry in.*

Bring Dr. Seeburger, he's with the archduchess! – You stay here. Help me lay her on the couch.

*The Countess Esterhzy-Liechtenstein and the servants hurry to the unconscious empress and lay her on a wooden divan. There she comes to.*

ELISABETH: What happened...?

COUNTESS ESTERHAZY-LIECHTENSTEIN: Thank God, she's with us again! Are you in pain, majesty?

ELISABETH: No. I'm fine...

COUNTESS ESTERHAZY-LIECHTENSTEIN: Here comes the doctor. –

*The doctor enters. The audience does not see his face.*

DOCTOR: What happened?

COUNTESS ESTERHAZY-LIECHTENSTEIN: She was lying under the rings, unconscious. She must have gotten dizzy. No wonder, she doesn't eat anything. And then these exercise. The Archduchess was always against it, and I was too. But the empress wouldn't listen to good sense...

DOCTOR: Leave us!

*The Countess Esterhzy-Liechtenstein and the servants distance themselves. The doctor steps to the divan where Elisabeth is resting and begins his examination.*

DOCTOR: Your pulse...

ELISABETH: I'm already feeling better.

DOCTOR: Your brow is hot.

ELISABETH: I don't feel a thing!

DOCTOR: Your eyelids are pale,  
If I'm not mistaken –  
And I'm always right you see,  
This is certainly the malady.  
An infection, your majesty. Not fatal, but unpleasant. It's what they call the French disease...

*With a quick jerk he picks Elisabeth up.*

ELISABETH: That is disgraceful! What are you implying?  
What you're saying is completely impossible!

DOCTOR: Impossible? Why? Emperors are human too!

ELISABETH: My husband is faithful!

DOCTOR: That is false.

ELISABETH: God, if this is true,  
Then my husband has dragged me into deep disgrace!

DOCTOR: He certainly has.

ELISABETH: I'll hate him.  
I'll leave him forever!  
Even better: I'll kill myself!

DOCTOR: Do it, Elisabeth! I'm waiting for you.

*She looks at the doctor's face for the first time and recognizes him as Death.*

ELISABETH: You?!!!

*He strips his disguise off and is again the seducer.*

DEATH: This might be the final chance.  
Seize yourself, flee with me come fly!  
Come dance with me, the final dance!  
Leave everything behind!

ELISABETH: No, I'm staying here!  
My husband has in truth, done me a favor.



Where his morals ended,  
My freedom has new fervor.  
What doesn't kill me  
Makes me strong.  
I'll show it to everyone  
I have the right from his guilt and wrong,  
To tear open the chains.

*She rips the chain Franz Joseph gave her for their wedding from her neck and throws it to Death.*

ELISABETH: Go!

*Death sees that he can't come back, and exits.  
Blackout. Scene change.*

## 7. <sup>viii</sup> IN THE ARCHDUCHESS'S CHAMBERS

BELLARIA\*

## 7. RESTLESS YEARS

RESTLESS YEARS

*In a pool of light in the palace the advisers evaluate and discuss the situation in hushed tones. Franz Joseph sits writing at his desk.*

ADJUTANT: How is she to be healed?

PHYSICIAN, CHIEF STEWARD, & CHAMBERLAIN (*overlapping*): Just no scandal!

PHYSICIAN: I advised a change of air.

ADJUTANT, CHIEF STEWARD, & CHAMBERLAIN (*overlapping*): Strictest silence!

CHIEF STEWARD: She wants to go to Madeira...

ADJUTANT, PHYSICIAN, & CHAMBERLAIN (*overlapping*): She must go at once!

ADJUTANT: That's much too far for the emperor.

PHYSICIAN, CHIEF STEWARD, & CHAMBERLAIN (*overlapping*): Don't tell him!

CHAMBERLAIN: That won't stop her.

ADJUTANT, PHYSICIAN, & CHIEF STEWARD (*overlapping*): Just no scandal!

PHYSICIAN: She will leave straight away.

ADJUTANT, CHIEF STEWARD, & CHAMBERLAIN (*overlapping*): Strictest silence!

FRANZ JOSEPH: My poor angel, I hope...

ADJUTANT, PHYSICIAN, CHAMBERLAIN & CHIEF STEWARD (*overlapping*): Just no scandal!

FRANZ JOSEPH: ...you aren't suffering too much...

ADJUTANT, PHYSICIAN, CHAMBERLAIN & CHIEF STEWARD (*overlapping*): Strictest silence!

FRANZ JOSEPH: ...I count the days until...

ADJUTANT, PHYSICIAN, CHAMBERLAIN & CHIEF STEWARD (*overlapping*): Just no scandal!

FRANZ JOSEPH: ...until your return...

ADJUTANT, PHYSICIAN, CHAMBERLAIN & CHIEF STEWARD (*overlapping*): Strictest silence!

*Silently Franz Joseph continues writing, while on the other side of the stage Elisabeth in travelling clothes hurries across the stage. She is trailed by exhausted noblewomen and maids carrying luggage and parasols.*

NOBLEWOMEN & MAIDS: She never comes to rest,  
Rushing from place to place.  
As soon as we've arrived somewhere,  
We leave again on her wild race  
Today on steep mountain roads,  
Tomorrow back to the sea.  
Breathless with wounded feet,  
We pant behind her majesty  
Always onwards, upwards,  
Eight hours on our feet,  
And though we may grow tired,  
.Our duty we must meet.

FRANZ JOSEPH, ADJUTANT, PHYSICIAN, CHAMBERLAIN & SECRETARY (*overlapping*): Where is she now? What has she planned? Where will she go next?

NOBLEWOMEN & MAIDS: Sure she wanted to see Madeira.  
But now again we roam  
She wants to go to Corfu, Pest, or England,  
But never towards back home.

FRANZ JOSEPH, ADJUTANT, PHYSICIAN, CHAMBERLAIN & CHIEF STEWARD (*overlapping*): How is she? Whom does she see? When will she return to Vienna?

*While the noble ladies and maids continue to march, Elisabeth has taken a seat in a hairdresser's chair. The hairdresser Feifalik combs her hair as Lucheni runs on stage and holds a mirror in front of Elisabeth.*

LUCHENI: Mirror, mirror, in my hand,  
ten years now in a foreign land.  
Then one has to ask: Is she still young – or not...?

*Elisabeth is shown the comb. Lucheni notices that hairdresser has hidden a hair from the comb behind her back. He grabs her by the wrist and wrests the hair from her.*

LUCHENI: Cosa stai combinando? [What are you doing?] – Aha! A gray hair. Scocciatura! [Nuisance!]

*Lucheni, the hairdresser, and Elisabeth exit. The hairdresser's chair disappears. Light change.  
A visibly older Franz Joseph sits as before at a desk. The advisers to the emperor trade their information about the empress, who is far from Vienna.*

FRANZ JOSEPH: Since Mama is dead, my angel...

ADJUTANT, PHYSICIAN, CHAMBERLAIN & CHIEF STEWARD (*overlapping*): She buys horses.

FRANZ JOSEPH: ...I miss you even more...

ADJUTANT, PHYSICIAN, CHAMBERLAIN & CHIEF STEWARD (*overlapping*): She's learning Greek.

FRANZ JOSEPH: ...Rudolf will be twenty-eight...

ADJUTANT, PHYSICIAN, CHAMBERLAIN & CHIEF STEWARD (*overlapping*): She writes poetry.

FRANZ JOSEPH: ...and questions me every day...

ADJUTANT, PHYSICIAN, CHAMBERLAIN & CHIEF STEWARD (*overlapping*): exercises and fasts.

*Elisabeth appears anew and her followers hurry over the stage.*

NOBLEWOMEN & MAIDS: She never comes to rest,  
Rushing from place to place.  
As soon as we've arrived somewhere,  
We leave again on her wild race

FRANZ JOSEPH, ADJUTANT, PHYSICIAN, CHAMBERLAIN & CHIEF STEWARD (*overlapping*):  
Where is she now? What has she planned? Where will she go next?

NOBLEWOMEN & MAIDS: Today on steep mountain roads,  
Tomorrow back to the sea.  
Breathless with wounded feet,  
We pant behind her majesty

FRANZ JOSEPH, ADJUTANT, PHYSICIAN, CHAMBERLAIN & CHIEF STEWARD (*overlapping*): How  
is she? Who does she see? When will she return to Vienna?

*Lucheni again jumps in the empress's way and holds the mirror in front of her face. Noblewomen and maids exit.*

LUCHENI: Eighteen years now on a panicked run,  
From court her husband and her son  
And now one has to ask: Is she still young – or not...?

*Elisabeth grabs the mirror and breaks it before hurrying from the stage. Lucheni laughs tauntingly behind her.*

LUCHENI: E un aver mimosa. [And have a mimosa.] And ride like the devil. Always onwards! Ecco!  
[Yonder!]

*Scene change. Lucheni admires himself in the mirror briefly, as Death enters, accompanied by his Angels and Carriage. He gives Lucheni and meaningful look and Lucheni quickly exits.*

## 8. IN DEATH'S CARRIAGE

### THE SHADOWS ARE GROWING LONGER (REPRISE)

*An early morning in 1888. Death's carriage from Act II, Scene 2. Lucheni passes Rudolf downstage of the coach. He throws himself onto the royal bed and buries his face in his arms. Death comes from the wings and rubs Rudolf's shoulder.*

DEATH: Time that we finally spoke.  
Time that the silence finally broke.  
You know me. Yes, you know me.  
Don't you? You were just a boy,  
When I promised you my toy  
That I would always stay near you.

RUDOLF: Oh, you, I haven't forgotten.  
My friend, who I called for,  
When my fears eat me rotten

DEATH: I come, because you need me!

DEATH & RUDOLF: The shadows are growing longer  
But everyone stays blind and deaf.  
To music that grows stronger  
They dance wildly in the face of death.  
The shadows are growing longer...  
It is five till twelve, there's almost no time left!

RUDOLF: Time to see the world burning.  
If only I could turn get them turning!  
But I must watch and stand by it.  
They've all tied my hands.

DEATH: Nothing is worse than the knowing,  
How the disaster risks are growing,  
And to watch powerless.

RUDOLF: It makes me so sick!

*Behind the coach the shadowing Chorus of Death can be recognized.*

DEATH, RUDOLF, & DEAD: The shadows are growing longer  
And the songs are growing cold and shrill.  
The devil's might grows stronger,  
But they all ignore the bitter pill.  
The shadows are growing longer...

It is five till twelve, why do they all hold still?

DEATH: What holds you back? This is the moment! Reach for the power! Do it for yourself!

RUDOLF: Myself?

DEATH, RUDOLF, & DEAD: The shadows are growing longer.

What must happen, it must happen now.

The devil's might grows stronger,

Resist disaster, pull back somehow

The shadows are growing longer...

Kaiser Rudolf, in time he'll bow!

*Closing image. Scene change.*

## 9. <sup>ix</sup> THE ROYAL AUDIENCE CHAMBER

RUDOLF I AM BESIDE MYSELF

## 9. IN THE OPERA CIRCLE IN VIENNA

HATE

*A March afternoon in 1888. Supporters of Georg Ritter, leader of the Aldeutschen Party, block the Vienna Opera Ring streets. The traffic is stopped. Lucheni sits on a scaffolding and looks in the direction the parade of demonstrators is approaching from.*

VOICES OF THE DEMONSTRATORS (*approaching*): Hate the rest of the world! The strong conquer, the weak fall!

Hail the German awakening! A stronger man must come to power!

*A baron looks out the window of one of the delay carriages.*

BARON: What's going on? Why are we stopped?

LUCHENI: A demonstration, Signore. Nationalists, anti-Semites! Schoernerer's followers. Non c'e niente da fare. [There's nothing to be done about it.]

VOICES OF THE DEMONSTRATORS (*partially overlapping*): Hate and violence for those, who aren't like us! And those who arm themselves, hunt them down!

*The demonstrators storm onstage. They carry flags and banners and chant their slogans at the audience.*

DEMONSTRATORS: Socialists and pacifists, we won't dally with anymore! The Jewish writers, the Jewish women are our downfall! Enough!

*Several demonstrators stir up the others.*

A PROFESSOR: They've jailed our leader!

DEMONSTRATORS: Ugh!

PETTY BOURGEOIS: The judge must be a Jew!

DEMONSTRATORS: A pig!

JOURNALIST: The Jews protect a high lord!

DEMONSTRATORS: Who?

JOURNALIST: The crown prince!

DEMONSTRATORS: Ugh!

CADET, PROFESSOR, PETTY BOURGEOIS, & JOURNALIST: Jewish slaves!

A PASSERBY, LOYAL TO THE CROWN: Outrageous! What is this?

DEMONSTRATORS: Heil!

LUCHENI: Progress, cazzo [dick]! Unmistakably the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It marches on!

DEMONSTRATORS: The people of an empire!

Hate and violence for those, who aren't like us! And those who arm themselves, hunt them down!

CADET: The crown prince chases after Jewish whores!

FIRST GROUP OF DEMONSTRATORS: Down with the Habsburgs!

SECOND GROUP OF DEMONSTRATORS: Germany for the Germans!

PROFESSOR: The empress scorns the German spirit!

THIRD GROUP OF DEMONSTRATORS: The guard on the Rhein stands proud.

FIRST GROUP OF DEMONSTRATORS: Down with the crown prince!

PETTY BOURGEOIS: Down with Hungry!

SECOND GROUP OF DEMONSTRATORS: Annex Prussia!

THIRD GROUP OF DEMONSTRATORS: Wilhelm should be emperor!

JOURNALIST: Wilhelm II for us!

ALL DEMONSTRATORS: Yes!

*Lucheni mingles with the demonstrators.*

LUCHENI: You heard the latest from the empress?

DEMONSTRATORS: What?

LUCHENI: She stubbornly collects money!

DEMONSTRATORS: For who?

LUCHENI: She wants to build a monument here in Vienna...

DEMONSTRATORS: What?

LUCHENI: ...for Heinrich Heine!

DEMONSTRATOR: Ugh!

PETTY BOURGEOIS: Impudence!

FIRST GROUP OF DEMONSTRATORS: Purity and strength!

LUCHENI: She has a fondness for madhouses!

SECOND GROUP OF DEMONSTRATORS: Christian values!

THIRD GROUP OF DEMONSTRATORS: Down with the traitors!

LUCHENI: In any case she isn't well!

PROFESSOR: One people! One reich!

FIRST GROUP OF DEMONSTRATORS: Freedom for our leader!

SECOND GROUP OF DEMONSTRATORS: Death to the barons!

THIRD GROUP OF DEMONSTRATORS: Down with the Slavic sate!

CADET: Men don't need masters!

FIRST GROUP OF DEMONSTRATORS: Race! The people! Glory!

Unity! Purity! Power!

Race! The people! Glory!

SECOND GROUP OF DEMONSTRATORS (*overlapping*): Heil and sieg and sieg and heil and hail and sieg and hei, Siegheil, Siegheil, Siegheil!

ALL DEMONSTRATOS: Siegheil!

*The final pose is that of a fascist parade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Blackout. Scene change.*

## 9. THE LOGGIA OF A VILLA IN CORFU

LIKE YOU (REPRISE)<sup>x</sup>

*A moonlit night in Corfu. Elisabeth sits alone at a desk on the open balcony of an Italian villa between flickering candles. She dips her quill in the ink. Surreal sounds. A gust of wind. Elisabeth senses the presence of a ghost and lifts her hands to summon it.*

ELISABETH: Oh, I feel you near. Come and show me!  
I suspect, wandering spirit...who you are –  
I expected you, Heinrich Heine. Stay with me, don't disappoint me alone.  
Come and dictate me another poem!  
I've got my quill and paper laid by and ready.

*Somewhere in the darkness the imaginary form of Duke Max materializes.*

DUKE MAX: I don't need anything.

ELISABETH: Father...? It's you, I know it!

ELISABETH & DUKE MAX: Fantasy and writing poems, or riding like the wind...

ELISABETH: I wanted to be like you.

DUKE MAX: Why do you speak with the dead? I don't like it –

ELISABETH: What should I talk about with the living...?!

DUKE MAX: You are cynical, you are bitter and alone.

ELISABETH: ...they have me performing as an empress!

DUKE MAX: To be yourself, you have to first free yourself.

ELISABETH: It all disgusts me!

DUKE MAX: You must endeavor to be happy.

ELISABETH: Why do you lie to yourself?

DUKE MAX: You have never given up. Nothing took your courage.

ELISABETH: Maybe – because I know nothing of the people... -

DUKE MAX: You want to live without constraints and taboos.

ELISABETH: That's right!

ELISABETH & DUKE MAX: Living free as a gypsy, with my cares to the wind...

ELISABETH: But now it's too late...

DUKE MAX: Adieu, Sisi!

ELISABETH: ...Now I'm torn in two. I'll never be like you!



*Blackout. Scene change.*

## 11. IN HERMES VILLA

### IF I WERE YOUR MIRROR

*Through the mirror you can see Elisabeth sitting at a vanity. The hairdresser, Feifalik combs her hair. Rudolf appears off to the side. He must wait.*

RUDOLF: How often have I waited, for you to speak to me.  
How I've hoped that you would break the silence finally.  
Though it scares you, how our similarities lie:  
So tired, of being mired  
In a world, that's beginning to die.  
If I were in your mirror,  
Then you'd see me in you....  
Then to understand my fear,  
Wouldn't be so hard for you...  
Until you turn around to me,  
Because you know yourself so well in me.  
You push me away  
And never allow me to come close.  
When I look your way,  
You only glance at me at most.  
We are strangers to each other  
and so closely related in all.  
I reach out give you a sign, and you turn and decline  
As though between us stands a wall.  
If I were in your mirror,  
Then you'd see me in you....  
Then to understand my fear,  
Wouldn't be so hard for you...

*Elisabeth turns around, and we see Rudolf through the mirror.*

ELISABETH: What's this disturbance? What's the matter? What do you want here?

RUDOLF: Mama, I need you...  
I came with the greatest urgency,  
I feel surrounded and caught.  
I'm threatened by thieves,  
Who would take my honor and leave it for naught  
You alone can I trust, with what's at stake.  
I don't see a way out anymore...

ELISABETH (*overlapping*): I don't want to hear about it, ...

RUDOLF: ...royalty and honor are torture to me.  
I'm sick, my life is empty...

ELISABETH (*overlapping*): ...I can't help you!

RUDOLF: ...and now this miserable scandal!  
If only you'd plead for me with the emperor,  
It wouldn't be too late!

*Rudolf wants to step through the mirror.*

ELISABETH: The emperor has long been out of my hands,  
I've long ago cut through all ties.  
I never plead. – And I won't do it for you.

*The mirror image disappears. The music stops.*

RUDOLF: So, you desert me...

*The scene fades to black. Scene change.*

## 12. MAYERLING

*The Dance-of-Death theme swells. An Angel of Death entices Rudolf to him with a pistol. As he's about to grab the gun, the angel slides it across the stage to another angel. Rudolf lurches towards it, but before he can reach the pistol it's been passed to a third angel, and so on. Rudolf attempts in vain to reach the pistol but it always changes hands too fast. Eventually Rudolf collapses into Death's arms, who is dressed as Rudolf's young beloved Mary Vetsera. Rudolf and Death circle in the Dance-of-Death waltz. Finally Death presses the pistol in Rudolf's hand and guides it to his head. He gives him the kiss of death on the lips, during which the shot is fired. Rudolf slumps lifeless to the floor. Death spreads a shroud over the corpse and leaves the stage with his angels.*

## 13. CAPUCHIN CRYPT

### LAMENTATION

*Monks with candles in their hands follow the coffin into the Capuchin Crypt. A heavily veiled Elisabeth follows the procession. She stops and lifts the veil from her face.*

ELISABETH: Rudolf, where are you?  
Can you hear me call you?  
You were just like me – You needed me.  
I abandoned you,  
Selfishly to stay free.  
How can you ever forgive me?  
What I said...I take the blame...

*Overcome by pain, Elisabeth can't speak for a moment. Then she continues...*

If I could just once

Hold you again  
And protect you from this cruel world!  
But it's too late. They're laying you to rest.  
We both remain alone...

*Behind the bars of the crypt Elisabeth sees Death.*

Come open up for me! Don't make me wait...  
Haven't I been tortured enough?  
Have pity! Come, sweet death...come cursed death...  
Release me!

DEATH: Too late! I don't want you. – No! I don't need you! Go!

*Elisabeth collapses in tears. The lights go down. Scene change.*

## 14. A TERRACE AT CAP MARTINE

### MY NEW SELECTION

*Lucheni hurries downstage. He wipes the sweat from his brow and presents the audience with a fan of postcards showing Elisabeth as the "mater dolorosa." ["Sorrowful mother"]*

LUCHENI: My new selection is going like hotcakes. – A keen collection!  
Especially this picture of the grieving mother at the coffin of her son!  
It stirs your heart. Then you shudder and think full of sympathy:  
It even happens to the lords. Thank god they're the rich and powerful not me!  
Because who isn't like the rest of us,  
Broken down by time.  
It's comforting and ethical.  
And any way you like: Kitsch! Kitsch!

*Change in rhythm.*

The empress meanwhile constantly travels about.  
She starves, runs, and shuts her mouth..  
And sometimes the emperor follows behind her,  
Because he's also inclined to punish himself.  
And if she's there, when he arrives,  
Still there and not again in flight,  
Then there'll be a rendezvous,  
On a mild full-moon night  
With a view of the bay...

*In the meantime the scene has changed: a clear night in February of 1895, in front of the villa where the empress lives during her time in residence on the Cote d'Azur. Elisabeth and Franz Joseph have come out onto the terrace to speak where they won't be overheard by the staff. It is cool. In the distance are the lights of a small harbor and the moonlit sea.*

## SHIPS IN THE NIGHT

FRANZ JOSEPH: You know why I've come.

ELISABETH: No. But I had a premonition of it.

FRANZ JOSEPH: Come home, Sisi. We belong together. I still believe that. I love you. And love, they say, can heal all wounds.

ELISABETH: Love can do much,  
But sometimes love just isn't enough.  
Faith is strong, though sometimes holding faith is tough  
We want miracles, though there's none we discover  
It is time that we finally understood each other  
We're like two ships passing in the night.  
Each has its own destination and its own guiding light  
We meet each other on the sea,  
and the parting leaves us even more lonely  
Though what moves us, is in our own hands.

FRANZ JOSEPH: You want everything, but sometimes less is much more.

ELISABETH: Your dream is too small for me!

FRANZ JOSEPH: To be close in the darkness, isn't that enough for your destination?

ELISABETH: I don't want to be in your shadow!

ELISABETH & FRANZ JOSEPH: If you could just look once through my eyes,  
Then my motive you'd discover.  
It is time that we finally understood each other  
We're like two ships passing in the night.  
Each has its own destination and its own guiding light  
We meet each other on the sea,  
and the parting leaves us even more lonely  
Why is happiness so hard for us?

ELISABETH: We're like two ships passing in the night.

FRANZ JOSEPH (*overlapping*): Understand me...I need you...I love you...Can't you be with me?

ELISABETH: Each has its own destination and its own guiding light

FRANZ JOSEPH (*overlapping*): Understand me...I need you...Why are we alone?

ELISABETH & FRANZ JOSEPH: We meet each other on the sea,  
and the parting leaves us even more lonely  
Why is happiness so hard for us?

FRANZ JOSEPH: I love you!

ELISABETH: Realize this: What cannot be, cannot be.

*Both exit. Scene change.*

## 15. ON THE DECK OF THE SINKING WORLD

### ALL THE QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ASKED (REPRISE)

*A firing squad leads Maximilian of Mexico onto the half-lit stage and takes aim to shoot him. At the same time and on various levels and sides of the stage other scenes and tableaux are set which relate to the downfall of the Hapsburg empires: Two attendants force Charlotte of Mexico and Maria of Naples into straightjackets. Ludwig II strangles Dr. Gudden and goes into the water. Nationalists wave various flags and begin to fight each other. Rudolf, the child, shoots his cat. Rudolf, the man, shoots Mary Vetsera and himself. Dying and wounded soldiers wander over the battlefield at Solferino. Tattered red flags wave. The Duchess of Alencon opens a rummage-sale. Bismark strikes a doppelganger of Franz Joseph in the knee with a rifle. The scenes play out partially realistically, partially in slow motion, and partially backwards like a scene on film run backwards and then forwards again.*

*Lucheni jumps clownishly back and forth between the living pictures. He follows a wordless order Death gives him, as he shows the diverse groups.*

*Death stands in the center, at the helm of the "ship".*

LUCHENI (*standing at the helm and pointing at Maximilian*): Look! The world is a ship, and the ship is...sinking! Maximilian Hapsburg, Elisabeth's brother-in-law...King of Mexico...Shot by revolutionaries Uno...Due...Fire!!

*Lucheni leaps to the Duchess of Alencon. He takes a torch and sets her clothes on fire.*

Sophie of Wittelsbach, Elisabeth's sister...Duchess of Alencon...up in flames! Ashes to Ashes!

CHORUS: All the questions have been asked  
And all the phrases well rehearsed

LUCHENI (*meanwhile by Ludwig II*): Ludwig of Wittelsbach, Elisabeth's cousin...Mad King of Bavaria...drowned!

CHORUS: Of this old world we are the last  
With no way out, too deep immersed.

LUCHENI (*overlapping; pointing at the women by the asylum attendants*): Maria of Wittelsbach, Elisabeth's sister...Queen of Naples...Gone mad!

*The stage moves into a slant. The ship, whose deck we've been watching, is sinking. The real Franz Joseph comes crashing onto the stage. Vexed he runs from group to group, until he realizes who commands the ship, he discovers Death.*

CHORUS: ... Though all the sins are risky now  
And all our virtues have been learned  
All the curses and the vows  
And all the blessings that we've earned...

LUCHENI (*pointing to Franz Joseph*): Franz Joseph! ...Emperor of Austria!

FRANZ JOSEPH: What is this? A mad house?

DEATH: Your sinking ship, your majesty!

FRANZ JOSEPH: How did I get here?

DEATH: Don't ask me! This is your nightmare!

CHORUS: Everything a nightmare, nightmare!

FRANZ JOSEPH: Why is the ship sinking? Where is the empress?

DEATH: Elisabeth? My Elisabeth?

FRANZ JOSEPH: *My Elisabeth!*

DEATH: She belongs to me.

FRANZ JOSEPH: Impertinence!

DEATH: She loves me.

FRANZ JOSEPH: Liar! Fool! Enough of this nonsense!

DEATH: But this is your nightmare!

FRANZ JOSEPH: I gave her my life...

DEATH: A poor gift!

FRANZ JOSEPH: ...gave her peace and security...

DEATH: I gave her freedom!

FRANZ JOSEPH: ... and tradition!

CHORUS: Everything a nightmare, nightmare!

*An explosion rocks the scenery. Smoke and flames pour from a porthole. The various groups continue to act undisturbed. Debris crashes on the stage. The sinking of the ship is in its final phase.*

FRANZ JOSEPH: I am responsible for her!

DEATH: I freed her from her bonds.

FRANZ JOSEPH: I rescued her.

DEATH: No, I rescued her...

*Death pulls a triangular file from his shirt and holds the instrument high in the light.*

...with this!

FRANZ JOSEPH (*overlapping*): What is that?

DEATH: Hey, Lucheni, it's time!

FRANZ JOSEPH: Give it here! Now! I order you...no!

*Lucheni reaches his hand out. Death throws him the murder weapon.*

FIRST CHORUS: Everyone will dance with death...

SECOND CHORUS (*overlapping*): Elisabeth, Elisabeth, Elisabeth, Elisabeth!

FIRST CHORUS: ...but no one like Elisabeth.

DEATH: Elisabeth!

THIRD CHORUS (*overlapping*): Elisabeth, Elisabeth!

FIRST CHORUS: Everyone will dance with death...

SECOND CHORUS (*overlapping*): Elisabeth, Elisabeth, Elisabeth, Elisabeth!

FIRST CHORUS: ... but no one like Elisabeth.

FRANZ JOSEPH: Elisabeth!

*The scene ends like a movie. The ship sinks into the chasm of time.  
Blackout.*

## EPILOGUE

### THE VEIL FALLS

*The voice of the judge is heard in absolute darkness.*

VOICE OF THE JUDGE: What did you want in Genf, Lucheni?

LUCHENI: To kill the prince of Orleans. But he didn't come.

*It slowly grows lighter. Lucheni stands on the ramp and looks in the direction from which we hear the voice of the Judge.*

VOICE OF THE JUDGE: Then why the Empress Elisabeth?

LUCHENI: Il giornale! [The newspaper!] I read that she was in the city.

VOICE OF THE JUDGE: When was this?

LUCHENI: September 20, 1898. Un giorno bellissimo, a beautiful day.

*The stage is fully lit again. The boardwalk of the Hotel "Beau Rivage." Lucheni pulls a newspaper from his jacket pocket and reads it.*

*A ship's horn is heard. Elisabeth and the Countess Sztaray disembark, both in travel clothes, and the empress carrying a white parasol. Lucheni throws the newspaper aside and pulls out the file and hides it.*

*Elisabeth and Countess Sztaray pause to admire the fall foliage of a chestnut tree. The countess urges her to hurry on. Both women walk over the empty pier to the boarding ramp of the steamship.*

*Lucheni leaps, using the cover of the trees, across the street and sprints to Elisabeth. She and Countess Sztaray move to the side to avoid the man.*

*Lucheni raises his right hand, stoops as if he wants to look under Elisabeth's parasol, and stabs Elisabeth in the chest with the file. She falls backwards to the floor.*

COUNTESS SZTARAY: Majesty! Oh! ...Help! Oh God!

*Lucheni runs away, and you hear him laughing. The countess helps Elisabeth to her knees. She resists the help, and doesn't seem to realize that anything's happened. She sets her disordered hair and then continues with the countess towards the ship. At once she clutches her breast and sinks down with a deep sigh. Aghast, the countess leans over her.*

COUNTESS SZTARAY: A doctor. Quickly! A doctor! My god, she's dying! She's dying!!

*At this Death appears downstage. He crosses to Elisabeth slowly. As she sings Elisabeth sheds her black gown, revealing a white shift.*

DEATH: The veil falls, leave these shadows.  
I have longed for you so. Don't make me wait.

ELISABETH: Turn the night to dawning.  
Let me be free as I've been wanting.  
Extinguish memory but for you alone,  
And give my soul a new home!

ELISABETH & DEATH: Let the whole world descend!  
We'll drown together in its end  
With your fire revive me  
And together spend eternity...

*Elisabeth and Death passionately embrace. Elisabeth breaks from Death and turns to the audience.*

ELISABETH: I cried, I laughed, Was cowardly and hoped anew.  
But what I also did, was to myself stayed true.

ELISABETH & DEATH: The world seeks in vain for the sense of my/your life...

ELISABETH: ...because I belong only...

DEATH: You belong only...

ELISABETH & DEATH: ...to me!



*Death kisses Elisabeth. She collapses, dead. Tenderly death picks her up and begins to carry her upstage. On the other side of the stage we see Lucheni serving his life sentence in his cell. He lays the noose around his neck to kill himself. He makes eye contact with death. The scene freezes. Blackout.*

## THE END.

---

<sup>i</sup> This song was dramatically altered from the 1996 original, eliminating choruses by Elisabeth's family members, husband, and son. In this re-writing their respective tragedies and deaths play out slowly; rather than a dark foreshadowing our first impression of them is as their lively, and very much alive, characters.

<sup>ii</sup> Lucheni's introduction to this scene is not in the original 1996 script, but provides backstory for the audience who may not be as familiar with the traditional Sisi story.

<sup>iii</sup> The 1996 script does not have this line, and it is notably the only reaction we hear from Helene in an entire song about her beauty and prospects.

<sup>iv</sup> This "Like You" reprise replaced the lines above it in the 2008 music. It is more important than her feverish reprise to her mother, because it clearly establishes the love between Elisabeth and Death is mutual, rather than primarily only his attraction to her.

<sup>v</sup> A few unnecessary verses were cut to shorten this song in the 2006 music. While the audience doesn't get a fuller picture of the empire, or several approved requests to compare to the mother's plea, it shortens the song dramatically, and heightens the mother's urgency.

<sup>vi</sup> Again Lucheni gives greater background on the scene than in the original script. These introductions are especially helpful for an English speaking audience.

<sup>vii</sup> This scene and its respective song were completely new additions to the play from the original 1996 script. The song has become one of the show's most iconic and is one I would potentially add back in. However it also shows Death and Elisabeth's relationship in an almost playful light, very different from the dramatic, tense back-and-forth of the rest of the show.

<sup>viii</sup> Here the newer version adds a fairly unnecessary scene: Franz Joseph confronts his mother in a reprise of "An Empress Must be Glowing". Given that he has already declared his separation from his mother, it is interesting to see him confront her for her scheming. However her solo at the end seeks sympathy for her actions, which I find out of character for a woman who has been the unmovable force at court through the play.

<sup>ix</sup> This song was also a later addition. Sung between Rudolf and Franz Joseph, it emphasizes the former's desperation, and the latter's longing for his wife. While it shows their relationship, and sets up Rudolf's plea to his mother, it slows the pace of the second act.

<sup>x</sup> This scene was switched with "Hate" to improve the pacing, giving the audience an upbeat number between the tragic "Rudolf I Am Beside Myself" and "Like You Reprise"