A winter’s night; in the clear, starry sky the moon is shining. A road in the village of Dikanka: we see the roofs of the houses of the Ukrainian peasants, all covered with snow; fences, little gardens and trees are all frozen. On the left, Solocha’s house with its chimney-pipe rising above the roof and a little gate leading onto the road; on the right Cub’s house with a patio; the windows are shuttered. In the background the road divides into two roads leading right and left; at the fork there is an inn with lighted windows. Solocha steps out of her gate into the road and looks round, listening.

SOLOCHA
I would stay awake all night and amuse myself, but I’m frightened of being seen.

SOLOCHA
I’ve never met such a hot woman!

BES
Cheer up, my lass, you’re just what we needed! We’ll have a good time tonight! I feel like spending the night with you!

SOLOCHA
But I’m not a witch.

BES
Aren’t you? Oh yes, you are.

SOLOCHA
And how do you know?

BES
There are all the signs: big bones, high breast, grasping hands, strong legs – there you are in all your beauty, it’s just that in your dark locks there’s a white hair, a hint of a moustache above your lip, and there’s another clue – your voice is a little hoarse, and then a little defect – a tail, just a little one, like a hook… a little tail!

SOLOCHA
And when did you see it?

BES
I am a little imp, you know.

SOLOCHA
Well… if that’s the way it is, I can see you’re no fool, you could be useful, there’s no sense beating about the bush with you.

Just wait now, and no peeping. I’ll go and light the fire. You look up there, you’ll see the smoke coming out of the chimney pot, and behind it, I’ll go up. I’ll fly up to the bright stars, and then dive down into the blue air! I’ll ride my broomstick!

BES
I’ve been lucky with the woman and I’ll be her ruin.

SOLOCHA
What nonsense are you speaking now?

BES
I don’t need a broomstick, I’ll fly after you!

SOLOCHA
BES will never catch me, he’ll never catch me!

BES
But I’ll follow her!

SOLOCHA
I’m still young whatever my age is.

BES
She’s quite a girl, she really is!

SOLOCHA
I’ll fly higher and higher, I’ll fly up and dive down into the air!

BES
I want to see you in my arms, in my arms…

SOLOCHA
I’ve been a lucky little devil with Solocha, even though she doesn’t want me. She’s got really warmed up, she’s shaken, she’s on fire! (He rubs his hands in delight, but then stops and remembers something.)

BES
But I was forgetting why I’ve come sneaking up here from hell! The witch’s son, Yakula the blacksmith, played a dirty trick on me: he drew a picture of me, the villain, such a black picture that all the silly devils split their sides laughing at me! I can’t forgive an insult like that.

Just you wait, damned blacksmith! Just you try to go and see Oksana on her own, without her father. I’ll steal the moon on the spot, and all the spirits of the wind, free from their chains, will start whistling around and heap up mounds of snow. On a night like this Cub won’t dare set off to go and drink with his friend! Her father will see it and keep him away from his daughter, he’ll douse your spirits! He’ll give you such a thrashing that you’ll remember this devil’s name! Hey you, wild winds, wintry storms! Shake off your icy chains, fly towards the sea over the steppes, cover the ravines with snow, the merchants’ carts, the houses, the peasants’ shelters, cover everything you come across with snow, you won’t have to answer to anybody.

A distant rumbling is heard in the air. The stars become pale. Bes looks up at the chimney pot. He sees sparks flying out, the witch appears wearing only her nightshirt, her head thrown back, her hair flowing free as she rides her broomstick. She holds a little broomstick in her hand.

SOLOCHA (huseling)
Follow me!

BES
I’m coming, wait for me!

BES runs into the house and immediately afterwards, now in his real appearance, he comes out of the chimney pot and flies after the witch. Noises and hissing sounds grow louder in the air. The snowstorm rages. The black silhouettes of the devil and the witch fly swiftly across the sky covering the full disc of the moon.
Cub and Panas come out of the house.

CUB
What the devil!

PANAS
What is it?

CUB
Look, Panas, just look. Where is the moon?

PANAS
Well, really, I'll be damned. Where can it have gone? It was there before!

CUB
It was but it isn't there now. The devil's behind all this.

Cursed dog, you can't even find a glass of vodka in the morning! It must be a joke: I looked out of the window before and it was as bright as day! I just went to get my bearskin hat and...

It's pitch black... Hadn't we better go back?

PANAS
All right then, let's go back.

CUB
But how can we? What about our booze-up? And our mate?

PANAS
Ah yes; the booze-up... Right, come on, let's go. I suppose we'll find the way somehow.

They move towards the back of the scene, their voices come from different directions.

CUB
Come on then! Where are you, my friend?

PANAS
Hey, Cub, where are you?

CUB
What a storm!

PANAS & CUB
The inn!

CHORUS OF SPIRITS
The merchants are freezing in the fields, there's no road and no way on...

Only the houses are lit up, in honour of the Christmas star.

Banks of snow cover the whole stage, which stays like this until the scene changes.

Scene 2

Oksana's aria

Cub's house. The inside of a little Ukrainian house with windows looking out onto the road, a stove and a low dividing wall behind which we call Oksana's casket and bed. The table is laid out for the feast, there is an oil-lamp, a wooden bowl and biscuits ready for the koljadtki singers. A towel is hanging on the wall, near the stove a poker, an oven fork and a shovel.

Oksana comes out from behind the dividing wall wearing her best dress. Her hair is tied up with ribbons and she is holding a mirror. She listens to the sound of the wind for a while, then places her mirror on the table, standing it up against the bowl. She glances out of the window, but she is in a bad mood.

Oksana

4 Just look at the snowstorm! Only a fool would go out singing the koljadtki!... My father is the only one who's gone to the deacon, because he's drunk. Even in this terrible weather he didn't want to stay and celebrate Christmas with his own daughter, in the bosom of his family.

A little apple tree was blossoming in the garden, it was in flower but it has withered; the mother cuddled her daughter, she prepared her dowry, but then she went away. Where are you, mother? Look at me, look at me from the other side, at least a glimpse through a crack, look at your little girl, your dear daughter, look at her, mother!

Your daughter has a new blouse with pretty patterns; your daughter's hair is plaited with silken ribbons, on her white neck she wears a gold necklace, but the daughter like this is so ugly, look mother, look how ugly she is! Ah, who will ever fall in love with her? Who will caress her?

Look well at me, mother, who will caress me like I am, who will love me?

(She sits down on a stool pensively and picks up her mirror.)

And yet people say that I'm as beautiful as a bright dawn, as a white swan, that none other is a beautiful as me! What do wicked people say about me!

Oh no, they tell the truth. (Vakula enters without Oksana's noticing him.)

Who has eyes like mine?
Who has plait like mine?

My eyes are stars, my plaits are sinuous... Oh, how black my plaits are, how thick they are!
Who has eyes like mine?
Who has plaits like mine?

My eyes are stars, my plaits are sinuous! People tell the truth: such beauty is nowhere to be found!

Scene with Vakula and Oksana

VAKULA
She never takes her eyes off herself, and then she even praises her own beauty out loud! What a girl!

OKSANA
Who will take me as his wife? With whom will my father settle a marriage contract?

No, it would be better never to get married, so I won't be unhappy if I find myself with an arrogant husband.

VAKULA
I could stay here for ever and never take my eyes off her.

OKSANA
Who is there? Vakula? Who invited you?
If you want I'll give you a smack with the shovel!

You're all very good at playing tricks on the girls!

I know you! Well, is my trunk ready?

VAKULA
It's almost ready. Don't be cross, sweet little dove.

I've been working on it day and night. My fair Oksana, sweet sun, dove, little swallow! I would give the world for a kiss!

OKSANA
Nothing of the sort! What cheek. He's found the honey, and now he wants a spoon!

Keep away from me, off you go! You've got hands like iron...

OKSANA
If I have to force you, it's not worth it...

All she thinks of is enjoying herself and making herself pretty, but I love her, I love her so much!

OKSANA
But is it true what the people say? That your mother, Solocha, is a bit of a witch? Eh?

Vakula's Arioso

VAKULA
I couldn't care less about mother or father. You are father and mother for me, you are everything that is best in the world!

The Tsar himself could call me, could promise me half his reign, could give me a golden workshop with two silver hammers, could order me an anvil in precious stones!

And I would say to the Tsar: my lord Tsar, I don't need anything. My lord Tsar! There's nothing in the world I need, I don't need gold, silver, precious stones, just give me Oksana.

Scene for Vakula and Cub

OKSANA
Just look at you! Yet my father knows what he's about. Remember my words, he will marry your mother!

Oksana retires behind the dividing wall with her candle. Vakula stands still, thunderstruck by her words. Cab comes into the house all covered with snow; he stops, incredulous, when he sees Vakula, who does not recognise him.

CUB
I must have come to the wrong house...

VAKULA (disguising his voice)
What do you want?

CUB
I want to sing the koljadtka...

VAKULA
The koljadtka? Get out... (He hits him on the throat and on the back of his neck.)
CUB
Hey, hands off.

VAKULA
Go on, get out...

CUB (coming to himself again)
My friend,
I'll go of my own accord, I'll take my leave.

VAKULA
Out!

CUB
Just look how bold the devil's smith has become!
Not surprising, he thinks he really is someone!
I'll show you, just you wait. You'll see...

Scene and duet for Oksana and Vakula

Oksana comes rushing out from behind the low wall without her candle.

Oksana
What's all this noise?
Perhaps my father has come home,
(Vakula enters. Oksana thinks it is her father and goes to greet him.)
Father! It's not my fault. I'm sorry...
(Realising the mistake she has made, she steps back.)
Vakula, who did you drive out?

VAKULA
I didn't recognise him...

Oksana (opening the front door)
Hey, father!
Where are you going in this weather?
There's a storm!

(Come back inside)
He's gone away... He didn't hear my voice!
Oh, Lord!

VAKULA
There's devilry in this...
What should I expect? I've lost my mind!

Oksana
Sent my father away! The owner of the house!

VAKULA
I didn't recognise him, Oksana.

Oksana
On your way now,
If you don't want to be sorry later... go...
(She rises up to the window and looks out. Vakula stands with bowed head.)
The storm is calming.
Go now, people will come
and see you here, and you'll be sorry...
How tedious it is to wait. What does this mean?
It's time to begin the koljakidi,
but the girls still haven't come...
What a bore!

VAKULA
Forget about the girls.
Forget them, Oksana.

Oksana
I certainly will not.
They won't come alone but with the boys;
they'll make me laugh with all their little tales...

VAKULA
You mean that you're happy with them?

Oksana
It's not much fun being with you.
You can imagine what a pleasure it is to chat
with a dolt like you. I'm fed up with you.
You stand about like a door-post all day,
and all you do is sigh and moan...
It really is boring to be with you, why don't you
get off home?

VAKULA (ready to leave)
Very well, I'll go...

Oksana
No, stop...
Wait, my dear, wait, hateful man!
The other man is quite something else!
I won't tell you his name, but I'll talk to you
about him.
He is quite something else!
I'm so fond of him, that young man with the
bright, fair face,
he has a brave gaze, noble words,
he's not an old man like you.

VAKULA (stricken)
Don't joke with my love for you,
don't make fun of me.
You can keep this nonsense for somebody else,
I know that there's no room for love in your heart.

Oksana
The other man is quite something else, sweet, dear!
His gaze is so bold, his words so noble and
passionate...

VAKULA
Have pity on me, Oksana!

Oksana
I love him, I love this young man.

VAKULA
There is no more beautiful face than yours in all
the world!

Oksana
Don't expect anything from me, hateful smith.

VAKULA
But your heart is wicked,
you enjoy tormenting me.

Oksana
There's another that I love
and will love all my life, with all my heart and
soul!

VAKULA
You reward my love with bitter insults
and betrayal, wicked girl!
But enough of this torture now!

Oksana
I have waited so long for my love.

VAKULA
I'm going, farewell.

Oksana
You can lose your temper with me,
you can scold me, but go now.
You can be as angry as you like,
farewell, hateful smith,
farewell for ever!

VAKULA
I'm going now, farewell, insolent girl,
farewell for ever!

Last scene

Oksana laughs. Vakula stands in astonishment.

Oksana
If only people were a bit more intelligent,
a bit more perspicacious, a bit braver,

VAKULA
Oksana, are you joking?
Or are you speaking the truth? Wait...

CHORUS OF YOUNGSTERS
The moon walks the sky.

Oksana (with a sly wink at Vakula)
If only boys could hear the truth, if only,
fools that they are, they could understand a
joke...

VAKULA
Oksana, you're making fun of me!

Oksana
If only people were more intelligent...

CHORUS
The angels flew softly down from heaven.

VAKULA
Oksana, my dear, really... I love you.

CHORUS
They sang a sweet song, pure angels.
The bright little star twinkled up in heaven.
The star has seen a holy baby!

Oksana
Away! Away with you! Cursed smith!
Do you think a pretty girl like me
could fall in love with a bear like you?
Oh you go, quick now. They're about to arrive!

VAKULA
You're a serpent, a viper, not a girl!

Oksana
I've teased him enough,
in the end I even feel a bit sorry for him.
And if he stays angry with me and leaves me?
What will become of me?
I feel like crying... and laughing,
but I feel more like crying.
(He sits down at the table and covers her face
with her hands.)

The Girls
The star calls the dawn to itself,
glory to thee! Glory to thee!
(The girls are heard laughing off stage, The
door opens suddenly and few girls run in.)
Here we are, Oksana, we've come for you,
hurry up, the girls are all waiting for you.
OKSANA (almost in tears)
Go away!

THE GIRLS
Why are you crying?

OKSANA
Leave me alone…
Don’t call me, go in peace, God be with you,
Go away!
We’ve been singing the
TH E G IR LS
Leave me alone…

OKSANA
Why are you crying?

THE GIRLS
you know, but we get bored without you,
Anyway, as you like: goodbye, Oksana!

OKSANA
What a bore, oh, what a bore,
I’m bored! I’m bored!

OKSANA
I don’t even know what’s happening to me!
My spirit is heavy, I’m bored,
I know I love him, but I torment him,
How I’d like to caress him, show him my
fondness, but I can’t.

OKSANA
I love you, you dear!
(She runs off in tears.)

ALMOST IN TEARS)
for a while,

Intemzzo
aren’t you an old witch?
Why be so stubborn?
you get home, I’m behind you…
Why be so stubborn?
 Aren’t you an old witch?

Scene for Solocha and Bes
Solocha’s house, similar to Cub’s: in the place of
the low dividing wall, a large stove with a pallet
on one side and a bed on the other, Dishes on
the walls and sacks of coal.
The table is full of food and bottles. Near the
window a tub and a barrel. As the curtain rises,
Solocha buttons her collar up slowly, She has
just thrown a cloak over her shoulders, her hair
is unkempt.
Bes creeps out of the stove.

1

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2

The storm has swept my broomstick away,
the wind is howling in the ravines.
Let it fill this dog’s throat with snow…
I’ve just come down and look, my broomstick’s
broken – I nearly fell off!
And this little imp, curse him, came behind me
with such vigour, so hotly, that he fell down too.
I got into the flue, and he was behind me…
This is no good!

BES
It’s not worth getting angry about it.

SOLOCHA
It’s no good, it’s so stupid,
because I’m a mortar for you.

BES
I’ve got horns like a fork,
and what does a fork do? It pricks!

SOLOCHA
Well, tell me when?

BES
When I put the pots in the oven.

SOLOCHA
Am I supposed to be an oven pot?

BES
No, you are a little gift glass!
Dear Madam, just think: we are quite a couple!
You fly in the flue, and I’m on your heels,
you get home, I’m behind you…
Why be so stubborn?
Aren’t you an old witch?

SOLOCHA
I feel really tired!
Let me rest a while.

BES
Don’t be such a crosspatch,
give a kiss to the little lad, in the service of the
devil!

SOLOCHA
Well then, little servant,
why don’t you dance the gopak?
Gop-gop, goat’s horns, goat’s hooves.
(She takes a few dance steps. From the stove
horrible faces appear, some like crickets, they
hold little violins and pipes and start playing.)

BES
Hey, you, devils with fiddles,
pipes and trumpets.
Gop-gop…

SOLOCHA
Gop-gop… pick your feet up…

BES
Hey, you, musicians, you dandies hidden behind
the stove.
Don’t blow, pluck. Gop-gop…
(Solocha and the devil set about a dashing
dance. There the m usicians hide behind the
stove and stop playing. Silence.)

SOLOCHA
Who’s there? I won’t open!

BES
I bet the witch will open!

SOLOCHA
I’ll turn my broomstick on you!

BES
If it’s Cub she’ll let him in for sure!

SOLOCHA
Go to the devil! Who is it? Is it you, Vakula?

BES
Oh, Madam Solocha.
If it isn’t a bear, it’s Pan Golova.
Things aren’t going right,
for we won’t find room here for Pan Golova.
Listen, good woman, if this Pan is with a
woman and he’s drunk, he’s sure to make the
sign of the cross!

SOLOCHA
And what am I supposed to do?
I’ll open the door.
Golova, the dolt, won’t go away,
towards morning he’ll propose to marry me!
I’ll open…

BES
Wait before you open, let me get away
or at least find somewhere to hide!
I’ll jump into the sack, I’ll fold myself in three;
and so, if I want I’ll make a hole with my finger,
old Pan might need my help! Or…

SOLOCHA
The devil is good at guessing, he’ll spy on me!

BES
At least I can spy, I’m good at guessing.
(He hides in the sack)

Scene with Solocha and Golova

GOLOVA (entering)
Now that’s what I call snow!
Look, my bear skin’s completely covered.
I was on my way to drink some brandy, I was
out on the road, when, just think, the storm broke and covered
my nose, my mouth and my beard with snow.
And it never stopped!

SOLOCHA (looking out of the window)
But it seems to have calmed now, it’s even
brightened up…

GOLOVA
Oh my! Aren’t you pleased to see Golova?

SOLOCHA
Pan Golova, you know I’m a poor widow;
I don’t let just anybody into my house,
I’ve got a kitchen fork ready for some!

GOLOVA
And the fork is just what some rascals need,
but you needn’t be frightened of me.
Aren’t you at all happy to see me?

SOLOCHA
You see, Pan Golova, I haven’t had time to put
a nice dress on.
(Solocha offers Golova a glass of pepper-
flavoured gorilka.)
I drink to your health!
GOLOVA
My lovely one, you are pretty enough without
getting dressed up.
( Golova drinks, then be starts to Sing beating
the rhythm with his foot.)
Your skirt is colourful, you are still young,
you're very comely and so attractive.
My dear Solocha, pour me some honey and
wine and cheer my head up!

SOLOCHA (hears someone knocking)
There's someone at the door again!
The devils are here!

GOLOVA
Hide me, Solocha,
I'm frightened I'll die if they find me here!

SOLOCHA
And where could I hide you?

GOLOVA
Wherever you want, even under the bed.

SOLOCHA
Just a moment, I'll empty the sack.
(She empties the coal into the barrel. Golova
hides in the sack.)
There you are, get in it!

GOLOVA (in the sack)
Just look how things have turned out!

Scene with Solocha and the Schoolmaster
The schoolmaster enters and looks around.

SCHOOLMASTER
Is anyone in?
Now, my good Solocha, how are you?

SOLOCHA
What are you doing here?
If your wife finds out she'll be angry.

SCHOOLMASTER
I don't care! She's as old as the devil,
you're very comely and so attractive.
My dear Solocha, pour me some honey and
wine and cheer my head up!

SCHOOLMASTER
Offer me something...

SOLOCHA
I never will! Hands off, don't ask for anything.

SCHOOLMASTER
Just a little bit.

SOLOCHA
Go away!

SCHOOLMASTER
I'm going... But wait, kind lady!
I can't see very well!
May I? (pointing at her hand)
What's this?

SOLOCHA
It's a hand.

SCHOOLMASTER
A hand, really? And this?

SOLOCHA
A neck!

SCHOOLMASTER
A neck! Good heavens, what a neck!
Then kindly permit me, my splendid Solocha,
to ask something else.
What sort of thing is this?
Is it a shoulder? Or...

SOLOCHA
Go to the devil!
Shame on you!
You have a wife...

SCHOOLMASTER
I'm not interested in that old bag,
But listen now, my dearest Solocha,
I've written a song for you!

SOLOCHA
Sing it and then be off with you!

The schoolmaster's song
SCHOOLMASTER
A woman runs after the devil,
she has made friends with the accursed.
She begs him: 'Let the loving sickness come into
my sinful soul!' 'So be it', replies the devil and sets to work.
Oh, how ill I feel, woe is me!
I am tumbling down into sin.

I call you in vain, Solocha, to love's banquet!
My old woman is as bad as the devil,
her tongue is always sharp.
She'll swing her fists without a thought,
she uses the mallet, the poker, the pan and the
cushion.
I keep humble silence, I don't want to reply.
Oh, how ill I feel, woe is me!
I am tumbling

down into sin.

I call you in vain, Solocha, to love's banquet!

Knocking at the door.
SOLOCHA
That's enough now, listen, someone's knocking.

SCHOOLMASTER (scared and astonished)
Knocking? I can't hear...
Oh Lord. An outsider!
Woe is me, I'm damned.
Oh, shame, shame, only shame!
My hour has come!
Solocha, hide me for heaven's sake!

SOLOCHA
I won't hide you.

SCHOOLMASTER
Have pitty on me, Solocha!

SOLOCHA
But where?

SCHOOLMASTER
Even under the bed!

SOLOCHA
Everybody under the bed, what a fine idea!
And what about a sack?

SCHOOLMASTER
Anywhere will do, Solocha.

SOLOCHA (emptying the sack)
Get in then!

The schoolmaster hides in the sack. Solocha
opens the door and Cub comes In.

Scene with Solocha and Cub
Solocha throws her arms around Cub's neck.

CUB
Greetings!

SOLOCHA
Oh, my dear, my treasure!
SOLOCHA
Stop, where are you going?
What am I to do with them?
(Cub gets into the sack, where the schoolmaster is hiding.)
They've all hidden in the sacks!
Quintet
SCHOOLMASTER
(poking his head out of the sack)
I don't feel well...
SOLOCHA
Don't come out, you'll feel much worse if my son knocks the door down!
The schoolmaster hides, but now the devil looks out of the sack.
BES
Good lady, send him to the inn!
SOLOCHA
Son knocks the door down!
The schoolmaster hides, but now the devil looks out of the sack.
Good evening! Good evening!
CUB
I can't take it any more, I'm suffocating!
SOLOCHA
And now I've got to sort things out!
SCHOOLMASTER
I feel ill, I feel ill...
SOLOCHA
Quickly now, all of you get in, come on, quickly...
BES
What a woman, oh what a woman!
She's tricked the lot of you!
GOLOVA & CUB
Solocha, this is no good.
Isn't there anywhere else?
SOLOCHA
Quickly now, all of you get in, come on, quickly...
GOLOVA & CUB
We will all choke in there, for sure...
BES
What a woman, oh what a woman!
She's tricked the lot of you!

Louid knocking at the door.

VAKULA
Well, mother, are you going to open the door or not?

Solocha opens the door. Vakula comes in, sad and thoughtful. Everybody hides quickly in the sacks...

SOLOCHA
Why the devil have you come back?

VAKULA (sadly and sweetly)
Perhaps I'd better get away.

SOLOCHA
I thought you'd have stayed and slept at the smithy.
(She steps away)

VAKULA
Yes, the smithy's all right, why not.
What's more, I'd better take these sacks away, and tidy them up for the feast day, the birth of Jesus.

Vakula's Arioso

VAKULA (becoming thoughtful)

A year has gone by and here they are calling me again to go and sing the koljadka,
but I can't find any peace even at home.
Passion has consumed me, like a viper's bite!
Melancholy ruins me! What has become of me?
I can't even lift these sacks!
And yet I used to be able to bend coins with my bare hands and snap horseshoes.
I really was strong... And now?
I can't even drag a couple of coal-sacks out!
I can't lift them onto my back...
How fed up I am with this house,
I'd like to die and stop suffering!
Every day I yearn, I can't sleep at night,
passion has worn me down, dried me up!
Melancholy, why do you keep on drying up my heart like the venom of a viper?
Why do you poison my soul?
Oh no, what the devil!
If I want, I can still carry five hundredweight!
(He picks up two sacks.)
And I'll carry another sack in my hand with my tools in.
God help me! I need my strength!
(He starts to move his voice together)

Mother, let me in!

Curtain.

Scene 2

The scene is the same as the first scene in act one. On the road, beyond the crossroads, a song is being sung in chorus, first in the distance, then coming closer.

CHORUS I
Good evening! Good evening!

CHORUS II
Good evening! Good evening!

CHORUS I & CHORUS II
Little birds have come, they've broken all the cups...
they've pecked the bread, they've drunk up the wine.
Wake up, Arina!
We have to find a wife for your brother and a husband for your sister...
Good evening!

CHORUS III & OLD MEN AND WOMEN
Quiet night, bring health to the good!
A soft pillow for the sick!
Little presents for the children!
Little glasses for the old and flowers to decorate the icons.
Good evening! ...

CHORUS I
Hey there, grey whiskers, don't be stingy with the snacks!
Offer us the smoked fish, pour us a drink.
Good evening!

The second group of singers enters from the left.

CHORUS I, II & III
Swallow, little swallow...
More singers!
Hello there! Where have you come from?
It's come to our window...
Where have you come from?
We can't be split up, let's all sing another koljadka together!
Open the window, good lady, give us two loaves of bread...
You can't split up, sing together!
So you too will be happier!

(The girls greet each other, looking for Oksana.)

CHORUS I & CHORUS II
Give us a spoonful of kasha, add some salame!
But where's Oksana?
Doesn't she want to join us?
Is she still lazing in bed, or is she still getting ready?
(They start singing the koljadka outside another house.)
The little swallow has come to our window.
Open the window, good lady, give us two salames, two loaves, a spoonful of kasha, and some more salame.

Toc Toc...

CHORUS III
A beautiful viburnum has grown near the fence...
Quiet night, bring health to the good...

CHORUS I & CHORUS II
But more beautiful still is the fair Arina.

CHORUS III
A soft pillow for the sick...
The fair maid Arina was awaiting her guests. She poured the wine out into the jugs, but then fell asleep. For the little ones, presents, for the old, little glasses. Some flowers to decorate the icons. Good evening!

Scene and song of the little shoes
Two boys pull Oksana along on the sledge, sitting next to another girl, Odarka; they stop among the group of people.

CHORUS

Oksana, why are you so late? Why did it take you so long to get ready?

CHORUS

What is the matter with the girl, with Oksana? All she thinks about is getting dressed up, and slander would be a sin.

OKSANA

Have you any idea boys, who has just been here to play his fiddle, despite the freezing cold, at my window, till he cried? His strings broke, his voice became hoarse, he could hardly move his fingers.

CHORUS

Was it you? No, it wasn’t me… Vakula enters. He stops in the middle of the road, throws the two sacks down and puts the third one all his shoulders. He looks admiringly at Oksana.

OKSANA (noticing Vakula)

Have you heard, boys, about the lad who sneaked into the girl’s house? He came in without being asked, and that’s not all, he threw the girl’s father out and punched him. Oksana gets off the sledge, which is then taken away. She stares at Odarka’s shoes with obvious admiration. Vakula steps closer.

CHORUS

We’ve never seen anything like that, never heard such a thing, but slander would be a sin. You can see that when a man falls in love his head is all in a whirl! A man in that condition is quite laughable.

OKSANA

Oksana, oh, how marvellous your shoes are, even more beautiful with these decorations. And they’re new! You really are lucky, Odarka! You’ve got someone who buys you all the right things! And I haven’t got anybody to buy me such nice things.

VAKULA

Don’t be sad, pretty girl. I’ll find you a pair of shoes that not every girl can have, coloured ones from Kazan.

CHORUS

Have you heard what shoes the proud girl wants?

OKSANA

The very same shoes! You are my witnesses! If Vakula the smith can find me the shoes… that the Tsarina herself wears, I give you my word, I’ll marry him on the spot, yes I will!

CHORUS

Let’s go now, come on, flighty Oksana, come on…

OKSANA

Where? I don’t feel like singing koljadki. Let’s go and have a snowball fight, come along if you want.

She runs to the back of the scene, followed by laughing boys and girls.

VAKULA

You can laugh! I feel like laughing at myself too. Have I lost my wits? (He becomes thoughtful.) What is the matter with the girl, with Oksana? All she thinks about is getting dressed up, and making fun of people… Isn’t there another girl like her somewhere in the world?

CHORUS

The ball’s flying! Look out, Oksana.

OKSANA

Good throw, but you missed…

CHORUS

Dash it all, I’ve sunk, I’ve fallen. Dash this cursed little hill. It’s sunk in the heap of snow… (They all laugh heartily.)

VAKULA

Listen to her laughing, her voice peals out like a little bell! My head is all a-whirl, my heart is broken! It’s a toper I’d go and hide at the inn! She’s coming here, again, her eyes are sparkling, she looks like a Tsarina. Wait, don’t come any closer, little charmer! Let me get away… They all come back to the edge of the stage.

OKSANA (with a sly look at Vakula)

My shoes aren’t very big, one step to the right, one to the left, and here and there! My shoes aren’t very big, they leave prints in the snow: on the right, the other on the left, and here and there!

CHORUS

One on the right, the other on the left…

OKSANA

Don’t go beyond the haystacks, don’t go into other people’s houses, don’t seek your destiny by following the footprints!

CHORUS

Don’t go, don’t seek your destiny by following the footprints!

OKSANA

Destiny follows its own laws! My destiny, my destiny! She sees Vakula and stops in front of him.

Last scene

OKSANA

Ah, Vakula, you’re here again. Were you rewarded for your koljadki? But look, what a little sack! And the shoes? If you can find me the Tsarina’s shoes, I’ll marry you!
OKSANA
No, he won't go away,
he can't forget me,
that simply can't happen!
He's just talking nonsense.

VAKULA
It doesn't matter what happens to me,
give your love to others, it's all the same to me,
farewell, we'll never meet again!

OKSANA
If he could fall in love...
then how could he stop loving me?

VAKULA
Brothers, go to church in my place
to weep over my sinful end.

CHORUS
What is the matter with you?
This is a sin!
Have you gone mad, may the Lord be with you.

VAKULA
It will be easier for me to ruin my soul
than to suffer so for love...

CHORUS
Oksana is joking, she laughs about it.

VAKULA
I can only suffer, loving her so much.
Farewell, Oksana, farewell for ever!
(He moves away.)

CHORUS
It's a sin, Vakula...
The chorus of women withdraws.

OKSANA
He's getting ready to die,
he's thinking about death and God...
but, if we look in these sacks
that he's left on the road...
he's really earned a lot with the koljadki.

CHORUS (feeling the sacks)
It's hard to believe,
but there are live pigs in them!

OKSANA
Can there be, really?

CHORUS
Call the others to see what's inside!
Hey you, boys and girls! What is it?
Come here, boys, quick now!
Faster, untie the sacks, let's see what's inside!
Something to eat? Get a move on!
(As the sacks are untied Golova, Cub and the schoolmaster step out. Everybody is astonished.
Golova steps out with dignity. The schoolmaster looks terrified and runs off.)
Cub! The schoolmaster and Pan Golova in person!

OKSANA
Father, is it you?

CUB
I've played a fine trick on you all!

CHORUS
Curtain.

OKSA NA
Near the bank
the water is not frozen, a boy is passing.

CHORUS
Break, break, blue ice!

WOOD SPIRIT
The boy cannot stand,
he seems to be coming to meet you,
It's cold, cold as in frozen coffins!

Vakula's scene and song
Vakula enters carrying the sack on his shoulders.

VA KULA
Where have I come to? To the river?

EC H O
River...

VA KULA
The evil spirit, drives me to commit a sin...
If only the cock would crow!
(He listens)

EC HO
Crow...

VA KULA
Who knows, my girl, if your heart can feel
my pain, my terrible pain?
And can you see, at least in your sleep, my dove, my suffering, as though I were burning in the flames,
I shall be happy if I end up in the river...
[Words by N. Caej]

He puts the sack down on the ground. Bes jumps out of it.

Scene for Vakula and Bes

BES (jumping onto Vakula's back)
You are mine now, I will never leave you...
You will end up with the undines in the river, accursed smith.
Or if you like, you can sell me your soul and Oksana will be yours.
Scene 2

Hold on tight!

In the palace

Bes and Vakula rise up into the sky.

A reception hall in the palace. Vakula enters astride the devil and jumps off.

We are there.

BES
I agree, I’ll give it to you…

VKULA
Swear then, sign in blood!

BES (hiding behind the fireplace)
You are in the palace!

Vakula looks around. The Cossacks of Zaporozhe come in. They too look around.

VAKULA
Good evening!

AN OLD COSSACK
And who are you?

VAKULA
I am the smith, Vakula, a fellow-countryman. Don’t you recognise me?

COSSACK
We will talk tomorrow. Now the Tsarina is expecting us for the banquet.

VAKULA
The Tsarina? Would you be so kind as to take me with you?

COSSACK
No, it isn’t possible. My brother, we will talk about our business with the Tsarina, no, it isn’t possible…

VAKULA
Take me with you. Devil, you ask him! 

BES steps out from behind the fireplace.

BES
Why don’t you take him with you? He could be useful!

COSSACK
What do you think?

(A guard enters)

CHORUS
Why not, he might be useful!

GUARD
His Serene Highness has ordered me to show you into the great hall This way please! His Excellency has ordered that you be given green caftans for the journey, coloured smocks and silver coins for everyone.

VAKULA
Thank him, cossacks.

CHORUS
Thank you, thank you.

The Cossacks leave. The stage is empty for a few moments, then it changes suddenly.

Scene 3

The reception

Polonaise

A hall in the palace with columns, lamps and candelabras. A crowd of guests and courtiers in period costume. They are dancing in couples to the rhythm of a polonaise. The Cossacks from Zaporozhe, and Vakula, stand by the columns. A master of ceremonies approaches.

VAKULA
Have I reached heaven? Or is all this wonder just a dream?

MASTER OF CEREMONIES
Are you all here?

CHORUS OF COSSACKS
Yes, we are all here, father.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES
Then don’t forget to address his Highness exactly as I taught you.

CHORUS OF COSSACKS
We won’t forget, father.

HIS SERENE HIGHNESS
Before we start the dances, allow me, my friends, to declaim an ode or, simply, the fruit of the poetical zeal of this poet. (The poet bows and hands a folded sheet to the prince.) It will sing of the glory of the act of heroism of the Russian army that has been announced to you. (The poet bows again.) Even though it is far from perfect, like the skill of Derzavin strumming the strings of the gilded lyre, I like the rhythm of panegyric verses! Now I shall read it to you!

CHORUS OF COURTIERs
Hurrah! Your Excellency, prince, please read, we are anxious to hear it!
HIS SERENE HIGHNESS
The mighty voice of glory has announced to
St Petersburg the fresh victory of our Russian
heroes over the enemy.
Hearing the battle cry, following destiny, the
voice of glory has swept over the distant shores
of the Black Sea.

CHORUS
Oh, what a happy lot is ours!
We are first in the battle and the Russian
Minerva points to glory!

HIS SERENE HIGHNESS
Our army knows no bounds when it is led
against the enemy by a bold leader
who commands the respect of all.
People of Russia, rejoice from
the banks of the
Minerva points to glory!

CHORUS
Oh, what a happy lot is ours!
We are first in the battle and the Russian
Minerva points to glory!

HIS SERENE HIGHNESS
What do you want?

VAKULA
I dare to ask if the Tsarina
wears gold or silver shoes.
I think no similar shoes
exist in all the world!
Your Excellency, if only my fiancée
could put on a pair of shoes like these!

Everybody laughs. The prince smiles.

HIS SERENE HIGHNESS
Arose!
(He whispers something to one of the courtiers
who leaves the hall.)
I have heard that in the Sec, where you live,
obody gets married!

CHORUS OF COSSACKS
Oh, Sir.
We are not monks, for goodness' sake, my
Lord!

A pair of golden shoes with high red heels are
brought in on a silver tray. The Prince gestures
that the shoes be given to Vakula.

HIS SERENE HIGHNESS
May the Lord permit all brides in the Ukraine
to wear shoes like these.

The prince leaves.

VAKULA
Oh, my Lord! What splendour!
If the shoes are like these, what sort of feet can
wear them?
They must be made of pure sugar.

Everybody laughs.

HIS SERENE HIGHNESS
I am touched by this simplicity.
Let us enjoy ourselves. Ask someone, Princess
Miroslava or dear Temira to dance a Russian
dance, so they can dance the kascok.

CHORUS
I've already seen to it!

MASTER OF CEREMONIES
In the Tsarina's family theatre they are about to
start a play with a song…
'The Tsarevich Chunor, or the rose without a
thorn'.
Please, take your seats if you wish to hear the
work.
OKSANA AND SOLOCHA
My Solocha, console me!
My son! Beautiful eagle, my soul!

Finale

Festive bells ring out. The people go home after the mass.

CHORUS OF WOMEN
12 We invite you to our house, there will be vareniki, there will be galuski, there will be vatruski, there will be all sorts of things, we invite you to our house!

OKSANA (bitterly)
Don’t call for me, girls, I’m not going anywhere!

CHORUS
Why are you so proud, my girl?

OKSANA
I’m not going anywhere!

CHORUS OF MEN
Greetings, Oksana!

OKSANA
Greetings to you, too!

CHORUS
Why are you so sad, why are you so downcast?

OKSANA
It has not been a happy feast-day for me!

CHORUS
You look as though you have been crying, perhaps they have promised you to a man that you don’t love. Why don’t you say something? Just say a word, girl, open your heart! Marry the man you love...

OKSANA
There was an eagle, but he flew away and I shall never manage to catch him again!

CHORUS
If the eagle flew away, then pick up a little dove!

OKSANA
Stop it, boys!

CHORUS
Don’t be angry, beautiful girl! Let everything be as it was before.

OKSANA
I made my beloved angry, and I have caused his end!

She cries and goes away. They boys watch her walk away and shake their heads.

CHORUS
13 If you want to drink honey, come with us to the Jewess’s house! The Jewess has got black eyebrows, as high as horseshoes, Come on, let’s go to the inn, we can loosen our purse-strings there. The hostess of the inn has lit the lamp and warmed the house, she has set the table. The Jewess is rich! She’s got honey, she’s got brandy, beer… Come on, let’s go to the inn, we can loosen our purse-strings there. You ask and you drink, there’s salame too, all you need do is open your purse! Honey, brandy, beer, ask and drink your fill! Come on, let’s all go to the inn to drink honey and beer! The table is set, let’s all go to the inn! Come on, if you want honey, let’s go to the Jewess’s. Let’s go to the Jewess’s, she’s got black eyebrows, as high as horseshoes! Let’s go to the inn, we can loosen our purse-strings there, everybody to the inn!

Cub, Golova and Panas enter.

CUB
Where are you going, boys? This is a shame! Please, come to me! I’ve got everything: I’ve got gorilka and pirogi, I’ve got lard and salame, and they’ve brought me beer from the brewery. Whatever made you think of going to the inn? And where’s Oksana? I told her to invite you to our house. What a scatter-brained girl! Bother her! Pan Golova, Panas! Come to my house!

GOLOVA
We’ll be there.

PANAS
We know the way well enough.

CHORUS
We are grateful, too. But we’ll look after ourselves. We’ll go to the inn!

(Vakula enters.)

VAKULA
Yes, you father! Don’t be angry on the day of Christ’s birth. Be merciful! (He takes the presents and lays them at Cub’s feet, then he kneels before him.) Accept these with my repentance, here’s the bearskin hat, the gloves, here’s the belt and the whip. If that’s not enough, beat me father, as hard as you like. I repent before you, it was all my fault! (He looks around proudly.)

CUB
That’s enough now, get up! Let’s forget what happened! I forgive you! Let it be… But what do you want?

VAKULA
Father, give me your Oksana as my bride!

CHORUS
Look at the smith! He’s a good lad!

VAKULA
Cub, let me marry Oksana as soon as possible!

CHORUS
Cub, we’ll all come to your house!

Oksana enters.

CUB
Very well. Send for the officials.

VAKULA
Look at the shoes I’ve brought you! The very shoes that the Tsarina wears!

OKSANA
I don’t want them, I don’t need them… Even without them…

CUB
Why don’t you hold your tongue, silly girl? I can see you’re happy! Well, I had noticed! Come here, row and give each other a kiss with my blessing! We’ll marry you, and you’ll live in love and prosperity. Hey, musicians, what are you doing sitting around there? Hey, sing, come here and honour the bride and groom!

CHORUS
Look at the smith, Vakula! He’s a good lad! (The singers step up. Solocha stands beside them.)

14 Strong winds, do not blow in the thick woods. Blow, dear morning, down the road that our girl takes.

OKSANA, SOLOCHA, VAKULA & CUB
Untie your plait, let it fall down to your waist like dew falls on the earth, on the green meadow.

In the distance you can hear the horses neighing. The enemy must stand aside if he doesn’t want to be trampled down. Here they are bringing the clear-eyed bride! Get up, good morning, good morning to the bride and groom… Good morning to all good people, to the peasants and strangers, good morning.