

# *A Scene from Bohemian Life*

**Will Owen**

playlet

\*

## **Introductory Information**

**Synopsis:** This playlet is a re-imagining of how Schaunard and Musetta killed the hapless parrot that was enervating the rich Aloys. As in the original -- Henri Murger's *Scenes from Bohemian Life* -- the scene is set in Paris in the eighteenthirties.

**Scene Breakdown:** The action represented takes place in the music room of a fashionable apartment/townhouse.

## **CHARACTERS**

MUSETTA  
SCHAUNARD  
ALOYS  
PARPAGNOL

\*

## ***A Scene from Bohemian Life***

*The music room of a fashionable apartment/townhouse; Shaunard is giving Aloys a singing lesson; a parrot looks on; there are two entrances/exits represented, one to bedrooms/private quarters (E1) and one to entrance/parlor (E2).*

### **PARROT**

Sghcaaaaaw! Haaw! Haaw! Haaw!

### **ALOYS**

D-d-damn...d-d-damn...d-d-damn...d-d-damn that d-d-damned parrot!

If I that parrot I could kill, I would.

Allowed is not to laugh away at me. No!

### **SCHAUNARD**

Once more, once more, good sir, we try...and try again,  
and step by step, by phrase by phrase, we learn --  
some little more at least, and bettered reach day's end,  
more humble but more able than when it began.

### **ALOYS**

I not do want for learn more humbug for more better.

I want for learn singing -- for cure my stutter!

That is all -- and that is what you are for -- no more!

### **PARROT**

You are for! No more! Sghcaaaaaw! Haaw! Haaw! Haaw!

### **ALOYS**

Argh!

### **SCHAUNARD**

But singing, sir, will cure much more --  
a stutter is but a stumbling, and quick  
we catch ourselves and walk upright -- a trifle.  
But singing, sir, will cure the the deepest ills  
of desolation in our human soul --  
all melancholy, oh, even despair,  
the joyful peal of song a-sounding out, and in  
within you thrumming strong behind your brow  
in spacious cloisters of the mind does make  
what just before was dark and troubled night  
new morning alight, carefree in the risen sun.

### **ALOYS**

D-d-damn all that too. I need for cure -- stutter.

I am rich. I am powerful. And I am laughingstock!

**PARROT**

Laughingstock! Laughingstock! Sghcaaaaaw! Haaw! Haaw! Haaw!

**ALOYS**

Argharghargh!

**SCHAUNARD** *singing, playing, etc.*

*(Those most on whom fortune smiles,  
to their blessings blinds their eyes.)*

And again, sir, we will try. First, listen.

**ALOYS**

Not want for lesson I listen -- I want for lesson I sing!

**PARROT**

I sing! I sing! Sghcaaaaaw! Haaw! Haaw! Haaw!

**ALOYS**

I need for find a way to make you die. Now we sing!

**SCHAUNARD**

Like this, sir; we try again.

*Manca sollecita*

*piu dell' usato*

*ancor che s'agiti*

*con lieve fiato...*

**ALOYS**

*Mawonka souleechitaw*

*peeoo dale usayaytoh*

**PARROT**

*Mawonkah souleechitaw*

*peeoo dale usayaytoh*

Sghcaaaaaw! Haaw! Haaw! Haaw!

**SCHAUNARD**

*(Sghcaaaaaw, haaw, haaw, haaw, haaw...aah, aah, ah-aah...)*

**ALOYS**

Argh! Musetta! Musetta! Bring me tea! No! Vodka!

**SCHAUNARD**

Musetta!?

**PARROT**

Musetta! Musetta! Sghcaaaaaw! Haaw! Haaw! Haaw!

*Musetta comes on from E1, evidently just having gotten out of bed.*

**MUSETTA**

Yes! What! Ah yes, what, my sweetest love? *to Aloys Arh! surprised to see Schaunard immediately goes off E1*

**SCHAUNARD**

(You... So that is why.)

**ALOYS**

You say!?! What!?!

**SCHAUNARD**

Ahh...you...what? What is more sir, is to also have the great good fortune of a house well-heated such as this that so bespeaks your august standing ah so! that frees the body to loll and sultriate as if in the blossom-wafted paradise of alhambric summer while all others' freeze in this huddled city's grey desolation cracking in the vise of Siberian cold. Russia's rulers are intent these days it's said to build a Paris of their own at Saint Petersburg -- and in exchange have gifted us their winter.

**ALOYS**

What!?!

**SCHAUNARD**

Nothing, sir -- merely musing to your question.

**ALOYS**

And Musetta is my niece. You hear? My niece! Musetta!

**PARROT**

My niece! Musetta! Sghcaaaaaw! Haaw! Haaw! Haaw!

**SCHAUNARD** *as Musetta comes on E1, now in dressing gown or similar*  
Indeed, how nice it must be to receive relatives from home when visiting abroad?

**MUSETTA**

Oh Aloys my dear, you're singing so beautifully, so beautifully my dear.

**PARROT**

Beautifully! Beautifully, my dear! Sghcaaaaaw! Haaw! Haaw! Haaw!

**ALOYS**

Arghargh! Vodka! Vodka!

**PARROT**

Vodka! Vodka! Sghcaaaaaw! Haaw! Haaw! Haaw!

**MUSETTA**

Oh Aloys, Aloys -- calm yourself. And nothing calms better than a mid-morning vodka, and I'm sure with such a fine teacher as this, your stutter will soon be gone.

**ALOYS**

You know..met..have him?

**MUSETTA**

Why would we ever have met? Of course not.

**PARROT**

Of course not. Sghcaaaaaw! Haaw! Haaw! Haaw!

**ALOYS**

Uhahoh! ... And yes, yes -- I have must calm myself.  
And if this parrot you find way to die  
a natural death, so just...it happens  
I will give you more reward than, than...

**SCHAUNARD**

Perchance, if you should sing to it, for some  
brief length of time -- so beautifully, oh,  
(so beautifully, my dear) -- as only you...  
Aye, as even sweetest things -- oh, love itself --  
can cloy it's said to exhaustion and disgust.  
But you sir, are a counselor of your state --  
a man of power in your home and here --  
who knows, when death cannot be naturally arranged  
an artificial one can serve, and quite as well.  
And I know cooks could strip the plumes, and mince  
and sauce that leathery bird and make  
a stew that you would swear was made  
of sweetest turtledoves and quails, the way  
that simmering in riches only can  
make of feathery slatterns of the street  
fine lace-decked ladies of an envied house.

**MUSETTA**

(And oh if you my damned Schaunard do not shut up,  
I swear it is not just the parrot that must also die.)

**ALOYS**

What? No. I have for live here now from mighty friend

of my father's merchant house. The parrot...argh!  
is the juice and apple of his eyes and pride

**SCHAUNARD**

(And oh my dear Musetta, you do as well I see,  
teaching him French as I do teach him singing.)

**ALOYS**

and so I must for care for it so must be  
a death I can explain -- in this I was  
for nothing -- and so for all believe.

**PARROT**

And so for all believe! Sghcaaaaw! Haaw! Haaw! Haaw!

**ALOYS**

Argharghargh! I cannot! I cannot! I must have now! Where is my apothecary?  
He was to come this morning, and it is *door knock/bell heard* Ah-hah! And  
perfect for in time he comes. I will receive him in the entranceway and  
speakingroom. *goes off E2* Monsieur Parpinvol, Monsieur Parpinvol, I am upon  
my way!

**MUSETTA**

No. Oh God. He cannot know I'm here.

**SCHAUNARD**

Now an apothecary? Parpagnol?  
Tell me, in what deep reverie  
might I have been of late -- of broken heartedness --  
that I, distracted, did not see, so many  
of my acquaintance so come up in the world,  
as I, a fool, remain a penniless musician?

**MUSETTA**

Schaunard, I beg you. I am trembling and not jesting.  
He cannot know I'm here. I defied him --  
and he will take his vengeance -- he must.  
You know that. His is the world of men where all  
respect is lost if loyal silence is not kept  
and where no defiance of their fearsome dignity  
can be brooked -- and so must always be avenged.  
I shamed him in the street in front of all --  
taunting him with the truth of how quick he is  
to make of poor girls whores who need his wares  
and pay their debts to him -- because my friend  
Mimi I lived with spends all her money there --  
and in the street the crowd they laughed and laughed at him,

and he will more than disfigure me, so all can see  
that none dare brave manly hoodlum majesty.

**SCHAUNARD**

So you sent her, Mimi -- she took the lodgings --  
the garret, past the stairs above our own?

**MUSETTA**

Yes. When I came live here

**SCHAUNARD**

with him.

**MUSETTA**

I never thought he could even know Parpagnol.

**SCHAUNARD**

And that is why I couldn't find you -- I  
who lorn and desp'rate-eyed these weeks  
have ranged the streets where you went to live,  
I thought -- every alley near Our Lady of Loreto and  
fearing for you so, even I inside the church  
did stop to pray and weep in anxiousness for you,  
as all who knew you said they had no news of you.

**MUSETTA**

Keep it that way. Don't you see how fear

**SCHAUNARD**

he's not coming in here and if he does

**MUSETTA**

and anyway, why'd I want them to see me now?

**SCHAUNARD**

And the worst that has befallen then,  
is not on you, but me? What can a man  
in my sad penury in truth expect  
more than to be left, without a word,  
by the faithless whore he can't forget?

**MUSETTA**

Faithless? Whore? Schaunard...

**SCHAUNARD**

Musetta!



**MUSETTA**

Schaunard, no -- our tragic comedy of singing and starving is finished for me now. ... Do you see Mimi? How is she? I thought the four of you might be an influence for better.

**SCHAUNARD**

Just past the door, this morning, coming in, from somewhere in some raucous darkness in this city of the night.

**MUSETTA**

No one I know has such a reckless stamina, and energy to laugh, to dance, and tempt debauchery.

**SCHAUNARD**

We hardly know her yet. All else remains the same --

**ALOYS** *heard from off in direction of E2*

Ah, Monsieur Parpinvol, how glad I am for seeing you.

**PARPAGNOL** *heard from off in direction of E2*

Ah, Monsieur Aloys, how glad I am for being here.

**SCHAUNARD**

he's not gone -- and now's our landlord's strongman too -- and days ago I saw him from the stairs and he was shouting at her door above -- now I know why -- in the old neighborhood -- yes, why would you or anyone want to now go back to that?

**MUSETTA**

Help me. Parpagnol cannot know I'm here.

**SCHAUNARD**

You know I will. And they now won't come here. For they are far too fastened on their bartering -- when soporifics mix with money, changing hands across a table, not fire nor war nor judgement day distract from the obsession of the task at hand.

**MUSETTA**

Alright. And as for Aloys

**SCHAUNARD**

"My sweetest love," who sings -- or better, pays -- so beautifully?

**MUSETTA**

Provides. And better you, with your music and your poverty, could protect from feral press

of sly helps and barterings lost in the streets  
the likes of me -- a girl alone,  
penniless and propertyless save for this --  
I've looked hard in others what becomes of us --  
that for one brief blossoming in season of fair youth  
now stands here in my shoes?

**SCHAUNARD**

I know -- too well I know, but still love can

**MUSETTA**

love cannot and never will.

**PARROT**

Love cannot, and never will! Sghcaaaaaw! Haaw! Haaw! Haaw!

**ALOYS** *from off then coming on from E1 and going off through E2*

Very well, Monsieur Parpinvol, in an instant I will return. Argh! Shut that parrot! I must get for pay my apothecary and put away my medicine. Then we sing! Ah-ha!

**PARROT**

Then we sing. Sghcaaaaaw! Haaw! Haaw! Haaw!

**SCHAUNARD**

He seems to have provided himself with a fine supply.

**MUSETTA**

And will soon enough be back much improved in mood.

**SCHAUNARD**

As Benoit our ferret landlord and Parpagnol his wolf  
will soon enough be back to see us four at home --  
and far from improved in mood with every month  
that passes with the rent unpaid. Your Aloys,  
so how much might he pay should this most  
unfortunate raucous rooster find that death  
can come most sweetly lethally -- naturally --  
perhaps, under the influence of...of?

**MUSETTA**

Ouf, for some there is more money than ever you could imagine. And please Schounard, as for Aloys, you do not know me, and you have never seen me in your life.

**SCHAUNARD**

I do not know you, oh Musetta -- no, I  
have never seen you -- or sung with you --

in my life. So how are you, singing now --  
with him so beautifully here?

**MUSETTA**

Schaunard, don't hurt me more than now  
it may already, to vent your angered pride --  
if I told you, "you can't afford to sing with me"?  
I left you, Schaunard -- I left that life, not you --  
and I don't regret it. Oh! Aloys will be in here now  
at any instant and that Parpagnol is there  
aprowl I'll wager for bric-a-brac to steal.  
Make sure he does not come in and know I'm here.

**SCHAUNARD**

He's quietly sitting there -- on his best behavior, at least until he gets paid.

**MUSETTA**

And how is your music, and your life? I should ask

**SCHAUNARD**

if only from politeness

**MUSETTA**

or some regret?

**SCHAUNARD**

Oh Musetta, my most beloved Musetta,  
the time we lived at work and play, and love  
together, now I see was all my happiness.

**MUSETTA**

Oh...

**SCHAUNARD**

And here is a song I wrote for you  
in hope someday you'd sing again with me --  
and oh my love, I will sing it for you now:  
*Oh sweet lost love  
come back to me*

**PARPAGNOL** *from off then coming in E2*

Ahah! Oh yes, that trumpet nose resounding voice -- I'd know it anywhere!  
Schaunard! You? Here?

**MUSETTA**

No!

**SCHAUNARD**

Throw yourself into my arms, turning your back  
and I'll embrace and hide your face this way.

Out! *to Parpagnol*

**PARROT**

Out! Sghcaaaaaw! Haaw! Haaw! Haaw!

**PARPAGNOL** *going off E2*

Ah! Ah, Schaunard -- ah that other trumpet resounding nose! I should have known. (And Aloys, should he know too? But all secrets are safe with me, until they are of use.)

**MUSETTA**

Schaunard, enough -- he's gone thank God.

**SCHAUNARD**

Why should we stop now -- we can so quick --  
so practised at playing this that we are --  
who made love morning, noon and night

**MUSETTA**

more often than we could afford to eat -- and that is the life I left.

**SCHAUNARD**

I know, but I had hoped that singing together we

**MUSETTA**

could climb away from shivering subsistence and  
breath unworried, in warmth, free from want?  
And I believed it for too long. And now I'm anxious  
the money, nourishment and comfort end  
replacing fear their lack would be the end of me?

**SCHAUNARD**

Just one more kiss from your sweet lips, oh my  
Musetta, now that you are here, again  
brimming within breathing reach of me,  
my soul assailed by dark enchantment  
as if drawn to the deep center of the world  
beckoned by the chant of Orpheus' lyre.

**MUSETTA**

Only fools accord such power to lyres.

**SCHAUNARD**

That when untuned, discordant put to lying use,  
sing so false for having sung so true?

But by an honest player, well-tempered,  
would once again sing so richly and so true?

**MUSETTA**

Oh God, in listening to you, unthinking,  
quick as throats can change from sound to song  
I could give in to hope and with you

**SCHAUNARD**

sing again?

**MUSETTA**

No, stop -- and he'll be here again this instant, and then?

**SCHAUNARD**

He's giving himself a double dose I'll wager --  
to make sure he's getting what he's paying for.

**MUSETTA**

He doesn't care or even notice what  
he pays -- you have no idea how much  
some have of money, and so how little they  
conceive how much it is for likes of you.

**SCHAUNARD**

Or you? So he would pay in fact if the parrot died?

**MUSETTA**

Or me. And caught in a careless mood, if the parrot died  
a natural death, or so it seemed to him,  
he'd pay more than all you four would need  
to pay your rent for a year or more, but

**SCHAUNARD**

first, we'd spend it all on wine, women and song?

**MUSETTA**

No -- you like to think you would. But most  
you'd spend on food and rent and paint and instruments --  
and buying time to work -- that soon runs out,  
just like the money -- oh and back to desperate  
like you are now. And I have seen that life with you,  
and see how those who choose to live that way  
cannot sustain it for that long.

**SCHAUNARD**

It is the life we have, and even if employed,

we have no money. Rodolfo works now at the Opera,  
and what they pay is almost nothing.

**MUSETTA**

How is Rodolfo? I miss his presence,  
the sunny happiness of his making  
even most drudgeous work amusing play --  
almost as much as I miss your love for me,  
my jealous, prideful, disgruntled one, aey?  
Keep on spying -- make sure he's not about  
to stand up and to come this way.

**SCHAUNARD**

Musetta, now that you so coldly left me, why  
you can at least stop always seducing me.  
And Roldofo, Rodolfo is always better.  
Every day, he becomes it seems more exited  
by his work -- he feels so lucky -- sings  
the praises of the master dancer he  
is so proud to be learning from -- Jules...Parrot? --  
could that be his name? -- and so volubly delights  
in debating with himself his endless quand'ry  
of what prima ballerina and ideal for art  
he most adores. He praises to the skies  
the apparitionly enchantment of Taglioni  
and as quick returns his loyalty and heart  
to Essler and her embodiment of rapture --  
then just as quick jumps back again  
ablath'ring and apuzzling on and on  
like this: hmm, why oh! the one's so humbly studied  
and flawless execution, oh so noble  
in moral purpose; but hmm, well yes, but oh!  
the other's so vibrant an abandon, so  
accomplished in performance, oh so proud  
and earthily disturbing.  
And like a beamish jumping jackanape  
keeps his questioning volleying back and forth  
as if that itself where the game's delight --  
hm-hmm, so? mutually exclusive are they?  
and yet can't both be fully true at once?

**MUSETTA**

Give him my love, and fondest best --  
though I for one, don't understand him.  
And you, Schaunard, though I should know but

**SCHAUNARD**

I am a simple workman, without much inspiration,  
and sometimes that can sadden me --  
but not as much as does losing you.

**MUSETTA**

Schaunard, please

**SCHAUNARD**

just a little kiss -- on the cheek -- and loose  
embrace so I can breath here by your hair and neck  
and faint from longing and desire.

**MUSETTA**

Schaunard, enough!

**PARROT**

Schaunard, enough! Sghcaaaaaw! Haaw! Haaw! Haaw!

**MUSETTA**

Oh! Sit over there and...and tell me more about Rodolfo,  
and his loves.

**SCHAUNARD**

Or lack thereof.  
He's lucky; he's in love with work and art,  
and otherworldly Wallises and Sylphs,  
and not a worldly woman, the way she is.

**MUSETTA**

Even now? Your faithless whore?

**SCHAUNARD**

Yes, Musetta, even now.

**MUSETTA**

Oh, Schaunard ... Schaunard, just tell me of you now.

**SCHAUNARD**

Like tired old friends now -- once tireless lovers --  
now trying to listen through the memories --  
each to the other's latest narration of their life?  
I teach like this -- and sometimes would prefer  
that parrot for a student, for at least he tries --  
and now you know I also work accompanying  
at the chapel of the Celestines.

**MUSETTA**

You? They risk to let you in a nunnery?  
Schaunard, I love you because you make me laugh.

**SCHAUNARD**

But no, not in the nunnery -- they let me in  
the chapel's sacristy and lock me in the loft to play.  
I never see or speak to them I only hear  
them lift their hearts in prayer and sing --  
and that thrilling trembling at the center of my hearing  
sustains me more than any fortune they might pay.

**MUSETTA**

And this you do now every day?

**SCHAUNARD**

Three times -- matins, lauds and vespers -- every day.

**MUSETTA**

When otherwise a man would be sustained  
by breakfast, lunch and dinner

**SCHAUNARD**

or making love with you? Musetta

**MUSETTA**

Schaunard...Schaunard, no...please...  
I have changed life, and it was not so easy.  
And if I should change again, now that you -- you!  
pray every day with the chaste and cloistered Celestines  
why I -- someday -- do you think, among  
the sweet-voiced sisters that you never see  
and well up your eyes with tears  
at the plea for mercy of their song  
there's not a faithless whore now begging God  
for pity with her sweetest song that He  
forgive what once, to she herself, she found,  
unfortunate, was best to do?

**SCHAUNARD**

More than one I hope -- there are ways much worse to end.  
But my Musetta, no, not you. You were  
not ever one given to self-pitying and regret.

**MUSETTA**

No, not me. I'll say you're right.



**SCHAUNARD**

The more I see this parrot, the more he seems to me sadly destined for ministrations of an apothecary.

**MUSETTA**

I'd have to get the precious held key to his special medicine chest. But what could be the other cause of death, naturally?

**SCHAUNARD**

Even sweetest things can cloy, it's said, and if we sang to sleep this parrot, never to wake?

**ALOYS** *comes on E1*

Ahahahow...looleeoo oooo...

**PARROT**

Looleeoo oooo. Sghcaaaaaw! Haaw! Haaw! Haaw!

**ALOYS**

Ahrgh! Ahrgh!

**MUSETTA**

Ahi! Ahi! Aloys! Aloys! Ahi! Oh! Help me!

**ALOYS**

What, what my lovey-dove? But I have to pay

**MUSETTA**

Ahi! I have a cramp, a terrible burning pain! Ahi! Oh, oh please! Aloys! Aloys! Ahi! Oh! Help me!

**ALOYS**

Yes -- but my apothecary I must pay.

**MUSETTA**

That can wait! The pain I have it kills me now. Can't you see? It makes me useless for love. Ahi! Oh! Oh, please! You must have some elixir -- a wee dram of laudanum, something in this house

**ALOYS**

Where?

**MUSETTA**

Here! Deep under my side, crumpling me. Oh! Give me the key to your medicine chest

and maybe there I can find a solace for this pain  
and return at once myself again, and yours.

**ALOYS** *giving her the key and she goes off E1*

Yes, oh yes, and return to me again, and mine for love...ahahooo...

**PARROT**

And mine for love, ahahahooo... Sghcaaaaaw! Haaw! Haaw! Haaw!

**PARPAGNOL** *coming on from E2*

Ah! Oh, Monsieur Aloys I heard you here and thought I heard a woman too, cry in pain extreme (or was it pleasure?) how could that be and I took my liberty of come to help in case.

**ALOYS**

Ah, Monsieur Parpinvol, thank you for your solicitation for me yes. But here it was nothing, nothing -- my singing master here was with my niece a moment and singing with this parrot who

**SCHAUNARD**

sings too.

**PARPAGNOL**

Also with a trumpet nose? I wish my parrot could sing with her too.

**ALOYS**

What? No, Monsieur Parpinvol there was no woman singing here -- my niece only, a meek girl now finished in finishing school, visiting for culture from my capital at home. Maybe I can bring for you glass of vodka, no?

**PARPAGNOL**

(And likely underage! Ah Schaunard, I am shocked -- and when even I am surprised at the habits I find where none would think expect them, oh Schaunard, such moral reprobation! But your secret is safe from him with me -- for you, for a small fee of protection for it.) Ah, Monsieur Aloys -- I should not drink so early in the day, I have important business to attend and an apothecary

**SCHAUNARD**

(teetering under the influence of his wares would be a reprobation to respectability -- a travesty, Parpagnol -- I am shocked -- and here in this city most of all where not a single house harbors habits and hypocrisy. I saw your wife not long ago -- so devout and admirable a woman, so devoted to your daughters who so adore their father now -- in the Church of Our Lady of Loreto -- and I joined my prayers to hers, which I'm sure were all -- much needed -- all for you.)

**PARPAGNOL**

(Watch yourself, Schaunard. I know where you live. And never mock me for no

one fears a laughingstock, and that I can't afford. And I am glad to let you know, I will come tonight to collect -- with your disappointed friend Benoit -- oh, speak of hypocrisy -- I am shocked -- when he rented you and your mates his precious rooms, who made him believe you could pay the rent?) Ah yes, but for you Monsieur Aloys, I will drink to your health and our relations -- and the happiness of your niece during her visit to Paris and her adventures in our artistic culture, no? (I wager you made her believe you loved her? At least I am honest in my deceptions.)

**SCHAUNARD**

(And in your self-deceptions? Where mine, are dumpling sweet as baby's skin -- and playful, your self-justifying tales of why it must be so... after all...are hard-hided, blunt ignorance, so deadly serious, indifferent to affliction.)

**ALOYS**

Yes. To our rulers -- may they rule us firmly and forever!

**PARPAGNOL**

And here's to you Monsieur Aloys. (And to you -- firmly and forever -- as debts must be paid and money owed must be collected

**SCHAUNARD**

firmly and forever -- or else the world would end?)

**ALOYS**

Ach! Now we go!

**PARPAGNOL**

And your niece -- so charming -- I caught only a glimpse, her name you say it's

**SCHAUNARD**

Mongolia -- geographic names -- indeed, so charming -- so in fashion in your country now, not so Monsieur Aloys?

**ALOYS**

Oh...oh yes -- an our ancestral practice culture.

**PARPAGNOL**

I see.

**SCHAUNARD**

Yes, Mongolia.

**ALOYS**

This way now please.

*Aloys and Parpagnol go off E2, and Musetta comes on E1.*

**SCHAUNARD**

And I too am trembling and not jesting.  
And you, my feathered friend, far from deserve  
this end, but then, nor did the hapless hen  
I dined on last -- I can't remember when.  
As now necessity -- mine, not yours --  
laces up the cat's cradle of deception  
whereon you will fall to sleep beyond awaking.

**PARROT**

Fall to sleep. Sghcaaaaaw! Haaw! Haaw! Haaw!

**SCHAUNARD**

Aye, and if that vial of life-leathing elixir  
that now she brings were a hollow ring  
among her playful fingers, as if dancing,  
beckoning with the courtesan jewels on her hands,  
I too would drink Lucretia's poison,  
to all abandon in the vortex of her kiss  
that at a banquet of sumptuous corruption  
she would lean to give for my distraction  
while she poured her ring into my cup.

**MUSETTA**

Schaunard, we are killing a parrot not a pope.

**SCHAUNARD**

And oh, this scheme must work and well; I fear  
that even you don't see how much I need the money.

**MUSETTA**

Schaunard, I lived with you for years --  
the best years of my now fading youth --  
love so blissful, life so unbearable -- and oh,  
I know how much you need this money.

**SCHAUNARD**

And all that time, I believed you loved me.

**MUSETTA**

I still love you. But that's useless. Look at us --  
and the world we live in -- now killing this

poor parrot in a trick of mountbank theater  
to gull some torpid sot to spill open up his wallet.

**SCHAUNARD**

You're speaking of your lover.

**MUSETTA**

I'm speaking of my protector, and a life now free  
of your hardscrabble misery's fear and want.

**SCHAUNARD**

I have my music and my songs, and...  
to choose what we would live for, to be free,  
is to choose the fastening chains that anchor us,  
drowning, to that that makes us free.

**MUSETTA**

And we have chosen. ... So what will we sing, to bring  
this poor parrot's comedy to its tragic end?

**SCHAUNARD**

This song I wrote for you from down within  
the lightless well of desperation fearing  
all hope was gone of seeing you, not just  
not living by your side again in love.

**MUSETTA**

Let me see it and let me hear the melody.

**SCHAUNARD**

Here -- and listen -- you don't read music  
nor play because you're so lazy, but none  
that I have ever heard can sing so freely  
with such artful reaching to the human heart,  
and I'll just start and with your genius  
you will just go.

**MUSETTA**

I do too read music. A little bit. You taught me.

**SCHAUNARD**

Musetta, oh my love, why are you crying?

**MUSETTA**

I am not crying.

**ALOYS** *comes in E2*

Loolleoo-oooo Ah, yes. And now we sing!

**PARROT**

Ah yes, and now we sing. Sghcaaaaaw! Haaw! Haaw! Haaw!

**ALOYS**

Argharghargh! That p-p-p-p-ararargh! Only there is one wish left to me! Where is my key?

**MUSETTA**

Oh Aloys, my love, I feel so well and wonderful now -- oh thank you, oh thank you -- you are such a kind and noble man -- and here is your key.

**ALOYS**

Ready again, for love I see.

**PARROT**

Ready again for love I see. Sghcaaaaaw! Haaw! Haaw! Haaw!

**ALOYS**

Argharghargh! What I would pay, what I would pay  
And if this parrot you find way to die  
a natural death, so just...it happens  
and I for nothing am in this.

**SCHAUNARD**

And sir, how much exactly might

**MUSETTA**

(I'll see to that later -- you wouldn't even know how much to ask -- now to the business at hand, and acting with clear, cold dispatch.) Oh Aloys, oh my...my little parrot, let me fill your vodka glass again and sit -- for I think your singing master here -- who has made you sing so well and now even your stutter seems to be going its way -- he helped me think of the perfect way. And here...and I think in this other glass I may a dram for this poor parrot also prepare that from so much squawking must be thirsty too. Here's for you my loud and little feathered friend. And Aloys, Aloys my most amorous demi-god, if this my idea works and well, then you will happily pay all I ask in just reward for jewels and new gowns for presenting me with you to the admiring eyes and envy of all men?

**SCHAUNARD**

(Pay you? And make of me kept man of the woman I couldn't keep? And I would throw it all in your teeth but for necessity.)

**ALOYS**

Musetta, oh my Musetta, for you, all mine? Ro all other men to see? Oh anything you ask.

**PARROT**

Oh anything you ask. Sghcaaaaaw! Haaw! Haaw! Haaw!

**ALOYS**

But how -- with me for nothing here -- the parrot will make die?

**MUSETTA**

We will sing to it.

**PARROT**

Sing to it. Sghcaaaaaw! Haaw! Haaw! Haaw!

**ALOYS**

Sing? Oh, Musetta you amuse me so -- so most of all when you joke.

**SCHAUNARD**

(...and act with clear, cold dispatch...)

Oh sir, no jest -- no jest at all, indeed, this death  
you will most scientifically understand  
and so explain -- you who were in truth  
for nothing here -- to your father's mighty friend  
to dessicate his tears at the weepful news  
of the juice and apple of his eyes' untimely end.

**ALOYS**

Oh yes?

**MUSETTA**

Oh yes.

**ALOYS**

And why?

**MUSETTA**

Yes? Why?

**SCHAUNARD**

Oh sir...for France's finest naturalists  
that have of late sailed the tropic seas  
and traveled deep into the forests where  
creatures of beauty beyond our ken  
live free in Nature's Eden care, well they  
have learned that parrots are of all  
the creatures that God made to grace this Earth  
the ones of keenest hearing -- that is why  
to human language only they, can hear  
and they can say.

**PARROT**

And they can say. Sghcaaaaw! Haaw! Haaw! Haaw!

**SCHAUNARD**

But this keenest hearing, if overfilled  
by the high sweet keening of human song,  
why, their bird-like brains are overdosed  
and in exquisite apoplexy fall to death.

**PARROT**

Fall to death. Sghcaaaaw! Haaw! Haaw! Haaw!

**ALOYS**

Oh yes. Of course. I understand, and can explain. And when it will die?

**SCHAUNARD**

Now.

*Schaunard and Musetta sing; Aloys falls asleep; the parrot dies.*

**SCHAUNARD & MUSETTA**

*Oh sweet lost love  
come back to me,  
or by God above  
surely I'll diee.  
I let pretend  
all's well with me,  
but in the end  
I know I liee.  
Your loss to me  
I cannot bear,  
return to be  
my love ever there.  
Oh sweet lost love  
come back to me,  
or by God above  
surely I'll diee.  
Return to be  
constant to me,  
constant to me,  
constant to me  
as true love can be.*

**MUSETTA**

Schaunard, for a moment I felt asleep,  
and in your arms not dreaming,  
deep, as if in the dark of dawns in those  
first days in faith and hope in love with you.



**SCHAUNARD**

And with a deepest kiss awake again.

**MUSETTA**

Yes.

**SCHAUNARD**

Yes, and all that spectacle mounted for him,  
and shameless, he falls into his sleep.  
And I feel ashamed to wake him but

**MUSETTA**

you, need the money.

**SCHAUNARD**

Yes.

**MUSETTA**

Oh, let him sleep -- when he wakes, he'll make  
his sense of it -- and meet me at Momus at five  
this afternoon -- Renata -- your Marcello's Renata --  
she works there in the kitchen as you know --  
she saw me there last night -- and so I'm found --  
I'll see her there when she starts work today --  
you'll get the money then I trow.

**SCHAUNARD**

Momus? Our old haunt? *Ah-ah, ah-ah; oh-eh, oh-eh -- venez, venez -- venez  
tous venez, écouter nous chanter, voyer nous danser -- au Café Momus, dix-sept  
Rue des Prêtres-Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois...*

**MUSETTA**

Shshshsh...you'll wake the dead.

**SCHAUNARD**

And I'll arrange we'll sing -- again tonight -- and late -- the best of our old  
repertoire! Oh, Musetta...

**MUSETTA**

Pay your rent first before they break your fingers  
and leave your piano untouched and alone as

**SCHAUNARD**

Musetta!

**MUSETTA**

No!

**SCHAUNARD**

But you will come? To sing with me again?

**MUSETTA**

If he's awake and takes me, well, why not?

**SCHAUNARD**

Musetta, oh I love you. I love you so.

**MUSETTA**

Schaunard, for both our sakes now leave me.

*Schaunard goes off, and all dark.*

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