The Mirror

Story by George MacDonald

Libretto by Jack Ballard

(It is the 16th century, when alchemists were of a dying, yet not dead, breed, but the philosophers are taking over and the creeds of blending the worlds of sciences and metaphysics, not to say religion, are in their infancy. COSMO, a student at the University in Prague, is a nobleman from an impoverished family. He dabbles in alchemy and his research explores the reaches of magic since the intelligentsia still held it as a serious, if discouraged, discipline.)

The set is split between COSMO’s room SR and the antique shop USL. In front of the shop is a square, open to the city outdoors. This “extends” into the audience, utilizing stairs to the stage (which can be to the side, center or both as the director wishes). The audience aisle/s are to be used; if large enough, for the action, otherwise as an avenue to a clear spot in front or on stage or on the stairs.

The mirror in question must be large enough so the audience can see the Princess on her couch.

This story would also be effective as a collaboration between a filmmaker and a staged opera director, in which case more visibility can be used.)

## SCENE 1

In the audience, COSMO wanders down the aisle, in a state of dreaminess, taking in the sights.

###### SONG: THE MYSTERIES

###### COSMO

###### Oh, the mysteries, the mysteries

###### That go beyond the life I see

###### Electricity of history

###### Shows elements, nonetheless, will be.

###### Once upon a time

###### I stood among the stars

###### Seeing things that couldn’t be

###### The past to come, the “are”

###### Oh, the mysteries, the mysteries

###### That go beyond the life I see

###### Electricity of history

###### Shows elements, that nonetheless, will be.

###### While I dabble in eclectic spell

###### Wherein powers of occult dwell

###### To me, their thoughts, and secrets tell

###### To drink liqueur from endless wells

###### Oh, the mysteries, the mysteries

###### That go beyond the life I see

###### Electricity of history

###### Shows elements, that nonetheless, will be.

###### 

###### The books I read, the stories bleed

###### Wond’rous things of God’s design

###### Like food I need, ‘pon which I feed

###### The beauty of the great divine

###### Oh, the mysteries, the mysteries

###### That go beyond the life I see

###### Electricity of history

###### Shows elements, that nonetheless, will be.

Oh, the mysteries, the mysteries

That go beyond the life I live

What I see, what I hear barely touch on my belief

Oh the mystery.

As he casually saunters TO STAGE, HANS catches up to him and taps him on the shoulder.

###### HANS

###### Hey Cosmo! The studied man!

###### If you can’t help me, no one can!

###### This shop behind the thoroughfare

###### Has rarities that are hidden there.

###### Among them lie a soldier’s treasure

###### For me to buy for my décor’s pleasure

###### So look, I know that you know

###### Better than anyone else can show

###### The armored trade, the helmet made

###### The sharpened blade for warrior berserk

###### And a shield for defensive wield

###### Would you assess its handiwork?

###### COSMO

###### Naturally, an expert’s grace

###### Will help you in this mysterious place

###### Being sure that what you pay

###### Is worth the image they convey

###### Swinging swords procures me bread.

###### I’m an expert in the martial arts

###### Whose winning stays when all is said.

###### Of course, I’ll come: the city’s dead

*Hans guides him to a narrow alley SL, and thence a dirty little shop cluttered with trinkets and antiquities (WALKING MUSIC). The owner is a little, withered OLD WOMAN, with a hooked nose, and burning eyes constantly, in a slow restless motion, look here and there as if after something that eludes them. Cosmo fondles, as it were, an armor set hung to the right of the door.*

###### COSMO

###### I agree, this, by the door,

###### This armor is but stronger yet

###### Than much I’ve seen and worth the price

###### She’s asking for;

###### That, I’ll bet.

###### HANS

###### Done!

###### I’ll talk to her

###### Whose countenance seems less than kind.

###### I’m glad it’s worth it.

###### I’ll buy it now, if you don’t mind.

*As Hans pays the woman, Cosmo glances up at an old full-length mirror, which leans against the wall covered with dust. Around it was some curious carving, which he could see but very indistinctly by the glimmering light which the owner of the shop carries in her hand.*

###### COSMO

###### (to Hans)

###### You know, this shop’s an awesome place

###### And there are things fit for my dorm

###### I think I’ll stay, if you don’t mind

###### And look for something I can afford.

Cosmo lingers as the Hans leaves. Pretending to examine several other articles, Cosmo at last approaches the mirror, which is set against the wall in the back.

###### COSMO

###### May I see that mirror?

###### OLD WOMAN

###### Take it out yourself, master; I cannot reach it.

Cosmo takes it down carefully, admiring its intricacies.

###### COSMO

###### (mysteriously)

###### What’s with this thing?

###### I think I know…it recalls something from the long ago

###### These symbols here, they show the age

###### Placed here by artist of reknown

###### A sign that’s cut, details. But,

###### It’s meaning’s clear for those grown

###### In arts and magic and…and…

###### things unknown. (FADING)

*Cosmo rubs the surface which reflects LIGHT brilliantly and uncannily.*

###### COSMO

###### What do you want for this old thing?

###### OLD WOMAN

###### Forty groschen, my lord

###### COSMO (slumping)

###### Oh.

###### OLD WOMAN

###### You think the price too high?

###### You do not trust my word?

###### COSMO

###### I don’t know it’s too much to ask

###### but it is far too much for me to give.

###### OLD WOMAN

###### (holding the light up to Cosmo’s face but looking particularly creepy in the light)

###### I like your look.

###### (BEAT)

###### What is your name?

###### COSMO

###### Cosmo von Wehrstahl

###### OLD WOMAN

###### Ah, ah! I thought as much.

###### I see your father in you and as such,

###### The resemblance is uncanny

###### I knew better than many,

###### I am certain that in ghostly corners

###### Ancient closets, remote dormers

###### You might find old things with crest and cipher

###### Of the family Wehrstahl, awaiting arrival.

###### (BEAT)

###### Well, well, well.

###### I like you, sir

###### You shall have the mirror at the fourth

###### of what I asked

###### One condition will I task.

###### COSMO

###### What is that?

###### OLD WOMAN

###### If you should ever want to sell it off

###### I will be the first to tell you no.

###### COSMO

###### (smiling)

###### Certainly. a moderate condition indeed.

###### OLD WOMAN

###### On your honor?

###### COSMO

###### On my honor

*The exchange of money is made, Cosmos scrambling through his purse as well as his pockets for the remaining change, Old woman, watching with seeming indifference.*

###### OLD WOMAN

###### I will carry it home for you.

###### COSMO

###### (showing repugnance at the creepiness of the old woman)

No, no; I will carry it myself.

###### OLD WOMAN

###### As you wish. As you wish.

(BEAT. To herself as she putters about)

Sold for the sixth time!

I wonder what its fate will be

Or that of my lady, hehehe…

LIGHTS FTB

## SCENE 2

*(LIGHTS come up on a large low-ceiled room, bare of furniture; for besides a couple of wooden chairs and a table, a couch which served for dreaming on both by day and night, and a bookshelf of black oak, there is little in the room that could be called furniture. But alchemy instruments are heaped in the corners; and in one stands a skeleton, half-leaning against the wall, half-supported by a string about its neck. While it sports a top hat set humorously (or conveniently) on its head, one of its hands rest on the heavy pommel of a great sword as if waiting for the call to battle. Various weapons are scattered about over the floor. The walls have little on them except for some oddities thrown up for an excuse at decoration: a large, dried bat with wings outstretched, the skin of a porcupine, a deer skull, and a stuffed sea-mouse.)*

*We see Cosmo hanging the mirror on the wall, and contemplating it, as if wondering why he was obsessed with the thing. He wipes away the dust from its face, and, clear as the water of a sunny spring, the mirror shone out. But his interest was chiefly occupied with the curious carving of the frame. This he cleaned as well as he could with a brush; and then he proceeded to a minute examination of its various parts, in the hope of discovering some index to the intention of the carver.*

SONG: THE HEART OF A CHILD

COSMO

(INTRO) What a strange thing a mirror is!

And look! The connection ‘tween reality and imagination!

For this room of mine is the same

But in there, not the same.

I might read a book about it

A story I like.

And reread over and over.

And…over.

(ARIA) All its commonness has gone away

It opens to the art, and I say!

One can see with strange delight

Just like a person in a play

Put on the stage, the Bard’s delight,

Whose hope in life can go beyond

The weariness of living in the light

Of a boring, material, ordinary day.

The heart of a child,

Can show us things

Beyond Horatio’s philosophy, theophany, psychology

Innocent but wild, energy but mild

Exploring worlds that have no limit

The heart of a child

Can sing what’s in it

Of Dante’s Beatrice, and all that’s with her

Singing with her

While this world stays silent, cynical and cold.

But isn’t art that rescues us

From weary regards of our sense,

Appealing to the imagination

reveals Nature in some degree as she really is?

She represents herself to the eye of the child

The child who truly knows the import

Of the wonder-teeming world around him,

He rejoices therein without questioning?

[BRIDGE; quasi-recitative]

That skeleton, now

I almost fear it

Standing there so still.

It could move and raise the sword

Not by mine, nor any other word

But of its own volition, til

I defend myself against its skill.

Hollow eyes only for the unseen

A watchman looking across

All the waste of this busy scene

Into quiet regions of resting ghosts.

(recit.)

And yet I know every bone and every joint in it as well as my own fist.

(piú mosso)

And that old battle-axe

It looks like any time

It might be picked up by a mailed hand

With its mighty arm go crashing through

My helmet, skull, and brainpan,

Til I invade the Unknown

Yet another bewildered ghost.

(time)

The heart of a child,

Can show us things

Beyond Horatio’s philosophy, theophany, psychology

Innocent and wild, energy and mild

Exploring worlds that have no limit

The heart of a child

Can only sing

Of Dante’s Beatrice, and all that came with her

Singing with her

While this world stays silent, cynical and cold.

(Cosmo looks wistfully into the mirror)

(tag, recit.)

I should like to live in *that* room

if I could only get into it.

*(As he looks in the mirror, PRINCESS walks through the door in the mirror into the reflected room, under compulsion, clothed all in white. Her back only is visible as she walked slowly up to the couch in the further end of the room, on which she lies down wearily, turning her face toward him. She is beautiful. [The organization of the room must be such so that Cosmo cannot see her on the couch and she can only see his back as if she actually were in his room on the couch; thus, if he turns to the couch, she can see his face but he can no longer see her.])*

*Cosmo stumbles, shocked and stares at her in the mirror, turns to the empty couch behind him, then confused back to the mirror. She lies with closed eyes, sobbing silently.*

*Her eyelids slowly rise and take in the new “room” in which she finds herself. It seemed nothing but what was in the mirror could affect her vision; and, therefore, if she saw him at all, it could only be his back, which was turned towards her in the glass. The two figures in the mirror could not meet face to face, except he turned and looked at her, present in his room. By-and-by her eyes fall upon the skeleton. She shudders and closes them, disgust clear on her face. The features settled into an unchanging expression of rest; and by these signs, and the slow regular motion of her breathing, Cosmo knew that she slept. He admired her till he was weary, and at last seated himself near the new-found shrine, and reads a book, like one who watches by a sick-bed. After a while, he looks again into the mirror. She is gone. The mirror reflected faithfully what his room presented, and nothing more.*

*Resolving that if she returned, she should not at least be scared by the skeleton, he gets up and removes that and several other articles of questionable appearance into a recess by the side of the hearth, whence they could not possibly cast any reflection into the mirror;*

*Cosmo throws on his cloak and rushes out of the room (e.g., down into the audience from the stage steps) LIGHTS UP on audience aisle, as Cosmo is on a lonely walk and passes through the back of the auditorium and disappears. LIGHTS FADE*

## SCENE 3

*LIGHTS UP on room. Cosmo is restlessly standing in front of the mirror. LIGHTS are amber, with the sunset. SFX CHURCH BELL announcing the hour of six. PRINCESS enters again and lies on the couch. Cosmo clasps his hands, wringing them in admiration, frustration.*

###### SONG: OH LADY, LADY

###### COSMO

###### Oh lady lady lady lady:

###### So far away and still so near

###### I can see the beauty of your smile

###### I can feel each single tear

###### Are you just an image?

###### Or are you real

###### If just an image, you make me feel…

###### Oh, I don’t know…

###### Oh lady lady lady lady

###### In your array, but I fear

###### I stand here mutely, in denial.

###### You’re my ideal

###### In your saddened visage.

###### I make appeal

###### Did we meet in eons past?

###### Where time is naught and ages last

###### Spirits cling to what was asked

###### Fulfilling others’ hearts’ desires

###### Did we live where faith amassed

###### Where hope has grown and love is vast?

###### And now our lives have been recast

###### That overcomes our hearts on fire.

###### Oh lady, lady, lady, lady

###### far away and still so near

###### I can see the beauty of your smile

###### I can feel each single tear

###### Are you just an image?

###### Or are you real

###### If just an image, you make me feel…

###### Oh, I don’t know…

###### Did we meet in eons past?

###### Where time is naught and ages last

###### Spirits cling to what was asked

###### Fulfilling others’ hearts’ desires

###### Can you love one from another age

###### Another life, another page?

###### Are you just a picture in a crystal cage?

###### A figure painting, cold image

(LIGHTS fade.

## SCENE 4

*(Cosmo and Hans are “hanging out” in the town square sipping drinks at a bistro. They’ve been there chatting for some time. There are a few pedestrians about, including a couple of attractive women.)*

HANS

(looking appreciatively at one attractive woman. He sighs.)

###### Oh lady lady lady lady:

###### So far away and yet so near

###### I can see the beauty of your smile

###### In Shakespeare’s terms, one who beguiles

###### (sighs)

###### One with whom I’d walk the aisle…

COSMO

###### (ignoring him)

###### You know I’m an expert

###### And won the awards

###### I need to express

###### And practice my best

###### And make some money: I’m poor.

###### To all of the students

###### I’m glad to teach sword

###### I now have a life

###### Not afraid to get knifed

###### By barons or dandy or lord

###### So what do you think?

###### I’ll buy you a drink

###### As you contemplate giving your word!

###### HANS

###### (back to reality)

###### Haha, no need to think!

###### But I’ll be taking your drink

###### And the others will hear of your word!

###### Thirty groschen per lesson

###### Maybe more for each session

###### Any less for you would be absurd!

###### Then maybe now?

###### Please show me how

###### You do that slight twist with your bow

###### Or tricks that you know

###### Your knowledge on me, please bestow!

I’ll pay you right now!

COSMO

What? You don’t want a practice sword?

These are sharp!

###### HANS

###### I’m sure I’ll never get near you!

###### And you’re too good to cut me!

*(MUSIC UP) Hans and Cosmo courtesy and bow and draw their swords to salute each other. They engage and Cosmo disarms him easily within the first two moves. Hans is amazed and they do it again in slow motion as Cosmo shows him the particular move. Hans is successful and he gives him the money.*

*In the following montage, this scene is repeated as new students come from OFFSTAGE this time with wooden practice swords (Cosmo picks one up from the first student), each to salute, engage, “talk” and exchange money. Clearly Cosmo is popular and successful in his new endeavor.*

*Finally, one antagonist comes out: it is VON STEINWALD, a brute of man. Cosmo hesitates as VON STEINWALD comes at him with brute force, with a real sword and no finesse. He barely misses being skewered as VON STEINWALD clearly is less there for a lesson than as a bully but Cosmo parries easily with his wooden sword.*

###### VON STEINWALD

###### Nicely done, my good sir!

###### You’re better than all that I have heard!

###### Nothing personal, I hope.

###### I heard you were good

###### And even with wood, I had no chance of getting near you.

###### Come, now, what do you think?

###### Am I good, or do I stink?

###### Even in our short little parry

###### You know the skills that I can carry.

###### COSMO

###### (deep breath)

Are you sure?

It takes more than simple desire

To take critique without ire

As your teacher, I’m no liar

Your strength and force and passion fire

Are plentiful and deep and from its source.

To retain the facts in due course

That your teachers correct and your habits deflect

And match up finesse with your force

###### (Von Steinwald nods)

###### Well…

###### In my professional view

###### Your…”acquired” technical skills are few

###### But you’re strong and your strength

###### Can outlast a long battle at length.

###### You shouldn’t attack him with brutishness

###### Confront your opponent with cunning finesse.

###### What does he see?

###### What do you know?

###### You have to examine the skills of your foe.

###### VON STEINWALD

###### (clearly insulted but eager to learn; BEAT)

###### I understand; it’s certainly true

###### Sometime strength hasn’t a clue

###### I’d like to know more nimbleness:

###### A weakness I’d like to address.

###### While strength is a treasure,

###### The outcome is measured

###### Where all of the strength is wanting.

###### The winning is pleasure

###### I can win at my leisure

###### If craftiness, stealth come with drawing.

###### He hesitates but sheathes his sword as Cosmo tosses him a wooden one.

###### COSMO

###### Good; a lesson well earned.

###### Now let us see if your body has learned.

###### First, I require a count up to ten.

###### After I start us, only when I say “when.”

###### (BEAT)

###### En garde!

MUSIC UP. They salute and Von Steinwald laboriously counts to ten, Cosmo waiting. They go at it and in a parody of Hans’ lesson, stop, work through, talk and pay.

## SCENE 5

*LIGHTS UP. The room has made a miraculous change. Besides removing the macabre décor, His extra money has purchased lavish furnishings. He is in the process of unpacking and placing new items: two screens of Indian fabric, a couple of paintings reflecting country scenes, a nicer dining set and finally, an elegant couch for the lady to lie upon, in the corner where his bed had formerly stood; he has converted it into a rich boudoir.*

*The Princess enters and looks about her: she is surprised and even shocked at the change. She smiles wistfully. She looks closely at the paintings and is clearly pleased and impressed. But it doesn’t last long, and sadly, again buried her face in the pillows of her couch.*

*One evening, as he stands gazing on his treasure, she shows an expression of hope, and love, aware through his ministrations that there is love attending her through the room. This night she is dressed in an evening costume, resplendent with diamonds. But her beauty outshines her costume.*

DUET

###### Can you love someone from another age

###### Another lifetime, another page?

###### Are you just a picture in a crystal cage?

###### Just a figure painting, cold image

###### PRINCESS

###### It seems to me that you can be

###### Loving as much as the next man.

###### But now, I must go…

*She leaves, out the door.*

*During the following song, he does the following: He opens the secret drawer, takes out his books of magic, lit his lamp, and made notes. Then he replaced his books.*

*He clears the centre of the room; draws a circle of red on the floor, around the spot where he stands; writes in the four quarters mystical signs and numbers. Finished, he rises: the church clock strikes seven; Stepping carefully from the circle, he puts a small brazier into its center.*

SONG: I MUST BE STRONG, I MUST BE BOLD!

COSMO

(reasoning with himself)

###### Let us think through this logically.

###### The mirror is enchanted: that much is clear

###### I have the knowledge to break in magically

###### I know she is real and wants to be here

###### But her bondage restrains her most tragically.

###### (Feverishly working)

###### My books! My works!

###### They’re all right there!

###### I have to find it automatically, diligently

###### We leave nothing to chance, no fear

###### The mirror’s spell by demon alone

###### Can be stopped by power unknown

###### A stronger power than that of the glass

###### Can only make my lady pass

###### A spell unlawful to all that’s holy

###### Is still the stronger by love atoning

###### It’s my excuse, may God forgive me

###### (But are ends justified as Goodness lives?)

###### Never mind!

###### That old witch instills such terror

###### Just by my buying the enchanted mirror

###### Is nothing to the spell now wrought

###### The powers unleashed that I’ve been taught!

###### She must be real!

###### She must be real!

###### That old hag knew it!

###### She must be real!

###### I know! I feel it!

###### The spell that trapped her in the mirror

###### That evil hag, I see much clearer

###### My stronger spell can make her nearer

###### My skill, my will, by trial and error!

###### She must be real!

###### She must be real!

###### And now this young man knows it!

###### She must be real

###### She loves! She feels!

###### The mirror has her in its hold

###### That antique mirror ‘twas bought and sold

###### Worth more to me than any gold

###### And now, (beginning the spell chant) “in spite,

###### Of power and might

###### Of demon fright

###### On edge of night

###### Pow’r of malice,

###### Pow’r of spite,”

###### (out of spell chant)

###### Praying now that I am right!

(spell chant)

###### With inner sight

###### And holy Light!

###### That antique mirror ‘twas bought and sold

###### Worth more to me than any gold

###### I must be strong! I must be bold!

He hesitates as he gets out a taper and lights it from one of the candelabras.

COSMO

(sotto voce)

She must!

She must!

*He then set fire to its contents of charcoal, and while it burns up, opens the window and sits on the window seat. SFX: THUNDER/LIGHTNING. LIGHTS AMBER to PURPLE as he waits.*

*The lady enters and, just as she had appeared the first time, reluctant, slow, and stately, glides in the lady. She is dressed in the linen bed dress as if time has passed. Cosmo trembles; and when, turning, she revealed a countenance worn and wan, as with sickness or inward trouble, he feels as if he dares not proceed. But the longing to speak to her, to know that she hears him, to hear from her one word in return, becomes so unendurable, that he suddenly and hastily resumes his preparations.*

###### COSMO

###### I must be strong!

###### I must be bold!

*Soon the charcoal glows. He sprinkles upon it the incense and other substances which he had compounded, and steps within the circle, turning his face from the brazier and towards the mirror.*

###### COSMO

###### (raising his hands, tremulous voice, afraid of what he’s actually doing)

(spell chant)

###### Oko jyambo fletlass pass

###### Asante joini safari lass

###### Amor esper la noche glass

###### Shigata ga nai di moche sass

*The lady rises and walks uneasily to and fro in her room.*

###### COSMO

###### Solo deo, kleine earl

###### Du zu machte, snakker de verld

*Suddenly she sees him for the first time. He is excited now. She draws close to her side of the mirror, just as if his eyes had fascinated her. She puts her hands up flat against it. Now eyes meet eyes. Cosmo is distracted for the moment; LIGHTNING flashes in response and there is a sudden CRACK. It is very close).*

###### COSMO

###### (distracted and wondering, out of spell)

###### She is real!

###### She is real!

###### She lives!

###### (Now, with power, back into spell chant)

###### Horatio’s blundered philosophy

###### Can only see where world can see

###### And not for wondrous things of thee

###### But come to me if thou truly be!

Suddenly as if forced, the lady *turned and walks out of the door of her reflected chamber. A moment after she entered his room physically and present, soaking wet. Forgetting all his precautions, he jumps from the charmed circle, and kneels before her. There she stands, the living lady of his passionate visions, alone beside him, in a thundery twilight, and the glow of a magic fire.*

###### PRINCESS

###### Why did you bring a poor maiden through the rainy streets alone?

###### COSMO

###### Because I am dying for love of you;

###### but I only brought you from the mirror there.

###### PRINCESS

###### (looking at the mirror)

###### Ah, the mirror! (BEAT)

###### Alas! I am a slave while that mirror lies

###### Upon the wall of your apartment rise.

###### But wasn’t the power of your spells to give

###### It was love for me whose power will live

###### Beyond the spell you thought was strong

###### The good will win, when evil is strong

###### The spell you made had no measure

###### To summon the greatest virtual treasure.

*(LIGHTS dim as the sun sets. There is flickering and a distant SOUND OF THUNDER.)*

COSMO

(surprised)

You can love me, then?

###### PRINCESS

###### I do not know: I cannot tell,

###### so long as I am bewildered with enchantments.

###### Do I love you because your charms

###### Solely wanted me in your arms

###### Or do I love because your sacrifices

###### Work on me and thus suffice

###### To show how powerful and how weak

###### This love you have, that joy you seek:

###### I want to love with final breath

###### To love, but wanting so, to weep to death;

###### I think you love me, though I do not know

But…

*Cosmo rises from his knees.*

COSMO

###### I love you as

###### I do not know

###### For since I have loved you

###### There has been nothing else for me to do.

He seized her hand: she withdrew it.

SONG: BREAK THE MIRROR!

PRINCESS

###### No, better not

###### I am in your spell

###### And so I may not.

###### Such love would be false

###### But who can tell?

###### (Bursting into tears)

###### Cosmo, if you love me, set me free

###### Break the mirror!

###### It may not be, that I won’t see you

###### Break the mirror!

###### COSMO

###### But…but I won’t see you …

###### Will I?

###### PRINCESS

###### But if you love me, can’t you see?

###### The only way to set me free

###### Is take that gruesome mace

###### And smash the mirror in that place

###### And break the glass upon its face

###### Please won’t you please…

###### COSMO

###### But I can’t bear that total loss

###### And you don’t understand the tremendous cost

###### Of what it took to bring you here

###### So you can look, can see me, dear

###### The better so to bring you near

###### Please, can’t you please…

###### 

###### PRINCESS

###### Cosmo, if you love me set me free!

###### Break the mirror!

###### It may not be; I may not see you

###### Ever again!

###### But break the mirror!

###### Please, can’t you please…

###### COSMO

###### But I won’t see you

###### Will I? Will I? Will I?

###### PRINCESS

###### I don’t know.

###### (INSTR)

###### We may never meet again.

(Not yet pure in love, he hesitates.)

###### COSMO (in agony)

###### I cannot bear losing you

###### I know I’ll lose you

###### Beyond that place

###### Do I care for your life

###### For the freedom that you ask

###### Break the mirror?

###### It’s a small enough task

###### So can I do it

###### It’s the freedom you ask

###### Cosmo, break the mirror!

###### I must sacrifice myself

###### Like one other who did it for love

###### Though he died himself

###### It was others that he thought of!

###### So how can I do any less,

###### Lest I keep her hostage

###### I would be her jailor kept in bondage

###### Loving far, far less

###### For my own childish selfishness?

###### Cosmo, break the mirror!

###### PRINCESS (crying out)

###### Ah! he doesn’t love me.

###### He doesn’t even love me

###### As I may love him;

###### I care more for his love

###### Than for the freedom I ask.

###### Break the mirror!

###### It’s a small enough task

###### And you cannot do it

###### For the freedom I ask

###### Cosmo, break the mirror!

###### Even if you die yourself

###### Can you not do it for love

###### Can you think of another

###### I love you through your spell

###### And the future, who can tell?

###### Do you love enough to lose me?

###### No matter what we do to choose me?

###### Will I love you more or less

###### If you choose me or your childish selfishness?

###### Cosmo, break the mirror!

*He seizes the sword by the steel scabbard and stands before the mirror; he pauses for the shortest moment, then swings the blade. The blade slips out and strikes the wall as he overbalances. At that moment, a terrible CLAP OF THUNDER and LIGHTNING explodes in the very room beside them; He is thrown against the wall and knocked out. BLACKOUT. BEAT: LIGHTS UP. SFX FADING THUNDER. Cosmos comes to. The mirror and the Princess are gone. He realizes that the magic he had conjured up backfired and deprived him of his mirror and its Princess. He rushes out the door.*

*Into the old shop*.

COSMO

Where is it? Have you seen it?

OLD WOMAN

Seen what? (with an impish grin)

COSMO

###### The mirror!

###### It’s gone…it’s been…stolen!

OLD WOMAN

(Breaks into a nasty sneer, but says)

What? Stolen?

Who would want it badly enough for that?

## SCENE 6

WEEKS LATER.

*Cosmo is at a high society party, wandering about, listening to every stray word that he could catch, in the hope of a revelation. As he approached some ladies who were talking quietly in a corner, one said to another:*

LADY MARGUERITE

Have you heard of the strange illness

Of the Princess von Hohenweiss?

LADY URSULA

###### Yes.

###### She has been ill for more than a year

###### It is sad for so fine a creature

###### To have such a terrible malady.

###### She was better for some weeks,

###### But recently the attacks have returned

###### Accompanied with more suffering than ever

###### It is altogether an inexplicable story.”

LADY MARGUERITE

Is there a story?

LADY URSULA

It is said that she gave offence

To an old woman of trust in the family

Who disappeared after giving some threats

This peculiar illness followed soon after.

But the strangest part is the loss

Of an ancient looking glass

Which stood in her house

Which she constantly used.

Cosmo responds accordingly and rejoins the party. He soon runs into his old classmate HANS.

HANS

Have you seen Steinwald lately?

COSMO

No, I have not seen him for some time.

He is almost a match for me at the rapier

Maybe he thinks he needs no more lessons.

HANS

I wonder what has become of him.

I want to see him very much

He owes me.

Let me see

The last time that I saw him

He was coming out of that

Old antique shop where we looked at armor once.

But that is fully three weeks ago

And I haven’t seen him since.

###### COSMO

###### (to himself)

###### Von Steinwald!

###### Not he!

###### Anybody but he!

###### A man without reason, brains or sense

###### May be someone you can’t argue with

###### Yet still you cannot blame that one

###### Whom God made: he has no clue!

###### Can’t think beyond, all said and done.

###### He can’t break the mirror when moment’s due!

###### But someone playing with intrigue

###### Whose evil heart is beyond my league

###### Certainly, he is the last to break the mirror

###### The last to want to get her nearer

###### But just content to watch her fear

###### And soaking in her beauty, of that I’m well aware…

###### I cannot tell my old friend, Hans

###### That Steinwald is the worst of friends

###### And he will watch in potent lust

###### A voyeur beyond idea of trust

###### To watch his bird trapped in a cage.

###### For weeks, and years and coming age.

###### She will ask to break the mirror

###### He’ll refuse, to keep her body nearer.

###### He’ll not listen to her requests

###### But gaze on her, is all, I guess.

## SCENE 7

(Inside Von Steinwald’s house. DANCE MUSIC. There is a party and Cosmo enters by the door.

###### BUTLER

###### Sir, your card, please.

###### (Cosmo just hands him his cloak.)

###### COSMO

###### You will find everything in order.

###### BUTLER

###### (nonplussed)

###### Uh, well, uh, lord,

###### This is most irregular

COSMO pushes by him. Butler stares after him open mouthed. A female SERVER, without taking a break, pushes his mouth closed and moves on. He shrugs and goes OSR to place the cloak in the closet. Cosmo continues to walk nonchalantly, but aims constantly toward the MIRROR, now placed in Von Steinwald’s house, far SL. Von Steinwald intercepts him.

###### VON STEINWALD

###### Why, Cosmo, you’re looking peaked!

###### I never took you for one

###### Whom simple disease has weakened

###### I heard you were sick:

###### It’s why you didn’t get a letter

###### To my little soire; I hope you are better

###### COSMO

###### (discovered)

###### Yes. Yes. Don’t worry, I’m fine.

###### As you can see, I came anyway;

###### I hope you don’t mind

###### My background, pedigree

###### By royal decree

###### A prestige well known, and greatly refined

###### Will bring to this party, one who is hearty

###### Who brightens the dullness here; that you will find

###### VON STEINWALD

###### (offended)

###### My good Sir!

###### Do I take you to mean

###### It’s not worth being seen

###### In my little abode;

###### Why would you goad me

###### Really! You think I wouldn’t mind?

###### COSMO

###### (mollifying; his detestation had got the better of him and he has more important things in mind. He bows formally.)

###### Far be it from me, to rail on the host

###### It was nothing more than a partyer’s boast.

###### I assure you, Von Steinwald, my intent

###### Was a joke. That’s all that I meant.

###### VON STEINWALD

###### Well, I suppose

###### But such a sense of humor, as far as it goes,

###### Has much better places to be expressed as it shows;

###### A bar or a tavern,

###### With tolerant manner

###### Than under the banner

###### Of an aristocrat’s manor

###### It’s something that you…or anybody should know.

###### COSMO

###### Yes, yes, I should.

###### Haha, I do the best that I could

###### My humor is often called subtle at best,

###### And annoying at most; I’m cursed or I’m blessed!

###### (looking at the mirror behind Von Steinwald and and trying to maneuver around him. He pretends to examine the wood work. And conversantly change the subject.)

###### Now that odd-looking thing

###### You know…with the wooden etching

###### It’s ancient and old, not worth two, three groschen

###### What, on earth, is it doing here?

###### (he edges closer, his hand under his coat)

###### VON STEINWALD

###### (suspicious and moving closer to Cosmo, who moves away from him)

###### Stay away from that!

###### I mean…

###### It’s, it’s an…

###### …old family heirloom

###### Discovered at last

###### In a dark, black room

###### From out of the past

###### Of a…country house shack

###### Kept safe by our squire

###### Lest others know and until we inquired.

###### Such value it has

###### Sentimental at best

###### It was kind of him watching out,

###### At our behest.

Cosmo has taken out a hammer and rushes the mirror. Von Steinwald knows what he is about: none better. He is in time, as Cosmo was too soon in his action. He intercepts him and grabs his arm with the hammer: the partyers go silent and stare at the violence. Von Steinwald pushes him away, with his back to the mirror.

###### VON STEINWALD

###### (shouting)

###### Not the mirror!

###### (Recovers himself, speaking loud enough and self-righteously to convince the partyers)

###### What in God’s name are you thinking?

###### What kind of wine were you drinking?

###### What’s with the obsession that you possess

###### With this mirror; it’s nothing, nothing I profess!

###### You come and sneak into my lorded fief

###### Without an invitation, sir, just on belief

###### In your position in society’s ladder;

###### Good sir, you have passed beyond commoners’ manners!

###### COSMO

###### God knows you better than these people do

###### And what kind of magic; what kind of voodoo

###### Lies in that mirror that I want to break

###### For the lady’s sanity, for goodness’ sake!

###### You’re not the chivalrous, honorable knight

###### But a selfish pervert in cruelty delight.

###### The boor you are, the cad, the lout

###### That is what this man is about!

Cosmo is still determined to do the job and goes at the mirror again. Von Steinwald intercepts him and lunges with the sword. Cosmo avoids it, steps back and with no other choice, switches the hammer to his left hand and pulls his sword in response. They go at it until Von Steinwald runs the sword into Cosmo’s side. He gasps and Von Steinwald pulls back, initially shocked along with the partyers. Cosmo drops his sword and staggers to the mirror, Von Steinwald follows and grabs the hammer hand. They wrestle, Cosmos starting to drip blood on the floor, they get closer and closer to the mirror, Cosmo takes a wild swing at it in the one chance that Von Steinwald loses grip and…and… BLACKOUT.

LIGHTS UP on a different part of the stage. It is a lofty, silent chamber in another part of the city and Princess lies, looking dead. Her hands are crossed over her breast, and no breathing disturbed their repose.

LISA

She has lain so for an hour.

CONSTANCE

###### This cannot last long, a fading flower.

###### LISA

###### How much thinner she has grown

###### Within the last few weeks that I have known!

###### If she would only speak, and tell me what she suffers

###### I would gladly hear her like a mother

###### I think she has visions in her dreams

###### But nothing I can say or ask or scheme

###### Can bring the answer to these trances.

###### CONSTANCE

###### Does she ever speak about her collapses?

###### LISA

###### I have never heard her say.

###### They say she walks sometimes,

###### And disappeared for a whole night

###### Returning drenched with rain

###### And almost dead with stress and fright.

###### But even then she would give no story

###### Of literal tale or allegory.

They jump as the Princess suddenly writhes on her couch. She struggles to speak and then suddenly sits up and screams, still with her eyes closed.

###### PRINCESS

###### Cosmo!

Then she collapses again. Then with a wild cry, she jumps up.

###### PRINCESS

###### I am free! I am free!

###### He broke the mirror!

###### He broke the mirror!

Then she throws herself back on the couch, and sobs. She gets up and paces wildly up and down the room, with gestures of mingled delight and anxiety. Then turning to her motionless attendants:

###### PRINCESS

###### Quick, Lisa, my cloak and hood!

###### I must go to him, as I should.

###### Come on, make haste, girl!

###### You may come with me, if you will.

She rushes out the door, followed by Lisa. LIGHTS BLACKOUT ON STAGE.

LIGHTS UP BLUE (MOONLIGHT) ON AUDIENCE AND STEPS. Cosmo staggers down the audience aisle and collapses halfway down. He gets up and drags himself to the steps to the stage (high enough for the final scene). He falls again on the steps, never to get up. By this time, the Princess should be in the back in time to rush down to the stage, searching frantically. The princess runs, but Lisa cannot keep up.

###### COSMO

###### Are you free, lady?

###### The mirror is broken

###### Are you free?

She turns; and there, leaning on the parapet of the bridge, is Cosmo, in a splendid dress, but with a white and quivering face.

###### PRINCESS

###### Cosmo!

###### I am free from that hell!

###### I’m your servant forever.

###### I love you still, without the spell!

###### I was coming to you now.

COSMO

And I to you,

For Death made me bold

But I could get no further.

To you think that I’ve atoned?

Do I love you?

Just a little?

Truly?

PRINCESS

###### Ah, I know now that you love me, my Cosmo;

###### But what do you say about death?

He does not reply but looked down at his hand pressed against his side. She opens his overcoat: the blood wells from between the fingers. She flings her arms around him with a faint bitter wail. When Lisa finally comes up, she finds her mistress kneeling above a wan dead face, which smiles on in the spectral moonbeams.

###### SONG: SACRIFICE IN LOVE

###### PRINCESS

###### (INTRO) It was what I asked

###### I knew not what my love could be

###### The love you bore that sacrificed

###### It paid the price

###### To determine what my love should be.

###### (ARIA)

###### In spite of our deserving

###### There’s grace in our preserving

###### And sacrifice and only prove the love

###### But why is death unswerving

###### A payment best observing

###### The final debt to prove the final love.

###### Pure in love, a sacrifice

###### To prove he loves, must suffice

###### But now there’s nothing I can give him

###### But to remember and forgive him

###### Pure in love, the only price

###### It proved my love, it must suffice

###### Maybe God in all He lives in,

###### Sees in us a growing heaven

###### And only found in grace can I survive.

###### Too many times, we don’t trust in God

###### To give us things we think that we deserve

###### Too many crimes, that we applaud

###### The things we keep, that we possess

###### To hold ourselves, to our distress

###### That we behold, I must confess

###### To fade away, a vast façade….

###### Pure in love, a sacrifice

###### To prove he loves, must suffice

###### But now there’s nothing I can give him

###### But to remember and forgive him

###### Pure in love, the only price

###### It proved my love, it will suffice

###### Maybe God in all He lives in,

###### Sees in us a growing heaven

###### And only found in grace can I survive.

###### I can survive

###### If only for his love,

###### If only for his sake,

###### I must go on

###### I must survive

LIGHT FTB.

THE END