

Albert Giraud

Pierrot the Narcissist: A Winter Dream-- *Comedia dell'Arte*

(*Pierrot Narcisse: Songe d'hiver*-- *Comédie fiabesque*. Brussels: Veuve Monnom. 1887.)

Working Translation

Gregory C. Richter
grichter@truman.edu
Truman State University

ALSO SEE: Giraud, Albert. 2001. PIERROT LUNAIRE. Trans. Gregory C. Richter. Kirksville: Truman State University Press. [French, German, and English]

Dedication

To Iwan Gilkin

Now it has been three and a half years
Since I wrote *Pierrot Lunaire*.
I remain your friend:
It's really extraordinary.

That is why -- since it is my fate,
Captive of rhyme and number,
To have Pierrot beside me
Like a shadow, until my dying day --

These frail verses, all white because of him,
These verses where I have kissed frost,
Far from the baseness of nowadays,
And all the dear eyes that make me live;

This poem, sad and mocking,
Which leaps to a fantastic rhythm,
To the fantastic rhythm of a heart
That would be a Basque drum;

This sweet lily of winter, pale and pure,
A flower of pain and of joy!
This lily of silence and azure,
This lily of moon, I send to you

With a single gesture, proud and trembling --
Despite the asses that will bray
At a Pierrot clothed in white
Who resembles me like a brother.

A.G.

Dramatis Personae

PIERROT, unemployed
HARLEQUIN, nephew of Cassander
CASSANDER, uncle of Harlequin; senator of Bergamo
MEZZETIN, hypochondriac; friend of Pierrot
FIRST PRIEST, friend of Pierrot
SECOND PRIEST, friend of Pierrot
THIRD PRIEST, friend of Pierrot
SOMMELIER
ELIANE, niece of Cassander

Pierrot in modern clothing. Evening attire: white satin. Very high neck. White gibbus hat. Coat with white cape. 25 years old.

Harlequin in a black and white leotard. 16 years old.

Cassander in senator's clothing. 60 years old.

Mezzetin in a fur coat. 30 years old.

Eliane in a gown the color of dead leaves; black hair. 23 years old.

The three priests in purple satin.

Scene I

Bergamo. A night during Carnival. The interior of a large café, decorated with mirrors and gilding. Groups of masked revelers here and there. Distant strains of music compete.

FIRST PRIEST:

Hé! Waiter! Some coffee.

SECOND PRIEST:

Some chartreuse!

THIRD PRIEST:

Let's drink!

Pierrot, go up to the altar -- here is my ciborium --
And sing Alleluia, Pierrot, and bless us:
Sing! The busboys will bend their knees.

SECOND PRIEST:

Well, what are you waiting for?

FIRST PRIEST:

Sing, fulfill your promise!

O! Fie on the priest in white who's forgotten his mass.

THIRD PRIEST:

The church is beautiful. Look! The incense hangs dreaming in the
air,
The costly incense of kirsch, kümmel, and bitters.
I discern the taste of Latin prayers
In the flowery hymns that the Benedictines
Murmur softly into their pious bottles.

FIRST PRIEST:

Sing, or we shall think Pierrot is getting old!

SECOND PRIEST:

Sing! It is the mad and divine hour, O my pint!
The hour that dances, the harmonious hour that rings
Like a silver bell on a spaniel's neck.
Sing! The hour is mad.

FIRST PRIEST:

Some day you'll be alone.

THIRD PRIEST:

Sing! The hour is frail and full of gavottes.
Look at these bottles: they look so devote!
A wine cellar, for us, is a very sweet and blessed
Monastery, unctuous and fervent.
The chartreuse has the air of a penitent woman
Who wishes to convert you, and whose flesh tempts you.
It has the obscure charm of a forbidden love,
Sugar and velour, impious, with something of damnation in it.
We drink! It's like kissing an abbess...
One feels the need to hurry and confess --
To receive absolution, and start over!

SECOND PRIEST:

He doesn't hear us. What can he be thinking of?

THIRD PRIEST:

Make a sign to the bar! Sleeping melodies
Will escape for us from the kümmels and the crèmes de menthe,
And the rich plainchant of the liqueurs
Will warm our hearts like a great organ.

FIRST PRIEST:

I think he's corked up!

SECOND PRIEST:

Melancholy Pierrot!

THIRD PRIEST:

Pierrot is becoming an atheist!

FIRST PRIEST:

He's no longer a Catholic!
And on a Carnival night!

SECOND PRIEST:

Unbeliever! Apostate!
It's a crime against thirst! It's a crime against the state!

THIRD PRIEST:

It's awful! Deaf to the advice of absinthe!

FIRST PRIEST:

To the Diet, Luther!

SECOND PRIEST:

Get thee hence! Father Hyacinth!
In place of a swan we have only a cygnet.
You who are defrocked of joy, to the door!

THIRD PRIEST:

To prison!

FIRST PRIEST:

Let us go! It's time: to judge this fossil
Let us join in council;
We shall abandon him to the secular authorities!
Hé, Sir Executioner!

SECOND PRIEST:
Sir Executioner!

SOMMELIER:
Yes, Sir!

THIRD PRIEST:
The two of you shall go, according to ecclesiastical custom,
To ask this impious heretic:
"Will you drink?": just once!

FIRST PRIEST (seizing Pierrot):
Will you drink?

THIRD PRIEST:
Twice!

SECOND PRIEST:
Will you drink?

THIRD PRIEST:
Thrice!

PIERROT (freeing himself):
Oh, release me! I've been
Drinking for hours, for hours, by the
Mouthful, for days, for a week.
I know nothing except that I'm drinking; I'm dead drunk!

FIRST PRIEST:
But you've drunk nothing! Nothing at all!

SECOND PRIEST:
Drunk! That's overstating the matter a bit!

PIERROT:
Don't you see? I tell you I'm drunk!

THIRD PRIEST:
He's drunk? From what?

SECOND PRIEST:
From what?

PIERROT:
From what? From the frost,
From this sudden winter, so lucid, so clear,
And from the wonderful transparency of the air!

SECOND PRIEST:

He's mad!

THIRD PRIEST:

Fit to be tied!

PIERROT:

I'm drunk, I tell you!

Drunk from the male winter, from the hail, from the dizziness
Of all this whiteness that dreams under the azure sky.

The chaste sky is greater, clearer, purer:

The very sound of my sonorous step on the asphalt

Inebriates me, takes my strength and exalts me.

Oh these bitter kisses of the wind in my hair!

My blood boils. I am beautiful. I know. I can. I wish it.

Strong perfumes dilate my nostrils;

Yet, head high and thrusting out my chest,

My brain paved with glorious projects,

Inspecting all the passers-by as a king does his subjects,

And lashing this servile race with my coat,

Impetuously I cross the city

And the countryside, all in celebration, with something

Manly and proud blowing behind me!

FIRST PRIEST:

If you want some winter, Pierrot, I recommend

The whipped champagne: winter in a bottle;

The only one that smiles at me!...

PIERROT:

Oh! The snow smiles at me!

It has something of a mysterious spirit

That seems an exquisite paradox of nature.

It is the fantasy, it is the flourish

Of this banal world, uniform and sickly:

The snow resembles me; I am its cousin!

SECOND PRIEST:

The snow is your cousin? Well, that's a proud lineage.

We didn't know about this new relation!

THIRD PRIEST:

She is white; he is gray; the relation is clear!

Say "Aunt" to the moon!

FIRST PRIEST:

And "Uncle" to the winter!

THIRD PRIEST:

There, at the North Pole, have you no little sisters?

FIRST PRIEST:

Nor a mother-in-law with stalactites?

SECOND PRIEST:

To drink to their health, let's uncork these bottles!

PIERROT:

Your *conchetti* are heavy beside these snowflakes
Twirling and waltzing and singing!
Fall, ermine of the skies, on the cruel city,
Fall like forgiveness on these dull beings!
Cover them with candor, silence, and peace!
And when they are all sleeping their stupid sleep,
The page Flower-of-the-Winter will take limpid flight,
Far from their impure dream, toward the pale forest
Where the lilies of the eternal azure sky, secretly,
Will weep softly, one by one, upon his head.
And to console him for your stupid drunkenness,
Through the branches of the old shivering elms
The moon will incline its fabulous rays,
And my heart will sing in those ivory flutes!

FIRST PRIEST:

For the last time, my friend, will you drink?
The mustard is starting to smell!
Drink, after all, or I'll...

PIERROT:

You insist?
Very well, yes! I'll drink. The biggest glass!
Clarence, your barrel! Your boot, Bassompierre!
A glass as musical and deep as a well!
(He rushes outdoors and returns with his wine glass full of snow.)

FIRST PRIEST:

Hé! Waiter! Some Pomard!

SECOND PRIEST:

Holà! Boy! Some Nuits!

PIERROT:

No! But a wine stronger than all your infusions,
Sharp, bright, and cold as battle axes,
A wine the color of time, a wine the color of air.
This wine is the snow, and I'll drink to the winter!
(During this toast, enter Harlequin and Mezzetin.)

HARLEQUIN:

By my faith, this toast is the most gallant in the world,
But I'm not sure the winter will respond to it.
As for me, I'll drink to the spring, for I'm in love!

PIERROT (amazed):

In love!

THE PRIESTS:

He's mad!

MEZZETIN (with interest):

But no: he's feverish.

FIRST PRIEST:

Do you know where he gets this wonderful enthusiasm?
From the snow!

HARLEQUIN:

He's been drinking!

MEZZETIN:

Who knows? It's a miasm,
An unheard of malady, a new
Ailment of the stomach, the liver, or the brain.
Is it contagious?

PIERROT:

Not at all: have a seat.

MEZZETIN (thoughtful):

Is there a remedy?... Oh, Waiter! Some snow!

PIERROT:

It's no remedy!

MEZZETIN (changing his mind):

Oh, Waiter! Some kümmel!
It's just to warm me up, for I'm freezing.
As a remedy, alas, this kümmel is really weak!

PIERROT:

Alas! No, Mezzetin: I'm not sick at all.

HARLEQUIN:

Neither sick, nor mad, my friends! In love!
I know all about it. He's just like me: I'm happy,
I blush, I shiver, I feel my heart blossoming.
Love rises up within me as rosy as the dawn,
And I'm crazed by the flowers that will bloom tomorrow.
I'm in love. I shall love. It seems as though a
Mysterious and tender hand, frail and full of languor,
Grows weaker on my pensive forehead, caressing it,
And I fear I shall die of this sweetness.

MEZZETIN (observing Harlequin):

What the devil can Harlequin be sustaining himself with?
His eyes are trembling and his ears are pink.

FIRST PRIEST:

Pierrot drinks snow, and Harlequin grazes on roses!
Two new ways to starve!

HARLEQUIN:

Listen, Pierrot! I'm in love, I shall love!
My soul is melting in this reverie.
She is pure, she is fresh, she is a childlike
Field, the color of dreams and of morning,
A humid field, where the breath of thyme
And the deep perfume of crushed herbs
Scent with balm the laughing exile of my thoughts.
Tell me, Pierrot, my dear Pierrot, tell me why
Someone is there, so close to me, behind me,
Watching me, whose nocturnal eyes I can feel
Bewitching my flesh with taciturn kisses,
But whom I cannot see, and whose loving heart
Beats above my own, and comes obscurely,
Like a distant echo of the ocean swells,
To pacify itself and to extend itself, here, in my breast!
Your heart, is it not true, feels the same emotion?
You say nothing...Pierrot, I've offended you...

PIERROT (to Harlequin):

Be silent!

(aside)

This Harlequin disturbs me. In love. I envy him,
And his sweetness irritates me. It is as though Life
Were using this cruel child to besiege me.

(to Harlequin)

Be silent, Harlequin! Pierrot is the stranger;
The wanderer whom no one knows; the one who's
Miserly with his stormy, mad heart; the barbarian
Who cries at all that makes you laugh, who laughs
At all that makes you cry; a spirit,
A roguish and pensive light that vibrates
A bit higher than your love! Pierrot is free!
Speak to me no more, for you would offend me!

HARLEQUIN:

How you would love, Pierrot, if you but loved!
(Enter Cassander and Eliane)

CASSANDER:

Best greetings to all! What were you saying, and why this uproar?
Were you discussing politics?

HARLEQUIN:

Oh, no!

ELIANE (to Harlequin):

Good evening, my page!
Good evening, Pierrot! You've stopped speaking.
That's very bad. Gentlemen, do you know
That it's inconvenient? I might think
You were discussing me.

FIRST PRIEST:

It's a stupid story,
Madame. Mezzetin is ill, and complains
Of palpitations of the heart whenever his pitcher is not full,
But then he breathes not a word until it's empty.
Harlequin, your page, has become candid,
And sings sonnets worthy of a schoolboy
In love with his sweetheart. As for the gentleman
With the white visage, he eats snow
And drinks the health of the winter, of the frost -- what do I
know!
They are mad, arch-mad, double-mad, and counter-mad!!

CASSANDER:

Well, was there no more agreeable entertainment?

SECOND PRIEST:

The three of them are there, sad, defeated, lugubrious,
Like three heavy pedants, like sickly pawns.
Pierrot, white assistant of an undertaker, essence of an old man,
You'll be greeted like a hearse!

THIRD PRIEST:

Burier of joy, cupbearer of the shadows,
You'll make your way in a funeral procession!

FIRST PRIEST:

You resemble your white forebears
No more than a queen's son resembles a grocer's!

SECOND PRIEST (to Harlequin):

Like snakes, supple and fabulous,
The first Harlequins were less peaceful.
Their exquisite perfidy undulated and hissed,
And they were clothed with a flowering solar spectrum.
You, you are not their son: look at your costume!
You are not even a posthumous Harlequin!
No, you are not the son of the sons of the rainbow:
Your black and white raiment has an official air,
And I think, while bemoaning these austere colors,
Of some old chessboard sullied by notaries!
(Pierrot looks at himself in the mirror and cries out.)

HARLEQUIN:

Pierrot, what's the matter?

ELIANE:

Pierrot, are you suffering?

MEZZETIN:

What is it?

PIERROT (extending his hand toward the mirror):

There! There! Someone...

(He faints.)

MEZZETIN:
He's dead!

ELIANE (bending over Pierrot):
Oh, the strange,
Sweet, pale face!...

HARLEQUIN:
He's reviving.

CASSANDER:
A minor crisis...

ELIANE:
He is saved.

HARLEQUIN:
It's over.

FIRST PRIEST:
That sobers things up disagreeably.

CASSANDER:
Gentlemen, my niece and I --
To compensate for this moment of emotion --
Invite you all to come at eleven o'clock
To dine at our home tomorrow night.

FIRST PRIEST:
You'll need to die
Again more than once, Mezzetin!...

CASSANDER:
Agreed?

FIRST PRIEST:
Accepted!

SECOND PRIEST:
With all my heart!

CASSANDER:
You will be satisfied.

ELIANE:
Will you come, Mezzetin?

MEZZETIN:
It would be a great honor.

ELIANE:

Then bring Pierrot!
(to Harlequin)
If you wish to be loved,
Bring your Pierrot! Till tomorrow!

CASSANDER:
Till tomorrow!

Scene II

The avenue leading to Eliane's villa. A snowy landscape, with large frosty trees. Gusts of wind and clear stars.

PIERROT:
Am I still far? Oh, yes! So much the better! If this road
I'm walking on would go backward,
I would walk backward forever... It's snowing in droves,
The sky is as dark as an African, and the mad wind
Tousles my hair and bends me double, pressing its
Cold white lips passionately to my neck!
Like a wounded bird I beat the air with my sleeves,
And I'm afraid to arrive where I'm awaited.

(He advances a few paces.)

My fate will be determined tonight, and I feel less strong
Than before the cursed night of Carnival! I'm trembling.
Some distant danger threatens me...

(listening)

It seems that

Someone is saying very softly: "Pierrot, tell me why
Someone is there, so close to me, behind me,
Watching me, whose nocturnal eyes I can feel
Bewitching my flesh with taciturn kisses,
But whom"... I know no more. Harlequin has hurt me.
I fear that child: he'll be the death of me...

I smell roses beneath the snow... "a languor,

Grows weaker on my pensive forehead, caressing it!"

"Speak to me no more, for you would offend me!"

"How you would love, Pierrot, if you but loved."

Oh, this beautiful Harlequin, I think I envy him!

Harlequin, however, is only life, and youth... alas!

Nothing but that!

Nothing but that!...

HARLEQUIN (far off):
Tra la! La hi la! La ho la!

PIERROT:
Must I remain Pierrot, or cease to be him?
Why am I going forward? I am no longer my own master,
Yet I obey. Whom? I do not know.

HARLEQUIN (far off):
La ho la!

PIERROT:

It is youth. Nothing but that!
Should the most beautiful dream be disdained,
The naive pain of a young heart that bleeds?
To live and to dream? To dream and to live?
One must choose.

(He rings at Eliane's door.)

Scene III

Eliane's boudoir, the color of dying lilies. A cheval glass. The scent of amber lingers in the curtains. Harlequin is dancing.

HARLEQUIN:

La hi la! La ho la! Pierrot!

PIERROT:

You!

HARLEQUIN:

What a pleasure
To see you before the others!... My cousin
Will arrive soon: she is there, in the next villa,
And has asked me to entertain you while we wait.
My uncle is busy with his overseer:
He is tasting the wines for the fête,
And the preparations are making his head swim!

PIERROT (reserved):

You needn't wait on my account, Harlequin.

HARLEQUIN:

You're angry with me?
I've annoyed you...

PIERROT:

Not at all... I'm a bit nervous;

HARLEQUIN:

Really?

PIERROT:

But yes!

HARLEQUIN:

All the better!... Turn so I can see you!
Again! Your suit is beautiful. Silk...
Cassander does not want me to dress like that.
He's ugly, isn't he, my uncle? He's as
Grumpy and unpleasant as my schoolmaster.
...Is it bad, what I just said?

PIERROT:

Very bad, you thoughtless boy,

For you could very well look like him one day!

HARLEQUIN:

Me!

PIERROT:

You!

HARLEQUIN:

Me, look like Cassander, an old man!

PIERROT:

The flame is Harlequin! Cassander is the ashes!
The most beautiful Harlequin will make the coldest Cassander.
Beautiful page, beardless and blond, charming little rascal,
Some day you'll also have your Harlequin,
To whom you'll preach abstinence and fasting.
In your eyes, he'll commit the grave error of being young,
And in his, you'll commit the grave error of being old!

HARLEQUIN:

Grow old! To die a bit every day!
I'd rather grow old all at once through a gunshot!

PIERROT:

Bravo! Bravissimo! Well said! But Columbine,
But Eliane? But...

HARLEQUIN:

But she will love me
Before!

PIERROT:

Drat! And if she doesn't!

HARLEQUIN:

If she doesn't? She will wait,
Beneath the elm!

PIERROT:

Beneath the willow!

HARLEQUIN:

She's coming! I'll slip out!...
A handshake first!... Till the appointed hour!
...Long live Pierrot! Long live Harlequin! Long live us! Long
live everyone!
(He departs.)

(Enter Eliane; on her wrist is a parakeet attached by a little
silver chain.)

PIERROT:

Harlequin dances like a marionette pulled by a string.

I think he has wings on his light talons.
He's a storm of birds, joyous and fragile,
Sparkling and snowing and fusing together while he chatters.
He wouldn't bend a blade of grass while dancing.
Your cousin is becoming a young man, Madame.
He does not suspect it, but I believe in my soul
That your beautiful seagreen eyes have transformed him.

ELIANE:

Harlequin? That boy! That would be presumptuous.
That would really be impertinent, don't you think?

PIERROT:

But Madame,
If such a sentiment is impertinent, touché!
All my fellow citizens are impertinent.

ELIANE:

You are mistaken: not all of them are inconvenient
To this extent...

PIERROT:

Really?

ELIANE:

Your surprise is flattering!
I did not know you to be so complimentary.
My dear Sir, you are very gallant;
You would never be so rude,
Never in this fashion!

PIERROT:

Harlequin adores you,
He loves you, Madame, and knows of nothing else...

ELIANE:

Would you be so kind as to push this armchair forward?

PIERROT (obeying):

He speaks to you: his voice sings like a bullfinch
From the bottom of his soul, and when he gazes upon you,
His eyes bloom like flowers...

ELIANE:

Sir, be careful.
From this door there's a terrible draft.
Close it with a double turn...

PIERROT (same tone):

He loves you, I can read it
So well in his thoughts...

ELIANE (nervous):

Oh! The pleasant story

You're singing to me, Sir. I might think
You have come here to ask for my hand...

PIERROT (amazed):
Me, Madame?

ELIANE:
Wait! ...in the name of this boy.
Try to listen intelligently.

PIERROT:
But Madame, I...

ELIANE:
Are you working together?
You plead passionately for others, but when
It's for yourself, dear Sir, are you eloquent too?
You play the minuets of others well,
Too well; but now play me your own!
Your music, your own, must have its charms...
I'm listening...

PIERROT (dry):
Forgive me. I don't compose!

ELIANE (mincing):
What are you staring at, Sir? My ruche?
It is well made. My chemisette?

PIERROT:
The parakeet!

ELIANE:
What do you think of him?

PIERROT:
Adorable! Gold and fire.
A real ruby in flight... Oh! For him, it's a charming joy
To be perched on your finger like that...

ELIANE (with false laughter):
Do you envy his fate?

PIERROT:
No: he's on a chain!

ELIANE (more and more animated):
Marvelous, Pierrot! The trick is elegant,
Delicate, transparent, and finally I understand
The rebus!... You like perches without chains!
As for me, I don't much enjoy your riddles:
Who gives you the right to address me like this?
The perch does not need a frozen parakeet.
Do not oblige me to listen to this twaddle!

PIERROT (with an ironic salute):
You offer me the perch, but with the chains!

ELIANE:
You're conceited, Sir, and crude!
What did you expect to hear, and what have you understood?
I do not know you well. My uncle has invited you.
I am receiving you. We chat, we exchange pleasantries, and then,
quickly,
With a word, one sole word, Pierrot smiles
Advantageously, and supposes
That someone loves him, and this evening he will go through town
And show off his vile soul to all onlookers,
And tell them: "Eliane? She loves me, but as for me,
I don't love her!"

PIERROT (regarding Eliane for a long time):
Certainly not!
By my faith,
This incident must remain secret.
I shall be discrete if you are discrete.

ELIANE:
Discrete. Discrete. It's inexpressible!
I appreciate your kindness, Sir!
Your improvisation is no ordinary comedy.
You might call it "The Imaginary Lover"
And amuse us at our fête tonight!

PIERROT:
You'll have to be satisfied with "The Lover In Spite of Himself!"

ELIANE (eying Pierrot scornfully):
Are you sure, then, that I love you?

PIERROT (simply):
Yes, indeed!

ELIANE:
Who told you so?

PIERROT:
Hermione herself.
It's pure Racine! A great author!

ELIANE (forgetting herself):
Racine arranged by a counterfeiter!
Your play, Sir, could be booed and hissed.
Cassander is a purist; he adores his niece.
You'll agree that he'd have the right, if I wished,
To have you chased away by his valets
Like the vile insulter of women that you are --
With great blows of the broom upon your back!

PIERROT:

Very well then.

You love me, Eliane! ...Well? Where are your valets?

I'd really like to see them, and your brooms.

You never sweep?

ELIANE (running toward the door, then suddenly into Pierrot's arms):

I love you! I was mad!...

Forgive me: I have suffered so much! I am frivolous,

A coquette; I had never loved.

My soul was dry, my spirit was empty, my heart was cruel.

I was an inconstant and fickle Célimène.

To true love I remained a stranger,

And I laughed at the tears poured out for me,

But now I am another woman.

You will understand, you will come to the aid of

The conquered one, the miserable being

In whom you have made a supernatural lily bloom,

A lovely lily as white as snow and frost!

PIERROT:

I could love only a lily from the garden of the Moon,

Which would fade at your touch.

ELIANE:

Woe is me, alas, who loves you.

Since today, this cruel day when I saw you, I am

Another woman! I hate myself, I renounce myself!

Have pity! Have pity on me! All my irony

Is dead. It is through you that I have learned sweetness!

I wish to be both mistress and sister.

Have pity! Do not trample my heart! It is impious

To crush the one who abdicates herself, who atones for herself,

And who places her pride at your feet.

You can no longer leave my mournful thoughts.

You haunt me. You possess me. I no longer exist

But in you, through you, for you...

I have seen you pale, sad,

Suffering from the obscure malady of being unloved!

(The parakeet flies away.)

PIERROT (shaking his head):

Eliane reads wrong in a closed book.

ELIANE (beside herself):

Beat me, hurt me, but speak! Your silence

Is killing me. Oh! Take pity, see this heart thrusting itself,

Quivering, toward you like a drenched bird.

It bleeds, for bitter life has sullied it;

It bleeds, but this blood cleanses like a baptism.

Be kind, do not mock me: love the one who loves you.

Calm her, heal her with a cool and pure kiss!

Show her again, Pierrot, the light and the azure sky!
I love you! Hear me out: I know your suffering,
And I shall heal it. Let this hope
Flutter in my heart like a subtle perfume!
Isn't it true that you were suffering yesterday?
Isn't it true? Remember, Pierrot, the Carnival night...

PIERROT (aside):

I remember everything! Oh, that strange face,
Fraternal and sweet, resembling me!
Pensive and pale, the one who wished
To share my dreams and my melancholy!...
Would I see that face again if I loved another?
(to Eliane)
Forget me!
O poor soul in tumult! Forget me! This love
That transforms and illuminates you
Would become hatred the day I took pity!
Listen... This is the end of all intoxication,
And it would be the end of ours too, you see!
If I refuse, it is not at all because of virtue,
Pride, vanity, or ruse,
No...

ELIANE:

But why, then? Tell me why!

PIERROT:

From fear!

ELIANE:

From fear?

PIERROT:

The mad one, the mocker, I am
A coward before trials and before pain.
You know women very little, O woman three times woman!
Tomorrow we would be the talk of Bergamo,
Believe me. This beautiful love comes from feminine
Vanity: unlike the others, I have not come,
Lamentable and pitiful, to languish at your window.
Eliane, vanquished, has found her master.
Your coquettish soul leaps up at the affront,
And it is through vanity that you incline your head!
Vanity! Vanity! That's the whole story.
You would make me pay dearly for this victory,
And you would have vengeance, daily and in detail.
I fear the wind that blows across your fan.
It's the same one that blows across the mountain.
Signed: Gastibelza.

ELIANE (as if coming out a dream, and growing a bit calmer):

Poor Spanish love!

PIERROT:

You won't think about it again tomorrow when you awaken.

ELIANE:

Alas!

PIERROT:

Like the snow beneath the kisses of the sun
You'll awaken cold and rosy, amazed,
Saying: "I dreamed that I had given myself!"

ELIANE:

Thus, I'll forget you?

PIERROT:

Easily, and you'll laugh
At yourself and at me when you see me again.

ELIANE (pensive):

Perhaps...

PIERROT:

Your love was an *amourette*.
The wife of Pierrot must be a Pierrette.
Are you Pierrette?

ELIANE:

Alas!

PIERROT:

You are not of my blood.
Eliane!...

ELIANE:

But nevertheless, you hold the same rank
As we do, and your ancestors loved our ancestresses!

PIERROT:

But our ancestors died alone -- your ancestresses too --
Divided by the blood from which they sprang,
Punished for loving and matching one another!

ELIANE:

I can no longer understand you, Pierrot. You embarrass me!
Are you sure you are alive?

PIERROT (gravely):

Hear me! There exist two races
As old as the azure, as old as the light.
One is filled with force and reality,
Beautiful, luxuriant, heroic, enchanted
By the splendid banality of life.
This is the race of the happy!
The other is the race of dreamers

And those who, born beneath the sign of Saturn,
Have the rising of a star in their quiet heart!
This is the wild and sweet race of mockers
Who drag through the world a desire to be elsewhere;
A race which kills forever the chimerical desire
To live life to the fullest and observe it.
This is the race of those whose dull dreams
Die regretting that they have become reality!
One race is filled with joy, the other with envy;
One is from the sun, the other from the moon;
And it would be better to join the antelope and the shark
Than the sons of Pierrot and the daughters of Eliane!

ELIANE (smiling):

It seems true, alas, but not gallant,
And your transformation is really too violent!
Oh! Indeed, without harm to yourself, you could
Have chosen, to be fair, a more attractive animal!
The shark is a bit much!...
(She laughs.)

PIERROT (energetically):

Oh, this peel of laughter,
Sonorous, trembling, flying off with
Beating wings, like a loosed bird, toward the day,
This beautiful laugh, Eliane, shall carry your love away!

ELIANE (laughing more loudly):

This comparison seems less insolent.
The shark displeased me, but I like the aviary.
It shows a more noble style, and you have tact.

PIERROT:

Aviary. The more I think about it, the more it seems just the
right word!
You will not tarry in confirming the image,
For your soul is already filling itself with sweet branches;
There a dreaming dove is murmuring: "Harlequin."

ELIANE:

Harlequin? After you? No. It would be mean...

PIERROT:

He would be the wildest bird of the aviary!

ELIANE:

Harlequin? A child...

PIERROT:

And you will be proud,
Later, after many springs and summers,
When you are three or four times twenty!

ELIANE:

Perhaps... My God! I have lost my parakeet!
My parakeet!

PIERROT (looking for it):

There?

ELIANE:

No!

PIERROT:

Now I see him: perching
Up high. There! I have him!
(chaining the bird back onto Eliane's wrist)
From now on, speak softly
When uttering words he does not understand!

HARLEQUIN (from outside):

Eliane!

ELIANE:

We're waiting!...

PIERROT (with detached politeness):

Take my arm, Madame.

ELIANE (same tone):

With pleasure, Sir.

HARLEQUIN (entering):

Come! They've been asking for you all this time.
My uncle and our friends are there...

PIERROT:

What? You're not singing la hi la, la ho la?

HARLEQUIN (pouting):

One sings when one wishes to...

ELIANE:

Such a sudden transformation!

PIERROT:

Well, what's the matter? You look so morose...

HARLEQUIN (continuing):

But no...

PIERROT:

Have I hurt you?

HARLEQUIN:

I won't detain you, Pierrot...
(Exit Pierrot and Eliane.)

He tricked me!... It's infamous! It's base!
Pierrot, whom I liked so well! Oh, his white face!
You'll pay dearly for this: I'll have my revenge!
(He looks at himself in the mirror.)
I have two words for you, Pierrot! Speak! I know two
Lovers of Eliane, and I swear: that's one
Too many! Well! Very well! ...It's superb!

ELIANE (entering and regarding herself in the mirror):
A beauty spot
At the corner of the eye...another, here, near the mouth...
Oh, how rosy I am!...

HARLEQUIN:
Eliane!

ELIANE:
Harlequin!

HARLEQUIN:
What are you doing there, O cruel one?...

ELIANE:
And you, little rascal?

HARLEQUIN (tragic):
Avenging myself!

ELIANE:
On whom?

HARLEQUIN:
Pierrot!

ELIANE:
Oh, guess what he asked me!
...He asked for my hand!

HARLEQUIN (exploding):
By God!
I shall kill him, but...

ELIANE:
No...

HARLEQUIN:
But...

ELIANE (very sweetly):
I refused.

HARLEQUIN:
Really!

ELIANE:
I love another...

HARLEQUIN (threatening):
Oh!

ELIANE (stressing her words):
Who has not dared
To tell me...

HARLEQUIN:
And his name?

ELIANE:
You know already... Adieu!

HARLEQUIN:
Oh! I am mad!... My forehead! ...Fire! Fire!

Scene IV

Cassander's dining room, dark, with all the light over the glorious dessert table. Opposite the great window with a view of the landscape is a Venetian mirror.

FIRST PRIEST (to Eliane):
A thousand thanks. Really, the fête is charming!

ELIANE:
A bit of kümmel? A finger of crème de menthe?

FIRST PRIEST:
A finger...

PIERROT (with disdainful gallantry):
A finger, my friend, is nothing. You can see that
If you look at her fingers.. A single finger indeed!
Start with the entire hand!...

SECOND PRIEST:
Adorable!
He is really gallant!...

ELIANE (annoyed):
He is always gallant... at table!

FIRST PRIEST:
Touché!

PIERROT:
But that's where one ought to be gallant...

ELIANE:

Alas!

PIERROT:

Unless one is sure one has the discrete wine!

ELIANE:

I was waiting for you all: the hour is opportune!
Do tell some pleasant tales!
Seven men at dessert: there promise to be
Two-hundred confessions!...

PIERROT:

Seven men, yes, but only
One woman: the number is pathetic!

ELIANE:

Your idea of women is a bit black!

PIERROT:

Black? Oh, no, I assure you.
And yet you look so lovely in black!

ELIANE:

And my idea, earlier this evening,
Do you find it very... white?

PIERROT:

Oh, no! But on the other hand,
It could be black and white at once,
Like the fine costume of your cousin.
Or green, if you like -- the color of grapes
That hang to high!

FIRST PRIEST:

Stop, dear fellow! As for this number
And this color, that's quite enough!
Enough! You, Cassander, give us
A wise word -- one to drive us mad.
Or you, Mezzetin, sing us your ballad
In honor of Hippocrates!

MEZZETIN:

Oh, fie upon it! This salad
Is absorbing me, and I'm absorbing it, and that pleases me better
Than singing verses and rolling my eyes
And racking my brains to refine my points!
O salad! One should eat you with folded hands,
If only one had two more hands to eat you with!

FIRST PRIEST:

Bon appétit, Mezzetin...
(aside)
I shall avenge myself!
(To Mezzetin)

How have you been since this afternoon, my dear fellow?

MEZZETIN:

Not bad: a fleeting moment of well-being.
Too fleeting, alas!

FIRST PRIEST:

Yet your eyes
Are alert, your complexion is rosy...

MEZZETIN (becoming a bit sadder):

But still I'm no better...

FIRST PRIEST:

Look at him, my friends: under his hair
His ears are like vermilion flowers!

MEZZETIN:

Oh, I feel even worse!...

FIRST PRIEST:

Your nostrils are trembling...

MEZZETIN:

Alas, I'm dizzy, and afraid...

CASSANDER (aside):

He grows pale!

FIRST PRIEST:

Your glorious stomach, after so many battles,
Has nothing to fear from the largest wine barrels!

MEZZETIN (more and more anxious):

My heart is beating...

FIRST PRIEST:

And your nose, bright as a lantern,
Looks like a bishop who's becoming a cardinal!

MEZZETIN:

Oh, I am dying!

FIRST PRIEST:

To die! What a comedy!
Your dazzling face is aflame!
The firemen will follow you about!

SECOND PRIEST:

And tomorrow the oafs
Of our Observatory will tell the passers-by
That they have seen an immense aurora borealis!

FIRST PRIEST:

Such superb health!

SECOND PRIEST:
Amazing!

HARLEQUIN:
Ideal!

MEZZETIN:
I am dying! The earth is turning! Help! A doctor!
I am dead!
(He falls on the table.)

CASSANDER:
That's enough. He does it on purpose.
He'll speak no more, if he's dead! Come now: quick,
Revive him...

THIRD PRIEST:
Shall I resuscitate him?
It's easy: just look! Dear Mezzetin,
This laughter is stupid; I believe your condition
Is much graver than you wish to say!

MEZZETIN:
You, at least, you understand!

THIRD PRIEST:
How can you all laugh?
Can't you see that he's ill?

MEZZETIN:
Oh, yes!

THIRD PRIEST:
Ill! Very ill! He fainted
Twice or thrice while absorbing his salad!

MEZZETIN (tenderly):
Oh, my friend! How good he is! I am ill!

CASSANDER (aside):
A rebirth!

ELIANE (aside):
He's smiling!

THIRD PRIEST:
"Ill" hardly describes it...

MEZZETIN (smiling):
Yes, yes, it hardly describes it!...

THIRD PRIEST:

I swear, by God,
That he is much worse than he says!

HARLEQUIN:
His breath is short!

THIRD PRIEST:
His troubling pupil is filled
With a strange light...

MEZZETIN (laughing):
It's true!

THIRD PRIEST:
It's certain:
You have only one more moment to live! Mezzetin!
...You seem to be dead!

MEZZETIN (throwing himself into his arms):
You saved my life!

ELIANE:
If you die like this, Sir, I'll be very glad!

FIRST PRIEST:
O, dear Mezzetin! Pardon: I was wrong!
And now, Gentlemen, a toast: "Long live the dead Mezzetin!"

ALL:
"Long live the dead Mezzetin!"

FIRST PRIEST:
Pierrot, you are silent!
Why are you not laughing?

PIERROT (beatifically):
O divine indolence!
Heavenly nonchalance at the end of the feast!
I hear the song of the kirsch: speak no more.
Oh, let us be silent: to chat would be impolite.
Let's listen to the speeches of His Royal Highness
The kirsch, a German prince of noble, old lineage,
The kirsch, bitter ruler of this bitter season,
Beautiful, frosty margrave of pale silver and ermine,
Drawing behind him the fine and powerful scent
Of deep forests where the wind is intoxicated!

HARLEQUIN:
All that in a glass?

ELIANE:
Oh, how much you know!
You have a pedant palate! Will you drink
A bit more of this black forest?

SECOND PRIEST:

Look at him smoking his havana, moving
The ruby of his cigar back and forth,
His eyes closed, beneath his trembling nose!

THIRD PRIEST:

Watch out, Pierrot!

SECOND PRIEST:

You'll get burned! Beware!

PIERROT (puffing on his cigar):

Dessert! Dear moment that should be eternalized!
Oh, the mad warmth! It is sweeter than a kiss,
And I have the illusion of loving lips
That look for me and flee! What chartreuse
Could inspire in me this dream of being loved?
But this dream, oh delight, is very quickly smoked.

CASSANDER:

But this is to condescend to vain ideas!

ELIANE:

Let's find something else...

MEZZETIN:

Your turn, Cassander!
Your group, the Center: are they for rejecting
The budget?

HARLEQUIN:

Mezzetin talking about the budget!

FIRST PRIEST:

He is highly competent. He's a center himself.
He never stops inflating a certain budget: his own stomach!

CASSANDER (importantly):

Just yesterday, the Center were tending toward rejection,
But I begged them to approve the budget.
Still, to strike a blow at the Ministry of Finance
--Don't breathe a word of this: it's still a mystery!--
We shall propose, at the very last minute,
A very, very small amendment,
And suddenly you'll see
The budget and the Ministry together, defeated, on the ground.

MEZZETIN:

Might I ask for clarification!

CASSANDER:

Certainly!

MEZZETIN:

How do you mean "amendment"?

CASSANDER:

Oh the devil!

MEZZETIN:

I'm waiting!

FIRST PRIEST:

I'm burning to understand!

CASSANDER (embarrassed):

What I mean by "amendment"? How to explain it?

HARLEQUIN (abruptly):

I'll explain it in a word, if you like!

FIRST PRIEST:

Bravo!

THIRD PRIEST:

Long live Harlequin!

HARLEQUIN (plunging under the table and producing his uncle's false calves):

Look at these false calves!

MEZZETIN (laughing):

How funny!

CASSANDER (furious):

How insolent!

HARLEQUIN:

Well, this is what is called
An amendment!!

CASSANDER (rising):

Monster! Assassin!

ELIANE:

The poor man!

CASSANDER (chasing Harlequin around the table):

My cane!

HARLEQUIN (jumping over his chair):

The derby hat!

FIRST PRIEST:

Hurrah!

SECOND PRIEST:

Good jump!

CASSANDER:

There you are, you rogue: you're disinherited!

HARLEQUIN (coming up behind Cassander):

It's just politics.

...And this wig...

CASSANDER:

The beggar!

THIRD PRIEST:

Oh, the rogue!

HARLEQUIN (removing the wig):

...That covers your head...

CASSANDER (apoplectic):

I'll kill you!

HARLEQUIN (fleeing):

From far off!... Well, this ornament,

In the local jargon, is an amendment!

CASSANDER (chasing Harlequin):

Stop him! Stop him!

HARLEQUIN (disappearing):

Down with the Ministry!!

(Everyone rises to assist in the chase. Only Pierrot remains absorbed in his thoughts, sitting before his kirsch.)

PIERROT (elbows on the table):

So they've gone...I'll have a chance to be silent...

I have lived too much since this evening. I wish to dream,

To become my own master again, to save myself

In the august and proud silence of my thoughts!

I am happy with myself: the fête is over,

And the best part remains in my soul.

Eliane, Eliane, dear caprice, heady and malignant

Flower, O flower plucked in a dream!

You shall be the maddest and most beautiful lie

Among the cruel lies that form reality,

Yet you have suffered nothing from reality!

And you, her Harlequin, heart of a child, heart of sulphur,

O painful flame, O smile from which one suffers,

Little amorous candle burning at both ends.

Harlequin, Eliane, may you fade away!

(He rises.)

How many pale nimbuses I have already seen,

How many such magical faces, in the limbo

Of my memory and the vague chiaroscuro
Of my soul! O faces of tenderness and azure,
Loved before life, and dead before birth,
Which I have not loved, and which perhaps I loved.

(crossing his arms)

How one becomes mean, implacable, and critical,
Peering into the caverns of the heart!

And how the crystal of divine childhood

Cracks strangely at the first offense!

One retains forever a sad smile

In which the fear of suffering seems like pride!

(regarding the landscape)

Oh, the beautiful, clear night! The distant snow

Falls on the murmurings of the sacrilegious world,

Sweet sister of silence and of plaintive spirits.

The moon proceeds, and its furtive rays,

Passing and repassing over the frozen grass,

Are the dear desires and thoughts

Of someone calling me, and whom I cannot see...

HARLEQUIN (entering out of breath):

No one!

PIERROT:

Here they are: I hear the sound of footsteps..

I wish to see them no more... I shall flee... Ah!

(He sees himself in the mirror.)

HARLEQUIN (aside):

What a chase!

Cassander grumbled like a contrabass.

Eliane was laughing. One of the priests tried

To hold the contrabass, and I -- the bow

Of this great stormy and classic instrument --

I ran like the wind, for fear of the music!

But I am not alone! Pierrot! What is he doing there?

He looks as though he's rehearsing a minuet!

PIERROT (regarding his reflection):

Oh, the sweet apparition!

Oh, light in celebration!

I see it again... the very one, that face,

Fraternal and so pure, resembling me;

The one, pensive and pale, who wished

To share my dreams and my melancholy!

It moves... It lives...

HARLEQUIN (aside):

If anyone thinks I've forgotten

The trick that Pierrot tried to play on me,

By my soul, I'll take a thrashing!

Listen: this screen may have ears!

(He hides.)

PIERROT (contemplating himself):

It's someone else, and it's me: the lips are like
The virgin blood of a slain swan; the eyes are
Deep as the skies; the mysterious eyes
Are two lakes of sadness and whiteness
Where the silent evening of my eyes founders;
and in the shadow,
Farther than a hope and purer than a regret,
The tearful face follows me like a portrait.

HARLEQUIN:

To whom is he speaking in his slow, deep voice?
No one!

PIERROT (to his reflection):

Speak, oh speak!

HARLEQUIN:

He's looking at the mirror!

PIERROT (exalting):

Now I understand! It was you, dear absent one,
Dear phantom, invisible yet present,
Who filled my heart with this strange intoxication!

HARLEQUIN:

He's speaking to his reflection...

PIERROT:

This immense tenderness
Has spread around me; this need to suffer;
This thirst to see you; this fear of dying from it;
These roses beneath the frost; these lying roses
Whose deep perfume, like light voices,
Enchanted my flesh; these mad roses; these
Roses that bloomed at my temples,
My nostrils, my eyes; all this youth,
All this came to me from you, is it not so?
All this came from you!...

HARLEQUIN:

Yes! I understand!
In the end, the cousin of the snow has fallen for
His own reflection!... Ha ha! Pierrot! We shall laugh,
And I shall be avenged!

PIERROT:

Do you not wish to speak to me?
(slowly and almost singing)
O heart filled with my heart, vast as the seas,
Unfulfilled hope of my haughty lips,
Hope that has revealed to us these distant intoxications,
Beyond the sad hour and the bitter kisses...

HARLEQUIN (repeating):
Unfulfilled hope of my haughty lips.

PIERROT:
My tender, tired eyes fill your dear eyes with flowers...

HARLEQUIN:
Beyond the sad hour and the bitter kisses?

PIERROT:
As pure as a childlike sky, as kind as fountains!

HARLEQUIN:
My tender, tired eyes fill your dear eyes with flowers!

PIERROT:
Such a silence intoxicated with uncertain stars!

HARLEQUIN (same tone):
As pure as a childlike sky, as kind as fountains!

PIERROT:
A kiss of the moon has joined our flesh!
(He rushes headlong, arms extended, toward the mirror, which he shatters, and falls down, his white coat red with blood.)

Final Scene

PIERROT:
Oh! I've killed myself!!
(He remains self-absorbed.)

CASSANDER:
Why this uproar?

FIRST PRIEST:
Pierrot feels ill!

ELIANE:
What has happened to him, my page?

SECOND PRIEST:
Has he been attacked?

CASSANDER:
My poor mirror!

MEZZETIN:
What happened?

HARLEQUIN (triumphant):
Pierrot, mad from seeing himself
Too close in the mirror, has kissed his own reflection!

And that, my friends, accounts for all the uproar!

THIRD PRIEST:

Give him something to drink: he seems to be suffering.

CASSANDER (solemnly):

And that's what comes from being indifferent
To the affairs of state!

ELIANE:

Charmed by a glance!

MEZZETIN:

And that's what comes from not being ill!

HARLEQUIN:

Hé! Lord of the Hail.

ELIANE:

Marquis of the Winter.
You've stopped speaking!

MEZZETIN:

He's dead! O my dear
Pierrot, are you dead?

CASSANDER (shaking Pierrot):

Holà! Prince of the Frost!

PIERROT (standing up):

Oh, I have killed myself, but how I shall live!

December 1886