

~~COUPLE~~

~~Viktor... Stefanie.~~

~~WAITER~~

~~THAT'S WHAT ALL OUR PATRONS DEMAND;
THAT'S THE REASON WHY THEY'RE HERE.~~

~~ANOTHER COUPLE~~

~~Viktor... Hugo.~~

~~WAITER~~

~~THEY ALL COME HERE JUST FOR THE MOOD
AND IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME
TRY TASTING OUR FOOD.
THAT'S WHY WE HAVE GOT TO PRESERVE
A ROMANTIC ATMOSPHERE.~~

~~(Dance number culminating in rowdy behavior by CUSTOMERS and
BUSBOY)~~

~~SUCH BEHAVIOR WON'T BE ALLOWED
BUT EVERY NOW AND THEN WE JUST GET THE WRONG
CROWD.~~

~~(AMALLA RE-ENTERS)~~

~~GENTLY DOES IT, TRY TO PRESERVE
A ROMANTIC ATMOSPHERE.~~

115 *The Café Imperiale* (Orchestra)

*(SIPOS and GEORG ENTER. THEY cannot see AMALLA — nor
SHE them)*

SIPOS

Where's the rose?

GEORG

What?

SIPOS

The rose. Where is it?

(GEORG takes out a rose)

That's a rose?

GEORG

It's been in my pocket all day.

SIPOS

Let me have it.

(SIPOS starts to put it into GEORG'S lapel)

GEORG

Oh, no...

(GEORG takes the rose)

SIPOS

You've gone this far — go the rest of the way.

GEORG

No. Just — give her the letter — please? And thank you, Ladislav — I really appreciate this.

(GEORG starts to EXIT)

SIPOS

Wait!

(GEORG stops)

At least — let's take a look at her.

GEORG

You look.

(SIPOS looks through the café, spots AMALIA, then returns to GEORG)

She's old. Old and ugly and toothless — isn't she?

SIPOS

I wouldn't say so.

GEORG

There must be something wrong with her — terribly wrong!

SIPOS

Why?

GEORG

I can see it in your face!

SIPOS

The fact is: she's a very attractive girl.

GEORG

She *really* is?

SIPOS

Absolutely.

GEORG

But will *I* think so?

SIPOS

Well — of course — that's a matter of personal taste. Let's see now — who does she look like?

GEORG

(Hopefully)
Some — film star?

SIPOS

No, no, no. Let me think — more than anyone else, I'd say she looks like someone in the shop...

GEORG

In our shop?

SIPOS

As a matter of fact — you know who? Miss Balash. She looks very much like her.

GEORG

(Stunned)
Miss Balash? Amalia Balash? But I thought you said "*attractive*."

SIPOS

Well — I think so. But, of course, if you don't care for Miss Balash, you're certainly not going to like *this* girl.

GEORG

They're *that* similar?

SIPOS

See for yourself.

(GEORG moves to a spot from which he can see AMALIA. The minute HE spots her, his body droops. The rose drops from his hand and falls to the floor. Then he starts to EXIT)

You're just going to *leave* her there?

GEORG

What do you suggest? You want me to tell her *I'm* the poor fool who's written all those letters? She'd make me the laughingstock of the city!

SIPOS

How? *She* wrote some too. "Dear Friend: I took you out of the box — I cut you open..." And so on —

GEORG

It's impossible!

SIPOS

What?

GEORG

She never wrote those letters! She couldn't have!

SIPOS

You think it's just a coincidence? She just happens to like this café — she just happens to be reading "Anna Karenina" — she just happens to be using a rose as a bookmark — in December!!

GEORG

But it's Miss Balash! I can't be in love with Miss Balash!

SIPOS

How do you know until you try?

GEORG

I know *her*! There's some mistake, Ladislav. There's got to be.

SIPOS

Then, talk to her. Find out.

~~GEORG~~

~~*(Nodding in agreement)*~~

~~She's not Dear Friend. She's not. She can't be!~~

~~*(Suddenly terrified)*~~

~~Can she?~~