

Richard Wagner's
PARSIFAL

singing translation

by

Abigail Dyer

With illustrations from Parsifal (1903), Authored by Wagner, Richard (1813–1883),
translated by Huckel, Oliver (1864-1940), and illustrated by Stassen, Franz (1869-1949)

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Parsifal, Act II; Evocation of Kundry (c. 1886)
Henri Fantin-Latour (French, 1836-1904)
Artvee

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PARSIFAL
a stage consecration pageant by Richard Wagner

DRAMATIS PERSONAE



Motif from the prequel to the Parzifal narrative - Franz Stassen (1869-1949)

AMFORTAS.....	Baritone
TITUREL.....	Bass
GURNEMANZ.....	Bass
PARSIFAL.....	Tenor
KLINGSOR.....	Bass
KUNDRY.....	Soprano
FIRST and SECOND GRAIL KNIGHTS.....	Tenor and Bass
FOUR SQUIRES.....	Soprano and Tenor
KLINGSOR'S MAGIC GIRLS: Six Soloists.....	Soprano
Two Choruses.....	Soprano and Alto
BROTHERHOOD of the KNIGHTS of the GRAIL..	Tenor and Bass
YOUTHS and BOYS.....	Tenor, Alto and Soprano

SETTING

Act I - the Grail's realm, a location with the look of the northern mountain regions of Gothic Spain.

Act II - Klingsor's magic castle, on the south-facing part of the same mountain as the Grail's realm, facing Arabic Spain and looking similar to it.

Act III - the Grail's realm

Act I

The Grail's realm, a location with the look of the northern mountain regions of Gothic Spain.

Act I, Scene 1

Curtain up.

In the Holy Grail's realm. A forest, quiet and serious but not gloomy. A clearing Center. Stage Right, a path rising toward the Grail's castle. Upstage Center slopes down into a deep forest lake. Dawn.

Gurnemanz (elderly but spry) and two Squires (tender youths) are asleep under a tree. From Stage Right, as if from the castle, they hear horns playing a solemn morning reveille.

GURNEMANZ: *(waking, rousing the Squires)*

Hey! You! Guarding the woods
Or guarding your slumber?
At least wake up now it's morning!

(Squires spring to their feet)

Hear you the call?
Give thanks to God
That He has called you here to hear it!

(Gurnemanz and the Squires kneel in silent morning prayers. Gurnemanz rises, then the Squires.)

Get up, you youngsters!
See to the bath.
It's time.
The king must be attended.

(Gurnemanz looks Stage Right)



The Castle of the Grail

They bear him on a litter here.
I see his heralds coming now.

(Two Knights enter)

Greetings! How fares the king today?
How early he comes to the water!
The lotion that Gawain
So daringly found him,
I reckon that it salved his pain?

SECOND KNIGHT: So reckon you, you know-it-all?
They were a hundred times worse,
His pains, when they returned.
Sleepless with grievous suffering,
He bade us take him to his bath.

GURNEMANZ: *(sadly bows his head)*
Fools were we for faith in salves and lotions
When but salvation heals him.
Each useless lotion, every potion,
Sought from each end of the earth....
One man can help him,
One man only!

SECOND KNIGHT: So what's his name?

GURNEMANZ: Help with the bath!

(both Squires have moved Upstage and are looking Off Left)

SECOND SQUIRE: Look there! The wild rider comes! Hey!

FIRST SQUIRE: She flies on her devil horse to our forest!

SECOND SQUIRE: Ha! Kundry comes?

FIRST KNIGHT: With vital news to tell us?

SECOND SQUIRE: Her mare has stumbled.

FIRST SQUIRE: Did she really fly?

SECOND SQUIRE: She's crawling along the ground.

FIRST SQUIRE: Now she sweeps the moss with her mane.

(All look excitedly Off Left)

SECOND KNIGHT: The wild one has leapt from her horse.

(Kundry rushes quickly in, almost staggering. Wildly dressed, her skirt tucked up with a long snakeskin girdle whose ends hang down; her black hair is in loose braids, her face a deep red-brown. Piercing black eyes, sometimes with a wild gleam but more often fixed and dead.

She hurries to Gurnemanz and presses a small glass vial into his hand.)

KUNDRY: Here! Take it! Balsam...

GURNEMANZ: From where comes this small flask?

KUNDRY: From further off than you'll ever know.

If the balsam fails, Arabia offers nothing more for his cure.

No more questions!

(throws herself to the floor)

I'm too tired.

(A procession of Squires and Knights bearing Amfortas stretched out on a litter, enters Right)

GURNEMANZ: *(has turned away from Kundry, toward the approaching procession)*

He comes. They bear him on his litter.

What pain! How can I bear behold him

Who in manhood's prime was golden,

The lord king of his victorious race,

By illness vanquished, crushed and enslaved?

(to the Squires)

Attention! Hark! The king has groaned!

(Squires come to a halt and set the litter down.)

AMFORTAS: Just so! My thanks! Let's stop and rest.
Last night's old agonies
Meet morning's majesties.
The holy lake
Will soothe me with its water
And it will make
The night's harsh pain grow softer.
Gawain!

SECOND KNIGHT: Sire! Gawain waited not.
The healing balm he brought,
The rare and precious mixture,
Betrayed your hope and failed,
So off he went to find a new elixir.

AMFORTAS: Without leave! May he make atonement,
Who breaks the Grail's holy laws!
Oh woe to him, the daring bold one,
If into Klingsor's net he falls!

Let no one here cause me vexation!
I wait for him, the foreordained one.
"Made wise through mercy..."
Was that it?

GURNEMANZ: You said that's how it went.

AMFORTAS: "...the fool so pure."
I'll know him when I meet him.
By name, as Death, I'll greet him!

GURNEMANZ: *(hands Amfortas Kundry's little flask)*
Maybe so, but why not first try balsam?

AMFORTAS: Whence comes this curious little flask?

GURNEMANZ: 'Twas brought forth from Arabia here to you.

AMFORTAS: But who obtained it?

GURNEMANZ: There lies the woman wild.
Up, Kundry! Come!

(Kundry refuses to move. Remains on the ground.)

AMFORTAS: You, Kundry?
Have I once more to thank you,
You shy, uneasy maid?
All right. The balsam will be worth a try
If just as thanks for your devotion.

(Kundry writhes violently, anxiously on the ground.)

KUNDRY: No thanks! Ha ha!
What good are thank yous?
No thanks! Go take your bath!

(Procession exits Up. Gurnemanz, looking sadly after it, and Kundry, still on the ground, remain behind. Squires enter and exit.)

THIRD SQUIRE: Hey! You there! You sleep here just like a wild beast?

KUNDRY: Are the beasts in here not sacred?

THIRD SQUIRE: Yes! If you're sacred, too,
Is something we've yet to prove.

FOURTH SQUIRE: I bet that magic brew she brought
Will make our master rot away wholly.

GURNEMANZ: Hey! What harm has she done you?
When we all have no clue
How to reach our brothers on far off missions--
We can't send them a missive
When we don't know where they are--
Who goes alone and unarmed,
Runs and flies to get the job done?
Our message carried, a victory won?

You feed her not, she keeps far off.

Nothing of yours does she share.
But when there's a threat and we need help
She flies to aid us with zealous haste
And never asks for thanks or praise,
Yet you all act like ingrates.
I reckon that that's a sin great.

THIRD SQUIRE: She hates us, though;
Just see how gloatingly at us she glares.

FOURTH SQUIRE: She's a heathen and a sorceress.

GURNEMANZ: True. Under a curse, perhaps, she lives.
Here on this morn,
Perhaps reborn,
With sins from her past incarnations
For which she's made no expiation.
If she atones through deeds and service,
Aids our brotherhood now through her good works,
Good is her heart and right is her goal.
Serving us, she helps her soul.

THIRD SQUIRE: So would it also be her sin
That caused the dire straits we're in?

GURNEMANZ: (*remembering*)
Yes. When she spends much time away from us
Then something awful happens here.
I've known her ages now but Titurel's known her still longer.
He found, back when he built this castle,
Her sleeping on the forest floor
As still, lifeless as death.
Again, I found her nearly lifeless
Back when disaster came to us
Sent by that villain
There in the valley who shamed us
And caused our disgrace.

(*to Kundry*)

Hey! You! Hear me and say:

Where were you then? Where had you gone
The day our master lost his Spear?

(Kundry, grimly silent)

All your help then you gave us not?

KUNDRY: I never help.

FOURTH SQUIRE: So she agrees!

THIRD SQUIRE: If she's so brave and without fear
Then send her to retrieve our master's Spear!

GURNEMANZ: *(grimly)*

No. To retrieve it
No one is allowed.

(greatly affected)

Oh wound, oh wonderworking Holiest Spear!
I saw you brandished by unholy hands.

(becoming lost in memories)

With it equipped, Amfortas, bold and brave,
Went with overwhelming force there
To triumph o'er the sorcerer.

Quite near the castle gate, from us our hero strayed.
A frightful beautiful maid swept him away.
While in her arms he lay besotted
The Spear tip came and got him.

A curdling scream!
I reached the king
As I saw Klingsor slip away.
The Holy Spear, he stole that day.

The king's retreat, I guarded well and fiercely
Yet he'd been wounded there, where Klingsor pierced him.

That wound it is, the one that will not close.

(First and Second Squires return from the lake.)

THIRD SQUIRE: *(to Gurnemanz)*

So then you met Klingsor?

GURNEMANZ: How fares our master?

FIRST SQUIRE: The bath has helped.

SECOND SQUIRE: The balsam eased his pain.

GURNEMANZ: That wound it is, the one that will not close.

(Third and Fourth Squires have seated themselves at Gurnemanz's feet. The other two Squires join them under the big tree.)

THIRD SQUIRE: But father dear, tell the story right:

You once met Klingsor! What was that like?

GURNEMANZ:

Titurel, who all excelled,

Knew Klingsor well.

To Titurel, as evil used its might
Our holy kingdom to imperil,
To him there came one holy, hallowed night
Two gifts brought by our Savior's heralds:

From this He drank at His last love-feast table.
The holy cup became the vessel later
That caught His blood when from the cross a blow
Struck by the lance's Spear caused it to flow.

These testaments so rich and wondrous rare
Were given to our monarch's care.
This shrine he built to enshrine them.

All you who heed this holy calling
Walk paths that are denied the fallen.
You know, it's just the purest

Who may be joined unto us,
The brothers, those who do the saving labor
The Grail commands us for our Savior.

He whom you asked about before was barred—
Klingsor-- although to join us he fought hard.

Next to the valley where he lived secluded
There lay a wild, lavish heathen land.
I still don't know in just what way he sinned there.
He sought atonement, though, and pious virtue.

Unable all his sinful longings to extinguish,
Laid he on himself sinful hands
And tried the Grail then to grasp.
Disdainfully its guardian drove him off.
Then rage set Klingsor on an evil path.
It seems his sacrificial sin
Gave knowledge of magic black to him:
He found it then.

His wasteland—poof!—became a pleasure garden.
There, flourish fiendish, gorgeous daughters
Who lure the Grail knights so he can take them
By wicked lust to ruination.
Those he ensnares become his creatures.
So many knights has he defeated!

When Titurel, infirm with age, had given
His son the realm to rule as sovereign,
Amfortas would not let it lie.
The magic plague to halt he tried.
The ending now you understand:
The Spear is still in Klingsor's hand.
Yes, even saints he's wounded with that.
The Grail as well he plans from us to kidnap!

FOURTH SQUIRE: (*jumping up*)

But first things first:
The Spear we must regain!

THIRD SQUIRE: *(jumping up)*

Ha! Who succeeds
Gains glory and wins fame!

GURNEMANZ: Before the now abandoned shrine,
In passionate pleading lay Amfortas.
For sign of rescue prayed he piteous.

(softly)

Redeeming radiance flowed throughout the Grail.
A holy countenance
Addressed him in his trance.
In brightly gleaming golden words it painted:

(very softly)

“Made wise through mercy,
The fool so pure,
Wait for him to bring your cure.”

FOUR SQUIRES: *(very softly)*

“Made wise through mercy,
The fool so pure.”

(from the lake, shouts and cries of the Knights and Squires. Gurnemanz and the Four Squires stop and turn, shocked, Up.)

KNIGHTS AND SQUIRES: *(from Off)*

No! No! Oh no! Stop!
Who is the villain?

(A wild swan flies in from the lake, falls exhausted to the ground. Second Squire removes an arrow from its breast. Knights and Squires lead Parsifal on.)

There! Here! A swan!
A wild swan!
The swan is wounded!

GURNEMANZ: What's that?

KNIGHTS AND SQUIRES: How awful! Awful!

GURNEMANZ: Who shot the swan?

FIRST KNIGHT: The king had seen him as a sign of blessing.
As over the lake circled the swan,
An arrow flew...

KNIGHTS AND SQUIRES: That one! He shot!
Here's his weapon!
Here, the dart that from it flew!

GURNEMANZ: 'Twas you who shot the swan and killed him?

PARSIFAL: Indeed!
What flies I shoot down in flight!

GURNEMANZ: You shot him, then?
Do you not tremble at the deed?

KNIGHTS AND SQUIRES: Punish the villain!

GURNEMANZ: An outrageous thing!
You have done murder here in the holy forest
Where quiet peacefulness abounds?
The woodland creatures, were they not all tame,
Greeting you friendly and fond?
From the shrubs did the sparrows not sing to you?
How harmed you the faithful swan?
He flew through the forest, sought his mate
So they could circle over the lake
And thus the water bless as their bath.
That gave you no joy? Instead you took
A wild, childish shot with your bow?

We loved him so. What was he to you?
Here! Look here! You shot him here.
Here clotted his blood, wings drooping down lifeless,
His snow white feathers flecked dark with blood.
Lackluster, his eye. See how it stares?



The Killing of the Swan

(Parsifal has been listening to Gurnemanz and become increasingly emotional. He breaks his bow and throws away his arrows.)

So has your sinful deed sunk in now?

(Parsifal covers his eyes with his hand.)

Speak, boy—you recognize your shocking guilt?
How could you commit this crime?

PARSIFAL: I just didn't know.

GURNEMANZ: Where are you from?

PARSIFAL: I know that not.

GURNEMANZ: Who is your father?

PARSIFAL: I know that not.

GURNEMANZ: Who sent you here to our forest?

PARSIFAL: I know that not.

GURNEMANZ: Your name, at least?

PARSIFAL: I had so many but now I have forgot' them all.

GURNEMANZ: You know nothing at all?
I've never met someone so dumb save Kundry there.

(to the Squires, who have assembled in increasing numbers)

Now go! Leave not the king to bathe alone! Go!

(Squires reverently lift the dead swan onto a bier of fresh branches and exit with him Up toward the lake. Gurnemanz, Parsifal and [apart] Kundry remain onstage.)

(Gurnemanz turns back to Parsifal.)

Okay: if you know none of those answers
Then tell what you know.

There's something, surely, you know of.

PARSIFAL: Yes. I have a mother...
Herzeleide's her name!
In woods and in wild meadows
We made our home.

GURNEMANZ: Who gave you the weapon?

PARSIFAL: I made it myself to chase the wild eagles from the forest.

GURNEMANZ: Yet eagle-eyed you appear, and nobly born, too.
So tell me, why did your mother never instruct you in weapons?

(Kundry, who, without moving from her corner of the forest, although she had thrashed about anxiously during Gurnemanz's narration about Amfortas, has sharply focused her gaze on Parsifal and, because Parsifal remains silent, calls out with a rough voice:)

KUNDRY: She didn't because he had no father,
For in battle slain was Gamuret!
From such an early hero's death her son she sheltered.
Weaponless and foolish she raised him in a wasteland—
The fool girl!

(she laughs)

PARSIFAL: *(suddenly paying active attention)*
Yes! And one day, at the edge of the woods
On handsome beasts
I saw some men sit silver and shining.
I wished to be like them.
They mocked me and galloped away.
I gave them chase
But failed, alas, to find them.

I ran through wild woodlands, far, far away.
Oft' it was night, then again day.

(Kundry has stood up and is moving toward the men.)

My bow and arrows protected me
Against wild beasts and giants.

KUNDRY: (*enthusiastically*)

Yes! Bandits and giants met with his might.
The boisterous child, they learned to fear him!

PARSIFAL: Who fears me? Say!

KUNDRY: The bad guys!

PARSIFAL: Those men who fought me, were they all bad?

(*Gurnemanz laughs*)

Who is good?

GURNEMANZ: (*serious again*)

Well, the mother you ran away from,
She who now weeps for you, wails and waits.

KUNDRY: Her waiting's done,
Since his mother is dead.

PARSIFAL: (*in terrible fright*)

Dead? My own mother? Who says?

KUNDRY: I saw her die when I rode out there.
She bade me greet you, you fool boy.

(*Parsifal springs at Kundry in a rage and grabs her by the throat. Gurnemanz holds him back.*)

GURNEMANZ: You crazy youngster! Violence again?

(*After Gurnemanz has freed Kundry, Parsifal stands as if dazed.*)

What's she ever done but tell the truth?
She ne'er deceived us, for all she's seen.

PARSIFAL: (*trembling violently*)

I am fainting!

(Kundry, as soon as she sees Parsifal's distress, goes to a forest spring and brings back water in a horn. She sprinkles it on Parsifal and gives it to him to drink.)

GURNEMANZ: That's right! That shows the Grail's mercy.
For evil dies when with kindness it's killed.

KUNDRY: *(grimly)*
I do no kindness.

(Sadly turns away and, as Gurnemanz looks after Parsifal in a fatherly way, drags herself unobserved into the forest undergrowth and is not seen again.)

I long to rest now... just rest now. Ah! So tired.
Sleep now! Oh let nobody wake me!

(fearfully startling)

No! No sleeping!
Terror grasps me!

(trembles violently, then her arms go limp)

I've no defense!
The time has come.
Sleep now... sleep now... I must!

(Movement from the lake. The procession of Knights and Squires with the litter returns from Up.)

GURNEMANZ: From bathing does the king return.
The noontime sun shines
Now to our sacred meal let's go together.
If you be pure then will the Grail
With food and drink refresh you.

(Gurnemanz has put Parsifal's arm around his own neck and put his arm around Parsifal, supporting him, leading him slowly step by step.)

PARSIFAL: Who is the Grail?

GURNEMANZ: That can't be told.
But if you've been chosen by it
Then you that knowledge will acquire.
And look! In you, I think I see its plan:
No path leads to this holy land
And no one ever can arrive here
Whom it has not seen fit to guide here.

PARSIFAL: With scarce a step I'm in a far-off place.

GURNEMANZ: You see, my son, here time turns into space.

(Bit by bit, as Gurnemanz and Parsifal seem to walk, the scene has been changing. The forest has disappeared and the stone walls have opened into a gateway, which closes behind them.)

Watch carefully, and I'll watch you:
If you're a fool and pure,
Some wisdom for you here might be in store.

(As they walk up along the stone walls, the scene around them has changed completely. Gurnemanz and Parsifal now stand in the mighty hall of the Grail's castle.)

Setting: Feast hall with vaults and domes. Doors open at both sides of the feast hall, Up. Grail Knights enter from Left and line up at the feast tables.

GRAIL KNIGHTS: Let's go to this last love-feast
That daily does renew.
As if it were our last feast,
May we receive its food.
Who smiles on kindly deeds,
The bread of life receives.
Refreshment to him flows
And many gifts bestows.

(Through the open door, Amfortas is carried in on a litter. The Four Squires walk ahead of him, carrying the shrine which holds the Grail. This procession makes its way Up Center where Amfortas is set down on a raised couch. Before the couch is a stone altar, upon which the Four Squires set the Grail shrine.)

YOUTHS: For the sinful world in all its sadness,
For which our Savior bled,
For our saving hero, may now with joy and gladness
My blood be shed.
He ransomed us with His last breath.
He lives in us now through His death.

BOYS: His love is alive.
The dove still flies,
A herald of saving grace true.
Take of the wine,
A gift divine,
The bread of life, partake, too.

(After everyone has taken his place and silence reigns, from deep in the background, from an arched niche behind Amfortas's couch, the voice of Titurel is heard as if from the grave, calling out urgently:)

TITUREL: My son Amfortas, are you at work?
So shall I live today and see the Grail?
Must I perish without my Savior's company?

AMFORTAS: *(half-rising in painful distress)*
Anguish! Anguish! Woe and dread!
My father! Oh, in my stead
Would you conduct the rite?
Live on! Live and let me perish!

TITUREL: Entombed, I live on through our Savior's grace:
Alas, I am too weak to serve Him.
You, do your penance! Take your place!
Uncover the Grail!

AMFORTAS: *(leaning on the Squires)*
No! Leave it covered up!
Oh let no one,
No one know the pain it brings,
When I behold the sight that you adore!
My wound is nothing!
It is nothing next to the hellish agonies
Of being damned to man this feast!

Painful inheritance that weighs upon me,
The only sinner in this company,
That I should tend the holiest relics
And beg them to bless these men pure and angelic!
He's punished, punished me and hurt me!
He, ah!, the angry God of mercy!

For Him, ah, for His benediction
I pray with longing desperate.
Through deepest penance, deep conviction
In Him may I find respite.

The time grows near.
A sunbeam lights upon the holiest cup.
The cover drops.

(staring out)

The blessed vessel glows with heaven's light,
Transcendent glory shining bright,
Shot through with holiest power divine.
His sacred heart's blood,
I feel it flowing into mine.

But soon my own sinful blood will flow back.
In mad, crazy cascades it comes
To overwhelm me,
Calling forth a sinful lust.
With savage horror it fells me.
Again it bursts through the door
From which it flowed before...
Bursts from my wound here that looks like His,
Inflicted by the self-same Spear's own tip.

It stabbed our Redeemer
And wounded Him
As bloody tears escaped Him,
Yes, godly tears shed for human sin
With pity, by our Savior.

Now there flows from me at this holy altar,
The keeper of sacred treasure,
The redeeming cup's protector,
The blood of lust, sinful and hot.
Time and again, though I try to halt it,
It comes! And no penance makes it stop!

Have mercy! Have mercy!
Have mercy on me! Lord, have mercy!

Savior, depose me!
Close up my wound, Lord.
In death make me holy
For you, my true Lord!

(he collapses, unconscious)

KNIGHTS AND PAGES: "Made wise through mercy,
The fool so pure,
Wait for him to bring your cure."

Believe as you were promised.
Wait without fear.
Your duty, do today!

TITUREL: Uncover the Grail!

(Amfortas rises slowly, with difficulty)

(The Squires take the cover off the golden shrine and take an antique crystal chalice from it. Another veil is removed from the chalice. They set it before Amfortas.)

BOYS: "Take this My flesh,
Take this My blood,
For our love's sake."

(As Amfortas bows in silent prayer before the chalice, increasing darkness falls over the hall.)

"Take this My blood,
Take this My flesh,

In remembrance of Me.”

(A dazzling ray of light from above falls onto the chalice, which glows with an ever brighter crimson light, bathing everything in a soft glow. Amfortas, now transfigured, raises the Grail up and to each side, blessing the bread and wine. At the beginning of the darkness, all had kneeled. All now raise their eyes toward the Grail.)

TITUREL: Oh heavenly rapture,
Our Lord greets us brightly today!

(Amfortas sets the Grail down again. Its glow fades as the darkness dissipates. The Squires cover the chalice, return it to its shrine and cover the shrine as before. Daylight returns. Once they've shut the shrine, the Four Squires take the two wine jugs and two bread baskets, which Amfortas has blessed, from the altar table. They divide the bread among the Knights and fill the Knights' glasses with wine. The Knights seat themselves for the feast, as does Gurnemanz, who has kept the place next to him free for Parsifal. Gurnemanz makes a sign to Parsifal, inviting him to the table. Parsifal remains to one side, stiff and silent, as if in another world.

BOYS: Wine and bread become transformed
By our Holy Grail's Lord,
For His mercy's loving sake,
To the blood that He would shed
And the flesh that He would break.

YOUTHS: Blood and flesh, these holy blessings,
Are transformed for your refreshment
By the Holy Spirit's power,
Into wine that you are served
And the bread you eat this hour.

KNIGHTS: Take of the bread and make it change
Into strength and power for our labors.
True until death, steadfast we stay
To do the work of our Savior!

Take of the wine, change it anew
Into life's blood surging boldly.
Joyfully joined in brotherhood true,
To fight with courage holy.



The Communion of the Holy Grail

SQUIRES: Blessed in worship.
Blessed in devotion.

(During the meal, of which he did not partake, Amfortas's transformation has deserted him. He has once again sunk down, head bowed, hand on his wound. The Squires approach him and we understand from their actions that the wound has once again begun to bleed. The Squires care for Amfortas, lift him gently back onto the litter and, when all are ready to depart, carry him and the holy shrine back out in the order in which they arrived. The Knights process out similarly in a solemn way and leave the hall slowly. Daylight fades. Squires pass quickly through the hall. Bells peal. Parsifal, when he heard Amfortas's most agonizing cries, had put his hand over his own heart, clutching it forcefully for a long time. Now once again he stands stiffly, stock still until Gurnemanz sourly approaches him and shakes Parsifal by the arm.)

GURNEMANZ: Still standing around?
Know you what you saw?

(Parsifal presses his hand to his heart, distraught, and shakes his head lightly.)

It's true—you're really just a fool!

(Gurnemanz opens a narrow side door.)

Off with you to where e'er you may roam!
I counsel good sense to use:
From now on leave all the swans here alone
And seek, silly gander, a goose!

(He pushes Parsifal out the door and angrily closes it.)

VOICE FROM ABOVE: "Made wise through mercy,
The fool so pure"

VOICES FROM ABOVE: Blessed in devotion!

Curtain

Act II

Klingsor's magic castle, on the south-facing part of the same mountain as the Grail's realm, facing Arabic Spain and looking similar to it.

Act II, Scene 1

Curtain up.

The inner chamber high up in an open tower. Stone steps on the side lead toward the ramparts on the projecting tower wall, which is the floor of the stage. Deep darkness. Tools of magic and necromancy.

KLINGSOR: *(at the side of the projecting tower wall, sitting before a metal mirror)*

The time has come.

My magic castle lures the fool in.

I see him coming,

Filled with childish glee.

In death-like sleep

The curse has bound her tight.

But I know how to slip the knot.

Wake up! To work!

(Klingsor moves closer to Up Center and lights incense. The background fills immediately with blue smoke.

Returns to sitting in front of his magic mirror. With mysterious gestures, he calls into the depths.)

Wake up! Wake up! Come here!

Your master calls you, nameless lady.

She-devil, you, rose of Hades,

Called once Herodias and--

What else?

Gundrygia there, Kundry here!

Come here! Come over, Kundry!

Your master calls! Wake up!

(In the blue light, Kundry's figure appears. She seems to be sleeping. Kundry seems to waken. She lets out a terrible scream.)

You're waking? Ha!
So I've cast my magic spell once again
At the right time.

(Kundry lets out a wailing cry that trails off into a frightened whimper.)

Tell me, where were you off to this time?
Fooey! That's where the Grail knights live,
Where like a beast you let them treat you.
Don't you like it here much better?
At my command you captured their master —
Ha, ha— the guardian pure of the Grail—
So what do you want with them now?

KUNDRY: *(roughly, choppily, as if in an attempt to regain speech)*

Fright! Fright!
Darkest night.
Madness... Oh! Rage....
Ah, sorrow!
Sleep, sleep, deepest sleep....
Death!

KLINGSOR: Did one of them awake you? Huh?

KUNDRY: Yes... my curse. Oh, longing, longing!

KLINGSOR: Do you long for the pure and chaste knights?

KUNDRY: There, I served them.

KLINGSOR: Right, right, as penance for the suffering
You cruelly upon them have brought?
They won't help you now.
Each one turns crooked
When the temptation's right.
The strongest will fall
Victim to your enchantment
And thus will he lose the Spear
That from their king himself I procured.

The most dangerous of them
We'll catch today.

Foolishness shields him well.

KUNDRY: I will not! Oh, oh—

KLINGSOR: You'd better, since you must.

KUNDRY: You cannot control me.

KLINGSOR: But I can hold you.

KUNDRY: You?

KLINGSOR: Your master.

KUNDRY: And by what power?

KLINGSOR: Ha! Precisely because I'm immune to your charms.

KUNDRY: (*shrilly laughing*)

Ha ha! Are you chaste?

KLINGSOR: How dare you ask,
Accursed witch?
This is how the devil mocks
The man who once sought holiness.

Terrible need!
Uncontrollable longing's pain,
By a hell-bent, horrible urge possessed,
Which I have forced to silence through death.
Does it laugh, mock my pride,
Through you, its devil-bride?

Watch yourself!
I've made one mocker sorry already.
His pride pumped full of holiness,
He once rejected me:
And yet I crushed him.

Unredeemed must the Grail's guardians now languish
And soon, I reckon, I'll guard the Grail myself.

Ha ha, so how did you like Amfortas, the king,
I gave you for your little fling?

KUNDRY: Oh! Sorrow! Sorrow!
Weak was he,
Weak, each one!
To my curse, with me each one of them has fallen!
Perpetual sleep, my only cure,
How, how can I find you?

KLINGSOR: Ha! Who resists you, sets you free:
So on this next boy try your charms.

KUNDRY: I will not!

KLINGSOR: *(moves hastily to the tower wall)*
See how he's climbing the wall.

KUNDRY: O! Anguish! Anguish!
Is this why you woke me?
Must I? Must?

KLINGSOR: *(looking down)*
Ha! He's a pretty child!

KUNDRY: Oh! Oh! Pity me!

KLINGSOR: *(leaning out of the tower, blowing into a horn)*
Ho! You watchmen!
Ho, warriors!
Heroes! Charge! Fight the foe!
Ha! See them storming the ramparts!
See my foolish little puppets defending their beautiful devil-brides!
Yes! Bravely! Bravely!

Ha ha! The boy has no fear:
He took the sword from the warrior Ferris
And now wields the weapon against the rest.
How badly the boobies contend with his zest!

(Kundry breaks out in unearthly, ecstatic laughter that turns into a convulsive cry of pain.)

He hit that one's arm and that one's ankle!

(Kundry screams)

Ha ha! They weaken!
They flee him!

(The blue light goes out. Complete darkness below contrasts with the bright blue sky above the walls.)

Take their wounded limbs home as their prize.
What a kick it gives me!
May it be so,
That all the knights in the world
Fight to death with each other!

Ha! How proud he parades on the ramparts!
How laughter makes his cheek bloom so rosy as,
Childish, he stares at the garden, remote, secluded!

(he turns Upstage)

Hey, Kundry!

(she doesn't appear)

What? Hard at work?
Ha ha! My magic never fails
To call you back to me to do as I bid!

(turns back to face Downstage)

You there, childish sprout,
All those prophesies are wrong.
The young and dumb fall without fail to my power:
Your purity corrupted,
I'll keep you as my puppet!

(he and the whole tower sink rapidly as the magic garden appears onstage)



Parsifal on the Quest for the Holy Grail

Act II, Scene 2

The magic garden fills the stage completely. Tropical vegetation, a most luxurious collection of flowers; Upstage, the castle ramparts and on either side, in a rich Arabian style, projecting terraces.

Parsifal stands on the rampart, gazing astonished at the garden. From every side, first from the garden, then from the palace, beautiful girls rush in, in total confusion. At first, a few, then more and more. They've thrown on softly colored veils as if they've just been frightened out of a sound sleep.

FLOWER GIRLS: Here was the battle!

Weapons!

Wild war whoops!

Where is the villain?

Let's take vengeance!

My beloved is wounded!

But where is my man now?

Ah! I woke up abandoned!

Where have they fled to?

Where is my beloved?

Oh where can I find him?

Ah! I woke up abandoned!

Oh pain! Oh sorrow!

Where are our beloveds?

There in the castle!

We saw them in the castle!

We saw them all bloody and wounded.

Sorrow! Sorrow!

Someone help us!

But who is our foe?

(they notice Parsifal and point to him)

That's him, there!

There he is! There he is!

Where? There!

I saw!

With my Ferris's sword in his own hand!

Ah! I recognize my lover's blood!
Our castle he stormed!
And I heard our master's horn.
Yes, we, too, heard his horn.
Just so!

My swain ran that way.
Yes, all of them ran that way.
My swain ran that way.
Oh, pain!
They all came out here but each of our men lost his sword!
Oh woe! Woe to him whom they fought!
He smote my beloved!
He cut down my friend!
His weapon's still bloody!
My beloved's foe—

Hey! You there! Hey you!
Why did you cause such pain?
Accursed, accursed should you be!
Ha! Villain!
Dare you approach us?
How could you smite all our lovers?

(Parsifal jumps deeper into the garden. The Girls draw back. He looks at them, full of admiration.)

PARSIFAL: You charming children,
How could I not smite them
When they, you beauties,
They would have kept me from you?

GIRLS: You came just for us?
Say, are we fair?

PARSIFAL: I've ne'er seen so lovely a crowd.
I'd say you're pretty—is that allowed?

GIRLS: So then you don't want to smite us?
So you wouldn't smite us?

PARSIFAL: I'd rather not.

GIRLS: What harm you've done us by rampaging!
Oh what a rampage! Harmful, so harmful!
You've gone and smitten our playthings!
Who'll play with us now?

PARSIFAL: I volunteer!

(Girls' surprise has become lusty laughter. As Parsifal nears the two excited groups of Girls, the First Group and First Chorus slip away behind the flowerbeds to adorn themselves with flowers.)

SECOND GROUP AND SECOND CHORUS: So treat us right and do not stray.
Do not stray from us.
And if you do not chide us
We'll make it worth your while.
We do not play for wealth,
We're playing for love itself.
If you manage to assuage us
Then you'll have earned your wages!

(The Girls from the First Group and First Chorus reenter dressed in flower gowns and looking like flowers themselves. They immediately rush Parsifal.)

FIRST GROUP: Take your hands off him!
He belongs to me!
No! No, me!

SECOND GROUP: Ha! The hussies!
They've painted their faces!

(Second Group and Second Chorus exit to behind flowerbeds and also return wearing flower gowns.)

(Girls dance in changing circles around Parsifal, as in a children's game. They softly stroke his cheeks and chin.)

GIRLS: Come! Come! Handsome fellow!
I'll be your flower!
To your bliss and refreshment

I will devote every hour!
Let me come into flower.
To your blissful refreshment
We'll dedicate every hour!

PARSIFAL: (*merrily, calmly, from the middle of the circle of Girls*)
Your scent is so sweet!
Say, are you flowers?

GIRLS: The garden's best!
A scent so luscious,
In spring the master plucks us!
We grow up here in sun and summer;
We bloom for your bliss and wonder.
Now all our needs attend:
Don't keep from the flowers their friend!
If you can't make love to us each minute
We'll wilt and die off in an instant!

Upon your bosom take me!
Your hair, ah, let me brush it!
Your handsome cheek, let me touch it!
Your mouth, oh, let me kiss it!
No, I!
For I am fairest!
No, no, I am fairer!
I am fairer!
No, my scent is sweeter!
No, I! I! Yes, I!

PARSIFAL: (*gently deflecting their charming impetuosity*)
Crazed gaggle of blossoms so shapely,
If we're to play games you must not suffocate me!

GIRLS: You're scolding us?

PARSIFAL: Because you're fighting.

GIRLS: We're fighting over you!

PARSIFAL: Hey, stop that!

GIRLS: Hands off of him!

See, he wants me!

He wants me!

No, me!

No, no, he prefers me!

(to Parsifal)

You're pushing me away?

You're turning your back?

Rejecting me?

Rejecting me?

What, are you fearful of women?

Don't you dare to kiss them?

Horrible! Cold and a coward!

You're horrible—cold and a coward!

The bee must be chased around by the flowers!

Oh, he is cold!

Cowardly, he!

Come! Let's leave the fool boy.

We're giving up our best toy.

So he'll be ours to enjoy!

No, he belongs to me!

No, he is ours now!

He's ours!

And mine! Yes, mine!

PARSIFAL: *(half angrily shooing the Girls away)*

Let go! I'm not your prey!

(Parsifal wants to run away but the sound of Kundry's voice from the flower beds makes him stay where he is.)

KUNDRY: Parsifal! Stay here!

PARSIFAL: Parsifal, she called me that in her sleep, my mother.

KUNDRY: *(slowly becoming visible)*

Parsifal! Oh stay here, Parsifal!
You'll find salvation and joy withal!

(Upon hearing Kundry's voice, the Girls are shocked and move away from Parsifal.)

You sulkers and pouters,
Leave him alone!
Poor, half-wilted flowers—
Hands off! He isn't one of your toys!
Run home, back to your bowers.
There, tend your lonely, wounded boys!

GIRLS: *(Girls bashfully, reluctantly retreat from Parsifal and return to the castle.)*

Ah, to leave you!
To desert you!
How painful!
How painful, indeed!
How painful!
We'd gladly jilt our other lovers
To be with you alone—
Alone with you.
Farewell, you handsome, you haughty, you fool!

(With the last words, the Girls disappear giggling into the castle.)

(Parsifal looks around shyly to see where the voice came from. The flowerbeds part, revealing a most beautiful young woman—Kundry, now totally transformed. Lying on a bed of flowers, in lightly veiled, fantastical, Arabian-style dress, she comes into view.)

PARSIFAL: Those flowers, were they just a dream?

(still at a distance)

Did you call me, though I'm nameless?

KUNDRY: I called you, foolish pure one,
Fal-Parsi, you purest fool, you,
Parsifal...
As he, out in Arabian lands, breathed his last,
Your father Gamuret so named his son,

Still in his mother's womb protected.
He spoke this name as death approached him.
So I could tell you this I waited here.
What drew you here but curiosity?

PARSIFAL: I never saw anything like this before.
Why do I tremble at the sight?
Are you a bloom here in this grove enchanted?

KUNDRY: No, Parsifal, you foolish pure man!
I'm eons from my homeland.
So you would find me,
I waited for you here.
I came from far off,
Where I saw these things:

I saw the baby at his mother's breast.
His baby babbles laugh still in my ear.
How heavy-hearted, yet heartily laughed Herzeleide
As, in her suffering, gurgled her pride and joy beside her.

The softest mosses were his bedding;
His blanket, her kisses and caressing.
As sick with worry,
She guarded him with maternal fierceness.
He woke to a flurry
Of falling dew from her maternal tears.
She wept, your poor and sainted mother,
Over your father's love and death:
A fate like his, you'd never suffer!
She swore to this with every breath.

She kept you far from warriors and weapons
So she could keep you sheltered and protected.
She suffered so to keep you hidden;
Never should you learn of
Those things she'd forbidden!

Can you not still hear her plaintive cry
When late and far you would stray?
Ha! How she'd be cured by laughter and joy

Once she had searched and found your way
And when her arms around you she'd fling....
Did you find her kiss a frightful thing?

But her anguish
You just ignored,
So, too, her troubled raging,
When in the end you wandered off,
No trace of you remaining.

Day in, day out, she waited
Until her sobs abated.
Her grief tore her suffering apart.
For death's release she cried.
Her sorrow broke her heart.
She, brokenhearted, died.

PARSIFAL: *(with increasing gravity until, terribly grief-stricken, he sinks down, painfully overwhelmed, at Kundry's feet)*

Sorrow! Sorrow!
How could I!
Where was I?
Mother! Sweet and lovely Mother!

Your son! Your only son has killed you!
Oh fool! Stupid, bumbling fool!
Oh, where did you go, go to forget her?
How could I e'er forget you,
Dearest, darlingest Mother!

KUNDRY: Had you never known hurt,
Sweet consolation could never comfort your heart.
The suffering you regret,
Repent it now through consolation.
Let love pay your debt.

PARSIFAL: *(increasingly despondent)*

My mother—my mother,
I did forget her.
Ha! What else have I gone and forgot?
What was I ever mindful of?

There's naught but foolishness in me.

KUNDRY: *(Still lying down, bends towards Parsifal's head and gently touches his brow. Cozily wraps her arm around his neck.)*

Confession bring guilt and ends in sadness.
 But wisdom makes sense of foolish madness.
 It's love you should be learning:
 Your father learned the same
 When Herzeleide's burning
 Engulfed him in its flame!
 The one who bore you, raised and adored you,
 Whom death and folly can't dismiss,
 She gives you this,
 This mother's blessing,
 This last wish,
 This love's first, sweetest kiss.

(Kundry has bowed her head completely over his. Puckers her lips and gives him a long kiss on the mouth.)

(Here, Parsifal suddenly makes a gesture of deepest horror. His behavior denotes the fearful change that has come over him. He presses his hands violently against his heart as if to overcome agonizing pain.)

PARSIFAL: Amfortas!

The wounds —ah!
 The wounds —ah!
 They burn inside my body.
 They're wailing, wailing, horrible wailing,
 A broken wailing deep in my heart.
 O! O! Abject! Disconsolately!
 The wounds, I see them bleeding —
 They bleed inside of me!
 Here! Here! No! No!

No, it's not the wound that pains me.
 Let my blood pour to put out the pain!
 Here! Here! It burns in my heart!
 A yearning—a horrible yearning.
 It grabs ahold of me, has its way.
 Oh, love's own torment!

(As Kundry stares at Parsifal in horror and amazement, he becomes increasingly lost in reverie.)

(softly, unearthly)

Oh how I tremble,
Quail and shake with sinfullest desire!
I fix my gaze, dim, on the holy cup.
The holy blood, aglow.
Salvation's bliss is godly sweet
Yet causes every soul to tremble.

Yet in my heart I am still tormented.
The Savior's wailing, ah, I hear it,
The wailing, ah, the wailing,
Over a desecrated faith:

"Redeem me, rescue me
From guilt-stained hands of sinners!"

So did the Lord in anguish call to me,
Here in my soul's depth.
But I, the fool, the coward,
Played stupid little boy games,
Ran straight here!

(falls grief-stricken to his knees)

Redeemer, Savior, what's Your will?
What is the penance for my guilt?

KUNDRY: *(her astonishment turned to passionate admiration, shyly approaches Parsifal)*

Brave warrior, throw off your fear:
Arise! Behold! The willing one draws near!

PARSIFAL: *(still kneeling, stares stiffly at Kundry as she bends towards him and gestures affectionately in the ways he describes below:)*

Yes, that love song, she sang it to him.
That little look—that look I recognize.
And that one she used to mirthfully mock him.

That simper, yes, she used it on him.
Like that, she tucked her chin down.
Like that, she tossed her hair —
So flirty it fluttered behind her.
Like that, swung her arm 'round his neck
And slathered him with caresses.
Allied with all unholy torment,
His own salvation
Her lips did kiss away!

I... know that kiss!

(Parsifal suddenly rises, pushes Kundry away)

Despoiler, get you away!
Never tempt me again!

KUNDRY: *(very passionately)*

Pitiless!
If, as you claim, you can feel the world's pain,
Well, then, it's time you felt mine, too.
If you're a savior
Why keep your favor
From me, who so hotly desires you?

Forever, I've been waiting to find you,
To let myself be saved
By Him I cruelly shamed.
Oh, if you knew the curse
That's plagued me ever after,
In death, in life, in
Pain and laughter,
Through time and time again, I see
Endless, how it torments me.

I saw Him, Him and mocked Him!
Then I found His gaze...

I seek Him now
From world to world
Once more to feel His presence.

In deep distress
I sense His gaze turn to me.
His eye upon me rests.
Then, once more, the accursed laughter grips me.
A sinner falls to my enchantment.
I laugh then,
Laugh and cannot cry, no, I
Rant and rave in screaming folly,
A never-ending soul's dark night
From which I waken, so contrite.

Him whom I craved
As death's shadow stalked Him,
Him whom I knew
And yet I mocked Him,
Upon His bosom let me cry and
For just an hour we'll be united.
Though God Himself cast me away,
You'll lift my sin from me;
I'll be saved.

PARSIFAL: Forever more would you and I
Be damned for that one hour
If I forget my mission
And fall to your enchantment!

You, too, I have been sent to save
If you turn from your wicked ways.
The healing solace that will guide you
Flows not from lust that can't be quelled.
Salvation's water is denied you
Until you seal perdition's well.

Another one, another source,
I saw the brothers thirsting for.
The brothers, in repentance earnest,
Would mortify their flesh and scourge it.
But who can know it?
How to tell
Which is the saving water's well?

Oh wretch who's turned from all that saves,
Delusional, disordered,
You hotly thirst for holy graces
And from damnation's well draw water!

KUNDRY: (*in wild rapture*)

So was it my kiss
That to enlightenment brought you?
Then taste the rest of my body —
You'll feel divine, you'll feel godly!

So you're a savior.
Well that's just grand.
Become a god this hour!
For that, let me be forever damned,
Cast from salvation's power!

PARSIFAL: Salvation, sinner, I offer you, too.

KUNDRY: Ah, let me love you divinely!
Salvation I will get from you.

PARSIFAL: Love and salvation you'll inherit.
Lead the way to Amfortas and you'll see.

KUNDRY: (*erupting in a rage*)

No! You'll never find him!
He is fallen—so let him rot there!
That unhappy, lewd little man,
After I mocked him, mocked him, mocked him,
Ha ha, he fell by his own sharp Spear!

PARSIFAL: But who could have stabbed him with the blade revered?

KUNDRY: He who reproved my mocking
And laid his curse.
Ha! It makes me brave!
Against you, too,
I'll turn the blade
If you should pity that reprobate.

Ha! Madness! (*imploing him*) Mercy! Mercy on me!

One hour with me, stay!
 One hour with you, pray!
 At the end of it, you will be shown the way!

(She moves to embrace him. He violently pushes her away.)

PARSIFAL: You wretch! Get you away!

KUNDRY: *(flying into a wild rage, she calls out to Upstage)*

Help me! Come one and all!
 Capture the scoundrel!
 Come now!
 Blockade the exits!
 Blockade the byways!

Should you escape from here
 And follow every path in the world,
 The one path you seek,
 That path, you never will find it!

The paths and byways
 That kidnap you from me,
 Those I curse unto you:

Wander! Wander!

You, my true friend,
 Him I give into your charge!

(Klingsor has appeared on the rampart and points a lance at Parsifal.)

KLINGSOR: Stop there! This weapon binds you to me here:
 The fool will come to learn from his master's Spear!

(Throws the Spear at Parsifal. It freezes in the air over Parsifal's head.)

PARSIFAL: *(taking the Spear with his hand from the air and holding it over his head)*

This symbol vanquishes your magic power!
 As it heals the wound that
 Its blade inflicted,

So, too, shall it ruin all of your ill-gotten gain!

(He has swung the Spear in the sign of the cross as the castle sinks as if struck by an earthquake.

The garden quickly becomes a wasteland. Wilted flowers are strewn all over the floor.

Kundry sinks to the ground with a scream.

Parsifal pauses in his exit and, from atop the ruined wall turns to address Kundry.)

You know where you can find me if you seek.

(He exits. Kundry has raised herself up a little and watches him as he leaves.)

Curtain

Act III

The Grail's realm.

Act III, Scene 1

Curtain up.

Beautiful, open fields. Springtime in the realm of the Grail. Upstage, a softly rising flowery meadow. Downstage, the forest edge that, to the left, stretches up to a rocky plateau. Downstage near the forest is a spring. Across from it, Up, a simple hermit's hut, leaning against the rocks. Crack of dawn.

Gurnemanz, now aged and gray, is a hermit clad only in the tunic of the Grail knights, comes out of the hut and listens.

GURNEMANZ: What's groaning in the bushes?

So woefully wails no beast

And for sure not on this holiest holiday.

I think I recognize that mournful cry.

(Muffled groans—it's Kundry's voice. Gurnemanz walks purposefully to an overgrown thorn bush on the side of the stage. He pulls the undergrowth apart and stops suddenly.)

Ha! You're back again?

Did wintertime's prickly thorns cover her up?

For how long?

Up! Kundry! Up!

The winter's gone and spring is here!

(pulls Kundry, stiff and lifeless, from the bushes and lays her on a nearby grassy hill)

Wake up now!

Wake up to the spring!

Cold and still!

Maybe this time she's really dead?

Were those her groans, the noises I heard?

(Kundry stiffly laid out before him. He rubs her hands and temples, doing everything possible to soften her stiff limbs. Finally, life seems to return to her. She wakes up

completely and as she opens her eyes, lets out a scream. Kundry wears the coarse clothes of a penitent, similar to what she wore in Act I, but now her face is paler and all trace of wildness is gone from her appearance and behavior. She stares for a long time at Gurnemanz. Then she gets up, fixes her clothes and hair and sets herself to work right away as a servant girl.)

You wild wench!
Have you no word for me?
Are these my thanks for resuscitating you
Once more from a dead sleep?

(Kundry nods. Then she speaks with a raw, broken voice:)

KUNDRY: Let me serve you.

GURNEMANZ: *(shaking his head)*
That shouldn't be too hard.
We've no more messages to send.
Herbs and roots, each of us finds for himself.
We learned to in woodlands, from beasts.

(During all of that, Kundry has looked around, seen the hut and gone inside. Gurnemanz watches her go, astonished.)

Her stride is different from before!
Has this Holy Day wrought the change?
Oh Day of Mercy without equal!
Is it for her salvation
That I could wake her from her death-sleep on this morning?

(Kundry comes back out of the hut, bringing with her a water jug which she takes to the spring. There, she notices a figure in the forest, in the distance. She turns to Gurnemanz to point it out to him. Gurnemanz looks into the forest.)

Who's coming toward the holy spring?

(At Parsifal's entrance, Kundry has taken the now filled water jug into the hut, where she sets about working. Parsifal comes out of the forest in a blackened suit of armor. The visor is closed and the Spear, lowered. With his head bowed, dreamily hesitant, he slowly walks toward the grassy hill and sits down there, near the spring.)

He's dressed in grimmest armor?
There's no way that's a brother!

(Gurnemanz, who has been gazing in astonishment at Parsifal for some time, steps closer to him.)

Welcome, my guest!
Say, are you lost? And may I direct you?

(Parsifal shakes his head.)

Do you not greet me in return?

(Parsifal nods. Gurnemanz, annoyed:)

Hey! What?
You may have taken a vow to remain silent—
But I, too, took a vow:
To tell you what is proper here.
You stand on consecrated ground.
We do not carry weapons here
With lowered visors,
Shields and spears—
Much less today!
Do you not know what holy day this is?

(Parsifal shakes his head.)

Right!
From where came you hence?
Among what heathens did you dwell
That you don't know what day is today,
Don't know this is Good Friday morn'?

(Parsifal lowers his head even further.)

Put down your weapon!
Anger not the Lord
Who this day offered His holy blood
To ransom our sins, redeem the world!

(Parsifal stands after further silence, plunges the Spear into the ground in front of him, lays down his shield and sword, opens his visor and takes it off his head. He lays the visor down with the other weapons, whereupon he kneels in silent prayer before the Spear. Gurnemanz observes Parsifal with astonishment and feeling. He calls Kundry to him now that she has come out of the hut. Parsifal raises his gaze devoutly to the Spear tip.

Gurnemanz, softly to Kundry:)

Remember him?

'Twas he who shot the swan that time.

(Kundry affirms with a light nod.)

I'm sure it's him, the fool whom I angrily drove off.

(Kundry stares fixedly but calmly at Parsifal.)

Ha! How did he get back here?

The Spear, I know it, too.

(with great emotion)

O holiest day for me to wake in wonderment!

(Kundry has turned her face away. Parsifal rises slowly from his prayer, looks around calmly, recognizes Gurnemanz and extends his hand in greeting.)

PARSIFAL: Praise be that I once more have found you.

GURNEMANZ: So then you know me, too?

You recognize me though I am grey and bent with grief?

How came you here? From where?

PARSIFAL: Through error, along suffering's paths I traveled.

But have I freed myself from their confusion

Or are those forest noises just one more illusion?

You, my good grey-beard, do I greet you?

Are you, too, an illusion?

Yes, everything looks different.

GURNEMANZ: But what or whom did you come seeking?

PARSIFAL: Ah, him whose lamentations
In foolish wonder I first heard,
To bring salvation to him
I reckon I have been ordained.
But, ah!
Salvation's path, I almost missed it.
In error I wandered
As a wild curse chased me down.
Numberless conflicts, battles and contests
Turned me away from this path
Even though I knew it was right.
But then a dreadful doubt would seize me.
The sacred, could I keep sacred?
Keep it protected and preserve it?

Yes, wounds from every weapon I won,
For I would never wield this weapon in warfare.
Undeified, did I guard well its welfare
Till I could bring it back here,
Where now it shimmers bright and clear,
The Grail's Holy Spear.

GURNEMANZ: (*bursting out in greatest delight*)
Oh mercy!
Blessed bliss!
Oh miracle!
Blessed, beauteous miracle!

(*having gotten himself in hand again, turns to Parsifal:*)

Oh, sir, if 'twas a curse
That drove you from the righteous path,
Believe that it is lifted.
You've gotten to the Grail's domain.
Your coming they've awaited long.
Ah, they're in need of saving, the saving that you bring!

Since the first time that you came to us
The sorrow they made known to you,
The worry, is now deep distress.

Amfortas fought against his wounds and
Fought his soul's dark torment
But longed with furious spite only for death.

No prayers, no miseries of his brothers
Could get him to fulfill his holy duty.
Enshrined in darkness, long has lain the Grail
Because its sin-regretting guardian,
Who cannot die if he sees but a glimpse of it,
Is forcing death to take him,
To end his life and end his suffering with it.

We cannot now obtain the holy food;
We eat whatever grows around us
And this has done our heroes' strength no good.
None send us missives now;
No calls to holy battle reach our dark woods.
Wretched and pale, they stagger 'round,
The gutless, leaderless brotherhood.

Here in this woodland, I myself await
Death's quiet unawareness,
To which my old commander has succumbed.
Yes, Titurel my hero fell.
Without the Grail's presence to refresh him
He died just as all men do!

PARSIFAL: (*fighting against deepest pain*)
And I, I caused all of this misery!
Ha! Such a sinner!
What disgraceful guilt falls on this foolish head
And weighs it down forever
So that no penance
Or atonement can wrest from me this blindness!

Ordained was I to come and save them
Yet lost, I wandered vaguely.
I sought the path but failed to find it!

(Parsifal nearly collapses but Gurnemanz holds him up and sits him down on the grassy hill. Kundry goes to get a pitcher of water to sprinkle over Parsifal. She returns with the water and Gurnemanz refuses it:)

GURNEMANZ: No, no, the holy spring itself
Will sanctify our pilgrim's bath.
I think that there's more work today he must accomplish.
To celebrate a holy service
He must be free from stain
And all that wandering's dust
Must from him now be washed away!

(Parsifal is led by the two to the edge of the spring. During the following, Kundry undoes his leg armor while Gurnemanz takes off his breastplate.)

PARSIFAL: Today will Amfortas deign to receive me?

GURNEMANZ: For certain, for the mighty castle calls.
The funeral service of my dear loved lord commands me there today.
The Grail once more for us will be uncovered.
His long-neglected duty just once more he will take up
In honor of his lordly father, who through his son's neglect did die,
A son who wishes to repent....
That's what Amfortas vowed.

(Kundry washes his feet with humble enthusiasm. Parsifal watches her, astonished.)

PARSIFAL: *(to Kundry, then to Gurnemanz)*
You've washed my feet so kindly,
Would you now bathe my head, my friend?

GURNEMANZ: *(scooping up a handful of water from the spring and sprinkling it over Parsifal's head)*
Be blessed, oh you pure one, by pure water.
And thus may it cleanse your guilty burdens from you!

*(As Gurnemanz joyfully sprinkles water, Kundry takes a small gold vial from her breast and pours its contents out over Parsifal's feet, which she then dries with her quickly unbound hair.
Parsifal gently takes the vial from Kundry and passes it to Gurnemanz.)*

PARSIFAL: You salved my feet so kindly;
Let salve my head now Titurel's old friend,
So that today as king he may receive me!

GURNEMANZ: *(during the following, shakes the remaining contents of the flask out onto Parsifal's head, gently rubs it in and then folds his hands onto Parsifal's brow.)*
Thus was the promise given;
Thus bless I now your head.
As king I may receive you!

You pure one!
Merciful, patient one,
Wondrous and wise You are!
Just as You took upon Yourself our sufferings,
This one last weight now take, too, from his head!

PARSIFAL: *(had, unnoticed, taken water from the spring. He bends toward Kundry, who is still kneeling in front of them, and wets her head with it.)*
I'll start my duties with this act:
Be baptized and believe in the Redeemer!

(Kundry sinks her head to the ground. She seems to weep violently. Parsifal turns and looks with gentle delight upon the forest and meadows, now bathed in morning's light.)

How beautiful the meadow seems this morn'!
I've met with flowers marvelous,
As tall as I, who clung like vines around me
But I've ne'er seen so soft and sweet a blossom, bud or flower
That smells so childishly fair and speaks such trusting music as these.

GURNEMANZ: That is Good Friday magic, Sire!

PARSIFAL: Oh horror! Day of agony!
I reckon everything that blooms
Or breathes or lives and lives again
Should mourn Him, ah!, and cry for Him!

GURNEMANZ: You see, it is not so.
Repentant sinners' tears you see here
That now with holy dew

Baptize meadow, flower and bloom
And sweetly consecrate them.
Creation understands this day
The sign of grace our Savior gave,
And sends its prayer in celebration.

Him on the cross is something flowers can't dream of.
They look but to the saved among mankind,
Those free of sinful burdens and of meanness
Whom God's own loving sacrifice made pure.
Here's what the flowers have an idea of:
No human foot will trample them today.
For just as God showed us His heavenly face
And in His mercy for us suffered pain,
This day we show the flowers grace
With tread like gentle rain.
All creatures then give thanks and praise.
All that which blooms and soon decays,
Its sin by Nature washed away,
Wins back its innocence today.

(Kundry has slowly raised her head again. With moist eyes, serious and calmly beseeching, she looks at Parsifal.)

PARSIFAL: I saw them wither,
Who mocked and chased me.
This morning, do they seek salvation?
You see, your tears as well are blessed dew.
You cry and, look, the meadow blooms.

(Kisses Kundry on the forehead. Bells peal in the distance.)

GURNEMANZ: Midday. The time has come.
Allow me, Sire. Let your servant escort you!

(Gurnemanz has fetched his Grail knight's cloak, which he and Kundry put on Parsifal. Parsifal solemnly takes the spear and, with Kundry, follows Gurnemanz, who slowly leads the way.)

Very gradual scene change, similar to that in Act I, only this time from left to right. After the three have been visible for a while, they disappear entirely and the forest scenery moves Off. The stone arches move nearer. In the vaulted hallways the sound

of the bells becomes increasingly loud. The stone walls open and the Grail hall, as in Act I only this time without the feast table, is once again there. Dim lighting. From one side, a procession carries Titurel's body in a coffin. From the other side, a procession carries Amfortas on a litter preceded by the covered Grail shrine.)

FIRST GROUP OF KNIGHTS: We carry in its sheltering shrine
The Grail to its holy office.
Who's sheltered in the gloomy shrine
You carry mournfully here?

(as the two groups pass each other)

SECOND GROUP OF KNIGHTS: We bear our hero's coffin hence.
It bears the holy power
That God Himself on him once bestowed.
Titurel's body we bear.

FIRST GROUP OF KNIGHTS: But who brought him down,
Him whom God preserved,
God himself protected?

SECOND GROUP OF KNIGHTS: 'Twas age and its burdens
That brought him down
Once he could no longer see the Grail.

FIRST GROUP OF KNIGHTS: But who blocked the Grail's grace from his vision?

SECOND GROUP OF KNIGHTS: He whom you accompany,
Its sinful guardian.

FIRST GROUP OF KNIGHTS: We accompany him now, today,
Since once more, just one last time,
He wishes to do his duty,
One last time today!

(They leave Amfortas in his litter behind the Grail's altar, before which they set the coffin. The Knights direct the following to Amfortas:)

SECOND GROUP OF KNIGHTS: Sorrow! You guarded the Grail!

FIRST AND SECOND GROUPS OF KNIGHTS: Oh! Just one last rite he will

celebrate today!
The last time, today!

AMFORTAS: *(feebly raising himself up a little)*

Yes, woe, ah, woe, ah woe unto me!
Yes, I agree with you all.
More so, I'd agree to be put to death,
The lightest sentence for sinners.

(The coffin is opened. At the sight of Titurel's body, everyone breaks out in sudden cries of distress. Amfortas raises himself higher on his couch and turns toward the body.)

My father!
Best beloved of the heroes!
You, pure one, a man the angels once bowed to,
In seeking my final breath,
You I put to death!

Oh you who sits in glory with God
And beholds our Savior's face,
Oh beg this of Him:
That His sacred blood,
Should He send once more this true sign,
May bring the brothers healing.
Just as it brings them new life,
May it at last bring me death.
Death! Dying... grant this mercy!

This poisonous wound, may it perish with me!
Make still the heart that it eats away!
My father! I beg you,
Beg our God made flesh,
"Redeemer, oh grant my son his rest!"

KNIGHTS: *(pressing closer to Amfortas)*

Uncover the Grail!
Oh do your duty!
Your father demands it. You must!



Parsifal healing King Amfortas

AMFORTAS: *(jumping up in wild distress, crashing into the Knights, who back away)*

No! Never! Ha!

The dark hand of death overtakes me.

Should I once more push it off of me and live?

You lunatics!

Who'd force me still to stay alive

Instead of helping me to die?

(tearing open his vestment)

I stand here.

My open wound is here!

The blood that poisons is flowing here!

Take up your arms, then!

Thrust all your daggers

Deep, deep, to the hilt!

Come, you heroes!

Kill now the sinner; his pain assail!

Then see it shine by itself, the Grail!

(Amfortas, stands alone in terrible ecstasy. All have shrunk back from him in fear. Parsifal, accompanied by Gurnemanz and Kundry and unnoticed by the Knights, steps forward and reaches with the Spear toward Amfortas, touching the wound in his side with its tip.)

PARSIFAL: This blade alone will help:

The wound's closed by the

Spear that dealt the blow.

(Amfortas lights up with holy joy. He seems to sway under the power of great emotion. Gurnemanz supports him.)

Be healed, forgiven and absolved,

For I assume your duties now.

May blessed be your suffering,

For it gave mercy's might

And purest wisdom's light

Unto the bumbling, foolish child.

(Parsifal steps Center, holding the Spear high up in front of him.)

The Holy Spear returns to its domain!

(Everyone gazes joyfully at the Spear. Parsifal has raised his eyes to its tip and continues to stare at it as he goes on in exultation:)

Oh, it brings wondrous joy again!
 From this that healed your wound and closed it,
 I see the holy blood now flow out
 In longing for its kindred fountain:
 That which flows within the holy chalice.
 No more will it remain confined.
 Uncover the Grail! Open the shrine!

(Parsifal climbs the altar steps, takes the Grail from the shrine, which the Squires have opened, and kneels before it in contemplation. Gradually, soft light flows from the Grail. Below, increasing darkness as the Grail's light from above grows stronger.)

KNIGHTS: *(voices from the middle and top of the dome, barely audible)*

Miracle most holy!
 Salvation of our Savior!

A beam of light: the Grail glows its brightest. From the dome, a white dove comes down and lingers over Parsifal's head. Kundry sinks down slowly, her eyes on Parsifal. She falls to the ground dead. Amfortas and Gurnemanz kneel in homage before Parsifal, who waves the Grail in blessing over the assembled Knights.
Final Curtain



Parsifal revealing the Holy Grail