

A Short Description of Events in the North Star Opera

ACT I

In a seaside village on the Gulf of Finland, a group of carpenters and other villagers enjoy a break from the day's work.

Czar Peter is disguised as a carpenter and enjoys hard work. Baker Danilowitz arrives to sell his pies and buns to the workers, who make fun of Peter's infatuation for Catherine, the woman who keeps the local canteen. Peter is riled, while the people start to drink and dance, raising a toast to Finland and asking God to protect Sweden. Danilowitz steers the people to raise a toast for the Czar of Russia, leading to the Finns becoming annoyed. A fight is brewing, but a bell call everyone back to work.

Danilowitz and Peter find they both hail from Moscow so they decide to join the Czar's military.

Peter hears his flute instructor Georges Skawronski play, and would like to join him to play his flute and maybe have a drink too. Catherine interrupts the tipsy lesson to tell him she has just now managed to arrange a marriage between her brother Georges and her friend Prascovia, who was granted permission by Prascovia's uncle Reynolds.

Peter and Georges praise Catherine for her diplomatic sense, and the North Star begins to shine brightly in the sky, illuminating the prophecy of Catherine and Georges' mother.

Prascovia rushes up in distress to announce the approach of a Tartar army that burns villages to the ground. Catherine takes upon herself to fix this situation as well, telling everyone else to hide while she meets with the approaching Tartars and their leader, Gritzenko.

Catherine mesmerizes the Tartars with her song and predicts everyone happiness and Gritzenko the rank of a Corporal if he enlists with the Czar's army. Catherine warbles some trills and coloratures, and the Tartars are overcome and leave.

Catherine has barely paused for breath before Peter appears and begins flirting with her. Catherine is game and flirts back, remembering her mother's prophecy that she would come across a great man and find success in life herself. The lovebirds trade a ring and necklace between themselves. Peter bids Catherine adieu, pledging to be faithful to her.

Prascovia rushes up again, this time in even greater distress, because Georges has been drafted into the army, and their wedding is at stake, and their honeymoon as well. Not to worry, Catherine promises to make sure they'll have a full two weeks to themselves after the wedding.

The wedding takes place, a fun and high-spirited affair. Catherine, disguised as a soldier, steps upon a ship and takes Georges' place in the army.

ACT II

The soldiers of the Czar's army relax in camp, dancing and drinking. Danilowitz performs a Cossack dance, the shindy continues with a marching band of female soldiers and the Czar's march, which is suddenly forbidden.

Gritzenko has become a Corporal, just like Catherine foresaw, and has intercepted a letter that warns of a conspiracy, which Catherine can read out to him. Germoloff arrives to inform that the Czar has sanctioned the use of the Nagyka whip in army discipline. This makes the soldiers unhappy. Gritzenko orders Catherine, who is disguised as Georges, to stand guard outside a tent.

While standing guard, Catherine recognizes the men boozing in the tent as Peter and Danilowitz and tries to eavesdrop on them. Nathalie and Ekimonna, women from the canteen, join their drinking party and tell a story about dice that are cast to determine partners. Catherine is shocked to find Peter being unfaithful to her. Gritzenko tries to end Catherine's guard duty, but she won't have it and gives him a cuff on the ear! This makes the enraged Gritzenko demand the drunken Peter sentence Catherine to be executed. Catherine, on her way to her death, sends Peter his ring and the letter that reveals the conspiracy.

The rebels increasingly curse the wickedness of the Czar until Peter is forced to reveal his true identity, promising to rule his Empire as a victor. Everyone bows to the Czar, pledging allegiance.

ACT III

Czar Peter, back at his palace, is unhappy and would give anything if he could only have his Catherine back. Danilovitz tries to console the Czar in his sorrow. Gritzenko arrives, hoping for a promotion, having been such a worthy soldier. The Czar finds out he is the perpetrator of Catherine's death, but then learns that she has escaped, swimming and dodging bullets. So Catherine isn't dead!

Meanwhile, some Finns have arrived at the palace gates. Prascovia and Georges bump into Gritzenko, who now threatens Georges with capital punishment. Prascovia and Georges decide to flee, coming upon Danilowitz, who has seen Catherine alive.

Catherine, who has lost her memory, is brought to the palace, and Peter brings visions of Wiborg and the wedding party to her mind. Finally she is brought completely back to her senses by the playing of flutes. Finally Catherine and Peter can get married! The End.