

In a legendary time, the Princess (let's call her Princess X), is a woman of great beauty, but has a heart that is as cold as ice. She says, "Any prince seeking to marry me must answer three riddles. But if he fails, he will have to die," (by guillotine, no less!)

Prince Calaf (il principe ignoto [the unknown prince]) falls in love with Princess X at first sight and proclaims to all that he will answer her three riddles.



Riddle 1. What thing is reborn every night?



His correct answer... "Hope".

As Bilbo from the Hobbit will remember, there are a number of answers that can suffice to any riddle, so this question is tricky.

- Mahatma Gandhi said that "Each night, when I go to sleep, I die. And the next morning, when I wake up, I am reborn". So is the answer me or Mahatma Gandhi?
- Cicadas are seen to represent change, renewal and rebirth. Unlike a butterfly that undergoes complete metamorphosis, cicadas have no pupal state. So, could the answer be a cicada?
- From the epic 15 volume novel 'The Wheel of Time' "May you sleep and always wake up" is the Aiel greeting for people that live in the desert. So, perhaps the answer could be a nomad?

Riddle 2. What burns hot, but is not fire? ...

- A scientific answer is that a flame indicates heat has forced gas from a burning substance combining with oxygen in the air. Things that burn with no flame are not letting off a gas. Too technical an answer?
- In the cartoon the three Little Bops, the pigs remark that as a jazz trumpet player "The Big Bad Wolf, he learned the rule: you gotta get real hot to play real cool!". A trumpet player?
- In the film Young Frankenstein the monster performs "Puttin' On the Ritz". The routine ends when a stage light explodes and the monster charges into the audience. A stage light?

His correct answer... "Blood".

Calaf has successfully answered her three riddles. But Turandot recoils at the thought of marriage and refuses.

Riddle 3. What ice can make fire? ...

- Well, there is Game of Thrones based on the book 'Fire and Ice'. But you know nothing John Snow (the famous Middlesex fast bowler)?
- In Survival Kit manuals, you can use ice to make fire by carving out a big chunk, shaping it into a disk using your hands to melt it into a smooth, round lens. It is like a magnifying glass. A great survival tip, but...
- The band Foreigner sung the lyrics "You're as cold as ice". Unfortunately, the lyrics are in the "second person" telling of what may happen, but not naming the person.



His correct answer... "Turandot"

(which is, bingo, the name of Princess X, and the name of the Opera).

Calaf ups the ante.

Calaf says to the princess, "If you learn my name by dawn, I will forfeit my life, but if you do not learn my name, you must marry me. (Il mio nome non sai!" [My name you do not know!]).

Turandot gives the crowd an order not to sleep until someone learns his name. If they fail, all will be killed. Calaf hears Turandot's heralds proclaiming her command. It is here that the Nessun Dorma aria begins.

Nessun dorma! Nessun dorma!
Tu pure, o Principessa,
nella tua fredda stanza,
guardi le stelle
che tremano d'amore, e di
speranza!

None shall sleep! None shall sleep!
Not even you, oh Princess,
in your cold bedroom,
watching the stars
that tremble with love, and with hope!

Ma il mio mistero è chiuso in me;
il nome mio nessun saprà!
No, No! Sulla tua bocca,
lo dirò quando la luce splenderà!

But my secret is hidden within me;
no one will know my name!
No, no! On your mouth,
I will say it when the light shines!

Ed il mio bacio scioglierà
il silenzio che ti fa mia!

And my kiss will dissolve
the silence that makes you mine!

Il nome suo nessun saprà,
E noi dovrem, ahimè, morir, morir!

No one will know his name,
and we will have to, alas, die, die!



Calaf, now certain of victory (vincero), sings:

Dilegua, o notte!
Tramontate, stelle!
Tramontate, stelle!
All'alba, vincerò!
Vincerò! Vincerò!

Vanish, o night!
Fade, you stars!
Fade, you stars!
At dawn, I will win!
I will win! I will win!



So I landed on something that Mum could not knock back; Dad's favourite opera (which must have been performed at Christmas at some time in the world, at least once....surely!

- Die Hard with Bruce Willis (a story set at a Christmas Party)...[Mum would glare
- – No yippee ki yay];
- Pride and Prejudice (thankfully not set at Christmas....sorry Mr Darcy):
- A Christmas Carol (but no-one would play Ebenezer Scrooge)

So when mothers who are 94 speak, you listen and I went through the options....



My mother asked if this year the Christmas card could be a bit more "Christmassy", and perhaps something Dad would have liked to have remembered at this time of year.



Let No-one Sleep

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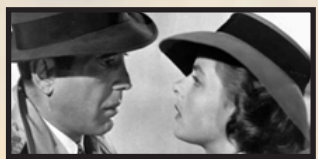
Just before dawn, Turandot confronts Calaf. Calaf gives her his name. Turandot is set to proclaim in front of the crowd her victory in learning his name. She hesitates, and says to the crowd:

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"His name is ...Love", and she then concedes defeat and marries Calaf.



And so, as the Captain and Tennille sang the Neil Sedaka song in 1974 that "Love will keep us together" regardless of whether either told each other their correct name;



And Humphrey Bogart lamented of his love that "Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine";



...And Maxwell Smart never learnt the name of his partner and confidante 99...

99 : I mean if anything should happen to you I...
 Max : Don't worry 99, nothing's going to happen to me.
 # 99 : You know what I mean, Max.
 Max : Yes, I do... Ernestine.
 # 99 : That's the first time you've ever called me Ernestine.
 Max : I know.
 # 99 : I wish it were my name.

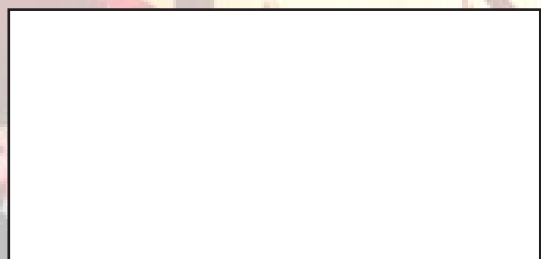
...So Mum, after 65 years of married adventure, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, until indeed, death had had you two parted, the secret to the love? I can imagine Dad might say with that irrepressible grin "I will always be with you, and you with me, so here's looking at you, kid"

And I somehow rather fancy that Bill now can change with Clancy,
Like to take a turn at droving where the seasons come and go,
As the stock are slowly stringing, Dad will ride behind them singing,
For eternal life has pleasures that we do not yet know.

"God bless you everyone, Merry Christmas"



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Gunderson Briggs Chartered Accountants will be closed from Thursday 23rd December 2021 and will re-open on Monday 10th January 2022.

