ACT I France, the 1920s. At her home in Paris, Magda, the mistress of the wealthy Rambaldo, declares that true love has nothing to do with money. The poet Prunier agrees with her and predicts that she will leave the city in pursuit of romance. Among the other guests is the young Ruggero, who has just arrived in Paris. After he has left for Bullier’s dance hall with Prunier and his girlfriend, Lisette, Magda decides to follow them, disguised as a shop girl and ready for an adventure.

ACT II At Bullier’s, Magda again meets Ruggero, who doesn’t recognize her. They dance and fall in love. When Rambaldo appears, Magda tells him that she has found true love and will leave him to start a new life.

INTERMISSION

ACT III Magda and Ruggero have been living on the Riviera, but their money is running out. Ruggero wants to marry her and paints an idyllic picture of his family’s home in the country. Madga is dismayed that he doesn’t know anything about her past as a kept woman. When a letter from Ruggero’s mother arrives, explaining that she is delighted that her son has found a virtuous bride, Magda confesses that she can be his mistress but never his wife. Leaving the devastated Ruggero behind, she goes off to return to her old life.

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