To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Maria Alexandra Wozniak entitled "The Luckiest Man Alive: an English Acting Version of Le Plus Heureux des Trois by Eugène Labiche." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Speech and Theatre.

Ralph G. Allen, Major Professor

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

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THE LUCKIEST MAN ALIVE:

AN ENGLISH ACTING VERSION OF

LE PLUS HEUREUX DES TROIS BY EUGÈNE LABICHE

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Arts

Degree

The University of Tennessee

Maria Alexandra Wozniak

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ABSTRACT

The Luckiest Man Alive (Le Plus Heureux des Trois) was written by Eugène Labiche in 1869 and received its first performance in January, 1870. It is one of three comedies which Labiche wrote on the theme of adultery.

Alphonse Marjavel is a wealthy, pompous businessman, who has been married twice. His first wife, Melanie--now dead--was involved in a secret love affair with Marjavel's friend, Jobelin. His current wife, Hermance, is involved in a love affair with Jobelin's nephew, Ernest. Both wives have exchanged notes with their lovers by leaving them in a small box hidden in a clock.

The play opens on Marjavel's feast day. Jobelin, Ernest, and Berthe, Jobelin's niece, arrive to bring Marjavel presents. Hermance has left a note for Ernest which Jobelin finds and mistakes for an old note from Melanie. Panic results when it is learned that a cabdriver, who has chauffered both illicit couples around the city, wants to communicate with Marjavel.

A pair of Alsacian servants, man and wife, arrive to serve in Marjavel's household. Krampach, the husband, speaks little English. He has married Lisbeth for her generous dowry, in spite of the fact that at the time of their marriage, he knew that she was not a virgin. He has been swindled out of the dowry by a man named Kuissermann, who is now in Paris and whom Krampach is determined to find.

In the course of the play, both Ernest and Jobelin try to keep the cabdriver quiet by paying him bribes. Krampach, who is sent

to deliver the money, has discovered that the cabdriver is indeed Kuissermann, and decides to keep the money, which he rationalizes that Kuissermann owes him.

Marjavel, meanwhile, is attracted to Lisbeth and reveals to the audience that he himself has cheated on both his wives. Krampach asks his master to find out who seduced Lisbeth before he married her. Circumstance reveals that it was Ernest.

Ernest and Hermance decide to break off their affair and agree that Ernest will marry his cousin Berthe. Krampach finds a love note, which he suspects has been written to his wife. Marjavel recognizes the handwriting as Ernest's. Not knowing that the note has been written by Ernest to Hermance, and thinking that Ernest is being forced into a marriage by his uncle, Marjavel decides to reveal the young man's adultery. A note is delivered from the cabdriver, threatening to reveal all unless he is paid. Marjavel decides to use this as final proof of Ernest's illicit affair. It is revealed, however, that the note incriminates not Ernest, but Marjavel. Marjavel is embarrassed, and Ernest and Jobelin, who have both cuckolded Marjavel, keep their secrets. Ernest will marry Berthe. Marjavel, however, ignorant of the true situation, prays for the day when he will have another friend like Ernest.

PREFACE

The dramatic works of Eugène Labiche have been likened to those of Molière. Such, at least, was the appraisal of Gustave Flaubert, who witnessed a performance of Labiche's Le Prix Martin at the Palais-Royal in 1876. Labiche himself would never accept this evaluation. He wrote to his friend and sometime-collaborator, Ernest Legouvé, that:

> If, as you claim, I have several drops of Molière's blood, I (nevertheless) have too much water mixed with it. I have flooded it with too many undistinguished plays. I did not know enough to save (those few drops) for three or four good comedies, which would have been worth more than all my baggage.[1]

The quality of Labiche's writing does vary considerably. A few of his early works were unmitigated failures. Some of his pieces, though critically acclaimed, were never popular with contemporary audiences. The best of his plays, however, are comic gems. These have been preserved in a series of volumes, edited by Émile Augier, entitled Le Théâtre Complet de Eugène Labiche. Of the one hundred seventy-five plays which Labiche wrote during his lifetime, fifty-seven are extant in these volumes. Labiche's works are still performed today in France, and a few of them, those which have been translated, have entertained audiences in England and America as well.

If Labiche bears any resemblance to Molière, it is in the fact that, like his classical predecessor, Labiche wrote comedies of character. However, whereas under the hand of Molière, characterizations

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[1] Ernest Legouvé, "Labiche Intime," Crapouillet, July, 1929, p. 10.

become archetypes for extreme behavior, under the hand of Labiche, they become the quintessential representations of a particular social class. Molière portrayed the miser, the misanthrope, the hypochondriac, the religious fraud. Labiche gave his audiences the typical bourgeois figure--egotistical, prosperous, self-satisfied. Moreover, the caustic and sometimes bitter humor of Molière is missing in Labiche. He laughed with, not at, his audiences as they watched themselves being portrayed upon the stage. Labiche identified with his characters, and they, for all their faults and foibles, are somehow lovable.

Around the talents and peculiarities of one particular actor, Labiche molded his most successful character: the rotund bourgeois. The actor's name was Geoffroy, and he played the dominant figures in Le Voyage de Monsieur Perrichon and Le Plus Heureux des Trois (The Luckiest Man Alive). Geoffroy had a marvelous comic sense. He continually delighted audiences with his astonished, naive expression and spontaneous, straightforward manner. Much of his spontaneity and naiveté comes through in a reading of Labiche's plays.

The Luckiest Man Alive was written in response to a challenge. Labiche had once stated that, as a comic source, virtue was funnier than vice. Later, the French critic Sarcey was discussing the subject of adultery as it figured in much of contemporary drama. He publicly stated that:

> . . . a vaudeville writer, if he was truly humorous, could amuse us by bringing to the stage those situations which in reality are so gruesome.[2]

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[2] Philippe Soupault, Eugène Labiche, Sa Vie, Son Oeuvre (Mayenne, France: 1964), p. 32.

Labiche gave him this answer:

> I was very impressed with your reflections on adultery and with the conclusion that one could, even with the public of today, draw material from it for a comedy. You believe that one would find there a great source for humor; so do I. You want a play; I will try to create it for you.[3]

The Luckiest Man Alive opened in January, 1870 with an enthusiastic review from Sarcey. The play is just as funny today as it was then, and that is why I have translated and adapted it for performance.

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[3] Soupault, p. 33.

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CHARACTERS

ALPHONSE MARJAVEL, a wealthy bourgeois. " . . . oblivious, fat healthy, merry, pompous . . . "

HERMANCE MARJAVEL, his wife. " . . . a sophisticated woman."

JOBELIN, friend to Marjavel and uncle to Ernest and Berthe; given to reverie of the past.

ERNEST JOBELIN, friend to Marjavel. "His servant! Hired by the year . . . without pay!" Nephew to Jobelin; about thirty-two years old.

BERTHE, niece to Jobelin and cousin to Ernest. " . . . very pretty."

KRAMPACH, Alsacian servant to Marjavel. Speaks English "a bit . . . not too much . . . from time to time all the same."

LISBETH, his wife. " . . . a strapping girl."

PETUNIA, maid to Marjavel and Hermance.

The action of the play is set in Auteuil, France in or prior to 1871 (the year Alsace was ceded to Germany, at the close of the Franco-Prussian War.)

ACT I takes place in Marjavel's drawing room on August 2nd.

ACT II takes place in Marjavel's summerhouse the following day.

ACT III takes place in the gardens of Marjavel's estate. The time is the following evening.

I. ACT I

SCENE 1

Drawing room in MARJAVEL'S house. In one corner, a fireplace. Above the mantle is mounted a stag's head with a clock built into the base. The antlers on the head are able to revolve in such a way as to reveal a small cavity in the skull. A cuckoo-clock on another wall. A bell-pull near the mantle. A large, round sofa (pouf) sits center-stage. The sofa converts to a cabinet by raising the lid. A door up-center leads to the front hall. On either side of this door hang two portraits. One is MARJAVEL'S. The other portrait shows a woman's face on both front and back. A door stage-left leads to the kitchen and servants' quarters. A door stage-right leads to the bedrooms. Down-left, windows look onto a balcony. A small writing desk along one wall. Chairs and small tables are tastefully placed throughout the room.

PETUNIA is discovered, dusting the furniture.

PETUNIA

Dusting . . . dusting. That's all I ever do! I sweep, I wipe, I push dust around. What a job for a girl with my talents!

(PETUNIA goes to the portrait of the woman, picks it up, dusts the frame and examines the back side.)

Now, isn't this edifying? A testament to marital fidelity! Wife Number One, Melanie, now deceased. (Turns picture over) Wife Number Two, Hermance, very much alive. The poor master can't bear to be partial.

(MARJAVEL appears at the stage-right door. He wears a towel around his neck and is in the middle of shaving. HE peeks in.)

MARJAVEL

Petunia!

PETUNIA (aside)

Mr. Marjavel, my master! (SHE returns the picture to its original position. Aloud) Yes, sir?

MARJAVEL

Is Ernest here yet?

PETUNIA

No, sir.

MARJAVEL

No, Petunia?

PETUNIA

No, sir.

MARJAVEL

Ah, me! (HE disappears stage-right.)

PETUNIA

Poor Mr. Marjavel! He just can't live without his Ernest. Once he hired a cab and drove all the way to Paris--just to tell him a joke! Now he's installed Ernest in his summerhouse, given him new furniture, has him over to dinner every night. The only gift he hasn't given Ernest is his wife!

HERMANCE (off-stage)

Petunia!

PETUNIA

Our mistress!

(HERMANCE enters from up-center. SHE is wearing a hat and coat and carries a small wrapped package.)

HERMANCE

Has Ernest arrived?

PETUNIA

(Taking package and placing it on a small table)

No, Madam.

HERMANCE

No, Petunia?

PETUNIA

No, Madam.

HERMANCE

Ah, well! Take my hat, my coat. Leave me.

PETUNIA

Yes, Madam. (Exits stage-right with indicated objects)

SCENE 2

HERMANCE

Alone. Good! (Goes to mantle) I wonder if Ernest has left me a note. (Turns the stag's head to reveal the small cavity) No. Nothing! And it's been a whole week! Men! They don't know the meaning of love! While I--fond, foolish creature that I am--write to him every day. Fond, foolish . . . I must warn him of my suspicions! (Goes to writing desk and, taking pen and paper, begins to write) Danger! The driver of the cab has recognized us. He's a spy. Driver Number 2114. Try to see him. I have a terrible premonition this man will be our undoing . . . "

MARJAVEL (off-stage)

Hermance!

HERMANCE

My husband! (Goes to the stag's head, places the note in the cavity of the skull, and turns the antlers to their original position)

MARJAVEL (off-stage)

Hermance!

(HERMANCE assumes a casual position beside the mantle. MARJAVEL appears at the stage-right door.)

MARJAVEL (peeking in)

Is Ernest here?

HERMANCE

Ah . . . no, Alphonse. I haven't seen him.

MARJAVEL (entering)

What can that stupid boy be doing? (HE goes to the mantle and looks at the clock. HERMANCE eyes him nervously.) At ten o'clock in the morning!

HERMANCE

What's the matter? Do you need him?

MARJAVEL

No. I just enjoy having him around. He's so amusing, such an innocent! (HE lights up a cigar.) Last night his uncle Jobelin and I were discussing the escapades of a certain married lady. Ernest overheard us and--can you imagine--his face turned bright red. "Is it possible," he cried. "Do such women exist? Women who cheat on their husbands!" He's such a boy! Such a boy!

HERMANCE (forcing a laugh)

Yes, he certainly is!

MARJAVEL

One day I'm going to take Ernest under my wing. Have a man-to-man talk with him.

HERMANCE

Well, I never! What do you mean by sticking your nose in other people's affairs? Is it any of your business?

MARJAVEL

Now, don't get angry. I was only joking! (Starts out) Ah, Hermance! I knew there was something I wanted to tell you.

HERMANCE

Well?

MARJAVEL

I've hired a manservant.

HERMANCE

What a good idea!

MARJAVEL

And his wife.

HERMANCE

Oh!

MARJAVEL

Dependable people. Because from now on, I want only dependable people around me. They're coming from Alsace.

HERMANCE

From Alsace?

MARJAVEL

I have a manager there. "Find me a dependable man," I wrote. "Marry him to a dependable woman. Send them to me." They're coming today.

HERMANCE

What about Petunia?

MARJAVEL

Something the matter?

HERMANCE

No, nothing's the matter. Still . . .

MARJAVEL

I'm not against her, mind you. She's not a bad girl. But she keeps the strangest company. There's this fireman, for instance . . .

HERMANCE

Yes, I've noticed him.

MARJAVEL

He's always in the kitchen. Whenever I see him, I cry, "Fire! Fire!" I can't help it. It worries me. (MARJAVEL puts out his cigar and rings for PETUNIA.)

HERMANCE

Are you going to dismiss her?

MARJAVEL

Me dismiss Petunia? Oh, no. No, no.

HERMANCE

Well, then.

MARJAVEL

You are.

HERMANCE

What?

MARJAVEL

It's a household affair. That's your business. My first wife always handled these delicate matters. My sweet Melanie, whose portrait hides behind your own, because I did not want to separate you . . .

HERMANCE

Thanks, so much.

MARJAVEL

To have known her is to have loved her! Only ask Jobelin, Ernest's uncle. He knew how to appreciate her! When there was a servant to be sent away, Melanie would say to me, "Alphonse, why don't you take a little stroll?" So I left. And when I returned, it was done.

HERMANCE

All right. Leave this to me.

MARJAVEL

Of course, if you'd rather, we could wait for Ernest. He can do it.

HERMANCE

No, that's not necessary.

MARJAVEL

As a matter of fact, I have something else to ask him. A favor.

HERMANCE

Alphonse, perhaps I can . . .

MARJAVEL

No, you can't do it. There's a leak in the roof. Ernest is young. He's strong. He can climb up there.

HERMANCE

But that's a very dangerous job!

MARJAVEL

Of course it is. I wouldn't climb up there for a thousand francs.

HERMANCE

Then, why are you sending him . . .

PETUNIA (off-stage)

I'm coming!

MARJAVEL

Shh! It's Petunia. I'm going. Remember Melanie. Be firm. Be adamant.

SCENE 3

PETUNIA (entering from stage-right)

Did you call me, Madam?

HERMANCE

Yes, young lady. I'd like to speak to you. Petunia, you have put me in a very awkward position.

PETUNIA

Me. Madam?

HERMANCE

Yes, very awkward, indeed.

PETUNIA

I don't understand, Madam.

HERMANCE

Well, you see . . . I have no alternative . . . none indeed . . . it has been decided . . . circumstances beyond my control . . . force me . . . despite my own wishes . . . to deprive myself of your services!

PETUNIA

Does that mean I'm fired, Madam?

HERMANCE

Are you really so surprised?

PETUNIA

No. I should have guessed as much. It's Mr. Ernest, isn't it?

HERMANCE

Mr. Ernest has nothing to do with my household affairs.

PETUNIA

I wasn't thinking of household affairs, Madam. It's just that Mr. Ernest is such a good friend of the master . . .

HERMANCE

That's true.

PETUNIA

And the mistress.

HERMANCE (aside)

She suspects something.

PETUNIA

May I have a week's notice, Madam?

HERMANCE

Certainly. That's not too much to ask.

PETUNIA (crying)

You don't know how painful this is to me. I was very attached to you, Madam. And to Mr. Marjavel. And even to Mr. Ernest!

HERMANCE

All right, all right. You have been devoted . . . and discreet . . .

PETUNIA

Very discreet, Madam!

HERMANCE

I will speak to my husband on your behalf. You must understand that he is very annoyed about this fireman you've been seeing.

PETUNIA

Madam! Whom should I receive? Ambassadors? Besides this fireman . . . is my guardian.

HERMANCE (aside)

She's making fun of me. (Aloud) Go. I'll call you later.

PETUNIA (starting out)

I almost forgot. Madam, that mauve dress you were wearing yesterday . . .

HERMANCE

Mauve? You mean my purple.

PETUNIA

Oh, was it purple? Well, the lace is a bit frayed. Should I mend it for you?

HERMANCE

Don't bother. I give it to you. Maybe you can do something with it.

PETUNIA

Thank you, Madam! I'm eternally grateful. (Starts out, pauses by stage-left door) I will never leave you, Madam. (Exits stage-left)

SCENE 4

HERMANCE (alone)

She knows something. How did she find out? And where is Ernest?

(MARJAVEL enters from up-center.)

MARJAVEL

Is he here yet?

HERMANCE (forgetting herself)

No, I'm waiting for him.

MARJAVEL

So am I. (Looks at clock) Eleven o'clock. He's probably still getting dressed. Waxing his moustache! Well, that settles it.

HERMANCE

What?

MARJAVEL

Ernest will have to leave.

HERMANCE

Now you're being unjust. He watered your garden for three hours last night. While you stood by and smoked your cigar!

MARJAVEL

Well, you don't expect me to water it myself. Oh! My lumbago! Very painful . . . Besides, later on, I played bezique with him.

HERMANCE

You mean, he played bezique with you.

MARJAVEL

No, I played bezique with him.

HERMANCE

He detests the game!

MARJAVEL

Ridiculous! Every evening Ernest says to me, "Well, Papa Marjavel. Aren't we going to have our little game?" You've seen it for yourself. You sit next to us with your sewing. That's when his eyes sparkle and light up.

HERMANCE (quickly)

At the sight of the cards!

MARJAVEL

Well, I should think so! Want me to tell you something? Ernest is a gambler. He doesn't play the horses. He doesn't like the gaming tables. He doesn't even care for women . . . so far as I've noticed.

(HERMANCE smiles.)

But, he is a gambler. You can tell by his eyes. He'll turn out badly. I'll have to warn his uncle Jobelin. But let's not talk about that now. You've seen Petunia. Have you . . .

HERMANCE (aside)

What can I say to him? (Runs to small package on table) My dear, I have a surprise for you.

MARJAVEL

What's this?

HERMANCE (giving HIM the package)

Today is your feast day. The feast of Saint Alphonse.

MARJAVEL (opening the package)

A nightcap!

HERMANCE

I made it myself.

MARJAVEL

My darling. How thoughtful you are! (Kisses HER)

HERMANCE

You had that awful headcold last winter . . .

MARJAVEL

That's true. It made my nose swell.

HERMANCE

The inside is lined with eiderdown.

MARJAVEL

With eiderdown! She encircles my head with eiderdown! My word, there is not a man alive luckier than I. It was the same way with my first wife. Two wives, two saints, two angels . . . how lucky I am! (Roguishly) Hermance, tonight, to prove my gratitude, I'm going to read my newspaper in your room!

HERMANCE

Oh, hush!

MARJAVEL

You don't want me to read my newspaper in your room! Refuse me! Go ahead, say the words . . . Ah! You say nothing!

HERMANCE

Really, Alphonse, you're such a fool.

MARJAVEL

Lord!

HERMANCE

What now?

MARJAVEL

Today is my feast day. We shall have the usual visitors. Jobelin with his bouquet--he never fails to bring it--little Berthe, his niece; my sister Isaure . . .

HERMANCE

Well?

MARJAVEL

What are we going to do? We have no servants. The Alsacians have not arrived. Petunia is gone. There's only Ernest left to help us.

HERMANCE

As a matter of fact, Petunia is still here.

MARJAVEL

Good! She can leave tomorrow.

HERMANCE

You don't understand. She told me the whole story. It's a very delicate situation.

MARJAVEL

I knew it! The fireman!

HERMANCE

No, that's not it at all. The truth is . . . Petunia is raising two orphans in a garret . . . on her meager wages!

MARJAVEL

You're not serious!

HERMANCE

And she's giving them a good education . . . with her savings!

MARJAVEL

You don't say! I would never have believed it!

HERMANCE

She has sacrificed herself to them. She has renounced the joys of marriage, of motherhood . . .

MARJAVEL

That's enough. What about the fireman?

HERMANCE

The fireman? Oh, yes! The fireman. He's their father.

MARJAVEL

Then they're not orphans.

HERMANCE

Well, you can hardly call a fireman a father. He's always putting out fires.

MARJAVEL

That's true. What you have told me has moved me deeply. Petunia will stay. (Rings bell)

HERMANCE

What are you doing?

MARJAVEL

I wish to speak to her. Offer her a few words of encouragement. (PETUNIA enters from stage-left.) There she is. Come here, Petunia. Come here, my girl.

PETUNIA

Sir?

MARJAVEL

It's all right. You don't have to explain. I know everything. Continue, Miss, to travel this path of self-sacrifice and self-abnegation, this difficult path which you have chosen for yourself.

PETUNIA

I beg your pardon?

MARJAVEL

The orphans will bring you happiness. (Starts out) Continue, Miss, continue. The orphans will bring you happiness. (Exits stage-right)

PETUNIA

What orphans?

HERMANCE

Keep your mouth closed--and you'll find the doors of the house open to you. (Exits stage-right)

SCENE 5

PETUNIA (alone)

Clever! That's what my mistress is! She's even got the master paying me compliments.

(JOBELIN enters from up-center, carrying a bouquet of roses and a bottle of rum.)

JOBELIN

Is Marjavel at home?

PETUNIA

Mister Jobelin! I'll tell him that you're here. (Exits stage-right)

JOBELIN (alone)

August the second. Saint Alphonse's Day. Marjavel's feast day. I always come on his feast day. This room never changes. I can still see her standing here, my sweet Melanie. Only a year and three days ago. Poor woman! How quickly one forgets! But not I. (Goes to portrait) Not I, my dear. Here I am, a pilgrim returning to his . . . Wrong side. (Turns picture over) Here I am. A pilgrim returning to his shrine. (Chuckles) We were naughty, weren't we? We tricked you, Marjavel. You worthy man! But I don't blame myself, because I'm sorry. Yes, I'm sorry that she's not here. It was my idea to have her portrait painted on the back of this other one. The last time I saw Melanie, we were in a cab together. She was so afraid of being recognized. How charming she was! How shy! Melanie hid her face behind a fan. She told everyone she'd one that fan at a lottery. A lottery! Ha! I gave it to her. Poor child! I had the devilish idea of giving Marjavel that bizarre clock for his feast day. No one has ever discovered our hiding place. (Goes to stag's head and turns the antlers) What's this? A note! We must have forgotten it. That was rash! (Turns antlers to original position) It's written in a trembling hand. Melanie's, all right. She was always trembling. (Reading) "Danger! The driver of the cab has recognized us. He's a spy. Driver Number 2114. Try to see him. I have a terrible premonition this man will be our undoing." Melanie was so childish about her premonitions. I remember one day she dreamt we were being followed by a black cat. And for weeks she maintained we were being stalked by the commissioner of police.

(PETUNIA enters from the stage-right door.)

PETUNIA

Mr. Marjavel will see you now.

JOBELIN

Good! My roses--ah, they're still fresh. Such an aroma! And rum. 1789. Nothing like it in the world.

(JOBELIN exits, following PETUNIA through the stage-right door. ERNEST enters from up-center, carrying a bouquet of roses and a bottle of rum.)

ERNEST (alone)

Well, happy feast day, Papa Marjavel. Here I am! Armed with roses and rum from 1789. Nothing like it in the world! I pinched it from my uncle Jobelin's cellar. Good grief, my back! That brute Marjavel made me water his garden for three hours last night. Ah, Hermance! I only did it for you. There she is. (Goes to portrait) We have been wicked, haven't we? What's this? Oh, wrong side. (Turns picture over) Who keeps turning this picture over? Yes, wicked. We've tricked you, Marjavel, you worthy man! But I don't blame myself because I'm not sorry. Ha! Not at all. Yesterday we took a delightful walk along the outside of the city. And this morning, in my pocket, I found the number of our cabdriver. 2114. I'll keep it as a love token. Also as a reminder not to get that lazy driver again. Let's see if Hermance has left me a note. (Turns the antlers of the stag's head) Nothing! Good grief, my back! I think I'm getting lumbago.

(HERMANCE enters from stage-right.)

SCENE 7

HERMANCE (running to ERNEST)

There you are, Ernest. Finally! I've been waiting for you all morning.

ERNEST

What is it?

HERMANCE

I have only a minute. And a thousand things to tell you . . . Shh! Someone's coming. (THEY separate.)

ERNEST (looking off-stage)

There's no one coming. Pull yourself together.

HERMANCE

Let's see. Oh, I don't know where to start. Where should I start? Petunia!

ERNEST

Petunia?

HERMANCE

Yes. She's suspicious. And Marjavel wants to fire her.

ERNEST

No!

HERMANCE

Yes! But I persuaded him to let her stay.

ERNEST

Bravo!

HERMANCE

And he's hired two Alsacians.

ERNEST

Alsacians?

HERMANCE

Dependable people, he says. To spy on us, no doubt!

ERNEST

Are you sure?

HERMANCE

I hear someone. (SHE sits down quickly on the sofa.)

ERNEST (looking out window)

You're wrong. It's only a carriage.

HERMANCE

A carriage . . . Oh, my God, a carriage! We must beware of the coachman . . .

ERNEST

What coachman?

HERMANCE

And if you should be asked to climb on the roof, Ernest, don't do it. It's very dangerous.

ERNEST

What roof?

HERMANCE

Oh! The most important thing! I left my fan in the cab. It was a present from my husband.

ERNEST

Hermance, your fan . . . I found it and put it in my overcoat pocket.

HERMANCE

Quick! Give it to me!

ERNEST

Later. Something happened this morning. You see, I went to my uncle's house . . . to, uh, borrow something . . . and I left my overcoat there.

HERMANCE

Someone will find it! We're done for!

ERNEST

Don't tremble so. I can't stand it when you tremble. (Takes HER by the waist) Oh, my dear, I am discreet . . . careful . . .

(The cuckoo sounds two o'clock.)

HERMANCE

Someone's coming! (SHE pulls away.)

ERNEST

It's not your husband! It's the cuckoo. Oh! Why do we have to talk like this? Only from afar.

HERMANCE

I simply can't endure it.

ERNEST

Neither can I. Last night, I was driven to desperate straights.

HERMANCE

What do you mean?

ERNEST

I climbed the trellis below the balcony outside your room. At least, I thought it was your room. So, I gave three short raps on the window.

HERMANCE

Oh, heavens!

ERNEST

A gruff voice answered, "Who goes there?"

HERMANCE

My sister-in-law! Done for!

ERNEST

Don't worry. I toppled down into the grass and didn't move until everything was silent. But I swear that I will try again tonight!

HERMANCE

Tonight! No, that's impossible! I forbid you!

ERNEST

Why?

HERMANCE

It's Marjavel's feast day and . . .

ERNEST

And what?

HERMANCE

Nothing.

ERNEST

Listen. It may be his feast day, but it's not going to be his feast night. If the coast is clear, signal me. Open this window, and I'll climb the trellis.

HERMANCE

No! Impossible! Leave me. They must not find us here together. Return in five minutes.

ERNEST

Yes . . . no! Three minutes.

(ERNEST exits through the up-center door. MARJAVEL enters through the stage-right door, with his arm around JOBELIN.)

SCENE 8

HERMANCE (aside)

That was close!

JOBELIN (gesturing with the bottle)

This was brought over from Jamaica in 1789 by Lafayette's cousin, whose nephew bequeathed it to my grandfather's uncle. There's nothing like it in the world.

MARJAVEL

Ah, my good Jobelin! What a true friend you are! (To HERMANCE) Has Ernest come yet?

HERMANCE

I haven't seen him.

JOBELIN

My niece Berthe will be arriving shortly, with a little something to commemorate your feast.

MARJAVEL

Ah! Dear little Berthe! She's also been thinking of me. But what can Ernest be doing? It seems to me that on an occasion such as this . . .

(PETUNIA enters from up-center, followed by ERNEST.)

PETUNIA (announcing)

Mister Ernest Jobelin. (SHE exits up-center.)

ERNEST (greeting HERMANCE ceremoniously)

Madam! . . . My dear Marjavel! (Hands MARJAVEL the bouquet)

MARJAVEL

My dear Ernest. In the future, don't keep me waiting!

ERNEST

Excuse me, but . . . my dear Marjavel, I had to go a long way this morning to bring you this.

MARJAVEL

What?

ERNEST

This bottle of 1789 rum. There's nothing like it in the world.

JOBELIN (aside)

I recognize that!

ERNEST

This was brought over from Jamaica in 1789 by Lafayette's cousin . . .

MARJAVEL

Lafayette's cousin must have brought back two of them.

ERNEST (softly, to JOBELIN)

What? Do you have two bottles of this rum?

JOBELIN (softly)

Of course not. Mine comes from the United Cellars.

MARJAVEL

My friends, my sincere thanks. So much do I value your most precious gifts--these two bottles--that I assure you now, I will be the only one to drink from them.

JOBELIN

But . . .

MARJAVEL

Please! Don't thank me.

JOBELIN (aside)

He might at least have offered me a taste!

(PETUNIA enters from up-center, followed by BERTHE.)

SCENE 9

PETUNIA (announcing)

Miss Berthe Jobelin. (PETUNIA exits up-center.)

JOBELIN

Ah! My niece.

BERTHE (holding small wrapped package)

Good day, Madam. Mr. Marjavel, permit me to offer you . . .

JOBELIN

The fruits of her toil.

MARJAVEL (opening the package)

A pair of suspenders! Why, thank you, child! I promise you I'll be the only one to wear them.

JOBELIN (aside)

The suspenders I understand . . . but the rum!

BERTHE (to ERNEST)

Oh, good day, Cousin. Here's your overcoat. You left it at Uncle's house. And see what fell from the pocket. (Pulls out fan)

HERMANCE (aside)

My fan!

ERNEST (aside)

Stupid little thing!

MARJAVEL (examining fan)

Let me see. It's very pretty.

ERNEST (softly, to HERMANCE)

He'll recognize it!

HERMANCE (softly)

We're done for!

MARJAVEL

You sly fellow! Carrying fans in the pocket of your overcoat!

JOBELIN (aside, staring at fan)

That looks like the fan I gave Melanie!

ERNEST

Please, Mr. Marjavel, don't think . . .

MARJAVEL

I do believe that this fan belongs to a woman. But one thing's certain: it doesn't belong to my wife!

HERMANCE (forcing a smile)

Of course not.

ERNEST

Oh! That's funny!

JOBELIN (taking fan from MARJAVEL)

May I see? Aha! I was right! I recognize it! This fan belongs to . . . (EVERYONE reacts.) to . . . Anne of Austria!

ERNEST (quickly)

And I bought it . . . to give to my cousin Berthe.

BERTHE

For me? Oh, how happy I am! (To JOBELIN) I told you he loved me!

JOBELIN

I don't believe it!

BERTHE

What don't you believe?

JOBELIN

Nothing. (Aside) I don't know what I'm saying.

MARJAVEL (ringing bell-pull)

My friends. We'll spend this day together. I have a plan. (HE notices the stag's head.) Ah!

EVERYONE

What?

MARJAVEL

Someone's been playing with my head!

HERMANCE

No!

ERNEST and JOBELIN

No!

MARJAVEL

Look! Its horns are turned around.

JOBELIN (aside)

Nincompoop!

ERNEST (aside)

Blunderbuss!

MARJAVEL (examining the head)

I never noticed this before. It turns, does it? (HE plays with the antlers.)

HERMANCE (softly, to ERNEST)

Did you get my note?

ERNEST (softly)

No.

HERMANCE (softly)

Done for!

MARJAVEL

Look! It opens, too! It forms a little box!

HERMANCE (softly, to ERNEST)

The note's gone.

ERNEST (softly)

Someone must have taken it.

HERMANCE (softly)

Petunia.

JOBELIN (aside, fingering note)

How lucky I was to have found this!

MARJAVEL (turning antlers back)

How nice! I'll keep my postage stamps in there.

(PETUNIA enters from up-center.)

PETUNIA

Did Madam call?

HERMANCE (aside)

It's her!

ERNEST (softly, to PETUNIA)

Here are twenty francs. Burn it!

PETUNIA

What? (Aside) He must be mad.

MARJAVEL

Petunia, find us a carriage. Make sure it's large. There are five of us.

PETUNIA

Right away, sir. (Exits up-center)

MARJAVEL

We shall dine at Maxime's. On my feast day, we shall feast together. My treat.

BERTHE

How wonderful! I've never eaten in a restaurant before.

ERNEST (softly, to HERMANCE)

Maxime's? Why don't you and I get a secluded table near the . . .

HERMANCE

Shh!

ERNEST

Certainly, my dear. It's his feast!

(PETUNIA enters from up-center.)

PETUNIA

Your cab is waiting, sir. Driver Number 2114.

HERMANCE, ERNEST and JOBELIN

Oh, my goodness!

MARJAVEL

What's the matter?

HERMANCE

Oh, nothing . . . I just pricked myself! The roses . . .

JOBELIN

I forgot my spectacles!

ERNEST

My boot is pinching me!

HERMANCE (softly, to ERNEST)

2114. That's the number of our cabdriver.

ERNEST (softly)

Don't I know it!

HERMANCE

He'll recognize us!

ERNEST

No, he won't.

HERMANCE

Yes, he will.

ERNEST

Damme!

HERMANCE

Disguise yourself. Mask your face. I'll do the same. (Puts on HER veil.)

ERNEST (aside)

What can I use? I have it! (Takes out a handkerchief, wraps it around HIS nose)

JOBELIN (aside)

The coachman might not recognize me after a year, but one can never be too careful. (Notices spectacles on mantle) Marjavel's glasses! (Puts them on)

MARJAVEL (noticing them)

What the devil have you done to yourselves?

HERMANCE

I'm allergic to dust.

JOBELIN

I'm afraid of the sun.

ERNEST

I get nosebleed in the wind.

BERTHE (to ERNEST)

You look silly!

ERNEST (softly)

Be quiet, Berthe, and give me your arm.

MARJAVEL

Petunia, if two Alsacians come here, ask them to sit down in the kitchen and tell them to wait for me.

PETUNIA

Very well, sir.

MARJAVEL (taking HERMANCE'S arm)

Let's be off.

JOBELIN (aside)

I can't see a thing. (HE bumps into HERMANCE.)

ERNEST (aside)

I pray no one sees me.

(EVERYONE exits up-center except PETUNIA.)

SCENE 10

PETUNIA (calling after THEM)

Have a pleasant trip! (Returning) Imagine! Me, mistress of the house! Alone . . . except for Miss Isaure, the master's sister. But she won't be leaving her room. She dyed her hair this morning. Now she's letting it dry.

(KRAMPACH and LISBETH enter from stage-left. THEY wear Alsacian dress and are carrying odd-shaped packages. LISBETH holds a cooking pot.)

KRAMPACH

Guten Tag mein Fräulein . . . Whont hier Herr Marjavel? Ein Mann, welcher einen grossen Bauch und Reichtum hat . . .

(LISBETH repeats the same German sentence.)

PETUNIA

What's that? What do you want?

KRAMPACH (to LISBETH)

She speaks not German. (To PETUNIA) Is this the house of Herr Marjavel? A big, fat man who a big, fat wallet has?

LISBETH

A big, fat man who a big, fat wallet has!

PETUNIA (aside)

These must be our Alsacians. (Aloud) You are Alsacian?

KRAMPACH

Ja!

LISBETH

Ja!

PETUNIA (aside)

Well, they look harmless enough.

KRAMPACH

Wir sind diesen Morgen . . . (Correcting HIMSELF) We this morning at four o'clock have left.

PETUNIA

Do you speak English?

KRAMPACH

Ja . . . a bit . . . not much . . . from time to time all the same. (Slaps HIS thigh) Maikäfer! But my wife has to school been more than me . . . who was at all not there. (Slaps HIS thigh) Maikäfer!

PETUNIA (aside)

What's wrong with him? Perhaps it's some sort of Alsacian greeting. (Slaps HER thigh) Madam speaks English?

LISBETH

Ja.

PETUNIA

And you're going to work for Mr. Marjavel?

LISBETH

Ja.

PETUNIA

And he (Indicating KRAMPACH) is your husband?

LISBETH

Ja!

(KRAMPACH starts to sit on the sofa.)

PETUNIA (noticing KRAMPACH)

No! Don't sit there! I'll get you some kitchen chairs. Give me your packages.

KRAMPACH (giving PETUNIA HIS packages)

Danke schön.

PETUNIA (to LISBETH)

And yours? (LISBETH starts to give PETUNIA the pot.)

KRAMPACH

No! Not the cooking pot! A wife should never her cooking pot abandon!

PETUNIA

Now, now. Temper, temper. I wouldn't give a sou for your cooking pot. (SHE exits stage-left.)

SCENE 11

KRAMPACH (slapping HIMSELF)

Take that! And that! And that!

LISBETH

What's the matter with you?

KRAMPACH

The matter with me is that this morning before we left our house, I went out to the back of the garden and got a flea in my pants trapped.

LISBETH

A flea?

KRAMPACH

Which I have carried around since we Mulhouse have left. It scratches me. It bites me. Take that! And that! And that!

LISBETH

Why don't you get rid of it?

KRAMPACH

Well, sure, I keep it not out of love! But when you on a train travel with ladies!--ones whom you do not know--you cannot your pants easily take off. The conductor would me off the train put!

LISBETH

You should have gone into a station.

KRAMPACH

Well, ja! I tried! No sooner did I off the train get than I had to climb back on!

LISBETH

Well, if you weren't such a Schlafmütze . . .

KRAMPACH

At Illfurth . . . I asked around. And ja, someone had the place shown me where it was alright myself to undress. There was a woman there who the place ran . . .

LISBETH

Well?

KRAMPACH

She wanted money have to go inside! I wanted that not! (Slaps HIMSELF) Ach! There he goes again, the pest! Slap my back! Harder! Harder! Lower! Lower! All right, that is that. I will get him out.

(KRAMPACH starts to pull down HIS suspenders.)

LISBETH

No! Don't do that!

KRAMPACH

There is no one here.

LISBETH

Well, what about me?

KRAMPACH

You are part of the furniture. Keep a watch out. If someone comes, shout.

LISBETH

Hurry up!

KRAMPACH

How terrible it is a flea in your pants to have . . .

LISBETH

Quick! Someone's coming!

SCENE 12

PETUNIA enters from stage-left, carrying a chair.

PETUNIA

All right, here's a chair.

KRAMPACH (aside, sitting down)

If I could just sit down on it . . . (To LISBETH) If you tired are, can you on your pot sit.

LISBETH

No, my bonnets are inside.

KRAMPACH

You can on the lid sit.

LISBETH

I don't want to.

KRAMPACH

As you wish.

PETUNIA

Well, you ought to be ashamed of yourself! Are you going to let your wife stand while you sit?

KRAMPACH

No more than she deserves.

PETUNIA

What do you mean?

KRAMPACH

Shh! She has a dreadful mistake before her marriage made.

PETUNIA

You mean . . . with you?

KRAMPACH

With me, would it not a mistake have been.

LISBETH (crying)

You promised me you would never talk about it!

KRAMPACH

I will never about it talk! I promised it you! But sure can I the lady it tell who nothing from it knows! (Jumps up and down several times and ends by scratching HIMSELF with the chair) This cannot last. It is impossible!

PETUNIA (aside)

I can't understand it. I've never seen anybody jump around so much!

KRAMPACH

When I Lisbeth married, she was a puny girl, a weakling. Her father searched for me in the fields, where I was at beets pulling. He said to me, "Krampach, you are an honest man. My daughter has a mistake made. You can her for your wife have."

PETUNIA

Charming!

KRAMPACH

I answered him with a smile . . . like this (HE grins) . . . which meant, "Papa Schaffouskraoussmakusen, I would rather the first at the gates of Rome be than the second at Lisbeth."

PETUNIA

You're proud, then?

KRAMPACH

Ja . . . I am a bit proud.

PETUNIA

But did you love her?

KRAMPACH

I loved her . . . ja, I loved her! She should five thousand francs from her mother get, Mama Schaffouskraoussmakusen.

PETUNIA

You married her for her money, then?

KRAMPACH

True. I invested this money in Kuissermann's business.

LISBETH

He is a dealer in leeches.

KRAMPACH

Quiet! You cannot speak. You have a mistake made! I have the money in Kuissermann's business invested, a dealer in leeches, at an interest of twenty-two percent . . .

LISBETH

Which he did not pay!

KRAMPACH

That is a very good interest, is it not?

PETUNIA

But if he wasn't paying you . . .

KRAMPACH

He was letting it accumulate. But when the time came the accounts to settle, he left for Paris with the accumulation.

PETUNIA

My God! You were robbed!

KRAMPACH

Ja. But I will him again find.

PETUNIA

But Paris is a very big city!

KRAMPACH

No matter. I have a plan. Every Sunday, I will in the market place stand. Eventually he will come.

(The front door bell rings.)

PETUNIA

Someone's ringing. I'll be right back. (SHE exits up-center.)

SCENE 13

KRAMPACH

What a pest! He is again awake. She is gone, that is that, and I will him out get. (KRAMPACH unhooks HIS suspenders.)

(MARJAVEL enters from up-center, followed by HERMANCE and PETUNIA.)

MARJAVEL

Where are they? I want to see them.

PETUNIA

There they are.

MARJAVEL (addressing KRAMPACH and LISBETH)

Good day, my friends! Did you have a pleasant trip?

KRAMPACH

Thanks. It did not badly go. And my wife, no worse. (Shakes MARJAVEL'S hand)

MARJAVEL (withdrawing HIS hand)

No need to shake hands. (To HERMANCE) They seem like dependable people. (To KRAMPACH) Make sure you're dressed before you come into the parlor.

HERMANCE

You didn't tell me they were peasants!

MARJAVEL

Leave it to me. After one week, you won't recognize them. Petunia, since it's late, show them to their room. We'll talk in the morning.

KRAMPACH (bowing)

Good evening, Sir and Madam.

LISBETH

Good evening, Sir and Madam.

MARJAVEL (aside, eying LISBETH)

Hmm. A very pretty girl.

(LISBETH and PETUNIA exit stage-left.)

KRAMPACH (aside, starting out)

This time will I the flea out get.

MARJAVEL

Krampach!

KRAMPACH

Ja, sir?

MARJAVEL

Stay here. Since you are my personal valet, you will help me get undressed. First, light the candles.

KRAMPACH (aside)

Never alone! Not since we left Mulhouse . . . (Goes to light candles)

MARJAVEL (to HERMANCE)

I need him now because I do not feel too well.

HERMANCE

What's the matter?

MARJAVEL

I ate two slices of melon at dinner.

HERMANCE

Well, I've warned you often enough about that.

MARJAVEL

It's unbelievable! The first slice always goes down so smoothly. And the second one is always so fatal!

HERMANCE

Then why do you always eat two of them?

MARJAVEL

It's my feast day! You talk as if you had no faults!

HERMANCE (quickly)

What I want, Alphonse . . .

MARJAVEL

Oh! Oh! I'm ill. That miserable second slice! I'm suffocating . . . Krampach!

KRAMPACH

Sir?

MARJAVEL

Open the window.

HERMANCE (aside)

Oh, goodness! That's the signal Ernest is waiting for! (Aloud) No! Don't open it!

MARJAVEL

What do you mean? Open it!

HERMANCE

You'll catch cold.

MARJAVEL

Don't worry, my dear. There's no danger. I'm well covered. (To KRAMPACH) Open it. (KRAMPACH opens the window.) Ah! That's good. I feel better already.

HERMANCE (aside)

Now Ernest will be climbing up the trellis. (Aloud) My dear, if you don't feel comfortable, why don't you go to bed?

MARJAVEL

Do you think I should?

HERMANCE

Yes, it's just what you need.

MARJAVEL

Very well, I'll take your advice. (Starts out) Good night, my dear. And don't worry. Tomorrow night, I'll read my newspaper in your room.

HERMANCE

Quickly, my dear! To bed.

MARJAVEL

Krampach, follow me.

KRAMPACH

Right away, sir. (Takes the fire tongs from the mantle and begins hitting HIS back. KRAMPACH and MARJAVEL exit stage-right.)

SCENE 14

HERMANCE

I'd better close this window quickly. (Heads for window. ERNEST appears on the balcony with a piece of drainpipe in HIS hand.) Too late!

ERNEST (out of breath)

I saw the signal . . . I come to you with a heart full of love.

HERMANCE

What's that in your hand?

ERNEST

It's a piece of drainpipe. It came unstuck when I was climbing up.

I couldn't let it fall . . . the noise . . . so I brought it with me. . . . Oh, Hermance, I come to you with a heart full of love!

HERMANCE

Hide it!

ERNEST

I can't.

HERMANCE

If my husband ever found it . . .

ERNEST

Oh! You mean the drainpipe. Well, I don't intend to keep it forever. Where should I put it?

HERMANCE

I don't know. (Goes to sofa and opens the lid) Oh, here! Inside the sofa.

ERNEST

What's this? It opens up! Very clever. (Puts the drainpipe inside the sofa and closes it) Now that that's done . . . Hermance, I come to you with a heart full of love!

HERMANCE

Go away.

ERNEST

Why?

HERMANCE

My husband's in there, sleeping.

ERNEST

That doesn't bother me. Hermance! Forget the rest of the world. We are alone, you and I. Romeo has climbed Juliet's balcony.

HERMANCE

Not so loud!

ERNEST

One kiss . . . one kiss, and I'll depart. (Starts to kiss HER)

VOICE OF MARJAVEL (off-stage)

Hermance!

ERNEST

Damme! (THEY separate.)

VOICE OF MARJAVEL

Hermance!

HERMANCE

He's coming! Depart!

ERNEST

Yes . . . this balcony shall serve me again. (Starts toward window) Oh, my God!

HERMANCE

Hurry up!

ERNEST

I can't. Your sister-in-law is at her window, drying her hair.

HERMANCE

Oh, no! And the door is closed. Where can you hide?

VOICE OF MARJAVEL

Hermance!

HERMANCE

Here. Inside the couch.

ERNEST

With the drainpipe? There'll never be room for both of us.

HERMANCE

Stop talking! (ERNEST climbs in sofa. HERMANCE closes it.)

SCENE 15

MARJAVEL enters from stage-right, followed by KRAMPACH. HE is wearing a night shirt.

MARJAVEL

Didn't you hear me call, my dearest?

HERMANCE

No. I heard nothing.

KRAMPACH

The master an ache in his stomach has. (Slaps HIS thighs with tongs)

MARJAVEL

And you're not helping me by slapping your thighs! Oh! Oh! I don't feel well. (HE sits down on the sofa.)

HERMANCE (aside)

Marjavel's sitting on Ernest!

MARJAVEL

I wish someone would go look for Ernest.

HERMANCE

It's no use . . .

MARJAVEL

Yes, it is! I want to see Ernest! (To KRAMPACH) Krampach, go into the summerhouse at the end of the garden. And if Ernest is sleeping, don't be afraid to awaken him.

KRAMPACH

Ja, sir. (Aside) In the garden, is maybe a fig-leaf where I myself can undress behind. (HE returns the tongs to the fireplace and exits up-stage.)

SCENE 16

MARJAVEL

Krampach will sleep on the sofa.

HERMANCE

What an idea!

MARJAVEL

So that if I need attention . . .

HERMANCE (aside)

What can I do? He must be suffocating in there. (Aloud) Do you feel better, dear?

MARJAVEL

No, I still feel all stuffed up.

HERMANCE (feeling HIS pulse)

Oh, my goodness! Your hands are like ice! You must be catching cold!

MARJAVEL

Do you really think so?

HERMANCE

You must walk . . . walk quickly!

MARJAVEL

Yes. Re-establish the circulation. (HE starts pacing.)

HERMANCE

Keep going! You have the whole house to walk around in.

MARJAVEL

Good thinking. I'll walk from one end of the house to the other. (HE starts out toward the stage-right door, taking great steps.) One . . . two . . . three . . . (Exits stage-right)

HERMANCE (opening the sofa)

Ernest, quick! Get out!

ERNEST (looking very pale)

I'm suffocating. . . . May I please have a glass of water?

MARJAVEL (off-stage)

Twenty-three . . . twenty-four . . .

(ERNEST ducks back into the sofa quickly. HERMANCE closes the lid and sits down on it.)

HERMANCE

Oh!

MARJAVEL

(Entering from stage-right and crossing the stage)

Twenty-five . . . twenty-six . . . twenty-seven . . . (HE disappears stage-left.)

(HERMANCE opens the sofa.)

ERNEST (continuing)

With a bit of lemon . . .

HERMANCE

We don't have time. He'll be back in a minute.

ERNEST (climbing out)

That drainpipe was cutting my face.

HERMANCE

I hear him! Go! You can come back in five minutes.

ERNEST

Yes . . . what a life! (HE exits up-center.)

MARJAVEL (re-entering from stage-left)

Fifty-one . . . fifty-two! I've done fifty-two steps! (To HERMANCE) Hasn't Ernest come yet?

HERMANCE

Not yet.

MARJAVEL (sitting on sofa)

I'm tired out . . . the walking . . . fifty-two steps. (Someone knocks

discreetly at the up-center door.) Come in.

(ERNEST enters from up-center.)

HERMANCE

It's Ernest!

MARJAVEL (sullenly)

How fortunate!

ERNEST (eagerly)

I heard you were asking for me. What's the matter?

HERMANCE

My husband isn't well. He's suffering. I'm going to make him some tea and prepare a poultice to soothe him. Would you light the fire, Ernest? (SHE exits stage-left.)

MARJAVEL (sharply)

Light the fire!

ERNEST (aside)

He's certainly being pleasant!

MARJAVEL

Oooh! Ah-h!

ERNEST

Oh, my poor friend! How are you feeling?

MARJAVEL

Very weak. I thought you would never come.

ERNEST

Well, I was in bed. I had to slip on a pair of trousers.

MARJAVEL

Ernest, if I had a sick friend, I wouldn't worry about trousers.

ERNEST

Really, sir, with all the ladies in the house! (HE feels MARJAVEL'S

pulse.) Nothing to worry about. A bit of exhaustion.

MARJAVEL

What did you say?

ERNEST

It's exhaustion.

MARJAVEL

Is it dangerous?

ERNEST

No.

(HERMANCE enters from stage-left, carrying a cup of tea and a small casserole dish.)

HERMANCE (to MARJAVEL)

Here, my dear. Have a cup of tea.

MARJAVEL

Thank you. (HE takes a sip.) Oh! It's too hot! (HERMANCE and ERNEST blow on the cup.) Hermance, Ernest tells me that I have exhaustion. But don't worry. It's not dangerous.

HERMANCE (loosening MARJAVEL'S collar)

Here, Ernest. You apply the poultice.

ERNEST

Me? (SHE hands it to HIM. ERNEST scoops up a huge quantity of the poultice and begins to apply it to MARJAVEL.)

HERMANCE

No! Stir it first!

ERNEST

Romeo and Juliet! Bah! (Crosses to fireplace, sits and begins to stir)

MARJAVEL (sipping the tea)

Ah! That's better. I can feel it going down. Hermance, come and sit close to me.

HERMANCE

All right, dear. (SHE takes a chair and moves it some distance from MARJAVEL.)

ERNEST (aside)

He's forgotten about me!

MARJAVEL

No! Closer, Hermance, closer! (SHE moves the chair closer.) Don't be shy! Sit here by me. On the sofa.

HERMANCE (sitting on the sofa)

Here I am, dear.

MARJAVEL

(Taking HER hands and kissing them)

You're an angel! How can I thank you?

ERNEST (aside, stirring vigorously)

I might as well not be here.

HERMANCE

You don't have to thank me, Alphonse. (SHE strokes HIS forehead.)

MARJAVEL (taking HER by the waist)

You take good care of your little boy, don't you? (SHE giggles.)

ERNEST (aside, stirring harder)

Damme! He's still ignoring me!

MARJAVEL

Do you love your little pouter pigeon? (Kisses HER arms and neck)

ERNEST (aside)

I can't stand it any longer! He's driving me mad! (ERNEST jumps up and crosses to MARJAVEL. HERMANCE rises. Aloud) Here, Marjavel! Take your poultice! (Dumps it on HIM)

END ACT I

II. ACT II

SCENE 1

A sitting room in the summerhouse where ERNEST lives. Furnished like a country cottage. Doors in the left and right side walls leading outside. The door stage-left leads to the house. The door stage-right leads to another part of the garden. A door upstage leads to ERNEST's bedroom. In the back wall, a fireplace with an armchair and hassock to one side of it. A secretary desk along one wall. Small tables and chairs scattered throughout the room.

ERNEST is asleep in the armchair, holding a piece of drainpipe. A knock at the stage-left door. ERNEST does not wake up. JOBELIN peeks in.

JOBELIN

Hello? (Not noticing ERNEST. To someone behind HIM) No one's here. (HE enters. Aside) Just stepping into this room brings back so many memories. Memories of my youth and Melanie. Ah, Melanie! You were queen, and this summerhouse was our castle!

BERTHE (entering)

Shh, Uncle! There's Ernest.

JOBELIN (approaching HIM)

He's sound asleep.

BERTHE (whispering)

What's he holding in his arms?

JOBELIN

I believe it's a piece of drainpipe.

BERTHE

Why is he clutching it so desperately?

JOBELIN (not hearing HIM)

Once, I fell asleep in that same chair. (Chuckles) Holding a goldfish bowl . . .

BERTHE

You, Uncle?

JOBELIN

Yes. But I had a reason.

BERTHE

Look! How peaceful he is!

JOBELIN

Yes, he's sleeping soundly.

BERTHE

And sweetly!

JOBELIN

Well, soundly at least.

BERTHE

Do you know what? I think Ernest is dreaming about me.

JOBELIN

What makes you say that?

BERTHE

He loves me!

JOBELIN

Did he ever tell you that?

BERTHE

A woman doesn't need to be told! She can sense it. Didn't you notice how he blushed when he gave me that fan yesterday?

JOBELIN

That's true. He did blush.

BERTHE

Now's the time to speak. Tell Ernest about your plans.

JOBELIN

What plans?

BERTHE

For our marriage!

JOBELIN

Young lady, they're your plans, not mine!

BERTHE

But you said to me just the other day, "Ernest will make a good husband."

JOBELIN

Unfortunately, Berthe, I wasn't thinking of you.

BERTHE

How can you be so horrible! You won't even give him a chance to speak!

JOBELIN

And for a very good reason. I'm your guardian. I have to watch out for your interests. Besides that, you're richer than he is.

BERTHE

But don't you see? That's what makes Ernest so bashful. He knows I have more money than he has. You'll never understand! You prefer to sacrifice us to the calculations of interest!

JOBELIN

Do you really care for him?

BERTHE

Yes!

JOBELIN

You won't change your mind?

BERTHE

Never!

JOBELIN

All right, then. I'll speak to him. Leave us alone.

BERTHE

Oh, you are the kindest uncle in the world!

JOBELIN

Go for a walk in the garden. I'll call you when I'm finished.

BERTHE

I know Ernest will be happy! (SHE exits stage-right.)

SCENE 2

JOBELIN

This will have to be a serious conversation. (Clears HIS throat) My dear Ernest. (Striking a pose) There comes a time when every young man must think about his future. Therefore, I am asking you to tell me truthfully . . . (ERNEST snores.) He's asleep. I'd better wake him up. (Starts toward ERNEST. Stops) On the other hand, if I wake him up, he might get angry. I'd better wait. Once upon a time, I fell asleep in that same chair, holding a goldfish bowl. But I had a reason. That bowl was a present from Melanie. We were passing in front of the lake at the Tuileries one day, when I chanced to say to her, "What beautiful goldfish!" That night I received a goldfish bowl. She was always doing things like that. Poor Melanie! We were very naughty. (ERNEST stirs.) Ah! He's getting up. No . . . he's asleep again. Just shifting that weapon from one arm to the other. Ever since Ernest was in the militia several years ago, he's dreamt from time to time that he was on parade. Well, I was a military man once. A lieutenant in the reserves. Sometimes Melanie would ask me to dress up in my uniform for one of our solitary walks. Women love a man who carries a sword! Now, why doesn't he get up?

SCENE 3

KRAMPACH enters from stage-left, carrying a letter.

KRAMPACH

Here a letter is. There is no address on.

JOBELIN

Shh! Can't you see my nephew is asleep?

KRAMPACH

What holds he in his arms?

JOBELIN

Idiot! It's a piece of drainpipe. Used to collect rainwater, you know.

KRAMPACH

Is true? (Aside) He a scientist must be.

JOBELIN

What do you want?

KRAMPACH

The porter has a letter delivered.

JOBELIN

Let me have it.

KRAMPACH

Wait. You must first me help. Was it you . . . or was it him . . . (Indicating ERNEST) or was it Herr Marjavel who Cabdriver Number 2114 knew?

JOBELIN

Cabdriver Number 2114? It's me! (softly) It's me! Talk softly.

KRAMPACH

I say nothing. (Gives JOBELIN the letter)

JOBELIN (reading)

"Dear Duncehead." Duncehead? Damn! He recognized me in spite of the glasses. Melanie always warned me to be more careful. "I have found you out at last." My God! He's been at it a whole year! "When a gentleman rides in a cab with a lady, he does not give a twenty-five centime tip to the driver with a virtuous smile on his face." And I thought I gave him thirty. "I could cause you trouble, but I am a reasonable man. Instead, I'm asking you for a small loan of five

hundred francs." Small loan, indeed! "I'll be waiting at my stand under the seventh gaslight. If I do not have them in one hour, I'll beg a thousand of you. Sincerely yours, 2114." A scandal! He'll tell Marjavel everything! I mustn't waste time. (To KRAMPACH) Do you have five hundred francs on you?

KRAMPACH (going through HIS pockets)

I will look . . . twenty-four, twenty-five centimes . . . and a few sous in my trunk.

JOBELIN

Keep them! (Aside) What am I going to do? In one hour, he'll be asking for a thousand. But suppose I borrow them from Ernest? I needn't waken him. (Goes to desk) I remember this desk well. (Tries to open it) It's locked! No problem. (Hits the desk with HIS fist. It opens.) And here's a note for five hundred francs. (Closes desk) Krampach!

KRAMPACH

Ja, sir?

JOBELIN

I want you to look for a cab. Drive Number 2114. Remember, 2--1--1--4. Under the seventh gaslight.

KRAMPACH

A cab under a gaslight. 2114.

JOBELIN

Seventh gaslight! Then give this note to the driver and tell him it's from a young man.

KRAMPACH

A young man?

JOBELIN

Yes. Me.

KRAMPACH

I would never it have guessed. (HE exits with note stage-left.)

JOBELIN

It's blackmail! He's got me, the scoundrel! I must protect Melanie's reputation . . . and Marjavel's! If he were to find out! There'd be a duel! No. I'd refuse to fight. But then, I'd have to take the consequences. Phew! I'm hot. Thirsty, too. I'll get a glass of water from Ernest's room. (Opens door) Well, what's this? My goldfish bowl! It's still here! Ah, Melanie! If you only knew what you are costing me. (Exits to ERNEST's bedroom and closes door)

SCENE 4

HERMANCE enters from stage-left. SHE cautiously looks in.

HERMANCE

Ernest!

ERNEST (waking with a start)

Eh? What's that? Take your poultice, Marjavel!

HERMANCE

Shh!

ERNEST

Oh! My dear Hermance, it's you!

HERMANCE

I was able to get away for just one moment. Marjavel's shaving. He's feeling much better today.

ERNEST

I should hope so!

HERMANCE

The poor dear's no longer suffering.

ERNEST

Well, I'm not surprised. I heated enough towels. I fricaseed enough poultices.

HERMANCE

Oh, my sweet. You had a dreadful evening.

ERNEST

But no! On the contrary. I had a delightful evening. A memorable night. Asleep on the sofa with a drainpipe. What should I do with it, Madam?

HERMANCE

Oh, anything! Hide it. Lose it. . . . My darling!

ERNEST (hiding drainpipe under armchair)

And now, Madam?

HERMANCE

You don't understand. He was suffering so. I sat up all night comforting him.

ERNEST

I know. From my cozy little berth, I heard every word you said.

HERMANCE

You heard?

ERNEST

Every syllable. Listen, Madam. What did you say last night to your husband at five minutes to two?

HERMANCE

Five minutes to . . . well, I . . .

ERNEST

I'll tell you. You said, "My pouter pigeon, if you died, I could not live without you."

HERMANCE

I had to divert his suspicions.

ERNEST

And at twelve minutes past four?

HERMANCE

Yes?

ERNEST

I heard a distinct . . . (Smacks a kiss)

HERMANCE

It's not my fault! I had to divert his . . .

ERNEST

Suspicions. I know. You spend all your time diverting his suspicions.

HERMANCE (caressing HIM)

Really, darling! Don't you know I love you?

ERNEST

Perhaps. But he's the one who's getting all the attention!

HERMANCE

Are you jealous of my husband?

ERNEST

I most certainly am! Husbands have nothing to complain about.

HERMANCE

Oh?

ERNEST

Well, tell me. What does your husband have to complain about? He doesn't even know about me! I have to coddle him, pamper him. I shake in my shoes if he happens to catch us together. While he goes about his business--oblivious, fat, healthy, merry, pompous . . .

HERMANCE

Ernest!

ERNEST

Well, he is pompous! You can tell by the way he sits down to dinner--so self-assured! Meanwhile, I climb up drainpipes and hide in sofas! And as if that weren't enough, your husband thinks I'm stupid! Stupid--but affectionate.

HERMANCE

He never said that!

ERNEST

Pardon me, Madam, but at three twenty-seven A.M. . . . Let me assure you, my watch works very well. (Looks for it) Where is it? I can't find it. It must be in my room. Stupid, but affectionate . . . And you didn't even disagree!

HERMANCE

Calm yourself, calm yourself. Here I am, cheerful, confident, while . . .

(ERNEST falls to HIS knees in front of HERMANCE.)

ERNEST

Hermance, this is the first time in two months I've been able to be alone with you. Let's make the most of this opportunity.

HERMANCE

Yes, Ernest?

ERNEST

Believe me, my dearest, the time has come . . .

HERMANCE

For what?

ERNEST

For us to . . . talk of love! (JOBELIN coughs off-stage.)

HERMANCE

Heavens! There's someone in the next room!

ERNEST

Damme! Who could it be?

HERMANCE

Marjavel! I know him by his cough.

ERNEST

Good Lord!

HERMANCE

We're done for! There's only one thing to do. Deny everything. Everything! (SHE exits stage-right.)

SCENE 5

ERNEST (alone)

Well, let's get on with it. We'll settle it now. I'd rather have it out. I've had enough of this topsy-turvy life. (Imitating HERMANCE's voice) "We're done for!" No, we're not! Marjavel will have to live with the truth! (Opens the upstage door) Sir! You may do with me as you wish!

(JOBELIN enters from bedroom, holding a goldfish bowl.)

JOBELIN

Thank you, friend. That's very kind of you.

ERNEST

Uncle!

JOBELIN

So! You're awake.

ERNEST (aside)

He hasn't heard anything.

JOBELIN

Poor little fish! Nobody feeds them anymore. I'm taking them out for a bit. Give me a biscuit.

ERNEST

Is this why you came to see me, Uncle?

(KRAMPACH enters from stage-left.)

KRAMPACH

This for someone trouble will be.

ERNEST

What's the matter?

JOBELIN

Krampach! I'll be right there. (JOBELIN beckons ERNEST over to a small table and THEY begin feeding the fish.)

KRAMPACH (aside)

I have my swindler found. Kuissermann! Cabdriver Number 2114. I was going this note to hand him for five hundred francs, when an idea to me came. Being an honest man, I said to him, "No reply," and put the five hundred francs toward his account.

JOBELIN (to KRAMPACH)

Well, what did he say?

KRAMPACH

He said, "Alright, if that is the way you want it. But I am coming back."

JOBELIN

What! He's coming back!

KRAMPACH (taking out a small notebook)

Got my accounts to figure.

ERNEST

What's the matter now, Uncle?

JOBELIN

Matter? Why, nothing . . . nothing. (Aside) He's coming back! I've got to see my banker. (Aloud) Good-bye. (HE exits stage-left.)

KRAMPACH (to ERNEST)

Sir, I a capable man need me with a problem to help, and I am going to you for help ask because you a capable man are.

ERNEST

Capable of what?

KRAMPACH

Capable of anything.

ERNEST

Well, what is it?

KRAMPACH

Five thousand francs minus five hundred francs plus the interest for one year, six months and twenty-three days plus the interest for less than one day which is today . . . how much does that make?

ERNEST

What kind of joke is this?

KRAMPACH

I will again start. Five thousand francs . . .

ERNEST

Take your problems somewhere else. You bore me.

KRAMPACH

That is the trouble with being a capable man. (Starts out) Five thousand francs minus five hundred francs plus the interest . . . Oh! I will never be able this calculation to figure! (ERNEST pushes HIM out stage-left.)

SCENE 6

BERTHE enters from the stage-right door.

ERNEST

Berthe!

BERTHE

Have you seen my uncle?

ERNEST

He was here just a moment ago, and left.

BERTHE

Oh!

ERNEST (aside)

What did I say? She looks embarrassed.

BERTHE (suddenly)

You don't seem very happy.

ERNEST

Who, me? Oh, I'm delighted. Charmed. (Aside) What is she talking about?

BERTHE

Then, kiss me!

ERNEST

Kiss you? Well . . . yes. Of course. Of course, I'll kiss you. (HE kisses HER. Aside) It's not her feast day!

BERTHE

There! And Uncle thought you didn't love me!

ERNEST

He did? Oh . . . how stupid . . .

BERTHE

What?

ERNEST

Stupid . . .but affectionate. (Aside) As Marjavel says.

BERTHE

But I knew he was wrong. Do you remember the day we walked in the Botanical Gardens?

ERNEST

The Botanical Gardens?

BERTHE

The zoo, silly! The day I fed the ostrich.

ERNEST

Oh, yes! Now I remember. Marjavel made me carry a four-pound loaf of bread . . . so that he could feed the bears!

BERTHE

Well, it was there that I first noticed your love.

ERNEST

In front of the bears?

BERTHE

No! In front of the ostrich!

ERNEST

Oh!

BERTHE

The horrid beast had snatched my glove. It was just about to swallow me alive when you leaped to the rescue. In one swift move, you courageously stuck your arm through the bars.

ERNEST

That's true! It was rather courageous. Me against the ostrich. I remember it clearly. I seized the end of your glove. I pulled. The ostrich pulled . . .

BERTHE

And you fell over . . .

ERNEST

Bringing back three fingers of the glove still intact!

BERTHE

Everyone laughed. But from that moment on, I swore I would be your wife.

ERNEST (choking)

My wife? You!

BERTHE

Didn't Uncle tell you?

ERNEST

No!

BERTHE

Oh! (SHE runs toward the stage-left door, crying.)

ERNEST (holding HER back)

No, wait! Wait! (aside) By God! That's the answer! Me . . . a husband! A real husband! (Aloud) You're an angel! (Throws HIMSELF at HER feet) You're my savior!

BERTHE

Get up!

ERNEST

But I love you!

BERTHE

Leave me. Ask Uncle for my hand. Then . . . we will see. (BERTHE exits stage-left.)

SCENE 7

ERNEST (alone)

Me! Married! If it were only true! Then I'd be a free man! I'd be delivered! (Clasps HIS hands) Oh, Lord! Please let me be delivered!

(HERMANCE enters from stage-right.)

HERMANCE (not seeing ERNEST)

My husband isn't here. He must still be at home. (Noticing ERNEST on HIS knees) Now, what are you doing?

ERNEST

Me? I . . . I'm waiting for you.

HERMANCE

On your knees?

ERNEST

On my knees . . . Why, yes . . . I get down on my knees . . . when I wait for you. It's more convenient. Then I'm ready to . . . (HE grabs HER hand and starts kissing it.)

HERMANCE

What a silly boy you are!

(MARJAVEL enters from stage-left.)

MARJAVEL (noticing THEM)

Sir! What is the meaning of this?

HERMANCE (aside)

My husband!

ERNEST (softly)

Caught! (Aloud) Stop! Don't come any closer! Don't move! (MARJAVEL recoils.) Did you find it?

MARJAVEL (coming closer)

Find what?

ERNEST

The diamond! The diamond that Madam lost!

HERMANCE

Yes . . . the diamond from my ring. It fell out of its setting. Ernest has been good enough to look for it.

MARJAVEL

Good Lord! A diamond! We must look! (HE bends over. To ERNEST) Especially since I've discovered that there are thieves in the area. Last night, someone absconded with a piece of my drainpipe. Have you found it?

ERNEST

No.

HERMANCE

I value it so very much because you gave it to me, Alphonse. It was the biggest . . .

MARJAVEL

Drat! Don't stomp around, Ernest! (HE gets up.) I'm going to look for a broom. There's one in your bedroom. Remember now, don't stomp! (MARJAVEL exits upstage.)

SCENE 8

ERNEST

Whew! We escaped that one!

(KRAMPACH enters from stage-left with a letter.)

KRAMPACH

This is for the man who Cabdriver Number 2114 knows.

HERMANCE

Our coachman!

ERNEST

Here! Give it to me! (Takes the letter from KRAMPACH)

HERMANCE

What does he want? Look! Quickly!

ERNEST (reading)

"Duncehead . . ."

KRAMPACH

Ja. That is what he said.

ERNEST

What?

KRAMPACH

He said, "Duncehead." The same thing to me.

ERNEST

(Pushing KRAMPACH away and reading)

"So! You think that a man can ride in a cab with a lady and give the driver a twenty-five centime tip!" I thought I gave him fifty. "If you don't send me one thousand francs in half an hour, I'll ask you for two thousand. Still waiting, 2114." The scoundrel! Where is my cane?

HERMANCE

What are you doing? We have to pay him off!

ERNEST

That's blackmail!

HERMANCE

Would you prefer a scandal?

ERNEST

No. (HE goes to the desk.) I don't know if I have that much money. (Turns the key, knocks the desk with HIS fist. It opens.) I'm sure I had some loose cash here. (Alarmed) Someone has opened this desk! Someone who knows the secret thump!

HERMANCE

Well?

ERNEST (going through HIS pockets)

All I have are thirty-three francs.

HERMANCE

Goodness! (Opens HER purse) I have ten.

ERNEST

That makes forty-three. (To KRAMPACH) You wouldn't have nine hundred fifty-seven francs on you, would you?

KRAMPACH (going through HIS pockets)

I will look.

(MARJAVEL is heard grumbling off-stage.)

HERMANCE

My husband!

ERNEST

Marjavel! (To KRAMPACH) Never mind. Later.

MARJAVEL (entering from upstage)

Not a broom anywhere! (To ERNEST) Have you found it?

KRAMPACH (answering MARJAVEL)

I have twenty-five centimes and thirteen sous in my trunk.

MARJAVEL (pushing KRAMPACH away)

Who cares!

KRAMPACH

It is for Ernest. He has someone who is waiting.

ERNEST (quickly)

It's nothing! Just a little debt that someone came to collect from me.

KRAMPACH

Nine hundred fifty-seven francs.

ERNEST (to KRAMPACH)

Never mind. I'll pay it later.

MARJAVEL

Why later? Who's out there?

KRAMPACH

It is Kuissermann.

ERNEST (quickly)

A tailor . . . (To KRAMPACH) Krampach, tell him I'll send it to him, but that I don't have the money with me.

MARJAVEL

Ernest! I have money! Here. Let me pay for it.

ERNEST

You! Oh. No, indeed!

MARJAVEL

Ernest, you grieve me! I thought I was your friend!

ERNEST

Yes, but . . .

MARJAVEL

Don't be childish! (To KRAMPACH) Give this money to the tailor.

ERNEST (aside)

This is too much for an honorable man to bear.

KRAMPACH

I will just this to his account add. (Writes in notebook) Five hundred francs plus one thousand francs plus interest . . .

MARJAVEL (to KRAMPACH)

What are you doing?

KRAMPACH

I am going, sir. I am going the money to deliver. (Aside) I will never be able this calculation to figure. (HE exits stage-left.)

SCENE 9

MARJAVEL

Well, did you find it?

HERMANCE and ERNEST

What?

MARJAVEL

The diamond.

HERMANCE

No, not yet.

ERNEST

We were just looking for it when . . .

MARJAVEL

Get back to it! Don't stomp around! (HE bends over.) Hermance, look beside the mantle.

ERNEST (bending over, aside)

You get tired of looking for a diamond that was never lost.

(JOBELIN enters from stage-left.)

JOBELIN

I've just seen my banker. (Noticing THEM) What are you doing on the ground?

MARJAVEL

My wife lost a diamond. The same one I gave Melanie.

JOBELIN

Melanie! Let's look! (HE bends over.)

(KRAMPACH enters from stage-left.)

MARJAVEL

Krampach, you look, too.

KRAMPACH

For what?

MARJAVEL

An expensive diamond. Look!

KRAMPACH (going down on HIS knees)

I once a flea found . . . but then knew I where it was. (KRAMPACH comes downstage. Aside) I have just Kuissermann seen. I said to him, "No reply."

ERNEST (crawling to KRAMPACH)

What did he say?

KRAMPACH

He said, "So that is what you want. I will be back." (HE crawls away, calculating.)

ERNEST

What? He'll be back!

JOBELIN (crawling to ERNEST)

Seeing that I've run into you like this, I'd like to return the five hundred francs I borrowed from you. (HE hands ERNEST some bills, then crawls away.)

ERNEST

Oh, so you're the one! (Aside) He knows the secret thump! (HE crawls to MARJAVEL.) Hold it!

MARJAVEL

You've found it!

ERNEST

No. But seeing that I've run into you like this, I'd like to pay back five hundred francs of what I owe you. (HE hands MARJAVEL the bills.)

MARJAVEL (brusquely, still searching)

Oh, there's no hurry.

ERNEST

I've just run into some cash . . .

MARJAVEL

Keep looking! Keep looking!

KRAMPACH

(Lying flat on the floor, making calculations)

Two times three is nine. Three times six is eight . . . I figure that he owes me still seventy-four thousand francs. That must be too much . . . .

MARJAVEL

Krampach, why aren't you looking?

KRAMPACH

I am looking, sir, I am looking. (HE slides across the floor and dives under the armchair.)

ERNEST (aside)

Are we going to play at this all day?

KRAMPACH (HIS head under the chair)

I have it found!

EVERYONE (getting up)

Where? Let's see!

KRAMPACH

Is this it? (HE drags out the drainpipe.)

ERNEST (aside)

Duncehead!

HERMANCE

Gracious!

MARJAVEL

My drainpipe! (To ERNEST) How did it get in your house?

ERNEST

It's very simple . . . you see . . . there was a lot of wind last night . . . a westerly wind . . .

MARJAVEL

Yes?

ERNEST

And westerly winds are notorious for removing drainpipes . . .

MARJAVEL

That's true.

ERNEST

Well, I found this in your garden . . . and I brought it in!

MARJAVEL

Why, thank you, Ernest! (Aside) Stupid . . . but affectionate. (HE gives the drainpipe to KRAMPACH who hides it behind the chair and continues HIS calculations.)

JOBELIN (to HERMANCE)

Such a dependable lad! Ernest will make a good husband.

MARJAVEL (sitting down)

Let's not get discouraged. (Aside) Oo-oh! My back! (Aloud) Keep on looking.

HERMANCE

It's no use, my dear. Oh! Now I remember! I believe I lost it in the garden.

JOBELIN

The devil! It will be even harder to find in the sand.

MARJAVEL

Ernest has good eyes. Go, children. Look! Look!

ERNEST (aside)

Hmm. I wouldn't mind a stroll in the garden. (To Jobelin) You take the right path, Uncle, and we (Indicating HERMANCE) will take the left. Now look, everyone. Look!

(HERMANCE, ERNEST and JOBELIN exit stage-right.)

MARJAVEL (calling after THEM)

Don't stomp around!

SCENE 10

MARJAVEL

Krampach!

KRAMPACH

Ja, sir?

MARJAVEL

If we don't find this diamond, then tonight after dinner, I want you to come down and sweep this room. Put all the sweepings to one side and we'll sift through them afterwards. Well! Are you happy here?

KRAMPACH

I am happy. But I am also a little upset.

MARJAVEL

What's upsetting you?

KRAMPACH

I will it you tell. (HE pauses a moment.) No, I will not . . . I dare me not it you to tell.

MARJAVEL

All right, then. Leave.

KRAMPACH

Ja, sir. (HE starts out.) Sir?

MARJAVEL

What?

KRAMPACH

I will me dare it you to tell. You see, what me here upsets . . . is the women. To be brief . . . I would like you a glance to give . . . from time to time . . . to my wife. I would you the favor return.

MARJAVEL

What? You want me to spy on your wife? What's she like?

KRAMPACH

Not bad. Certainly Lisbeth is not a bad girl . . . but she acts according to instinct. And she does a history have.

MARJAVEL

A history?

KRAMPACH

Ja, she has a mistake made . . .

MARJAVEL

Did she break something?

KRAMPACH (laughing)

Oh, nein, sir! (HE slaps MARJAVEL on the shoulder.)

MARJAVEL

Say what you mean, then!

KRAMPACH

You know what I mean . . . a mistake . . . with a gentleman.

MARJAVEL

Oh, bah! (Chuckling to HIMSELF) Well, well, well. (Aloud) And you attach such importance to this?

KRAMPACH

Ja. Not too much. It is a common accident with women. It would be silly to think we were the only ones . . .

MARJAVEL

What do you mean, we?

KRAMPACH

I mean that, besides me, there are a lot of husbands in my country who my problem share.

MARJAVEL (laughing)

And in Paris, too! (HE slaps KRAMPACH on the shoulder.)

KRAMPACH (laughing)

And in Paris, too. (KRAMPACH returns the slap.)

MARJAVEL

Don't slap me like that! You're a servant. You can't slap me! Only I, the master, can slap. (HE slaps KRAMPACH. KRAMPACH laughs very hard. Aside) Well, it's been a happy mistake, anyway.

KRAMPACH

And then, too, you know, in my case was it different. In my case came the mistake before the marriage. And I was about it warned.

MARJAVEL

But you married her, anyway . . .

KRAMPACH

It was a delicate situation. She had five thousand francs. But there is one thing that to find out I am determined. I want to know who this man is.

MARJAVEL

What good would that do?

KRAMPACH

I have fear that he no gentleman is . . . that he from a lower class is. But I know his name not.

MARJAVEL

Well, you can't know everything!

KRAMPACH

I asked Lisbeth what it was. She wanted it me not give.

MARJAVEL

Well, what do you want me to do about it?

KRAMPACH

Oh! A master is like a father. She trusts you. Make her talk. Make

her tell you who he is.

MARJAVEL

It's a funny idea!

KRAMPACH

Here is what to say: "You have a mistake made, have you not?" "Who told you that?" she asks. "A little bird," you say. And then report you to me.

MARJAVEL (aside)

He's got me acting as his spy!

KRAMPACH (looking off-stage)

There she is! Remember! Report you to me!

SCENE 11

LISBETH enters from stage-left with a lighted candle and a basket.

LISBETH

Are you ready to choose the wine, sir?

MARJAVEL

Yes, I'll be right there. (Aside, looking her up and down) She looks like a strapping girl.

KRAMPACH (to LISBETH)

Fix yourself up. The master is going you questions to ask.

LISBETH

Did you wish to speak to me, sir?

MARJAVEL

Yes, my child.

KRAMPACH (to LISBETH)

And do not anything hold back. The master is like a father . . .

MARJAVEL (to KRAMPACH)

Leave us.

KRAMPACH (softly, to MARJAVEL)

Remember. Report you to me. (Aloud) I am going to clean Ernest's room. (Softly, to LISBETH) Talk to the master. Talk to the master. (Softly, to MARJAVEL) Report you to me. (Aloud) I am going now. (HE exits upstage.)

SCENE 12

LISBETH

Well, sir?

MARJAVEL

Put down your candle and your basket. (SHE does. Aside) Yes, she does have a spontaneous air about her . . . a wanton, reckless streak . . .

LISBETH

Now, sir?

MARJAVEL

Good! (Aside) How the devil do I make her confess? I'll have to use an indirect approach. (Aloud) Straighten these chairs. This room is a mess! (SHE does. MARJAVEL comes downstage and speaks to the audience.) Funny! I can't seem to keep my hands off women! It's not in my blood. I have a charming wife. She's good, sweet. She adores me! If I died, she could not live without me. And in spite of that, I always have to have another woman on the side. I'm a tramp! Yes, that's what I am! I did the same thing when Melanie was alive. Only I had two affairs, then. Of course, I was younger, too . . .

LISBETH

All done, sir.

MARJAVEL (aside)

What now? Oh, yes! An indirect approach. (Aloud) Now, wipe the candlesticks. Harder! Harder! (To the audience) Last week, for instance, I went to the dancehall in Mabille. A bawdy place! I'm ashamed to admit it, but it's true. Whenever I come home from such an outing, I tell myself, "I won't go back, I won't go back . . ." But

I always do. I picked up a young Polish girl there named Ginginette. She has a reputation among the greatest families in Lituania. We've had two meetings now. But I'm smart. I don't get involved in my affairs. No dashing, sophisticated man-about-town should get involved in his affairs.

LISBETH

Anything else, sir?

MARJAVEL

Ah, yes! (Aside) We'll approach this matter delicately. (Aloud) You've made a mistake, haven't you?

LISBETH

Who told you that?

MARJAVEL

A little bird . . .

LISBETH

That's not true. It was Krampach!

MARJAVEL

Tush! Now, tell me. How did this mishap occur?

LISBETH

No!

MARJAVEL (stroking HER hand)

You don't trust me! That's not right! A master is like a father . . . (LISBETH laughs.) What's the matter?

LISBETH

You're tickling me!

MARJAVEL (aside)

Goodness! What superb teeth! (Aloud) Look at me now. Yes, she does have superb teeth. (HE kisses HER. KRAMPACH enters from upstage.)

KRAMPACH

Sir, with what should I these lamps polish?

MARJAVEL

I don't know. Ask Ernest.

KRAMPACH (softly, to MARJAVEL)

Has she his name told?

MARJAVEL (softly)

Not yet. But it's coming.

KRAMPACH (softly)

Good. Keep going. (Aloud) I am going Ernest's room cleanen.
(HE exits upstage.)

MARJAVEL

Where were we, my child? Ah, yes. How could you let yourself be so indiscreet?

LISBETH

It wasn't my fault. I was in love!

MARJAVEL (aside)

She answers well. (Aloud) Look at me. (HE kisses HER.) Was this stranger very handsome?

LISBETH

Oh, yes!

MARJAVEL

Young?

LISBETH

Ja!

MARJAVEL

My age?

LISBETH

Silly! I said he was young!

MARJAVEL

What did he say to you?

LISBETH

You know very well!

MARJAVEL

Tell me all the same.

LISBETH

He looked at me sideways . . . with big, wide eyes . . .

MARJAVEL (ogling HER)

Like that?

LISBETH

Oh! Much better than that!

MARJAVEL

And afterwards?

LISBETH

Afterwards, he gave me two oranges.

MARJAVEL (aside)

Goodness! Love is cheap in Alsace! One look and two oranges. I'll have to lay in a supply. (Aloud) After that? Don't hide anything from me.

LISBETH

You know very well . . .

MARJAVEL

Tell me all the same.

LISBETH

The next day . . .

MARJAVEL

Oh! You stayed till the next day? You didn't mention that! You cheated!

LISBETH

Well, he promised that he would marry me. Then he went away. He wanted to look for some papers.

MARJAVEL

Aha!

LISBETH

I waited three years for him. And when he did not come back, I married Krampach.

MARJAVEL

And have you heard from him since?

LISBETH

Ja. He sent me a silver watch.

MARJAVEL

May I see it?

LISBETH

No, I don't wear it anymore. Krampach said I should not wear the symbol of my dishonor.

MARJAVEL

Good boy!

LISBETH

So now he wears it.

MARJAVEL

Oh!

LISBETH

But he's not very happy. The watch runs slow.

MARJAVEL

Would you like me to get you another one?

LISBETH

That would be very nice.

MARJAVEL (kissing HER)

Made of gold?

LISBETH

That would be very nice.

MARJAVEL

Of course, you will pay me back . . . in oranges. (HE squeezes HER very hard. SHE struggles near where SHE has set the lighted candle. KRAMPACH enters from upstage.)

SCENE 13

KRAMPACH (noticing THEM)

Oh!

MARJAVEL (clasping LISBETH)

Fire! She's on fire! Help! Your wife is burning!

KRAMPACH

What?

MARJAVEL

The candlestick fell on her! Water, quickly! Water!

KRAMPACH

Fire! Water! Beat her! (HE exits stage-left.)

SCENE 14

LISBETH (laughing)

Oh! You are clever!

MARJAVEL

Quick! Tell me who seduced you. That will quiet Krampach.

LISBETH

Not very likely.

MARJAVEL

Is it someone I know?

LISBETH

Ja. You first brought us together in Alsace.

MARJAVEL

In Alsace? Who did I . . .

(ERNEST enters from stage-right.)

ERNEST

Mister Marjavel!

LISBETH

It's him! (SHE leaps at ERNEST'S neck.)

ERNEST

Oh!

MARJAVEL

Ernest!

(KRAMPACH runs in from stage-left with a bucket of water.)

KRAMPACH

Here is the water! (LISBETH moves back in surprise. KRAMPACH throws the water at ERNEST.)

ERNEST (drenched)

Damme! What was that for?

KRAMPACH

Ach! How did he get there?

ERNEST (aside)

Lisbeth in Paris! That's all I need!

MARJAVEL (waggishly, to ERNEST)

So, you've conquered Alsace.

ERNEST

Shut up!

KRAMPACH (to MARJAVEL)

Did she name the criminal?

MARJAVEL

She was ready to confess . . . when she caught fire. But don't be discouraged. I'll take her down to the cellar, and we'll take this up where we left off.

KRAMPACH

Good idea! Lisbeth, take your basket and your candlestick. Go into the cellar with the master.

LISBETH

But . . .

KRAMPACH

Go on! And do not anything hide!

MARJAVEL (aside)

Must remember to buy some oranges. (To LISBETH, who is taking up HER basket) Come, child. Krampach, I have a pair of boots. They've got a couple of holes and they don't fit correctly. I give them to you. (HE exits stage-left with LISBETH.)

SCENE 15

KRAMPACH (aside)

Ah! The master is a good man! He has me a livery promised . . . and now he gives me a pair of boots with holes! And when I think that the wife of my master secret affairs has! He does not clearly see. I must his eyes for him open. (To ERNEST) Psst! Psst!

ERNEST

Are you talking to me?

KRAMPACH

Come here.

ERNEST (aside)

He's acting very peculiar.

KRAMPACH

I am going to let you a secret know . . . which you must promise not to tell . . . because if you did it tell . . .

ERNEST

It wouldn't be a secret.

KRAMPACH

Ja! To continue . . . I believe that Mrs. Hermance . . . is that what you the lady call?

ERNEST

Mrs. Marjavel.

KRAMPACH

I believe that she is an affair having behind her husband's back.

ERNEST

An affair? That's ridiculous!

KRAMPACH

I saw a man along the trellis underneath her window climbing.

ERNEST

Nonsense! That's impossible! (Aside) The brute!

KRAMPACH

I am not a child! I know what I am saying! The poor master (Crying) . . . a good man . . . who me a livery and a pair of boots promised . . . with holes . . . he does not the truth see. We must his eyes open.

ERNEST

His eyes ope . . . (Correcting HIMSELF) Open his eyes?

KRAMPACH

We must him about this affair tell.

ERNEST (aside)

Is that so? (Aloud) Now, Krampach. You don't really mean that. First of all, what you say is not true. Second of all, if you told him, the master would be very hurt.

KRAMPACH

If it not true is, how could he be hurt?

ERNEST

You have a point.

KRAMPACH

And if it not untrue is, we must his eyes open. We will into the cellar go and it him tell. (Drags ERNEST by the arm)

ERNEST (aside)

Stubborn fool! (Aloud) No! Don't do that! Look at it this way. If someone told you that . . .

KRAMPACH

Someone did me that tell.

ERNEST

Oh, yes? Well?

KRAMPACH

Ja, I was jealous!

ERNEST

There! You see . . .

KRAMPACH

No matter. We will it him in the cellar tell. (Drags ERNEST)

ERNEST

No!

KRAMPACH

Ja!

ERNEST

He's coming! We really shouldn't talk about it in front of Lisbeth. Let's wait till he's alone.

KRAMPACH

Ja! Let us wait. (HE sits down on the floor.)

ERNEST (aside)

If I could only stuff him into a sofa! Ah! I have an idea. (Aloud) Krampach, what are you doing?

KRAMPACH

I am waiting for the master.

ERNEST

My room hasn't been cleaned.

KRAMPACH

I it this morning <u>geswept</u>.

ERNEST

Did you "gesweep" the closet?

KRAMPACH

No.

ERNEST

Well, there's a box sitting on the table. It has four small flasks filled with rum, brandy, anisette and kirsch.

KRAMPACH

That sounds good!

ERNEST

Go clean out the closet and you can have the flasks.

KRAMPACH

You mean, to drink?

ERNEST

Of course. Afterwards, fill them with water and shake them out.

KRAMPACH

You mean, rinse them. We say "rinse" in Alsace.

ERNEST

Yes! Go on! Go!

KRAMPACH

We must his eyes open. (HE exits upstage, muttering. ERNEST locks the bedroom door behind KRAMPACH.)

SCENE 16

HERMANCE enters from stage-right.

HERMANCE

Why did you lock that man in your room?

ERNEST

He saw someone climbing on your balcony and wanted to warn your husband.

HERMANCE

Gracious! Offer him some money! We must pay him off!

ERNEST

Yes, that's the solution! It seems to be an obsession with you. Keep your husband out of the summerhouse. I'll take care of the rest.

HERMANCE

What will you do?

ERNEST

He's in the closet now with four bottles of liquor. In five minutes, we'll put him to bed.

HERMANCE

What about tomorrow?

ERNEST

Tomorrow can wait. The important thing is to get your husband out of the way.

HERMANCE

You're right. I'll go. (SHE starts out stage-left, comes face-to-face with MARJAVEL.) It's him!

MARJAVEL (entering with LISBETH)

Come on, ducky . . . (Notices HERMANCE) My wife! (To HERMANCE) I was just coming up from the cellar with Lisbeth . . .

HERMANCE

Yes, my dear. So I see.

ERNEST

(Steeling HIMSELF nervously against a chair)

Ha, ha! Lisbeth . . . the cellar . . . what a good idea!

MARJAVEL

I've brought up a bottle of Pommard. It was starting to turn. It's time for us to drink it.

HERMANCE

Yes. As good a time as any.

ERNEST

(Taking the cover off the chair and crumpling it without noticing what HE'S doing)

Indeed! There's nothing like a good Pommard . . . if it hasn't turned . . .

MARJAVEL (aside)

What's the matter with him? (To LISBETH) This basket is too heavy for you. Call your husband. (SHE goes to the stage-left door.)

LISBETH

Krampach!

HERMANCE (quickly)

I think you sent him out on business.

MARJAVEL

Me? Nonsense! He was here just a few minutes ago.

LISBETH

Krampach! Oh, Krampach!

ERNEST (aside)

Damme! Can't she be quiet?

(KRAMPACH is heard singing in German.)

MARJAVEL

He's singing!

(LISBETH runs to the upstage door.)

LISBETH (turning the key, opening door)

Come on, Schlafmütze!

(KRAMPACH appears at the door, wobbling and singing in German.)

EVERYONE

He's drunk!

ERNEST (aside)

What luck!

KRAMPACH

Here I am, sir. I have something to you to say.

MARJAVEL

Mr. Krampach, I have something to you to say, too! (KRAMPACH tries to speak. MARJAVEL interrupts HIM.) Permit me . . . Mr. Krampach, I need not remind you that sobriety is the sister of temperance. But if you continue to comport yourself in this most inappropriate manner, unworthy the dignity of a servant of this household . . . let alone of a gentleman such as myself! . . . I shall have to fire you! Your turn. Speak!

KRAMPACH

Well, sir . . . last night . . . there was this man who the trellis climbed up to your wife's room . . .

MARJAVEL

A man?

ERNEST (quickly, to MARJAVEL)

Don't listen to him. He's drunk.

HERMANCE (to MARJAVEL)

Let's leave.

KRAMPACH

I have proof.

MARJAVEL

Proof? What proof?

KRAMPACH (taking out a pocket watch)

This watch, which to the trellis attached was . . .

ERNEST (aside)

My pocket watch!

HERMANCE

Done for!

MARJAVEL (examining the watch)

I recognize this! How did it get caught on the trellis under my wife's window?

ERNEST

I was going . . .

MARJAVEL

Where were you going?

ERNEST

I was going up to the third floor . . . to Lisbeth's room.

LISBETH

I didn't know that!

MARJAVEL

To Lisbeth's room? (HE roars with laughter.)

ERNEST

(Also laughing, addressing KRAMPACH)

Yes, to Lisbeth's room!

KRAMPACH

My wife's room!

ERNEST

What? His wife!

KRAMPACH

(Swooping down on ERNEST)

Scoundrel!

MARJAVEL

(Holding KRAMPACH back and shielding ERNEST with HIS body)

Don't touch him! He's my friend!

END ACT II

III. ACT III

SCENE 1

MARJAVEL'S garden. A tree, some bushes and flower beds. Benches and a few rustic chairs. Empty flower pots to one side. MARJAVEL'S house can be seen in the distance.

ERNEST is discovered, wearing gardener's clothes. HE holds a watering can in each hand and is watering the flowers underneath the tree.

ERNEST

She said, "Eight o'clock under the elm tree. Don't be late." So here I am. In these gardener's clothes. Because after what happened yesterday, we can't be too careful. Poor Hermance! I looked all night for an easy way to tell her, "Damme, Hermance, haven't you had enough of this? Duty calls, Hermance. Let's return to our duties. Let me marry my cousin Berthe." But she'll never understand that! Good grief! The ground's wet . . . . No wonder! For the last half-minute, I've been watering my feet.

(HERMANCE enters from the direction of the house.)

HERMANCE

Peter! Peter! Do you have the melon for tonight? (Noticing ERNEST) Ernest!

ERNEST

Drat! You recognized me!

HERMANCE

No, I guessed. Give me a watering can, and let's talk over here. (THEY move to one side of the stage. EACH takes a watering can and sprinkles flowers while talking.) I asked you to come here, because I can't receive you at home any longer. I'm too frightened!

ERNEST

So am I.

HERMANCE

Ernest, we must put an end to all this.

ERNEST (sadly)

Is it good-bye, then?

HERMANCE

Don't say that word!

ERNEST

Hermance!

HERMANCE

Ernest!

ERNEST

Hermance, I will always be your friend.

HERMANCE

I'm not finished. Ernest dear, you must get married.

ERNEST

I know.

HERMANCE

You know!

ERNEST

Yes . . . I . . . uh . . . knew that you would suggest that. It's horrible! After what I wrote to you just last week!

HERMANCE (consolingly)

I keep your letter close to my heart.

ERNEST

And you want me to take a wife!

HERMANCE

You must, my dear.

ERNEST

Who?

HERMANCE

My sister-in-law.

ERNEST

That old woman!

HERMANCE

You'll make her so happy!

ERNEST

I'll bet!

HERMANCE

I've thought it all out. You'll marry my sister-in-law. She's not pretty--she never was--but then, that doesn't matter.

ERNEST

No, of course not! Still . . .

HERMANCE

What?

ERNEST

Well, since we're going to go through with it, I thought we might as well get a young one.

HERMANCE

Ugly, then.

ERNEST (feigning indifference)

Ugly, pretty, what's the difference . . .

HERMANCE

Pretty, never!

ERNEST

Let's look at the ugly ones, then. Lord! They all look the same to me . . . well, first, there's my cousin.

HERMANCE

Berthe?

ERNEST

Yes. A marriage to her would please my uncle.

HERMANCE

She's very pretty.

ERNEST

Is she? I hadn't noticed. Anyway, I don't care for her kind of beauty. I used to see her when she was very young. She had only one tooth. She looked awful! That picture of her has always stayed with me.

HERMANCE

I'd prefer that you marry my sister-in-law.

ERNEST (aside)

I'd rather die at the hand of Marjavel!

(Off-stage, the sound of a whip cracking)

HERMANCE

What's that?

ERNEST (looking off-stage)

It's the coachman! He's left his stand by the seventh gaslight and stationed himself at the front door!

HERMANCE

I thought you paid him off!

ERNEST

I did! But the man's a fiend. I'm afraid we're at his mercy.

HERMANCE

This can't go on.

MARJAVEL (off-stage)

Krampach, find that gardener and bring him back--dead or alive!

ERNEST

It's Marjavel! He's talking with Krampach!

HERMANCE

Marry your cousin today. At once!

ERNEST

I'll talk to my uncle now.

HERMANCE

And I'll announce the news to my husband.

ERNEST (holding out HIS hand)

Adieu!

HERMANCE (taking HER hand)

Adieu!

ERNEST (tearfully)

O, think'st thou we shall ever meet again?

HERMANCE

I doubt it!

ERNEST (aside)

Thank goodness! Now I can breathe!

HERMANCE (aside)

At last! I'm calm!

(MARJAVEL enters from the direction of the house.)

MARJAVEL

Oh! There he is! Look here, you . . . (To HERMANCE) This booby knew that a diamond was lost near here, and he's raked all the paths!

HERMANCE

He was watering the shrubbery, dear.

MARJAVEL

I saw him raking near Ernest's room. (To ERNEST) Come here, booby. (ERNEST approaches with HIS back turned.) I told you to carry out this packing case, those pots, and these benches. (ERNEST puts the packing case over HIS head. MARJAVEL places two empty flower pots under ERNEST'S arms and puts a chair on top of the packing case.) What do you have to say for yourself, booby?

HERMANCE

That's too much to carry!

MARJAVEL

Nonsense! He's as strong as a bull. (ERNEST exits, stumbling.) And he's managing very well. (ERNEST bumps into MARJAVEL.) Ouch!!

SCENE 2

HERMANCE

Well, Husband! Aren't you even going to say hello?

MARJAVEL

Pardon me, my love. But since yesterday, I've been very distracted.

HERMANCE

With what, my dear?

MARJAVEL

With the loss of your diamond.

HERMANCE

It's a small misfortune.

MARJAVEL

I have my suspicions. Do you want to know something, Hermance? We are being robbed right under our noses! Ever since I got these dependable servants, not even my drainpipes are safe! This morning, I got up early and ran to the summerhouse. I told Krampach to sweep the place and to sift through the sweepings.

HERMANCE

That was unnecessary.

MARJAVEL

I intend to get to the bottom of this! And do you know what? Ernest had already gone out!

HERMANCE

Ernest has a lot of business to attend to at the moment. I understand he's getting married.

MARJAVEL (spluttering)

Married? . . . Ernest? . . .

HERMANCE (gaily)

Yes! Isn't it wonderful? You're the first person to know about it!

MARJAVEL

I must say . . . I'm taken aback by this . . . but I won't complain. What if I am losing a friend . . . whom I showered with blessings . . . because, after all, Hermance, you and I did shower him with blessings!

HERMANCE

He's thirty-two years old, my dear. He has to think of his future.

MARJAVEL

Young people only think of themselves, nowadays. I had grown quite fond of Ernest. He did not serve any purpose, but he was affectionate. If he marries, he must be doing the right thing. Only . . . I thought he had the makings of an excellent bachelor. And I'm afraid he will make a very bad husband!

HERMANCE

You misjudge him! . . . perhaps! . . .

MARJAVEL

No, I know him. Ernest has faults, but I'm his friend. I won't talk about his bad points. He has them; I ignore them. He sleeps until noon. Do I complain? He forgets to . . .

HERMANCE

Really! Marjavel!

MARJAVEL

Who is he marrying?

HERMANCE

His cousin Berthe, they say.

MARJAVEL

Poor child! Jobelin has arranged that marriage. Ernest is poor, Berthe is rich. Poor child!

HERMANCE (aside)

So, I'm happy and he's annoyed! How funny! (Aloud) I must see to tonight's menu. Till later, my dear. (SHE exits toward the house.)

SCENE 3

MARJAVEL (puzzled)

Why is he getting married? Aren't we happy the way we are?

(KRAMPACH enters, looking solemn and dignified in livery.)

KRAMPACH

Sir, I have an audience to request.

MARJAVEL

An audience?

KRAMPACH

I have something to say.

MARJAVEL

Be quick, then.

KRAMPACH

Would you like to be my witness?

MARJAVEL

Your witness? What do you need a witness for? You're already married!

KRAMPACH

It is not about that. I will a duel fight.

MARJAVEL

A duel?

KRAMPACH

Ja.

MARJAVEL

With whom?

KRAMPACH

With the young man who Lisbeth has seduced.

MARJAVEL

Come, come! Really! Do you hold a little thing like that against Ernest?

KRAMPACH (spluttering)

A little thing like that against Ernest! . . .

MARJAVEL

A thing that has done you no real harm?

KRAMPACH

No real harm! . . .

MARJAVEL

Then, why are you angry?

KRAMPACH

I, so angry! . . .

MARJAVEL

Shh! Your wife has made a mistake . . . but you have paid for it!

KRAMPACH

Ja, I have for it paid!

MARJAVEL

So, you see, the error no longer exists. Therefore, you can't have anything against Ernest!

KRAMPACH

Is that true? . . . Well, then. I want that he me respect!

MARJAVEL

You mean, he doesn't respect you?

KRAMPACH

No. I this letter addressed to my wife found. (HE takes out a piece of paper that is burned along one edge.)

MARJAVEL

A letter?

KRAMPACH

Ja. In the sweepings. There! Read it yourself. (Gives it to MARJAVEL.)

MARJAVEL (skimming it)

It's a very rough copy.

KRAMPACH (remembering)

"Your husband is a . . ." The rest is out burnt.

MARJAVEL (aside)

It's Ernest's handwriting!

KRAMPACH

"Is a" what?

MARJAVEL

"An imbecile" . . . (Aside) That's him, all right!

KRAMPACH (beaming)

Is that all it says?

MARJAVEL

No, there's more . . . But this couldn't be addressed to your wife! (Reading) "How can you be afraid of this honest man?"

KRAMPACH (joyful)

Ja! That is me!

MARJAVEL

"He is simple-minded, conceited and credulous . . ." (To HIMSELF) Simple-minded, conceited and credulous . . . I know some people like that.

KRAMPACH (not understanding)

Ja!

MARJAVEL (reading)

"Doff thy name, and for thy name which is no part of thee, take all my love." He's having an affair with a married woman!

KRAMPACH

Lisbeth!

MARJAVEL

Nonsense! To Lisbeth he would have written, "Let me see your oranges." This is to a sophisticated woman.

KRAMPACH

Means that that I friends with Ernest can be?

MARJAVEL

Certainly. It's your duty.

KRAMPACH

My duty? Then, all right!

MARJAVEL (aside, perusing the letter)

Oh-ho! What a spirited boy! Such passion! Such fire! Such intensity!

(Reflects a moment) Such a pity he's getting married . . . Well, that settles it! Ernest can't get married. He'll stay here with us.

(LISBETH enters, eating an orange.)

LISBETH

Dinner is ready!

KRAMPACH (quickly)

What eating you there?

LISBETH

An orange.

KRAMPACH

Who gave it you?

MARJAVEL (softly, to LISBETH)

Don't answer.

LISBETH

The master gave it to me.

MARJAVEL (aside)

Goose! (Aloud) Yes . . . er . . . just by chance, I happened to have an orange in my pocket and . . . I . . . er . . .

KRAMPACH

If it the master was . . . that is all right.

MARJAVEL (aside)

I don't believe it! What an oaf! When a man's that stupid . . . he shouldn't be married! (MARJAVEL exits in the direction of the house.)

SCENE 4

KRAMPACH (to LISBETH)

Now, explain yourself. Yesterday I was a bit sick to my stomach, but today . . .

LISBETH

I told you.

KRAMPACH

Be quiet. You have a mistake made! Why did you try me believe to make that you that young man did not notice? (LISBETH tries to speak.) Be quiet! Speak!

LISBETH

I told you! I didn't see anyone in my room . . . except the mice.

KRAMPACH

Mice carry usually no pocket watches.

LISBETH

How do you know?

KRAMPACH

Because they no pockets have. (KRAMPACH and LISBETH argue in German. LISBETH has the last sentence.)

KRAMPACH

Why did you not tell me that he himself as an aristocrat passed off?

LISBETH

It did not concern you.

KRAMPACH

What mean you, it did not me concern? Do I not my pride have?

LISBETH

Nein!

KRAMPACH

Ja!

LISBETH

Nein!

KRAMPACH

Ja! (With dignity) Well! Since it so has to be . . . I am going to court . . . to apply for a divorce!

LISBETH

Oh, Krampach!

KRAMPACH

And I will mistresses take . . .

LISBETH

Krampach!

KRAMPACH

With pretty hats . . .

LISBETH

Oh, Krampach! Don't you see? You have a livery now. I adore you!

KRAMPACH

Is that not like a woman? They are all the same. As soon as we a uniform get . . .

LISBETH

How handsome you are! (Throws HER arms around HIM and kisses HIM)

KRAMPACH (chuckling)

Stop! You are my suit crumpling!

LISBETH

Here. (SHE gives KRAMPACH the orange.) I'll never give my oranges to anyone but you! You're an angel! (SHE exits toward the house.)

SCENE 5

KRAMPACH

I am a lucky man, sure. Kuissermann pays me back, Lisbeth adores me, and she is saving her oranges. Only I get them! Ja, I am lucky!

(ERNEST enters from the direction of town.)

ERNEST

Well, that's done. Whew! I'm tired. I ran all the way to the town hall.

KRAMPACH

Ach! Ernest is back! (HE pretends to arrange the flowerbed.)

ERNEST (not noticing KRAMPACH)

I'm getting married! At last! My uncle's coming to announce the engagement. I'll be cementing the bonds of matrimony and severing the bonds of friendship. (HE sighs. Noticing KRAMPACH) Uh-oh! Krampach! He looks as angry as a bull. He knows I've planted horns on him. He and Marjavel make a pair. I'd better move. (HE starts to exit. KRAMPACH stops HIM and leads HIM back.)

KRAMPACH (with emotion and dignity)

We have both her loved, you and I!

ERNEST (struggling)

Heaven . . . chance . . . springtime . . . the month of May . . . I . . .

KRAMPACH

It is you who the mistake have made. But I have for it paid. So, it no longer exists. So, I do not anything against you hold.

ERNEST

Huh? Well, now! That's very reasonable of you.

KRAMPACH

I can it not against you hold. So, I you the watch return. (Gives ERNEST the silver watch)

ERNEST

The watch? Ah, yes! I recognize it. (Aside) The one I lost on the trellis! So, he's the one who's got it! (Aloud) Keep it.

KRAMPACH

Thank you. The only trouble is that it slow is. It like a duck moves.

ERNEST

Well, if you're not in any hurry, that poses no problem.

KRAMPACH

They say that it is guaranteed for three years.

ERNEST

You want me to have it adjusted?

KRAMPACH

Ja, and at the same time, I would like to have put in it a small bell.

ERNEST

Why a small bell?

KRAMPACH

At home, the brigadier of the gendarmes a watch with a bell has.

ERNEST

You mean, a repeater watch. Well, that's not too much to ask. It's yours.

KRAMPACH (holding out HIS hand)

Let us friends be.

ERNEST

(Aside, taking KRAMPACH'S hand squeamishly)

A servant! Ugh! (Aloud) Go look for Marjavel.

KRAMPACH

Ja. We will friends be.

ERNEST

Yes, go! Go! (HERMANCE enters from the direction of the house, followed by JOBELIN and BERTHE.) Good evening, Madam. (To JOBELIN) Good evening, Uncle. Cousin . . .

SCENE 6

JOBELIN

Madam. My good friend Marjavel . . . (Looks for MARJAVEL) He's not here. (Striking a pose) Madam, I would like you to be the first to know of this very happy event. Mr. Ernest Jobelin, my nephew, has decided to take Miss Berthe Jobelin, my niece, as his wife.

HERMANCE (to BERTHE)

Congratulations, my dear.

ERNEST (aside)

Everything's running smoothly.

HERMANCE (to BERTHE)

You must not doubt the sincerity of my good wishes.

BERTHE

Oh, Madam! I am very happy!

HERMANCE (confidentially)

Your cousin has been in love for a long time.

BERTHE

And--would you believe it, Madam--he never told me so before!

HERMANCE (with joy)

Ah, really!

JOBELIN

He's so shy!

HERMANCE (aside)

He doesn't love her.

SCENE 7

(MARJAVEL enters from the direction of the house, running.)

MARJAVEL (joyfully)

Someone call me? Jobelin! You're dressed up! With yellow gloves, too! Goodness! Should we repair to the drawing room?

JOBELIN

No, we're doing wonderfully under this roof of greenery.

MARJAVEL (kissing BERTHE effusively)

Poor child! (Kisses HER again) Poor child!

BERTHE (aside, astonished)

I wonder why he's kissing me?

JOBELIN (striking a pose)

My dearest friend, I want you to be the first to know . . .

MARJAVEL (softly, to ERNEST)

Don't worry. I'll get you out of this.

ERNEST

What?

MARJAVEL (clasping HIS hand energetically)

Count on me!

JOBELIN

(Following MARJAVEL to complete HIS sentence)

. . . of this very happy event . . .

MARJAVEL (softly, to JOBELIN)

Get your niece out of here.

JOBELIN

Mr. Ernest Jobelin . . .

MARJAVEL

Take the girl away!

JOBELIN

I have the honor . . .

MARJAVEL

Now!

JOBELIN

. . . of announcing tonight . . .

MARJAVEL

Jobelin!

JOBELIN

Ah! (To BERTHE) Berthe, my dear friend Marjavel would like you to pick a bouquet from his garden.

BERTHE (to MARJAVEL)

Are you trying to get rid of me?

JOBELIN

It's more convenient this way.

MARJAVEL

We'll call you back. (Kissing HER effusively) Poor child!

BERTHE (going off reluctantly)

What could Mr. Marjavel want? (SHE exits.)

SCENE 8

JOBELIN

Now! May I continue? (Striking a pose) My dearest friend, I want you to be the first to know . . .

MARJAVEL

Enough! You've come to announce Ernest's wedding.

JOBELIN (surprised)

Well, yes . . .

MARJAVEL

It's impossible!

JOBELIN

What?

HERMANCE

What?

ERNEST

What the . . .

MARJAVEL

Ernest cannot marry.

JOBELIN

Why?

ERNEST

Yes, why?

MARJAVEL

Ernest is not in love.

ERNEST

Really, Mr. . . .

MARJAVEL (softly, to ERNEST)

Leave it to me, boy! (Aloud) He has had an affair . . .

JOBELIN

What?

ERNEST

But . . .

MARJAVEL (to ERNEST)

You'll see. It's better to make a clean breast of it from the start. (To JOBELIN) He was involved in a love affair. A passionate liaison that . . .

JOBELIN

My nephew?

ERNEST

You're wrong there . . .

MARJAVEL

He loves a married woman . . .

ERNEST and HERMANCE

(Looking guiltily at one another)

Ah!

JOBELIN

Oh!

MARJAVEL

Ernest is guilty. He won't deny it. It would have been far better for him to take an insignificant little girl like . . . (Catches HIMSELF) But this love has an excuse: the very force of its own passion!

JOBELIN

Are you sure?

MARJAVEL

(Taking the burnt paper from HIS pocket)

Judge for yourself. (HE tries to read.) What have I done with my glasses? Hermance!

HERMANCE

My dear?

MARJAVEL (handing HER the paper)

You'll see how she reads sentiment. (To HERMANCE) Read this. Very Loud.

HERMANCE

Me?

MARJAVEL

Yes. And don't rush it.

HERMANCE

"Your husband is a . . ."

MARJAVEL

Skip over that part. It's burnt.

HERMANCE

"How can you be afraid of this honest man?" (Aside) Oh!

ERNEST (aside)

My rough draft!

MARJAVEL (joyful)

Continue.

HERMANCE (aside)

This is torture! (Aloud) "He is good-natured, simple-minded . . . conceited and credulous . . ."

ERNEST

Oh, well! You know . . . I wrote that . . .

MARJAVEL

That's all right. No harm done. All the same, I wouldn't mind knowing who it is! (To HERMANCE) Continue.

HERMANCE

My dear, is this really necessary?

MARJAVEL

Of course! The end is simply heart-rending! Listen to this, Jobelin.

HERMANCE (reading coldly)

"Doff thy name, and for thy name which is no part of thee, take all my love."

MARJAVEL (to HERMANCE)

More feeling! More passion! You read that as though it were a recipe out of the Bourgeois Cookbook. (With poetic fervor) "Doff thy name, and for thy name . . . which is no part of thee . . . take all my love!" (To ERNEST) The name is her husband's . . . the imbecile! Go on.

HERMANCE

(Continuing and becoming imperceptibly overcome by emotion)

"With love's light wings did I o'er-perch these walls.
For stony limits cannot hold love out:
And what love can do, that dares love attempt."

MARJAVEL

That's better! Now, feel it! Let yourself feel it!

HERMANCE

"I am no pilot; yet wert thou as far
As that vast shore wash'd with the furthest sea,
I would adventure for such merchandise . . ."

ERNEST (aside)

What an oaf he is to make her read that!

MARJAVEL

Well, what comes after that?

HERMANCE

(HER voice quavering with emotion)

"My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
My love as deep; the more I give to thee,
The more I have, for both are infinite."

JOBELIN (aside, crying)

Romeo and Juliet! Everything that I wrote to Melanie!

HERMANCE (in sobs)

"Dost thou love me? I know thou will say ay;
And I will take thy word.
Trust me, I'll prove more true
Than those that have more cunning to be strange . . ."

(ERNEST takes out HIS handkerchief, MARJAVEL HIS, and then HERMANCE, whose voice stops, wracked with sobs. Emotion has overcome ERNEST, JOBELIN and MARJAVEL, who blow THEIR noses noisily.)

MARJAVEL (crying)

This is so stupid! I'm crying like a baby!

JOBELIN (sobbing)

So am I!

ERNEST (sniffling)

Me, too. (MARJAVEL consoles ERNEST, then moves away. HERMANCE goes to ERNEST and sobs on HIS chest. Softly, to HERMANCE) Take care, Madam, take care!

HERMANCE (softly and quickly to ERNEST)

Break off the engagement. This sacrifice is more than we can bear! (SHE exits toward the house, running.)

ERNEST

Great! We're back where we started.

MARJAVEL (to JOBELIN)

Well, are you convinced now?

JOBELIN

Completely! The marriage is impossible!

MARJAVEL (chuckling, to ERNEST)

Didn't I tell you I'd get you out of this?

ERNEST

Thank you. There's only one trouble. The banns are published.

MARJAVEL

And you want me to fix it up at the town hall? I'm off!

ERNEST

No!

MARJAVEL

Yes!

ERNEST

No!

MARJAVEL

The sixteenth ward, right? Wait for me here. I'll be back soon. (Softly) If it weren't for me, your uncle Jobelin would have sold you up the river! (MARJAVEL exits toward the town.)

SCENE 9

ERNEST (to JOBELIN)

Why don't you do something? Help me stop him!

JOBELIN

A married woman! Don't speak to me, Nephew!

ERNEST

Really, Uncle! What else could I do? Make love to a virgin? They're off limits!

JOBELIN

No, but a nice widow . . . one that's well-preserved . . .

ERNEST

Widows! There aren't enough widows to go around!

JOBELIN

You know this woman's husband, then?

ERNEST

Know him? Oh, yes! I know him!

JOBELIN

Are you his friend?

ERNEST

His servant! Hired by the year . . . without pay! But it's all over now. Everything is over. You can give me my cousin without fear.

JOBELIN

No, sir! I'll never do that! Never, never, never, never, never!

(Argument off-stage and the sound of a slap)

VOICE OF KRAMPACH

Ouch!!

(LISBETH enters.)

LISBETH (talking to someone off-stage)

Take that! It serves you right!

JOBELIN

What's that?

LISBETH

I just smacked Krampach. (Gives some bills to ERNEST) Here's your money.

ERNEST

What money?

LISBETH

The money that Krampach was supposed to have delivered to the coachman and which he kept.

ERNEST and JOBELIN

He kept the money?

LISBETH

Yes, because Kuissermann owed him something. I don't understand that kind of thinking myself. I'm an honest woman . . .

ERNEST

You certainly are!

JOBELIN

But what about the coachman?

LISBETH

He's at the door . . . furious!

ERNEST

I should think so!

JOBELIN

Just as I thought!

LISBETH

He asked me the name of the man of the house.

ERNEST and JOBELIN

Marjavel? But why?

LISBETH

He wanted to write him a letter.

ERNEST

Damme! I've got to run!

JOBELIN

A letter? Good-bye!

(ERNEST and JOBELIN start off. LISBETH stops THEM.)

LISBETH

Oh, don't hurry. The letter's already been sent off. (SHE exits.)

SCENE 10

JOBELIN

Well, Nephew . . .

ERNEST

Well, Uncle . . .

JOBELIN

You've guessed . . .

ERNEST

You know . . .

JOBELIN

This cab drove . . .

ERNEST

Mrs. Marjavel . . .

JOBELIN

Yes.

ERNEST

Dear Hermance!

JOBELIN

Dear Melanie!

(THEY look at each other slowly.)

ERNEST and JOBELIN

What!

JOBELIN

Hermance!

ERNEST

Melanie!

JOBELIN

How could you, Nephew?

ERNEST

How could you, Uncle?

ERNEST and JOBELIN

What a pair we are!

(THEY embrace, laughing. HERMANCE enters.)

HERMANCE

Goodness! What a show of affection!

JOBELIN (quickly)

Ah, Madam! A terrible misfortune! Krampach has kept the money . . . . The coachman is furious . . . he's just written to your husband . . .

HERMANCE

I don't know what you're talking about.

JOBELIN

No, of course you don't. I thought I was talking to Melanie. (Softly, to ERNEST) You tell her.

ERNEST (quickly)

Krampach has kept the money . . . the coachman is furious . . . he's just written to your husband . . .

HERMANCE

Oh, no! We're done for! I'll never be able to face Marjavel again. It would kill me! We must go. Hurry!

ERNEST

Go where?

HERMANCE

It doesn't matter . . . Switzerland . . . America . . .

JOBELIN

What about Belgium?

HERMANCE

That's too close.

ERNEST

Permit me . . . such a trip might . . .

HERMANCE

So! Now you want out! After dragging me into the abyss!

ERNEST

That's a lot of nonsense! (Aside) Trapped! (Aloud) All right, let's go to America. Which do you prefer . . . South or North?

SCENE 11

(MARJAVEL runs in, from the direction of the town.)

MARJAVEL

Here I am! Whew! I'm hot!

HERMANCE

It's him!

ERNEST and JOBELIN (aside)

Too late!

MARJAVEL (joyful)

I'm back from the town hall! What a nasty old man I met there!

HERMANCE (softly, to ERNEST)

He hasn't seen the letter.

ERNEST (softly, to JOBELIN)

He hasn't seen the letter.

MARJAVEL

I asked him about Ernest's marriage. He said to me, "Sir, I may speak only to the young man's father or mother. Which are you?"

ERNEST (forcing a laugh)

Oh! That's funny! My mother! Ha, ha!

HERMANCE

Yes! Very funny!

JOBELIN

I wish I'd said that.

(KRAMPACH enters with a letter.)

KRAMPACH (to MARJAVEL)

Sir, here is a letter for you.

HERMANCE, ERNEST, JOBELIN (terrified)

The letter!

KRAMPACH

They are waiting outside for an answer.

HERMANCE (softly)

Done for!

JOBELIN (aside)

I think I'm going to be sick.

MARJAVEL (having opened it)

What funny writing! I can't find my glasses.

ERNEST (quickly)

Do you want me to read it?

MARJAVEL

No. Here, Krampach. (Gives KRAMPACH the letter)

HERMANCE

But, my dear . . .

MARJAVEL

It's all right. I don't have any secrets. Besides, Krampach must get used to these things. (To KRAMPACH) Read.

KRAMPACH (reading)

"Duncehead . . ."

MARJAVEL (aside)

He seems to know me!

KRAMPACH

"When will you learn that a gentleman does not ride in a cab with a lady and offer the driver a twenty-five centime tip?"

MARJAVEL

What's wrong with twenty-five centimes? It's a perfectly reasonable amount.

KRAMPACH (continuing)

"If you do not send me two thousand francs right away, I will tell your wife that you drove about town in my cab with a tart." (MARJAVEL pushes KRAMPACH away.)

HERMANCE

A what?

JOBELIN

A . . . bah!

MARJAVEL (aside)

My ride with Ginginette! My wife heard! I'm caught!

ERNEST (softly, to HERMANCE)

It seems that we've all been taking the same cab!

HERMANCE (to MARJAVEL)

You infidel! At your age! Farewell . . . Husband!

(HERMANCE starts off.)

MARJAVEL

Hermance! Stop! I can explain everything! (Softly, to KRAMPACH) Eat the envelope! (KRAMPACH turns HIS back, eats the letter and keeps the envelope. Aloud) This letter's not for me! Look! Am I the sort of man who would drive about town with a . . . tart?

HERMANCE

Whose is it, then?

MARJAVEL

Yes . . . whose is it? (Aside) Ah! I know! (Aloud) This poor, unfortunate young man. (HE indicates ERNEST.)

ERNEST

Who? Me?

MARJAVEL

Yes, Ernest. Your little folly has finally caught up with you.

ERNEST

But it's not me! I protest!

MARJAVEL

It's no use. I have proof. (To KRAMPACH) Give me the envelope.

KRAMPACH

I ate it.

MARJAVEL (dramatically)

You what? You ate the envelope! Fool! At the bottom of that envelope was written, "To Mr. Ernest Jobelin."

HERMANCE

What?

ERNEST

Are you sure?

MARJAVEL

(Tearing away the envelope from KRAMPACH and giving it to ERNEST)

Yes. Now, take this letter, Ernest. It should never have entered this house.

ERNEST (examining it)

But this is the envelope!

MARJAVEL

The . . . what! You mean . . . he ate the letter?

(MARJAVEL shakes KRAMPACH violently.)

ERNEST (reading the address)

"To Mr. Marjavel."

EVERYONE

What?

MARJAVEL

For me? Oh! I see . . . . It's just . . . I took . . . one day . . . to the zoo . . . my sister Isaure . . . someone took her for a . . . oh, dear!

HERMANCE (smiling mysteriously)

Well, sir! I shall have my revenge! (SHE crosses to MARJAVEL.)

(BERTHE enters with LISBETH.)

BERTHE

Are you finished talking?

JOBELIN

Yes, all the arrangements have been made.

ERNEST

We were just discussing the wedding presents when you came in.

MARJAVEL

So! Ernest is getting married . . . (To HERMANCE) We're losing a friend.

KRAMPACH

Take heart, sir. It will not be long. Someone else will come his place to take.

MARJAVEL

Someone else . . . another Ernest! Oh, I pray that he comes soon!

THE END

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VITA

Maria Alexandra Wozniak was born in McKeesport, Pennsylvania on December 4, 1948. She was educated in public and private schools and graduated from St. Peter's District High School in 1966. While attending Chestnut Hill College in Philadelphia (1967) and Mount Mercy College in Pittsburgh (1968), she majored in French Language and Literature. In 1968 she transferred to the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada. There she majored in theatre arts, graduating with distinction in 1971, with the degree of Bachelor of Fine Arts in theatre.

During the summers of 1969 - 1971, Miss Wozniak acted and served as stage manager in the semi-professional theatre company, Victoria Fair. In 1970 she commenced her graduate studies in theatre at the University of Victoria. These she continued at the University of Tennessee when she moved to Knoxville in 1972.

Since arriving in Knoxville, Miss Wozniak has served on the staff of the U. T. Theatres' Department. She has acted in the University's major productions, playing such roles as Mariane in Tartuffe (1972), Aurora in Justice Not Revenge (1973), Hedda in Hedda Gabler (1973), and Madame Ranevsky in The Cherry Orchard (1974). In 1974 she joined the fully-professional Clarence Brown Theatre Company, stationed in Knoxville, Tennessee. In the Company's inaugural production of Everyman, which starred the British actor Anthony Quayle, she played the role of Discretion and doubled the role of Kindred while on tour.

Miss Wozniak is a member of Actors' Equity Association.