

MISTER CHASE!

**A comedy in three acts
by Georges Feydeau**

Translated and adapted by David Jacklin

**presented for the 1st time in Paris
on the 23rd of April 1892
under the title
MONSIEUR CHASE!
at the Théâtre du Palais-Royal**

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Characters

Justinien **DUHOTEL**, 35 to 40
Gustave **MORICET**, 40 to 45
M. **CASSAGNE**, 40 to 50
GONTRAN Morillon, about 20
Commissioner of Police **BRIDOIS**, indeterminate
1st Officer
2nd Officer

LÉONTINE Duchotel, 30 to 35
Mme. La Comtesse de **LATOURE** Du Nord, 55 to 60
BABET, a maid *or* **ETIENNE**, a butler, indeterminate

The Scene

Paris, Fall, 1892
Act I: The smoking room of Duchotel's home, afternoon
Act II: Moricet's bachelor apartment, that evening
Act III: The smoking room of Duchotel's home, the next morning

A note on the text

This play first appeared on Broadway as **The Husbands of Leontine** about 1895-1898. It has since languished in obscurity, largely unnoticed except for a rather questionable “hippy” translation in the 60s which is still listed in the Samuel French catalogue. It has never had the huge success that others of Feydeau's plays have had, yet I feel it is easily as funny and as frantic as any of them.

I have left the French-scene markings exactly as they appear in the original, as I thought it was an interesting historical tidbit. Only those French-scenes where major changes in action occur were marked, although all the scenes were calculated. So, for example, the first scene in an act is marked Scene I, but then next time a scene is indicated, it is Scene III. Just to let you know that I didn't simply leave some out in translation.

I used music from Gounod's **Faust** as the thematic music for the premiere production of the show; there is a lot that works for a “farce” sort of feel. I suggest that Leontine and Latour play a four-hand version of *The Entrance of the Young Nubians* in the second act; it works very well. I have not, however, found the melody for *Anges Purs*, which I believe is Faust's final aria, for Moricet and Duchotel to sing in the second act. It's extant, of course, I just haven't found it yet. It doesn't really matter what tune is actually sung – the only criterion is that the Moricet and Duchotel bellow something at the top of their lungs.

Finally, working in a community theatre situation, we couldn't find a young girl to play Babet, so we simply hunted up the butler from a previous Feydeau farce and called the character Etienne. Works just fine.

MISTER CHASE!

Act I

(The smoking room in DUCHOTEL's home. An archway upstage onto an antechamber. Down left, a fireplace, with a mirror above it. On the fireplace, a clock and candelabras, a candlestick and matches, along with other decorations. Right of the fireplace, a pull cord for a bell. Left centre, a door to the living room and LÉONTINE's bedroom suite; down right, a door to DUCHOTEL's room. Between the DR door and the proscenium, a small secretary-desk, missing a foot and supported by a book. In it, writing material. Centre, an oval table, a chair on each side. On the table, a cartridge-loader, cartridge belt, two wooden bowls, one containing bullets, the other empty cartridges and wadding; at the secretary desk, a swivel chair, and R of the desk, a small straight backed chair. Left, between the fireplace and the table, a pouffe. On each side of the archway, a small table, with a vase of flowers; each side, between the tables and DS doors, a chair. Left of the arch, a hat-tree. On the top of the pouffe, a man's hat; leaning against the left table, a cane. A fire in the fireplace.)

(LÉONTINE and MORICET discovered seated left and right at the table, loading cartridges. She is using the loader to press the lead into the shells; he is placing the prepared cartridges into a cartridge belt.)

(Pause. MORICET raises his eyes to LÉONTINE, then continues loading cartridges. This happens three times. Finally he opens his mouth to speak.)

- LÉONTINE: No! *(She passes a cartridge to Moricet)* Continue with the cartridges.
- MORICET: *(He takes the cartridge and places it in the cartridge belt. They repeat the business of looking up and not speaking. At length:)* Léontine!
- LÉONTINE: No! I mean it! *(Indicating the cartridges)* Keep loading!
- MORICET: I am loading! *(Continuing to load cartridges)* But what are you going to do?
- LÉONTINE: *(Annoyed)* Oh! *(Emphasizing each word with a bang of the cartridge loader handle)* No! No! No! You hear?
- MORICET: *(Rising)* Oh, very good! The very first proof of love that I ask you for . . .
- LÉONTINE: The very first? You begin with the very last, thank you very much.

MORICET: Oh! You want every little thing in order! (*Sincerely*) What am I asking for, after all? An every day thing — between people who get on well. Your husband is going hunting; I am his friend. It's very natural that I should ask you to spend your evening with me.

LÉONTINE: My evening . . . until morning.

MORICET: Early morning! I have an appointment at eight a.m., so . . .

LÉONTINE: Oh! You can give me that much time!

MORICET: Léontine, you have no faith in me.

LÉONTINE: Listen, I want to do – that which you request, but I have my reputation to think of! Don't you think the maid, the *conciérge* will notice if I'm not here for a night?

MORICET: You women can always find a way to make these things work out.

LÉONTINE: Oh, yes! It's easy! (*Handing the cartridge to MORICET*) Twenty-nine.

MORICET: (*Taking the cartridge*) Twenty-nine. (*A pause.*) Don't you have relatives in the country?

LÉONTINE: Well, my god-mother . . .

MORICET: Perfect! Your husband goes away by himself, you go to the country – to your god-mother.

LÉONTINE: And on the way, I get lost and find myself at 40 *Rue d'Amour*, at your bachelor apartment.

MORICET: (*Sincerely*) Oh, please!

LÉONTINE: You amuse me.

MORICET: Well, it *is* close by . . .

LÉONTINE: Is that a reason?

MORICET: It's all because of you. When I couldn't choose between apartments, you said to me: (*In a throaty voice*) "Take *that* one, we shall be very close." (*With passion*) When you said that, I did not rest until I had the lease in hand! And it cost me handsomely! The apartment was let to a very good tenant, Mademoiselle Urbaine des Voitures, who had nothing against her but the irregular way she earned the rent money. I managed to get her evicted. Is that the action of a gentleman? No! But you said to me: "Take *that* one, we shall be very close!" And so . . .

- LÉONTINE: Well! I don't see what that has to do with . . .
- MORICET: Well, it's obvious we are two different people. When you said to me: "Take *that* one, we shall be very close", I understood that to mean . . .
- LÉONTINE: Do you think that I frequent bachelors' apartments?
- MORICET I don't think any such thing!
- LÉONTINE: *(Passing a cartridge)* Thirty.
- MORICET: *(Taking the cartridge and echoing automatically)* Thirty, yes. But do you think that I would think that you would think to do such a thing! It's *my* apartment! There's nothing sordid in it! But if I thought you *frequented* bachelor's apartments . . . !
- LÉONTINE: It's practically the same thing.
- MORICET: You think so? You don't understand the nuances of these things.
- LÉONTINE: Fine, say that I don't understand the . . . nuances . . . And, as I don't understand the . . . nuances, well, let's drop the subject. Is that all right with you?
- MORICET: *(Rising and pacing)* Oh, fine, fine. I won't speak of it again. I regret I brought the subject up.
- LÉONTINE: Good. Choke on your regret and keep making cartridges.
- MORICET: *(With simmering anger)* That is woman! That is woman, for you!
- LÉONTINE: *(Indicating the cartridges)* Well, are you done with them?
- MORICET: *(Same business)* Oh! Yes, I'm done with them! Fickle beings.
- LÉONTINE: I was speaking of the cartridges.
- MORICET: *(With a sardonic smile)* Oh! So you were. Well, I'm done with *them* even more! *(Blows a raspberry)* Pppht! to the cartridges. *(Still with restrained anger)* Do you expect me to sit here, making cartridges for your husband? God! When I think of the rapture we could have together! But let it go. I dismiss the dream of having you exposed before me.
- LÉONTINE: I beg your pardon?
- MORICET: I was speaking metaphorically.

LÉONTINE: I should hope so.

(Enter DUCHOTEL, down right).

DUCHOTEL: *(Leveling a hunting rifle which he has been cleaning, he suddenly pops in, as if surprising them) Ah-ha! (He laughs at his joke, then, changing tone, he comes between them, above the table) How's it going?*

MORICET: *(Sullenly)* Terribly!

DUCHOTEL: Really? What's the matter?

MORICET: Everything.

LÉONTINE: Nothing! Nothing at all.

MORICET: Yes, for you perhaps, but for a fiery nature like mine . . . !

DUCHOTEL: Now you see. You are always rushing too quickly at a job. You must take the long view, have patience. Wait for the fullness of time; stay the course.

(He crosses down right.)

MORICET: I'll neither stay the course nor wait any longer. I shall drop the whole matter.

DUCHOTEL: *(Patronizingly)* I could help you out, if you like.

MORICET: *(Dryly)* I doubt that you could help.

DUCHOTEL: Well, yes, I said to myself: "He's got my wife in there! They'll get along better without me."

MORICET: We certainly would.

DUCHOTEL: Now, you get back to it!

MORICET: *(Brightly)* Ah! You want me to get back to it? *(To LÉONTINE)* He wants me to get back to it!

DUCHOTEL: That's right. It's stupid to get into a mood for such a little thing! Look at me and my gun. I need it to relax myself, but I don't get in a fit over cleaning it.

MORICET: That's probably because you don't know it needs cleaning.

DUCHOTEL: And what do you do with it when it needs cleaning?

MORICET: *(A beat)* I send for the gunsmith.

DUCHOTEL: Exactly!

LÉONTINE: There! Thirty-two cartridges.

(She takes the belt of cartridges up right to the coat-tree).

MORICET: *(Standing)* You and your hunting, Duchotel!

LÉONTINE: *(Hanging the cartridge belt on the coat-tree)* There!

MORICET: *(Crossing down left)* I could never bring myself to cause pain to another creature!

DUCHOTEL: And this is a doctor speaking!

MORICET It's your friend Cassagne you'll be committing these massacres with?

DUCHOTEL: *(Briskly)* Yes, of course!

MORICET: Cassagne doesn't come here very often.

LÉONTINE: *(Crossing down to right)* That's true.

(She begins to untangle a hank of wool from her knitting bag)

DUCHOTEL: You know he won't budge from the country, poor fellow!

MORICET: I know. He's trying to forget his conjugal misfortunes.

DUCHOTEL: Oh! "His misfortunes". He's separated from his wife, that's all.

MORICET: Yes, well, his wife has deceived him, after all.

DUCHOTEL: That isn't proven.

MORICET: It's an established fact. Oh! I don't lay any blame, certainly! She's much too respectable for any blame to be attached. *(Meaningfully, to LÉONTINE)* The poor woman, she had a lover, at least!

(LÉONTINE looks away, pretending not to understand)

DUCHOTEL: Why do you say: "She had a lover at least . . ."? You seem to insinuate that she has had several.

MORICET: No, no, no! I didn't say: "She had a lover at least." I said: "She had a lover,

comma, at least." You misunderstand the nuance of my thought.

DUCHOTEL: I don't *see* the nuance of your thought.

MORICET: *(With a meaningful look to LÉONTINE)* You have no need to!

DUCHOTEL: But still you say: "She had a lover." How do you know that?

LÉONTINE: Yes, how?

DUCHOTEL: *(Getting worked up)* Just because the husband says so? Husbands are always the last to see the truth! Presumptions, yes, but not proof. It is presumptions that have made my friend Cassagne so furious – and lack of proof. If he could find proof, he could get a divorce. Without proof, both parties must agree to it. And the lady is opposed to divorce.

LÉONTINE: *(Approving)* Ah! She's a good Catholic.

DUCHOTEL: Yes! And furthermore, that would be an end to her allowance.

MORICET: Ah! She's a Reformed Catholic.

DUCHOTEL: *(Who has continued to clean his gun)* Ah! Damned gun! Enough. I believe I will take your advice.

MORICET: What advice?

DUCHOTEL: I'll send it to the gunsmith. *(He rises)* I'll tell Babet. *(He exits US)*

SCENE III MORICET, LÉONTINE

(Pause. LÉONTINE sits right of the table and arranges her wool and her hangings in her bag. MORICET paces)

MORICET: *(After a beat)* Once again. Do you want to or not?

LÉONTINE: *(With weariness)* Oh! Moricet! No . . . you know . . . no.

MORICET: *(Moving right)* Fine! Fine! – but when are you going to admit that you love me? *(LÉONTINE does not answer. He crosses upstage then down to behind the table)* You cannot deny you that said it. *(Darkly)* You remember your parakeet? She was dying, your poor little parakeet, who said so softly: *(In a parakeet voice)* "Give me some toffee. Give me some toffee. Give me some toffee." *(Normal voice)* And then she died, poor little bird, and we were there, all three of us. You, the deceased, and me. *(LÉONTINE sighs deeply)* Your husband had left. *(With lyricism)* Do you remember how you cried? And how I comforted you? You wept

on my bosom . . . Ah! What tears! . . . I held you in my arms . . . Ah! How tightly we held each other. . . I knew then how it was. My tears mingled with yours. *(Ordinary voice)* I had put the parakeet on the pouffe. *(Lyrically)* It was then the words escaped from the depths of your heart: "I love you!" I was mad! Your husband entered at that moment. I had only an instant to seize the parakeet and we all three continued to cry. But, you can't deny that you said it, that "I love you" which began it all!

LÉONTINE: Can one be held responsible for what one says in the throws of grief?

MORICET: *(Earnestly)* Oh, excuse me! You were sincere at that moment, I swear it. You can no more be certain a woman thinks what she actually says than you can be certain she says what she actually thinks.

LÉONTINE: So what? I may have said: "I love you." Does it follow that it involves everything that . . . follows? Because I don't see the same end as you!

(She rises)

MORICET Any man sees that as the end of an "I love you."

LÉONTINE: *(Struck)* Oh!

MORICET: It's a tacit agreement which, between people of honour, has the value of a gift certificate, the date of payment of which is indeterminate, but inevitable. Like a gift certificate, madame! The only difference being: it isn't negotiable.

LÉONTINE: Oh, very nice!

MORICET: It's very easy to say "I love you": but to prove it, that's another thing. Well, I am ready to prove it. I am ready. But are you? Are you? *(LÉONTINE looks awkward)* I swear I love you better than you love me.

LÉONTINE: *(Crossing to the table and sitting on the chair left)* But you misunderstand my intention! You say that I said: "I love you." I'm not going back on my word . . .

MORICET: *(Triumphant)* Go on!

LÉONTINE: But – *(She changes her line of thought)* Why should my heart *not* have the right of choosing? After all, you are not unpleasing. In fact, you are better looking than anybody else I see.

MORICET: *(Trying to be modest)* Oh! Well, you don't see that many people.

LÉONTINE: *(Ingenuously)* For that reason perhaps . . . *(Serious again)* You are elegant, you write wonderful verse – all doctors do – and women, of course, all have a chord in

their heart which vibrates to poetry . . .

- MORICET: *(Sitting at the table, with a moved modesty)* You are flattering me. *(A casual air that still holds conceit)* Did you have a chance to read my latest anthology, "The Tears of the Heart"?
- LÉONTINE: No, not yet. My husband has taken it to . . . read. *(Going back to her first tone)* I am convinced that there is a place for all affections in the heart. It is big enough for all. *(She rises and stands squarely)* But if a woman can espouse her own heart, the spouse not cannot dispose of the woman, for the spouse belongs only to her husband. *(She crosses down left)*
- MORICET: *(Sardonically)* Ah! Her husband!
- LÉONTINE: Don't speak ill of him; he's your friend!
- MORICET: *(Rising)* Certainly, he's my friend. A better friend than you. *He* trusts me.
- LÉONTINE: And this is how you return his trust!
- MORICET: *(With conviction)* But I love you to distraction. I love you, I love you, I love you!
- LÉONTINE: So you wish me to become a . . . strumpet?
- MORICET: *(A beat)* Well, that's one way of looking at it.
- LÉONTINE: Listen, Moricet, when a person marries, they swear fidelity.
- MORICET: Oh! If you're worried about a little thing like marriage vows.
- LÉONTINE: My husband keeps his vow. I will not betray mine!
- MORICET: Yes, "Gentlemen of the English Guard, fire first!" *(He slaps his chest.)*
- LÉONTINE: Very well. Prove that my husband is deceiving me, and I swear I will come to you and say: "Moricet, avenge me!"
- MORICET *(With passion)* Really? Léontine!
- LÉONTINE: *(Keeping him in place)* But I know very well it's a ridiculous thought. *(She goes to the fireplace)*
- MORICET: Oh, certainly! *(Leaning on the table, facing downstage)* What are the things he loves, eh? Canoeing, hunting . . . Those are the only carryings-on with Duchotel. Hygienic ones, at that.

LÉONTINE: *(To the fireplace)* Exactly.

MORICET: *(Slyly)* Still, there are hunts and there are hunts. There are husbands who make a pretense of loving the hunt, when it's not rabbits they're chasing. They say: "I'm off on the hunt!" And once that door closes, just try to hunt them up!

LÉONTINE: But not him!

MORICET: Oh, no! Not Duchotel! Now and then, I *have* said to myself: "Is it possible that Duchotel is . . . is . . .?" Well, no . . . you know, no! I'm perfectly convinced he has a clear conscience. Yes, I'm almost sure he has.

LÉONTINE: Are you telling me he hasn't?

MORICET: No, no! They were such enormous, obvious things! If he really was up to something, he would never make such obvious blunders.

LÉONTINE: *(Moving to him)* How? What? Which blunders are you speaking of?

MORICET: *(Leaving the table)* Oh! I don't know! But . . . well, the other day, for example, he brought home a hamper filled with rabbits and hares.

LÉONTINE: Well?

MORICET: Well! It's a known fact: *(Reciting as if a child's verse)* Where there are rabbits, there are no hares; where there are hares, there are no rabbits.

LÉONTINE: How do you know this?

MORICET *(Coldly)* Read your zoology. There is not a single case where these two rodents are found together.

LÉONTINE: Perhaps there is where he goes hunting.

MORICET: Possibly . . . say, at the butcher's. *(He crosses away from her)*

LÉONTINE: *(Following him)* Oh! – And you didn't tell me! But, I want to hear it from Duchotel! Yes, I'll confront my husband.

(She crosses below him to the right)

MORICET *(Following LÉONTINE)* Oh! My god! Don't do that! Léontine, I told you that I am completely convinced of Duchotel's innocence. I mean, my god! You think that if I had not been completely convinced I would have – *(Suddenly squares himself)* I will not hear you say a word against him! *(He edges to the door)*

LÉONTINE: *(Crossing down left)* I'll be calm. There's no need to escape.

MORICET: *(Coming down)* Oh! You think I'm escaping? I assure you, Léontine –

LÉONTINE: Fine! Fine! *(A noise off)* Here comes my husband. I'll make a clean breast of it.

MORICET: Léontine, this is insane! I . . . I . . . I'm . . . *(Seeing DUCHOTEL enter right)* I'm getting out of here.

(He heads for the exit door upstage.)

SCENE IV The same, DUCHOTEL

DUCHOTEL: *(At the door)* You're still here.

MORICET: *(Quickly)* No! Uhm! Yes!*(Shaking DUCHOTEL's hand)* How are you?

DUCHOTEL: *(Mystified)* What do you mean "How are you?" You just saw me five minutes ago.

MORICET: Certainly, but things change. *(Pause)* Goodbye!

(He takes his cane from the table)

DUCHOTEL: Goodbye! It's raining out. Do you want an umbrella?

MORICET: No, no, no! I have my cane!

(He goes out bareheaded)

DUCHOTEL: Strange fellow! You'd think he'd been hit with a hammer.*(Seeing that LÉONTINE is downcast)* And you! Have you both been hit on the head?

LÉONTINE: *(Acidly)* I have certainly received a blow. I have just had a lesson in zoology.

DUCHOTEL: Really?

LÉONTINE: It has taught me one of those important things that every bride should know.

DUCHOTEL: *(Interest piqued)* Oh, yes! And what would that be?

LÉONTINE: *(Moving a little toward him)* Where there are rabbits, there are no hares; where there are hares, there are no rabbits!

DUCHOTEL *(Puzzled)* Ah! Well, that's an interesting thing to know!

LÉONTINE: More than you would believe! Because if you had known, you would not have

brought back from your “hunt” a hamper full of rabbits and hares.

DUCHOTEL: Oh! That! That’s only because . . .

LÉONTINE: Only because you think I know nothing! The rabbit and the hare, as it turns out, are of the same family! Moricet has enlightened me on your perfidy!

DUCHOTEL: What, Moricet put this idea in your head!

LÉONTINE: *(Passing right)* Yes! Against his will, the poor man.

DUCHOTEL: The poor imbecile!

LÉONTINE: An “imbecile” who has enlightened me on the conduct of my husband!

DUCHOTEL: Nothing of the sort! His course in zoology has hammered an idea into your head, but it’s absolutely groundless, you understand me? Groundless!

LÉONTINE: Well, prove it to me, if my suspicions are groundless. Prove it!

DUCHOTEL *(Dumbfounded)* This is simply ridiculous!

LÉONTINE: *(To the right of the table)* Prove it!

DUCHOTEL *(A fresh approach)* Your friend, Madame Chardet, is, I believe, quarrelling with your friend, Madame Fontenac?

LÉONTINE: *(Very dry)* Yes.

DUCHOTEL: Consequently, they don't see each other?

LÉONTINE: *(Impatiently)* Naturally.

DUCHOTEL: When you want to see them, how do you go about it?

LÉONTINE: Nothing simpler. I go to their homes.

DUCHOTEL: You go to their homes!

LÉONTINE: *(Shouting)* Will you get back to the rabbits?

DUCHOTEL: *(Shouting)* I have not left the rabbits! *(Quietly)* Therefore, I put it to you, you hunt for Madame Chardet where you know Madame Chardet lives, and you hunt for Madame Fontenac where you know Madame Fontenac lives.

LÉONTINE: Very well, and? And?

- DUCHOTEL: Very well, and . . . ! There it is, “and”! My hare is Madame Fontenac, and my rabbit is Madame Chardet.
- LÉONTINE: What? What did you say? Your rabbit is . . . Madame Chardet?
- DUCHOTEL: Exactly. In other words, when I want to hunt a hare, I go where I will find a hare, and when I want to hunt a rabbit . . .
- LÉONTINE: *(Confused)* You go to find Madame Chardet?
- DUCHOTEL: *(Getting confused himself)* Something like that.
- LÉONTINE: *(Suddenly catching on)* Oh! My darling, and I suspected you of . . . of . . .
- (She puts hand to her forehead)*
- DUCHOTEL: Ah-ha! Yes! And now you have a headache. *(Embraces her)* And you deserve it. Suspect your husband . . .
- LÉONTINE: *(Rising)* But, it’s all Moricet’s fault! He who put the idea in my head!
- DUCHOTEL: Didn’t I say he was an imbecile? All this uproar for nothing. He has even forgotten his hat.
- (He shows the hat MORICET left behind)*
- LÉONTINE: He’s lost head!
- DUCHOTEL: That’s good, he won’t need his hat. Now, do you promise you have no more of these mad ideas? Very well, give me a hug *(Embraces her)* and light a candle. We’ll go to my wardrobe to get my hunting clothes.
- (LÉONTINE lights the candle on the chimney. – a doorbell sounds)*
- LÉONTINE: Oh, the bell. It’s probably Moricet.
- DUCHOTEL: Yes, he’s come to retrieve his hat and his head.
- SCENE V** **The same, MORICET**
- MORICET *(Enters hurriedly and crosses down to the table)* It’s me! I’ve forgotten my hat!
- DUCHOTEL: There! What did I say! Now, listen, I have bone to pick with you! What kind of story were you regaling my wife with?
- MORICET: Me?

- DUCHOTEL: Yes, you, with your hares and your rabbits! Trying to let on that my hunting trips are simply deceptions.
- MORICET: *(Flustered)* Oh! My! Oh! Well, I should say! Madame. . . ? Oh! On the contrary, it's me, isn't it? I said that you . . . because if you had seen Madame . . . Oh! But you know . . . won't believe it now, of course . . . Let me assure you I swore it couldn't possibly . . . that it was quite the opposite, in fact . . .
- DUCHOTEL: Well put!
- LÉONTINE: Calm yourself! My husband has explained it all to me.
- MORICET: *(Addressing one and then the other)* Yes . . . Ah! Well, I am quite pleased about that! . . . There, you see . . . I said it was all fine . . . because, if you had seen Madame, she had already reasoned that the rabbits and the hares . . . But I said "Well, what does that prove, rabbits and hares?" But you know, women . . . Ah! Well, you see . . . There you are . . .
- LÉONTINE: And very simply, the hares are Madame Fontenac.
- MORICET: Of course, of course they are!
- LÉONTINE: And the rabbits are Madame Chardet.
- MORICET: *(Airy)* Well, there you are! The hares are Madame . . . ?
- LÉONTINE: . . . Fontenac.
- MORICET: Fontenac. . . And the rabbits are Madame. . . ?
- LÉONTINE: . . . Chardet.
- MORICET: Yes! . . . Well! There! Clear as air! Ah! Well! Lucky I was here!
- DUCHOTEL: Well, now that's cleared up, pass me the candle! *(MORICET goes to the fireplace and takes the candle)* And next time, kindly do not hang a cloud over my family simply to display your erudition.
- MORICET: *(Who has picked up the candle, starts to pass it to DUCHOTEL but pulls it back)* Ah! Well, you know, if I have could predicted . . .
- LÉONTINE: *(To DUCHOTEL, as he reaches out to take the candle from MORICET)* You're not angry with me, are you?
- DUCHOTEL: *(Handing the candle back to MORICET)* Angry with you, my little one! *(He holds her in his arms and kisses her -- the kiss goes on and on)*

MORICET: *(Looks at their embrace and at his candle)* I feel such a fool.

DUCHOTEL: *(To MORICET, as he moves upstage past Léontine)* What, you've decided not to give me the candle?

MORICET: I was waiting for you to finish.

DUCHOTEL: Oh! I thought you were trying to steal the candlestick! *(He takes it.)*

SCENE VI The same, BABET

BABET *(Coming in upstage)* I have brought monsieur's new suit of clothes.

DUCHOTEL: Yes, so I see; take them to my room!

BABET: Yes, monsieur. *(She starts to leave)*

DUCHOTEL: *(Recalling BABET)* Oh! Do you have my gun?

BABET: Yes, monsieur. *(She exits)*

DUCHOTEL: You must see my new clothes, Moricet! All the most stylish people are wearing them. Made by the same tailor who dresses my nephew Gontran, I am told.

MORICET: Your nephew Gontran does more honour to his tailors than to his bachelor's.

DUCHOTEL: His bachelor's?

MORICET: Degree.

DUCHOTEL: *(Indulgently)* He'll get an honorary bachelor's degree.

LÉONTINE: Well, let's see these clothes. *(She exits DR, carrying the cartridge belt)*

DUCHOTEL: *(Following)* Very well. *(Turning to MORICET)* I must thank you for your latest volume by the way. What's it called, again? "Heart of artichoke"?

MORICET: "The Tears of the Heart"!

DUCHOTEL: *(Patronizing)* So it is! I knew it had a heart of some kind. I do have it somewhere, but I left it . . .

MORICET: Here it comes!

DUCHOTEL: *(At the door)* I left it lying on the living room table. Anyway, authors always make such a fuss about these things.

MORICET: Yes! Yes!

(DUCHOTEL exits)

(Alone. Mumbling) “Heart of artichoke!” *(Coming back down right)* And these are the people by whom one is judged! *(A beat)* This Léontine! I ask you: confronting her husband with the hares and the rabbits! You come back to offer her your sympathies, and you walk into a tiger’s den. *(As he speaks, he leans on the secretary desk, which wobbles)* Oh! This desk is rather unsteady. *(Laughing)* It's missing a foot. Someone has stuck a book under it. *(He removes the book and reads the title)* “The Tears of the Heart.” *(In a persecuted tone)* Charming. Charming! A block under a desk. My poor beloved, little book! *(Reading the cover with complacency)* “The Tears of the Heart: Rondels and sonnets, by Gustave Moricet, M.D.” I ask you, a publication of such sumptuousness, on paper from Holland – under a desk! Vandal!

SCENE VIII **MORICET, DUCHOTEL, in cardigan and with new pants**

DUCHOTEL: *(Coming in right and moving down to the fireplace)* Tell me, now! What do you think of these pants, eh?

MORICET: *(Without looking)* Oh! Very good-looking! Very good-looking!

DUCHOTEL: Of course, they are. The same as Gontran’s, I'm told.

MORICET: Oh, really! Listen, I don't care for the way you've disposed of my book.

DUCHOTEL: *(Crossing down to left)* Ah! You found it?

MORICET: Yes! Under the desk!

DUCHOTEL: *(Passing it off)* Yes. Yes. I put it there to replace the foot. I had nothing else . . . *(Kindly)* Your little book will serve some purpose, after all, eh?

MORICET *(Hurt)* That is not why I wrote it. Really! And after I went to all the trouble of dedicating one of the best poems to you! *(He crosses right toward the fireplace)*

DUCHOTEL: There’s a poem dedicated to me?

MORICET: If you had opened the book, you would have seen it. Page 91. “Pitiful”, I call it.

DUCHOTEL: Well, read it anyway.

MORICET: *(Repeating)* “Pitiful”. That's the title of the sonnet. *(Reading)* “To Justinien Duchotel.”

DUCHOTEL: *(Rising and shaking his hand over the table)* Thank you! *(He sits again)*

MORICET: *(Reads the verse in dreadful poetic tones)*
Dear Friend, trust me,
Life is nothing but a dream,
But I see you trifle it away.
The pitiful man is happy; he thrives.
He doesn't think, not once,
That soon, oh, soon, his pitiful end will come!

DUCHOTEL Very amusing!

MORICET: *(Silencing him and continuing)* Ssh!

And I shall be left, at that time, in bitter, bitter sadness
My soul shrinks when I think of the blindness that he shows!
I shall ever be left destitute: alone!
For where shall I be, where, when he is no longer here!

DUCHOTEL You know, you're starting to annoy me.

MORICET: *(Continuing his reading)* No . . .

DUCHOTEL: *(Mistaking his meaning)* Yes!

MORICET: No. . .

DUCHOTEL: Yes!

MORICET: *(Raising voice)* "No"! . . . is the beginning of the verse!

No, I do not believe he shall be for ever gone, the pitiful, pitiful man,
I dream of a different life, more gentle and beautiful than he could know,
For people more beautiful than this pitiful, pitiful man.

DUCHOTEL: Is there much more of this?

MORICET: For heaven's sake, it's a sonnet.

DUCHOTEL: Yes, fine. It's just that I have a train to catch.

MORICET: Oh, fine, leave! I would be loathe to delay you.

DUCHOTEL: Yes, I'm late enough without your poetry! But thank you, just the same!

MORICET: Yes. You're welcome. You're welcome.

(DUCHOTEL starts to exit)

DUCHOTEL: *(Turning)* Anyway, you liked my pants?

MORICET Pure poetry! Bourgeois! Leave!

DUCHOTEL: *(As he exits)* You don't think that the left leg is too tight?

SCENE IX MORICET, then GONTRAN, then BABET

MORICET: I don't care! *(He blows a raspberry.) Pppht!* to your pants! It's your business, soup merchant! *(He stands for a beat, fuming, then continues reading, with emotion)*

No, none can penetrate this mystery;
Those who could speak no longer may
And the secret lays guarded by the tomb.

(After a beat) It's beautiful! It vibrates! It breathes! Even if I have to say so myself. *(He has moved down left)* My God, there are Hottentots who would understand this. *(Notices some uncut pages and laughs bitterly)* These pages are uncut. Really! I don't expect him to read the whole thing, but he could at least have cut the pages. *(He puts the book on the table and cuts the pages with a letter opener from the secretary desk)*

GONTRAN: *(Entering upstage, his pants similar to DUCHOTEL's)* Ah! Monsieur Moricet!

(He places his hat on the table)

MORICET: *(At the table)* Gontran! Are you on holiday?

GONTRAN: Yes, for All Saints Day. My ferryboat has docked.

MORICET: What?

GONTRAN: I say: my ferryboat has docked! In other words: my college is on holiday.

MORICET: I see! Why would you say: "My ferryboat has docked"? What's that supposed to mean? In my college days, we said "My tub's washed ashore." Much simpler.

GONTRAN: *(Turning and crossing down left)* Things change. It's the way that the language grows. *(Back to MORICET)* Is my uncle here?

MORICET: Oh, yes! He's wearing your pants.

GONTRAN: What do you mean "he's wearing my pants?"

MORICET: Well, at least, similar ones.

GONTRAN: Oh! I see. He's copying my style. *(Tapping his knee with an idiomatic gesture)* Boring!

MORICET: Boring! Well, you'll find him, with his pants, in there if you want to see him.

GONTRAN: Oh! Well, to tell the truth, I'm in no hurry.

MORICET: Ah!

GONTRAN: No, I've come to hit him.

MORICET: Hit him! You'd strike your own uncle?

GONTRAN: No, no. I want him to hit him – for five hundred *francs*.

MORICET: Ah! Good. Well?

GONTRAN: Ah! "Well." That's the tricky part. I've already hit him for six.

MORICET: *(Taking him by the ear and pulling him DC)* Oh! I see. Have you been running after women?

GONTRAN: *(After a beat, and in a small voice)* Yes.

MORICET: It's not possible!

GONTRAN: *(With the exuberance of youth)* Oh! But it's marvellous, Monsieur Moricet! A true wonder! It's youth, it's fresh. It never grows stale.

MORICET: Hear, hear!

GONTRAN: I know *he* wouldn't approve, of course. The stodgy old . . . What must it be like to be old? *(He looks at Moricet)* Is it awful?

MORICET: *(A beat)* Yes.

GONTRAN: However, I need him to finance the affair.

MORICET: Finance it? You mean, she's a pro . . .

GONTRAN: *(With dignity)* Please! She's a *pro*-fessional!

MORICET: I didn't know you could get a degree in that.

GONTRAN: My little cuddlekins is very generous, but someone has to pay the bills.

MORICET: Your uncle.

GONTRAN: Precisely. You see, my little cuddlekins has a gorilla.

MORICET: A gorilla? (*GONTRAN pushes his nose to one side and bends his ear over to indicate a broken nose and cauliflower ear*) Oh! That's not what we called it in my college days. We called it a pi . . .

GONTRAN: A protector.

MORICET: Hmm.

GONTRAN: My cuddlekins said, "If my gorilla ever sticks his head in that door, you head for the closet!" (*Laughing*) He's in prison, at the moment! How's he going to know?

MORICET: (*Jeering*) Exactly! And where did you meet this marvel?

GONTRAN: (*He gestures silently as if to say "Ah! There!"*) At the pawnshop! She, pawning the family silver; I, my watch. Out of this coincidence, our love was born!

MORICET: Touching! Romeo and Juliet at the hockshop!

GONTRAN: That very evening, she gave me the keys to her heart – and to her apartment – and, since then, I see her every Sunday, when I am not locked down in the dormitory.

MORICET: Ha! Ha!

GONTRAN: Like last Sunday, for example. (*Abruptly*) Oh my goodness! I forgot about the telegram, telling her I would be visiting this evening. (*He searches in the inside pocket of his jacket*) She'll be very happy to see me! Fifteen days without . . . seeing each other. It's pretty hard . . . on her. (*Looking in his wallet*) No, not this! This is a guarantee for my uncle should he give me my five hundred *francs*.

MORICET: Well! If you're prepared to give guarantees.

GONTRAN: Of course!

MORICET: (*Taking the document and reading, while Gontran explores his wallet*) "On the day of my majority, I will pay to my uncle Duchotel, the sum five hundred *francs*, for monies received." (*He smiles*) This is your guarantee?

GONTRAN: (*Taking the paper and stuffing it back in his wallet*) What? That's as good as cash! (*He puts his wallet back in his pocket from which he pulls a different paper*) Ah! Here is the telegram. I'll send my uncle's maid with it. (*He rings, then to*

MORICET, with a little shake of the head) All the same! To hit up my uncle . . . If I could find a way to avoid it . . . *(Beat)* What would you say if I asked you for five hundred *francs*?

MORICET: *(Who has gone back to reading his book)* I wouldn't say anything.

GONTRAN: I thought not but I had to try.

BABET *(Coming in; to MORICET)* Monsieur rang?

MORICET: Not monsieur. *(Nod to GONTRAN)* Monsieur. *(He leaves his book on desk, right)*

GONTRAN: Yes, me. Take this message to the telegraph office.

BABET: *(Taking the paper)* This message? *(Reading)* “Mademoiselle Urbaine des Voitures, 40 Rue d'Amour.

GONTRAN: I did not ask you to read it: I asked you to carry it.

BABET: Very well, monsieur.

GONTRAN: There are nineteen words! Here are twenty *sous*. *(Grandly)* You may keep the rest.

BABET: *(Aside)* Well, that should keep me out of my grave a while longer! *(She exits US)*

MORICET: *(Hearing DUCHOTEL and LÉONTINE, crossing in front of the table, picks up his book)* Here's Duchotel. Present your petition.

GONTRAN: Already! Oh! *(He goes upstage. Enter DUCHOTEL and LÉONTINE, down right)*

SCENE X The same, LÉONTINE, DUCHOTEL

DUCHOTEL: *(Now dressed in the full suit)* There! I'm ready!

LÉONTINE: Gontran!

(MORICET is at the fireplace, GONTRAN is near him, LÉONTINE is above the table, DUCHOTEL is to right, near the table)

GONTRAN: *(Crossing to them)* Hello, Auntie! Uncle! Wait, it's true. You're wearing my pants!

(He puts his leg beside DUCHOTEL's)

DUCHOTEL: *(Holding out his own leg)* Exactly! We're twins.

GONTRAN: *(Aside)* He says the most disgusting things.

(During the following, GONTRAN, to get into the good graces of his uncle, congratulates him on his pants. He expertly adjusts a defective crease and the hang, etc., like a tailor)

MORICET: *(To LÉONTINE who has crossed left)* So you told the whole story to your husband.

LÉONTINE: I did!

MORICET: I'll never say anything to you again.

DUCHOTEL: Oh, heavens! I must send a telegram! *(He moves toward the desk, but, GONTRAN is pulling his pants at the instep, so that DUCHOTEL, held by the leg, nearly falls)* Will you leave me be! *(He goes to the desk right and, noticing that it is wobbly)* Oh, for heaven's sake! Who took the . . . Ah! There it is! *(He sees MORICET's book on the table and heads for it)*

MORICET: *(Slapping his hand down on the book.)* Oh, no, you don't! Use Victor Hugo!

DUCHOTEL: *(Sitting to write)* Very well! Oh, my goodness, what time is it?

MORICET: *(Looking at his watch)* Five-oh-five.

DUCHOTEL: Already?

LÉONTINE: *(Looking at her watch)* I have five-ten.

DUCHOTEL: *(To Gontran)* And you?

GONTRAN: *(Looking at his watch, a cheap one he carries in his pants-pocket)* Nine-thirty.

DUCHOTEL: Your watch has stopped.

GONTRAN: *(Laughing)* I think so.

(Looking at his watch, he crosses above the table; during this beat, LÉONTINE moves away from MORICET and, passing in front of the table, moves to DUCHOTEL)

DUCHOTEL: *(Starting to write)* All right, I still have time to make the five-forty-five.

LÉONTINE: *(Crossing to DUCHOTEL)* Are you sending a telegram to Cassagne?

DUCHOTEL: *(Turning the paper briskly so that she can't read it)* Yes! To tell him when to meet me at the station. *(Altering his tone)* Will you have Babet bring down my bag?

- LÉONTINE: Very well. *(She crosses right and exits up)*
- DUCHOTEL: *(Beginning to write)* Madame Cassagne, 40 Rue d'Amour.
- MORICET: *(To GONTRAN)* Well, why don't you ask him?
- GONTRAN: *(Trying to put it off)* When he has finished writing.
- DUCHOTEL: *(Finishes writing)* “. . . at six o'clock, at the *Maison D'Or!* . . . Zizi.” *(Rising)* I sign it Zizi, because she calls me Zizi! Here, of course, no one knows me by that name.
- (He folds the paper and puts it in his pocket)*
- GONTRAN: *(Urged by MORICET, comes down even with DUCHOTEL)* Uncle!
- DUCHOTEL: *(Rising, abstractedly)* What? *(To himself)* Oh, wait, do I have enough cash? *(He takes cash from his wallet and counts it)*
- MORICET: *(Below, to GONTRAN)* Excellent! Get going. He's primed.
- GONTRAN: *(Making an effort to broach the subject)* Uncle! I see you have some cash there. I'd be very grateful if you could give me five hundred *francs*.
- MORICET: *(Aside)* Well! He doesn't beat about the bush.
- DUCHOTEL: Me? Me! I certainly will not! I won't give you a *sou!* You owe me six hundred *francs*, already!
- GONTRAN: But uncle, I'm not asking you for a gift! I see you have hundred *franc* notes in your hand, and I'm only asking you to give me five of them, against my guarantee, my personal guarantee, for five hundred *francs*.
- DUCHOTEL: Oh! You've changed your tune! I'll do that with pleasure. Wait. *(Counting his bills. During this business, a bill goes adrift without him noticing. GONTRAN, standing close, hat in hand, catches the bill in his hat and covers it with the most innocent air in the world)* One, two, three, four, five! There. Five hundred *francs!* *(He gives him five bills)*
- GONTRAN: *(Placing the bills in his wallet)* Thank you, uncle! And there is your guarantee. *(He hands the IOU very politely to his uncle, then moves briskly above the table)*
- DUCHOTEL: What is this? *(Reading)* "On the day of my majority . . ."
- GONTRAN: *(Above the table)* Soon, soon.

DUCHOTEL: *(Running after him)* Oh, no! No! I'm not having any of this! Give me my money!

GONTRAN: *(Countering in semicircle around the table from left to right, then right to left, the table between them)* You have accepted the IOU, uncle! The document is in circulation.

DUCHOTEL: No, it isn't! Not a bit of it!

GONTRAN: Goodbye, uncle! And thank you! *(He exits quickly upstage)*

DUCHOTEL: *(Following to upstage and stopping at the door)* Gontran! Oh! This is too much! He's a pickpocket! A cutpurse! *(He crosses down)*

MORICET *(Laughing)* Ha, ha, ha! Old fellow, I believe you've been had!

SCENE XI The same, less GONTRAN; LÉONTINE, then BABET

LÉONTINE: *(Entering upstage with DUCHOTEL's coat and hat and watches MORICET laughing)* What is the matter with Gontran? Why is he running off like a lost soul? *(She crosses down)*

DUCHOTEL: Why? Why? He's cheated me out of five hundred *francs*, that's why.

LÉONTINE: *(Laughing)* No!

MORICET: Excuse me. He has given you his IOU.

DUCHOTEL: His IOU! It's worth nothing. Here! I'll sell it to you for forty *francs* and even then I'd be robbing you! Oh, when I catch him!

LÉONTINE: *(Giving him his hat and coat)* Not wanting to change the subject, but if you want to catch the *train* . . .

DUCHOTEL Oh, my goodness, the train! *(Door bell rings)*

LÉONTINE: That's the door bell.

DUCHOTEL: So it is! Who can that be?

(BABET enters upstage with DUCHOTEL's gun in its case)

BABET: Monsieur, there is a gentleman who desires speak to you.

DUCHOTEL: Oh! I have no time! Who is it?

BABET: He would not tell me his name.

DUCHOTEL: Well! Never mind! You see what he wants, Léontine; I must fly. *(To BABET)* You brought down my bag?

BABET: Yes, monsieur. *(She exits to the living room, centre left)*

DUCHOTEL: *(Taking his gun by its strap)* Very good. So, goodbye, my little Léontine.

LÉONTINE: Goodbye, my darling. Take care. No accidents!

(DUCHOTEL embraces LÉONTINE. MORICET, irritated by the sight, turns his head with a pout of bad humour)

DUCHOTEL: You'll go down with me, Moricet?

MORICET: Yes! I'll see you as far as the train. *(He goes for his hat and his cane)*

DUCHOTEL: Good! I'm off, and in an hour and half, my darling, you can say to yourself: "My husband is safely at Liancourt, with his friend Cassagne." *(He exits)*

LÉONTINE: Goodbye, my darling! Goodbye!

MORICET: *(Before exiting, making a last attempt)* Léontine?

LÉONTINE: What?

MORICET: *(With a significant look)* Well?

LÉONTINE: No!

MORICET: Ah! *(With a sigh of resignation, he leaves)*

BABET: *(Entering left)* Should I show in the gentleman in the living room?

LÉONTINE: *(Who is at the door upstage to watch DUCHOTEL leave, to BABET)* Do so.

BABET: Very well, madame! *(She goes to the door of the living room, goes partway out, returns and announces:)* Monsieur Cassagne!

LÉONTINE: *(Disconcerted)* What! Monsieur Cassagne?

(BABET exits upstage)

CASSAGNE: *(Entering, very pleasantly. He has a small cane in his hand and crosses to left of the table)* Ah! Madame! I am very happy to see you! How is Duchotel?

LÉONTINE: What do you mean? *(She is to right, a little below the table)*

CASSAGNE: He's here, isn't he?

LÉONTINE: No, no! Of course, he isn't here!

CASSAGNE: Oh, dear! It's been so long since I have seen him.

LÉONTINE: Has it? *(She moves a little closer to the table)* What do you mean?

CASSAGNE: I wished to speak with him on a personal matter, to get his advice, but as he's not here, perhaps I might confide in you! *(LÉONTINE distractedly indicates that he should be seated: they sit at the table, he to left, she to right. Placing his top hat on the table, to his left, they speak across the table)* You know that I am separated from my wife?

LÉONTINE: Yes, yes, indeed, but . . .

CASSAGNE: *(Interrupting)* Truly, I'd like to divorce, but I cannot find the proof I need. Well! *(He places his cane on the table to his right)* Tonight I have arranged to surprise my wife *in flagrante delicto*.

LÉONTINE: *(Who has hardly heard a word Cassagne has said)* Ah? Yes! So much the better!

CASSAGNE: *(Very calmly)* She has a lover, madame, I know it. Yes, she has a lover! A certain Monsieur Zizi.

LÉONTINE: *(Not having heard him,, she rises and shakes his hand)* Congratulations! But you said it has been a long time since you have seen my husband?

CASSAGNE: Oh! Ages ago! At least six months!

LÉONTINE: Six months!

CASSAGNE: You tell him he's not much of a friend! Six months without a word!

LÉONTINE: But, you've been hunting together several times in the last six months!

CASSAGNE: Hunting! Me? I don't hunt!

LÉONTINE: You don't hunt?

CASSAGNE: I've never hunted in my life!

LÉONTINE: He's never hunted in his life! *(A beat during which she makes choking sounds, then she suddenly jumps up and begins screaming)* Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

CASSAGNE: *(Springing up)* What!

- LÉONTINE: *(Seeming to address Cassagne)* Ah! Liar! Rascal! Scoundrel!
- CASSAGNE: But, madame! I've never lied to you! *(He crosses to the extreme left)*
- LÉONTINE: *(Moving toward him and still apparently addressing him)* Tell me you go hunting, will you! *(She moves upstage left)*
- CASSAGNE: *(Following)* Me? No, just the opposite!
- LÉONTINE: *(Opening the door and speaking in the direction where she watched DUCHOTEL leave)* Play the hypocrite with me, will you!
- CASSAGNE: Me? No! *(Aside)* She's gone crazy! *(He crosses down quickly)*
- LÉONTINE: *(Turning to him, forcing him to left)* God be praised! The blinders have fallen from me and I now see the utter blackness of your soul! *(LÉONTINE is even with the table, to left of it)*
- CASSAGNE: *(Leaning on the table, his hands spread)* But, madame, calmly, please!
- LÉONTINE: *(Taking the cane that Cassagne has put on the table and striking the table with each word, catching Cassagne's fingers)* Calm, be damned!
- CASSAGNE: *(Jumping back and shaking his fingers)* Oww!
- LÉONTINE: *(Gesticulating with the cane, and moving to the extreme left)* Now, I know! Oh! I had my doubts, before, but now . . . !
- CASSAGNE: *(Aside, keeping the table between them)* I hate it when this happens. *(Appealing to LÉONTINE)* Madame!
- LÉONTINE: *(Threatening with the cane)* Play me for a fool, will you!
- CASSAGNE: No!
- LÉONTINE: Laugh at me, will you! *(Crossing in front of the table and crossing right)*
- CASSAGNE: Never!
- LÉONTINE: We shall see who laughs last! *(She slams the cane down on the table and turns away laughing.)* Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!
- CASSAGNE: *(Near the fireplace, aside)* If I could get my cane back!
- LÉONTINE: *(Moving back toward the table)* When I think that I suspected nothing!

- CASSAGNE: *(Approaching cautiously and speaking soothingly)* Yes, madame, yes.
- LÉONTINE: I was blind! Asleep! *(She emphasizes each word by crushing Cassagne's hat)*
- CASSAGNE: Oh! Madame, that's my hat!
- LÉONTINE: Ah! *(LÉONTINE flings the hat at CASSAGNE)*
- CASSAGNE: *(Holding up his hands to defend himself)* Ah! *(Placing his hands down on the table to calm LÉONTINE)* Madame, please!
- LÉONTINE: *(Grabbing the cane and striking the table as she screams)* Ah! I must be insane!
- CASSAGNE: *(Again with crushed fingers, he moves up right)* I'll believe that!
- LÉONTINE: *(Who has risen and moved left, holding CASSAGNE's cane)* Oh! But now it's my turn! And you, monsieur, know full well that revenge is sweet! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! *(She pulls the bell pull)*
- CASSAGNE: *(Has retrieved his hat and is trying to uncrush it)* Yes, madame, yes!
- LÉONTINE: *(She hugs CASSAGNE suddenly)* Ah! It is your comfort! Well! Mine, too! *(She pushes him roughly away; speaking as though to Duchotel)* So! The marriage bed isn't good enough for you! Well! Me, too! *(Moving left, she shoves CASSAGNE aside and he falls over the pouffe)* And to begin, I shall write to Moricet!
- BABET: *(Entering upstage)* Madame rang?
- LÉONTINE: *(To BABET)* I'm going to the country, Babet. Yes! I'm going to spend two days with my god-mother! *(She laughs crazily and crosses down)*
- BABET: *(Amazed, to CASSAGNE)* What the matter with her?
- CASSAGNE: She's ill! She's very ill! *(BABET exits)*
- LÉONTINE: Ah-ha-ha-ha-ha! Yes, I will have – revenge! *(She flourishes CASSAGNE's cane)* Shame! Shame! *(In her anger, she breaks the cane and flings the pieces at CASSAGNE)* Ah-ha-ha-ha-ha!! *(She exits left, screaming furiously)*
- CASSAGNE: Oh! My cane! *(He holds up the broken pieces)* My cane!

CURTAIN

MISTER CHASE!
ACT II

(MORICET's bachelor flat – elegant furniture of the latest style – up left, a piano against the wall; the piano is open with a piece of music on the stand; knick-knacks and curios on the piano – down left, a door opening onto a hallway; the door is equipped with a working lock – up right, an elegant alcove with hangings and a very evocative representation of The Triumph of Venus – any Venus; in the alcove, a bed with blanket turned down ready for occupancy. The head of the bed is to left; near of the head of the bed, a small pedestal night table; on the pedestal table, a candlestick and matches; under the pedestal table, a pair of slippers. At the foot of the bed, facing the head, a chair; on the floor in front of the bed, a bearskin rug. Upstage centre, French windows with curtains similar to those of the alcove; Italian blinds raised a little higher than the opening of the windows. The windows open onto a balcony overlooking a moonlit street. Down right, a door with door knob and latch, opening onto an interior backing. Right centre, a door opening onstage, onto a closet. Between the down right door and the one above it, a fireplace with a fire; on the fireplace, a candlestick, a matchbox, a small hand mirror, two candelabra, a statuette. Above the fireplace, an artistic egg-shaped mirror is hung. Even with the fireplace, facing downstage, a small sofa with cushions. Centre, down stage of and a little to right of the piano, a table set for two; a chair on each side of the table; on the upstage side of the table, an elegant lamp with a lace lampshade. On the right end of the table, nearest the audience, a tray of hors d'oeuvres, also on the table, a quail, a lobster, a bottle of bordeaux in its pannier, a small bowl of radishes, etc. Arranged here and there, curios, pictures, statuettes, etc.)

SCENE I

MADAME LATOUR, DUCHOTEL

MME. LATOUR: *(An atomizer in hand, spraying the curtains of the alcove)* There! So much for the curtains! *(Crossing to the sofa)* Now, for the sofa! Ah, the sofa! It is generally the place where the battle begins. It's very important that the deployment be correct. The victory almost always depends on the first skirmish. Double spray on the sofa. Just . . . *(She carefully sprays the sofa)*. . . so! I must spray strategically. *(Crossing to the bed)* And here: the scene of the final engagement! Here, I must be careful, one must use the most delicate touch when one has arrived at this phase of the battle. The most delicate spray now can bring about libations of joy later! *(She sprays once between the bedsheets, then flaps them lightly; she goes right)* I hope the new tenant, Monsieur Moricet, will be pleased. *(Showing the atomizer which is almost empty)* He's paying me sixteen francs to spray the rooms for him with Imperial Russian perfume. *(Moving across to the piano)* I love men like that; men who, in matters of love, don't look to the cost! *(Spraying herself)* After all, is there any cost too great for the love of a woman? Ah! We are a fortunate sex. *(She places the atomizer on the piano and crosses slowly right, while speaking)* Would

that I, the Comtesse de Latour du Nord, had, in my youth, a weakness for a man like that one instead of a love for a circus performer. *(She sits on the sofa)* My husband would never have caught on and I would not be a *conciérge* today. *(Lying back on the sofa)* Ah! it is far away now . . . Happy times! This perfume numbs me. I am floating away! And what good does it do? If only the proverb were true! “There is no horse so grand that the jockey will not find his hour”, they say. Well, your jockey is never there when you need him.

DUCHOTEL: *(Off)* Madame Latour!

MME. LATOUR: *(Sitting up)* My jockey!

DUCHOTEL: *(Coming in, with his gun in its bag over his shoulder)* Madame Latour?

MME. LATOUR: Monsieur Zizi!

DUCHOTEL: *(At the left door)* I've been searching all over for you. Good heavens, what stinks? Is there a cat living here?

MME. LATOUR: *(Moving opposite DUCHOTEL)* A cat! It is Imperial Russian perfume.

DUCHOTEL: *Pffu!* It's enough to knock you flat on your back.

MME. LATOUR: That *is* the point.

DUCHOTEL: I rang ten times at Madame Cassagne's door across the way. Is she not in?

MME. LATOUR: No, Monsieur. Madame Cassagne said to me: “My uncle Zizi . . .”

DUCHOTEL: Ah, yes! That's me!

MME. LATOUR: “. . . my uncle Zizi is coming today; give him my key and ask him to wait for me.” *(She takes a key from her pocket)*

DUCHOTEL: I waited two hours at the restaurant. I had to eat a dinner for two by myself.

MME. LATOUR: *(Handing over the key)* I have completed my mission. *(In front of the sofa)* And by the way, Monsieur Zizi, what's the news in the country?

DUCHOTEL: *(Stopping short as he turns to go)* What's the news in the country?

MME. LATOUR: Yes!

DUCHOTEL: How should I know?

MME. LATOUR: I thought Madame Cassagne said that you lived in the country.

DUCHOTEL: *(Crossing down in front of the table)* What? Me? What ever made you think that I . . . Oh, yes, of course, of course! I live in the country.

MME. LATOUR: You must be very bored there.

DUCHOTEL: Oh, no . . . The public gardens . . . The military band . . .

MME. LATOUR: And of course, you can always come to Paris.

DUCHOTEL: Yes. What?

MME. LATOUR: Why do you always bring your gun when you come to Paris?

DUCHOTEL: *(With aplomb)* This! It's not a gun. It's a shaving kit. It's all the rage . . . in the country. *(Crossing right)* But tell me, Comtesse, the . . . ah . . . professional who lives here? She's well established, is she?

MME. LATOUR: The professional! Who do you mean? Mademoiselle Urbaine des Voitures? But she doesn't live here anymore, monsieur. We evicted her – just this week, in fact.

DUCHOTEL: Really?

MME. LATOUR: Oh! Monsieur, we could not tolerate such things here; she was giving the house a reputation! She specialized in the weaning of schoolboys! Good heavens! When I had to stand on the doorstep of a mere schoolboy and beg for the keys, *(striking her bosom with a noble gesture)* my patrician lineage could take no more!

DUCHOTEL: You are hard, comtesse!

MME. LATOUR: I despise corrupt love! I am not speaking of the divertissements of decent women, of course. Luckily, since the departure of this dragonfly, I may say boldly that the house is faultless; all married people! And some to each other.

DUCHOTEL: Oh! Water, gas and married people on each floor. Are the new occupants married?

MME. LATOUR: Him, no, but she certainly, if I may judge by the mystery with which he encircles the affair.

DUCHOTEL: How considerate of him! And what does he do?

MME. LATOUR: A doctor.

DUCHOTEL: A doctor who pays himself with his patients' wives! *(Indicating the dinner for two on the table)* Look at all of this! Meanwhile, the husband must sleeping on both ears. What a pea brain! Well, goodbye, comtesse. I will see if Madame Cassagne has returned. *(He exits)*

MME. LATOUR: *(Crossing to left near the entrance door)* Very well, Monsieur Zizi! *(She half opens the door, abruptly)* No, wait one moment. *(Partway out)* Good heavens! The new tenant is here. He will have me arrested for letting you enter.

DUCHOTEL: Well, let me leave, then.

MME. LATOUR: *(Stopping him)* No! You'll run into him! *(Taking him by the arm to the closet, right, which she opens)* Get in here! I will say that you are my father, that you have come to redecorate the apartment. *(She pushes DUCHOTEL into the closet)*

DUCHOTEL: But . . . !

MME. LATOUR: I'll let you out later.

DUCHOTEL: *Pffu!* It smells of camphor!

MME. LATOUR: What! Oh, yes, moths. Get in! *(She slams the door, as MORICET enters)* *Ouf!* Nicely timed. *(She leans against the closet)*

SCENE II MADAME LATOUR, MORICET, LÉONTINE

MORICET: *(speaking to LÉONTINE who remains off)* Here it is, Léontine, the sanctuary. Enter, have no fear!

LÉONTINE: *(OFF)* Oh! No, no, I don't dare.

MORICET: *(Carefully coaxing her)* Come on, what could possibly go wrong? What are you so afraid of?

LÉONTINE *(In a small voice; entering slowly)* But what if some one saw me!

MME. LATOUR: *(Aside)* Ah, déjà vu!

LÉONTINE: *(Jumping back)* A woman!

MORICET: What? Where? *(Indicating Madame Latour)* That? That's nothing at all!

MME. LATOUR: I beg your pardon!

MORICET: *(Presenting her)* The Comtesse de Latour du Nord.

LÉONTINE: *(Impressed, greeting Madame Latour with a bow)* Oh? Comtesse!

MORICET: My *conciérge*.

LÉONTINE: *(Stupefied)* Your *conciérge*?

MME. LATOUR: Alas! Yes, Madame, and a true Latour du Nord at that.

MORICET: Yes, a Latour who has finished her tour as a *conciérge*. (*With a meaningful look to Madame Latour*) Comtesse! We have no further need of your services.

(*MME. LATOUR moves to exit; there is a sneeze in the closet*)

LÉONTINE: What was that?

MME. LATOUR: I heard nothing.

(*Another sneeze*)

Moths.

MORICET: (*Indicating the closet*) Someone sneezed in there!

MME. LATOUR: Ah! Yes, monsieur. It's my father! I asked him to come to redo the apartment.

MORICET: (*Annoyed*) You should have done that earlier.

MME. LATOUR: (*Hurried*) But if monsieur desires he does not see the lady, monsieur has only to lead her into this room. (*She indicates the door downstage right*) While you do that, I shall spirit away my father.

MORICET: (*Moving LÉONTINE toward the down right door*) Very well, do it at once. (*Crossing back to MME. LATOUR*) Wait! Give this hundred *francs* to your father for his trouble. (*MORICET hands her a bill*)

MME. LATOUR: (*Taking the bill*) Ah! Monsieur, he will be most grateful.

MORICET: Well! Well! (*Herding LÉONTINE to the down right door*) Now, come, my frightened beauty! (*They exit R*)

SCENE III MME. LATOUR, DUCHOTEL

MME. LATOUR: (*Immediately MORICET and LÉONTINE exit, rushing to the closet door*) Quickly, Monsieur Zizi, you must leave!

DUCHOTEL: (*Entering from the closet and crossing down front of MME. LATOUR and the sofa*) Must I? Yes! Not a moment too soon, I've been camphorated! (*He sways*) Perhaps this is not the moment, after all. (*He crosses toward the sofa*)

MME. LATOUR: (*Who has fallen in step behind him*) Yes, very well, be quick! (*She sits him on the sofa and pushes his head between his knees*) Wait, this is for you! (*She hands him a coin*)

- DUCHOTEL: *(Raising his head to look at it)* A hundred sous?
- MME. LATOUR: From the doctor for doing up the apartment.
- DUCHOTEL: Oh! I'm your father, am I? My tip. You keep it, comtesse. I'll have no one say that I cannot support my family.
- MME. LATOUR: Thank you! And now . . . *(She indicates the exit door)*
- DUCHOTEL: *(Moving toward the door)* Of course, of course! *(Stops at the level of the bed and, with a sly air, indicates the door by which LÉONTINE and MORICET have exited)* Tell me! Is that where they . . . uhm . . . ?
- MME. LATOUR: What?
- DUCHOTEL: Are they in there?
- MME. LATOUR: Who?
- DUCHOTEL: The doctor! And the adulteress?
- MME. LATOUR: *(A little laugh, a little grumbling)* Really! Well, yes, they are in there. But, it may not be what you think. Poor little soldier! I am sure that this is her first skirmish.
- DUCHOTEL: True? Another one bites the dust, Comtesse! *Salut!* *(He salutes melodramatically; normal voice)* I'll be at Madame Cassagne's. *(He turns to exit)*
- MME. LATOUR: *(Rushing him to the door)* It's the door on the opposite side.
- DUCHOTEL: Yes, yes, on the same level! I know. Thank you and goodbye! *(He exits)*
- SCENE IV** **MADAME LATOUR, LÉONTINE, MORICET**
- MME. LATOUR: *(Closing the door)* I thought he'd never leave! *(Runs to the down right door; she starts to open the door, then stops and knocks discretely)* You can come in, now.
- MORICET: *(Entering with LÉONTINE)* That wasn't too bad!
- (He is centre; LÉONTINE is above the sofa, and during the dialogue between MORICET and MME. LATOUR, removes her cloak and hat and lays them on the cushions at the right end of the sofa)*
- MME. LATOUR: *(Near the exit door)* A very good night, monsieur, madame. *(She starts to leave)*
- MORICET: I certainly hope so! You, as well.

MME. LATOUR: Ah! Me! *(She heaves a sigh of remorse and exits)*

MORICET: *(As the door closes, he runs toward LÉONTINE with passion)* Léontine!

MME. LATOUR: *(Popping back in like a jack-in-the-box, stopping MORICET in mid-bound)* In case you should have need of me, the bell, there, goes to my room. *(She indicates a bell cord beside the fireplace)*

MORICET: Yes? Well, do like the bell! Go to your room! *(He closes the door, then turns to LÉONTINE)* Léontine! *(He stops himself and checks that MME. LATOUR has not popped back in, then continues)*

LÉONTINE: Moricet!

MORICET: *(Clasping LÉONTINE in his arms)* At last! Alone!

LÉONTINE: Ah! Moricet, is this happening? Am I truly here, in your arms?

MORICET: *(Taking her hands)* Léontine! I dare not believe it, either; I must look at you; I must drink you in; I must hold you closely! *(He does so)* I want you. . . *(He tries to unbutton her blouse at the neck)*

LÉONTINE: *(Putting her hands between them)* No!

MORICET: Yes! I tell you it is you – you – I have desired for so many days!

LÉONTINE: *(Moving away)* So many days?

MORICET: And at least as many nights!

LÉONTINE: *(Gasps)* Oh! Moricet, tell me that this is not just one big folly!

MORICET: A folly! In what way? What way?

LÉONTINE: In every way! Every way! *(She sits on the sofa)* Right now, I am still an honourable woman but tomorrow . . .

MORICET: *(He sits beside her; with magnificent conviction)* . . . you will still be honourable!

LÉONTINE: You mean that, truly?

MORICET: Certainly! Unless you plan to tell the story to the whole world.

LÉONTINE: Oh! No!

MORICET: *(He begins to kiss her fingertips with passion)* Well, then? What is that determines

a woman's honour? Public opinion, that's all. Well, we'll simply avoid airing our dirty linen in public!

LÉONTINE: Oh! There's a moral in that!

MORICET: *(He continues to kiss her fingers and works his way up her arm by the end of the speech)* How! Are you saying to me that your honour isn't a social agreement? It is society that has instituted this . . . institution "marriage". But, Léontine, is not true marriage an agreement of two hearts? Well, then, your true husband is your lover; the husband that society allows you is nothing more than a consort, while a lover, oh, a lover is the husband chosen by the heart!

LÉONTINE: *(Picking up his thought)* A husband second-class.

MORICET: Exactly! A lieutenant-husband. *(Aside)* And, lieutenants are the ones who do all the work. *(He kisses his way back down her arm.)* But why do we debate? Why do we argue? We are in love! *(He takes LÉONTINE's hand and takes her gently to the left)* Have you forgotten the letter that you wrote to me in such a full spirit?

LÉONTINE: No! I was enraged! I was in a frenzy!

MORICET: In a spirit of enraged frenzy, then. That letter opened paradise for me!

LÉONTINE: You have it?

MORICET: Do I have it? I have it engraved upon my heart.

LÉONTINE: *(With a look of indecision)* I would like to see it.

MORICET: It's here! *(He indicates the rear pocket of his pants)*

LÉONTINE: *(Blushing and looking away)* Oh! His heart!

MORICET: *(After a beat, with conviction)* The heart is everywhere! *(With lyricism)* Yes, even as you have written here, in your letter.

LÉONTINE: In my letter.

MORICET: In touching language, grand, yet simple. It comes from here. *(He touches his bosom, then takes the letter from his pocket)*

LÉONTINE: *(Between her teeth)* Like the letter.

MORICET: *(Reading)* "My love." *(Moved, he clasps the letter)* "My love, I have no words; as of this moment, there is no longer a barrier between us." *(Commenting)* Concise, yet eloquent! *(Listening to the lyric drone of his own words)* The eloquence of the

concision. And the concision . . .

LÉONTINE: *(In the same tone)* . . . of the eloquence?

MORICET: *(Disconcerted)* Yes. *(Reading)* “Free to act as I will, I shall come to you at once.”
(To her) That is what you wrote. *(He folds the letter)*

LÉONTINE: Oh yes, but what was the post script?

MORICET: Oh! The post script . . . The post script . . . is of no importance.

LÉONTINE: *(Reading over his shoulder)* “Know that I only do this because ‘he’ has driven me to it.” *(Insistent)* “. . . because ‘he’ has driven me to it!”

MORICET: Oh, yes! Well, a small concession to feminine pride.

LÉONTINE: *(A trifle indignant)* Oh! You think so, do you?

MORICET: *(Replacing the letter in his pants pocket. With passion)* Léontine, look around us. All is conducive to love! *(With his right hand, he takes her waist and circling her softly around him, he moves them upstage. They end centre, facing upstage)* Feel the perfumes numbing you with a languor of delight.

LÉONTINE: *(Going melodramatically limp)* Oh, yes! It’s true; it feels so good.

MORICET: *(He swings her through one and a half turns; they end up above the table)* See! An intimate table for two.

LÉONTINE: *(Clapping her hands like a child)* Oh! Quail! Lobster! My husband adores lobster!

MORICET: Well, he can’t have any! *(He swings her around again – With lyricism)* The very light is discrete. What mystery, ah, what promises are in this half-light. Yet, we have no need of light, for tonight we need not see, we love! *(He dims the light a little with his free hand)*

LÉONTINE: *(Alarmed)* Ah! Did you do that?

MORICET: *(Flatly, in contrast with the lyricism of his former words)* I am merely at one with the romance of the night. *(He swings her again; it’s a waltz by now; they end up at the French windows; through the windows, he indicates the full moon; lyrically again)* Behold the blushing moon, itself one with our love! The moon, the confidante of lovers!

LÉONTINE: The airy beauty of the moon!

MORICET: Yes, look at it, the star of the night! *(A beat; there’s something wrong with that)*

LÉONTINE: Oh! You have a balcony!

MORICET: *(Taken by the mood, still lyrically)* A balcony that goes all around the house, and all around our love! *(Taking her in his arms)* We will be Romeo and Juliet, and play our love scene upon the balcony.

LÉONTINE: *(Mockingly)* Only, viewed from the inside.

MORICET: *(Flatly)* It's Romeo and Juliet in winter. *(Swinging her toward the bed; lyrically)* And there, there . . .

LÉONTINE: *(Turning away at the sight of the bed)* Oh!

MORICET: What?

LÉONTINE: *(Throwing herself on the sofa in shame)* Oh! No, not this . . . Not this!

MORICET: What's the matter? It's the reason we . . .

LÉONTINE: Yes. Yes! But . . . no! Not there, not that!

MORICET: What? Oh, for . . . ! *(Imitating her)* No, not this . . . There! Not that! *(Aside)* It's like surgery. You should not display the instruments in advance. *(He returns to her; indignantly)* Now, look here, Léontine.

LÉONTINE: *(Her face in her hands)* Oh, Moricet!

MORICET: What's this? You tremble, you cry!

LÉONTINE: *(Sobbing)* Ah!

MORICET: *(Aside)* I feel like I'm married again. *(LÉONTINE throws herself into MORICET's arms; he is bewildered by her mood swings)* What!

LÉONTINE: *(Hiding in his arms)* Just like on my wedding night, when he was there with me!

MORICET: *(Holding her, but very annoyed)* Yes! Well, it works better that way.

LÉONTINE: *(Still holding him)* And he so gently introduced me to the mysteries of love that you . . . *(Abruptly, rebuffing MORICET)* And now, suddenly. . . the bed! As if it were nothing!

MORICET: No! Not at all! *(Crossing toward her)* Listen, my love! Oh! This is ridiculous!

LÉONTINE: If he had only remained faithful, I would not be here this moment!

MORICET: *(Losing his long-suffering air and crossing to her)* Léontine, would you please not talk about your husband all the time? Or if you must think of him, think of where he is at this moment.

LÉONTINE: Oh! Don't speak to me of it!

MORICET: But I shall! After all, his behavior is shameful! At this very moment, he is on a train to another woman, there to break all the vows he made!

LÉONTINE: It's true! The scoundrel!

MORICET: And you have compunctions?

LÉONTINE: *(With frenzy)* No! No compunctions!

MORICET: He . . . ! . . . he has a mistress!

LÉONTINE: *(Putting her arms around his neck)* Well! I . . . ! . . . I have a lover!

MORICET: And think! He is holding her, the unfaithful wretch. He is holding her in his arms!

LÉONTINE: *(She pulls his arms around her)* Hold me! Hold me!

MORICET: *(Holding her)* Yes! He kisses her!

LÉONTINE: Oh! *(To MORICET, frenzied, holding her face up)* Kiss me! Kiss me!

MORICET: Yes. *(He kisses her)* Oh, it's shameful! *(He kisses her again; abruptly)* And, what's this? She, the woman he is with, she returns his kisses!

LÉONTINE: No?

MORICET: Yes!

LÉONTINE: *(Furious)* She does? Well, there! There! There! *(She kisses MORICET)*

MORICET: *(With passion)* Ah! Léontine! How long I have waited for this moment! *(He waltzes her toward the bed and is about to lay her upon it)*

LÉONTINE: *(Breaking away and sitting by the table)* Ah! I must have a drink!

MORICET: She must have a drink! She must have a drink! *(To LÉONTINE directly)* What do you want to drink?

LÉONTINE: *(Picking up a glass from the table)* Anything! Champagne!

- MORICET: Good! Champagne! Where is the champagne? *(He sees that there is none on the table)* Oh my god! That Latour woman has forgotten the champagne! *(He crosses and rings the bell)* What was she thinking of?
- LÉONTINE: Aren't you thirsty?
- MORICET: *(With passion, he presses his face against hers)* I thirst only for you. I thirst only for your love. *(Declaiming)* I am made drunk with your smile, drunk with your beauty. My infinite love is my drink and my sustenance.
- LÉONTINE: *(With half-closed eyes, takes his head in her left arm, framing his face)* Oh! Fill me with your verses! Speak, O my poet!
- MORICET: *(The same)* Under your fiery gaze, I am lost, so much do I adore you.
All my body shivers with ardent delight!
- LÉONTINE: *(Bewitched by his poetry)* Yes! More! More verses!
- MORICET: *(Flatly)* I haven't finished the first verse.
- LÉONTINE: *(With passion)* When you speak to me this way, I cannot resist you.
- MORICET: She cannot resist me! *(He throws himself on to his back so that his head is in LÉONTINE's lap and he is looking up at her. A knock at the door. LÉONTINE jumps up. MORICET rolls to the floor; LÉONTINE crosses right)*
- MORICET: Who's there?
- MME. LATOUR: *(Outside)* It is I, Comtesse Latour.
- MORICET: *(Relieved, to LÉONTINE)* It's the concierge. It's Latour. *(Rising, he turns up the lamp and opens the door)* Enter! *(LÉONTINE is at the fireplace)*
- SCENE V** **The same, MME. LATOUR**
- MORICET: *(Crossing above the table as MME. LATOUR enters)* Well, Comtesse! Where did you leave your head? You prepare me a dinner and you forget the champagne?
- MME. LATOUR: *(Simply)* No, monsieur! You said to me: "Do as you would for yourself!" And as for me . . .
- MORICET: Yes?
- MME. LATOUR: . . . champagne gives me gas.
- MORICET: Well! If you're going to bring health into the matter!

MME. LATOUR: If monsieur desires champagne, I believe there are two bottles on the upper shelf of the side-room closet. *(She indicates the door right)*

MORICET: I believe I do want some!

MME. LATOUR: *(Making a show of going to the DR door)* Very well, I shall go . . .

MORICET: No, wait! I can do it more quickly. Please, keep Madame company.

MME. LATOUR: *(Above the sofa)* Very well, monsieur!

MORICET: *(Moving quickly)* "Made drunk with your smile, drunk with your beauty." *(He blows a kiss to LÉONTINE and exits down right. LÉONTINE sits on the sofa)*

MME. LATOUR: *(Watching him go)* Ah! There is a man that is a man.

LÉONTINE: You think so?

MME. LATOUR: *(Crossing between the table and the sofa)* With a man like that, I understand that a woman of the world would allow herself a weakness.

LÉONTINE: *(Haughty)* Of whom are you speaking?

MME. LATOUR: *(Quickly)* It is a general comment! Of myself, if you like! Of myself, whose greatest error was to favour a man who wasn't of my rank.

LÉONTINE: Really?

MME. LATOUR: *(A bitter sigh)* It cost me my position in the world, Madame, for while the world may excuse a scandal, it does not excuse bad taste!

LÉONTINE: Poor Comtesse! And what was he, this man of yours?

MME. LATOUR: He was a lion tamer . . . with the Circus Fernando!

LÉONTINE: Are you serious? A lion tamer!

MME. LATOUR: Oh, Madame, he was beautiful! I still recall the day I saw him for the first time: I was in the front row with my husband. Oh! He had a chest!

LÉONTINE: Your husband had . . . ?

MME. LATOUR: My husband? To the contrary, his sunk in! No, the lion tamer! What a man! I could not take my eyes from him in his cage, striking the fierce animals! So! So! So! Ah! My imagination knew no bounds! What he must be like with a woman?

- LÉONTINE: *(Rising)* That's horrible! I would like to see a man try that with me!
- MME. LATOUR: *(With the tone of a connoisseur)* Don't speak, Madame, of that which you do not know. *(Change of tone)* Shortly afterward, this tamer of my heart somehow got me to a small bachelor flat as well-appointed and perfumed as this one . . .
- LÉONTINE: Oh? *(She sits on the stool in front of the piano)*
- MME. LATOUR: Ah, Madame! Never develop a weakness for a lion-tamer with the Circus Fernando.
- LÉONTINE: I have no intention of doing so. *(She leafs through the music on the piano)*
- MME. LATOUR: *(Dryly)* No more did I. *(Pause. LÉONTINE begins to work out the piece. After a moment of listening)* Good! Very good! *Piano, there, piano!* *(As though excusing herself)* Rubinstein plays it "piano".
- LÉONTINE: *(Stopping and staring)* Rubinstein! You know Rubinstein?
- MME. LATOUR: *(With a touch of conceit)* Oh! We have often . . . played together.
- LÉONTINE: *(Surprised)* No! When?
- MME. LATOUR: Oh! In my youth!
- LÉONTINE: Ah!
- (LÉONTINE, in way of condolence, leans slightly toward her, then returns to the piano as though to continue playing; MME. LATOUR winces)*
- MME. LATOUR: No! Wait! If you will allow me, it is for four hands.
- LÉONTINE: *(Moving over on the stool to make room for her)* Of course, Comtesse.
- MME. LATOUR: Thank you, Madame. *(She sits at the piano)* Now! Two bars for nothing.
- LÉONTINE and LATOUR: *(Counting together)* One, two, one, two . . . *(they play)*
- SCENE VII** **The same, MORICET**
- MORICET: *(Arriving with two bottles of champagne.)* Very well, Comtesse, I have found the . . . *(Stopping in amazement)* Léontine at the piano with my janitor. Hell has frozen over! *(To them)* What are you doing there?
- LÉONTINE: *(Without stopping the piece)* We are playing four hands.

(MME. LATOUR, to best accent the rhythm, begins to sing the air, while continuing to play with LÉONTINE)

MORICET: *(Ironically, aside)* Look at it! What a picture. *(To them)* Excuse me!

(They continue to play the piece – if possible it should be played by the actors themselves)

Excuse me, Comtesse? *(MME. LATOUR continues to play; he bangs the bottles of champagne together)* Comtesse! Comtesse!

MME. LATOUR: *(Still singing and playing, she half-turns to him)* La, la, la, la, la, la, what?

MORICET: *(Mimicking)* “La, la, la, what?” I have found the champagne, that’s what. *(He holds out the bottles)* But where is the corkscrew?

MME. LATOUR: *(Staring at him over her shoulder as to a person who is deranged; sings:)* In the drawer, under the napkins. *(She goes back to playing)*

MORICET: *(Ironically)* Ah? Well! Don’t disturb yourself! *(He moves to exit)*

MME. LATOUR: *(She rises quickly)* Oh! Pardon me! I will find it for you.

MORICET: No! No! I would hate to interrupt you. Continue, comtesse! Continue! I’ll find it. *(He exits down right again)*

MME. LATOUR: *(To LÉONTINE)* Shall we continue?

LÉONTINE: No. It’s much too difficult. *(MME. LATOUR begins to move toward the DL door)* Was it a long affair, with your lion-tamer?

MME. LATOUR: *(Stopping and turning to LÉONTINE)* Twelve years.

LÉONTINE: *(Seated with her back to the piano)* Yet you were finally found out.

MME. LATOUR: It would have continued to this day, but I let myself fall into a trap.

LÉONTINE: Really?

MME. LATOUR: The oldest trick, Madame! The husband who goes hunting!

LÉONTINE: Hunting?

MME. LATOUR: Yes, that old trick!

LÉONTINE: Your husband as well!

MME. LATOUR: I don't have to tell you what he was really doing.

LÉONTINE: Heavens, no! Visiting his mistress.

MME. LATOUR: Exactly! What? No! When a husband goes to his mistress, he says he is going for a drive. It's a cliché, of course, but . . . when he says he's going hunting –

LÉONTINE: Doesn't that prove he has a mistress?

MME. LATOUR: No! It means he intends to return to trap his wife in an indiscretion.

LÉONTINE: *(Fluttering)* Oh! My God!

MME. LATOUR: What is the matter?

LÉONTINE: *(Jumping up and crossing down)* Oh! My God! I didn't think of it that way! *(To MME. LATOUR)* However . . . Madame, when a husband has already used the excuse of going hunting many times in the past . . .

MME. LATOUR: That means his first inquiries proved nothing and he's starting over.

LÉONTINE: Oh! My God! And here I thought that it was he who . . . *(Crossing abruptly to the DR door, and calling)* Moricet! Moricet!

MME. LATOUR: *(Astounded, crossing left)* What is wrong with her?

LÉONTINE: *(Calling)* Moricet, come quickly! *(She crosses to the front of the sofa)*

SCENE VIII The same, MORICET

MORICET: *(Breezing in with a corkscrew)* What's the matter! What's going on?

LÉONTINE: Quickly, my hat, my hat!

MORICET: *(Disconcerted)* What!

LÉONTINE: I will not remain a second longer in this apartment!

MORICET: But, you've only just got here! *(Crossing to her)* My God! Léontine, what's gotten into you?

LÉONTINE: It's gotten into me that you have abused my confidence, making me believe things that you could never prove.

MORICET: What!

- LÉONTINE: But, Heaven be praised! I have done nothing! I am loyal to my husband!
- MORICET: Well, technically, I guess.
- LÉONTINE: As I am faithful to him, so is he faithful to me, my little darling!
- MORICET: How is he faithful? He says he's going hunting and instead goes to his mistress!
- LÉONTINE: *(Putting on her hat)* You know perfectly well that when a husband goes to his mistress, he says he's going for a drive. Everybody knows that!
- MORICET: What! My God! Driving! Hunting! What's the difference?
- LÉONTINE: A great deal of difference! "Goin on a hunt" means that he is trying to trap *her*!
- MORICET: Who told you that?
- LÉONTINE: *(At the fireplace to see that the hat is on right)* Ask the comtesse!
- MORICET: The comtesse? *(He turns abruptly in the direction of MME. LATOUR and stares fixedly. She has been silently trying to reach the door; meeting MORICET's menacing gaze, she ducks behind the piano – After a beat)* Did you tell her that?
- MME. LATOUR: Oh, I may have said . . . I have heard that very thing quite often . . .
- MORICET: *(Furious)* Is that so? Who asked you to stick your oar in?
- MME. LATOUR: But, Monsieur, if I could have predicted Madame's reaction!
- MORICET: *(Livid)* Would you care to predict my reaction?
- LÉONTINE: *(To the fireplace)* Let the Comtesse alone! I wish to go and that's all there is to it. *(She takes her cloak from the sofa and puts it on)*
- MORICET: But I never saw such a . . . ! *(To MME. LATOUR)* Go! Get out, get out!
- MME. LATOUR: Yes, Monsieur Moricet, thank you very much, Monsieur Moricet, thank you very much! *(She exits)*
- SCENE IX** **The same, less MME. LATOUR**
- MORICET: *(Slamming the door after MME. LATOUR and echoing her)* Old busybody! *(To LÉONTINE)* Léontine! Surely, you're not serious?
- LÉONTINE: *(With a look of challenge)* You will see if I'm serious!

- MORICET: Léontine, look at the state you're in! I ask you to be calm.
- LÉONTINE: *(Crossing her arms and tapping her right foot impatiently)* I am calm!
- MORICET: I go to find the corkscrew, and when I return, poof! A complete change! You're absolutely tapping your foot, you want to leave so badly!
- LÉONTINE: *(Same business)* Certainly!
- MORICET: But what possible reason can you give me?
- LÉONTINE: I don't have to give a reason! I want to go! I am free to go, I assume? *(She crosses in the direction of the door)*
- MORICET: *(Stopping her and moving her toward the sofa)* Certainly, you are free, but I have your word! Your sacred word! In your letter, you said . . .
- LÉONTINE: Oh! It doesn't matter what I said! *(She goes around the sofa to the right and starts for the door)*
- MORICET: *(Seeing her intention, crosses left around the sofa to cut her off)* But, you have given me a mission! A mission to avenge you! And I will accomplish that mission! I shall be . . . *(With a grand pose)* . . . the Minister of Revenge!
- LÉONTINE: There's no such portfolio!
- MORICET: In government, perhaps, but here . . . !
- LÉONTINE: This is an odd way to avenge me! *(She crosses between the piano and the table toward the door)*
- MORICET: *(Blocking the door)* Léontine, listen! I love you!
- LÉONTINE: *(With a snort)* Ha! *(She moves right)*
- MORICET: Yes! "Made drunk with your smile, drunk with your beauty."
- LÉONTINE: No, Moricet! It's no good.
- MORICET: *(Thinking she has criticized his poetry)* Really? I thought it was quite good. It came from deep . . .
- LÉONTINE: Yes, where the letter came from.
- MORICET: *(Coming down between the piano and the table and moving right)* Cruel! You said that you couldn't resist me when I spoke in verse.

- LÉONTINE: Now I prefer prose! Prose and proof! *(She moves toward the door)*
- MORICET: *(Catching her hand and turning her so that she falls onto the sofa – with energy)*
Léontine! You will remain here!
- LÉONTINE: *(Has fallen seated on the sofa)* Oh! Violence! *(She jumps up furiously)*
- MORICET: Listen, as far as your people are concerned, you've gone to visit your god-mother. Think! You must stay with your god-mother, if you don't want everybody to know that she's nothing but a *fairy* god-mother!
- LÉONTINE: *(Matter of fact)* You don't want to let me leave?
- MORICET: No! No! No!
- LÉONTINE: *(Removing her cloak and smiling at him)* Very well, then. I will stay the night . . . On this sofa! *(She sits furiously)*
- MORICET: Very well! And me, on this chair! *(He sits, equally furious, on the chair right of the table)*
- LÉONTINE: Do as you please!
- (They are seated half-turned from each other. She tries to calm herself by twisting at the cushions, from time to time punching one. He mutters unintelligibly, and with one hand, forearm resting on the table, unknowingly flicks radishes from the radish dish on the table. He suddenly notices that his hand is in the water of the radish dish and wipes it furiously on the tablecloth)*
- MORICET: *(After a pause)* I shall remember this night!
- LÉONTINE: *(Still with her back to him)* No more than I!
- MORICET: A night of love . . . spent on a chair!
- LÉONTINE: *(Without turning, over her shoulder)* Don't put yourself out. You have your bed, go to it!
- MORICET: Fine! And you?
- LÉONTINE: There is a chaise-longue in the side-room.
- MORICET: *(Rising)* I can't let you do it! You must have the bed.
- LÉONTINE: *(Rising)* You would put me to bed in your bed? Oh! It never ends!

MORICET: Without me! Without me!

LÉONTINE: Oh, it's the same thing.

MORICET: *That depends on where you're looking at it from.*

LÉONTINE: *(At the fireplace, striking matches)* No! I will sleep in the side-room on the chaise-longue. It will be my punishment!

MORICET: Oh, my god! And all of this for . . . Oh! That concierge! *(He shakes his fist at the door)*

LÉONTINE: *(Who has at last succeeded in striking a match, lights the candle in the candlestick on the mantelpiece)* Will you give me a blanket? *(She takes the candlestick to go into the room, down right)*

MORICET: *(Crossing to the bed)* With pleasure. *(He flings the spread to the foot of the bed and holds out a blanket. After a short beat)* But you know, you will regret it!

LÉONTINE: *(Taking one side of the blanket)* How?

MORICET: It will be cold as a bear's den, in there.

LÉONTINE: *(Coyly)* Well, then I suppose I have no choice but to . . . light the fire! *(She yanks the blanket away from him.)*

MORICET: *(Furious, shaking his fist at the door)* Oh! That concierge!

LÉONTINE: And now, I shall retire. *(She exits through the DR door, slamming it.)*

SCENE X MORICET, then MME. LATOUR, then LÉONTINE

MORICET: *(He throws blankets around, trying to arrange the bed)* Wasn't that a pleasant scene? Carrying on like that . . . ! Well! There are plenty of fish in the sea. Plenty. *(He paces between the sofa, then back to the bed, twisting the bedspread in his hands)* After all, she's not as pretty as all that! *(He finds himself near the down right door)* Oh! No! It will be a hot day in a cold place before I go in there! *(A knock at the entrance door)* What is it, now? *(He drops the bedspread over the back of the sofa and opens the entrance door)*

MME. LATOUR: *(Coming halfway in, very embarrassed at what she may be interrupting)* It is me, Monsieur Moricet.

MORICET: *(Holding the door)* You, again? I have had quite enough of you tonight, thank you! *(He begins to close the door on her)*

MME. LATOUR: But, monsieur, the man across the way, on the other side, has sent me to you. He knows you . . .

MORICET: Well, tell him to send me his card; *I don't know him. (He starts to close the door)*

MME. LATOUR: No, monsieur! He knows you are a doctor and his niece has had an attack of nerves . . .

MORICET: Well, tell him I'm not a night-doctor. And now please leave! *(He starts to push her out)*

MME. LATOUR: *(Exiting)* Very well, monsieur, very well, I will tell him.

MORICET: *(After she has gone, slams the door and turns the key, crosses to the chair right of the table and unbuttons his spats, putting each foot on the chair)* I never! An attack of nerves. He has a nerve of his own! As if I care about his niece's nerves!

(LÉONTINE enters, searching. He continues to unbutton his spats)

What are you looking for?

LÉONTINE: *(Curtly, at the fireplace)* Matches to light the fire.

MORICET: *(Continuing to unbutton)* There, on the fireplace.

LÉONTINE: I can see. I'm not blind. *(She takes the box and exits)*

MORICET: *(There is a parting glance between them, then he goes left with a bitter chortle)* Oh! What a character! And her poor husband, bound to live with her! I pity him. *(A knock at the door)* Oh! Again! *(Loudly)* What is it this time?

DUCHOTEL: *(Off)* It's me, your neighbour across the way.

MORICET: Oh! For Heaven's sake! *(He crosses to the door left)*

SCENE XI MORICET, DUCHOTEL

MORICET: *(brusquely opening the door)* What? What do you want?

DUCHOTEL: *(Partly enters, looking back OFF without seeing MORICET)* You see, monsieur, my niece . . .

MORICET: *(Aside)* Duchotel! *(Aloud)* Don't come in!

(He tries to slam the door, but DUCHOTEL is already partway in and gets his arm caught in the door)

DUCHOTEL: *(Trying to disengage his arm)* Oh! Oww!

MORICET: Oh, my god! And his wife is here! *(He puts his back against the door)*

DUCHOTEL: *(Behind the door)* You're hurting my arm!

MORICET: *(Still leaning on the door)* I told you not to come in!

DUCHOTEL: *(Shoves the door, sending MORICET into the room)* That's enough of that!

MORICET: *(Landing on the sofa)* Oh!

DUCHOTEL: *(Seeing MORICET)* Moricet!

MORICET: *(Affecting surprise)* Duchotel! You! Here? Well, this is . . . good!

DUCHOTEL: *(Rubbing his arm)* You live here?

MORICET: *(Affecting nonchalance)* Obviously. Didn't I tell you?

DUCHOTEL: No!

MORICET: Ah! That's because I've just moved in . . . this evening. *(A fake laugh)* Ha, ha, ha!

DUCHOTEL: Ah! So you're the doctor?

MORICET: *(More fake laughter)* Ha, ha, ha! Of course! Yes, I am the doctor, I am the doctor. *(Aside)* Oh! My god! If Léontine comes out . . .

DUCHOTEL: What did you say?

MORICET: *(Even more nonchalantly, if possible)* Me? Nothing, nothing. *(There is a bang from the side-room; MORICET jumps)* Oh! My . . . ! *(To DUCHOTEL)* My . . . ! Mi . . . Mice! In the chimney!

DUCHOTEL: *(Chuckling)* Oh, yes? Who do you have in there?

MORICET: *(Even nonchalant-er)* In there? Nothing! No one! The chimney-sweep!

DUCHOTEL: *(Teasing)* At this hour?

MORICET: *(Same business)* Yes, he's a night chimney-sweep. It is night now, you know. *(He points out the French windows, then, as DUCHOTEL looks US, locks the DR door. Aside)* Ouf! At least, she can't come out, now.

DUCHOTEL: *(Who has seen him lock the door, teasing)* Why did you lock the door?

- MORICET: *(Very confused)* It's the soot. *(He suddenly begins to cover the sofa with the bed spread, like a drop sheet)* So the soot doesn't get in here.
- DUCHOTEL: *(Pulling MORICET down onto the sofa and sitting beside him)* Alright, now, let's have the whole story. You're obviously in luck, tonight.
- MORICET: Me?
- DUCHOTEL: Do you think I can't see that cozy little dinner for two on the table?
- MORICET: Oh, no! No, no, no, no, no. That dinner, that dinner was furnished with the apartment. It's a furnished apartment!
- DUCHOTEL: *(Still teasing)* It's a well-furnished apartment. You've been caught! You're having an affair with a scarlet woman. And I know who!
- MORICET: *(Bewildered)* Who? Who might that be?
- DUCHOTEL: It's obvious. There's only one woman it *could* be. It's . . . Madame Latour, the concierge!
- MORICET: *(Not hearing the joke at first)* No! It's not her! She's not here! I . . . Oh! The concierge! The concierge! *(Change of tone)* Ha, ha, ha, ha! Yes, well, as you said, I'm in luck, tonight. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!
- DUCHOTEL: Oh, come now. Come. *(Takes him by the arm)* Who is the little vixen?
- MORICET: Ah! My friend, discretion!
- DUCHOTEL: *(Patronizingly)* Come on, you can tell me.
- MORICET: Well! If you promise to keep it to yourself.
- DUCHOTEL: You think that I'd blab it around?
- MORICET: Oh! No.
- DUCHOTEL: Well?
- MORICET: Well! It's . . . it's . . .
- DUCHOTEL: It's . . .?
- MORICET: *(Searching)* Ah! *(With aplomb)* It's . . . Madame Cassagne! There!
- DUCHOTEL: *(Laughing and giving him a push; rising)* Liar, liar, pants on fire!

- MORICET: *(Rising and following DUCHTOEL)* It's the truth!
- DUCHOTEL: I don't think so, because, you see . . . I am with Madame Cassagne!
- MORICET: What! *(He recoils and falls onto the sofa and begins to laugh idiotically; to cover his embarrassment, he arranges the blankets on the sofa, continuing to laugh inanely)* Ha, ha, ha, ha . . . etc.
- DUCHOTEL: Yes! You see, you should confide in me! You'd feel better. Ah! I've just remembered! You're a doctor and I've come to get you. *(He goes to MORICET and takes his hand to lead him off)*
- MORICET: *(Bewildered)* What! Where are we going?
- DUCHOTEL: To your lady friend, who has had an attack of nerves.
- MORICET: What! You're taking me to . . . *(Aside)* Oh! And Léontine, my god!
- DUCHOTEL: You go on ahead. It's opposite, on the other side. I'll go down to the concierge and send her to the pharmacist, then I'll come right back. *(As DUCHOTEL starts to leave, the handle of the DR door begins to turn, first slowly then furiously and LÉONTINE shakes the door with rage. DUCHOTEL stops, stares at the door; pause while the door shakes)*
- MORICET: *(Inanely)* Well, what do you know? The door's shaking.
- DUCHOTEL: You've got a wildcat in there! *(The door continues to shake)* I think your wildcat wants out.
- MORICET: *(Crossing to the door)* Yes, yes! It's nothing! *(The door shakes more violently. A pounding on the door like a fist. Aside)* Thank god she's not shouting. He'd recognize her voice.
- LÉONTINE: *(Off; redoubling her pounding and screaming)* Moricet, Moricet!
- (MORICET flings his arms across the doorway and sings an air from Faust: "Angel Pure". The pounding and screaming continues)*
- MORICET: *(Sings)* "Angel pure, angel radiant, carry my soul to heaven's heart."
- DUCHOTEL: What has gotten into you?
- MORICET: Pay no attention! *(Sings while the screams and pounding continue)* "To God above, my soul I abandon."

DUCHOTEL: *(Singing as well)* “And God above, your sins will all pardon!”

MORICET: *(Excitedly to him)* That’s right! Sing!

MORICET and DUCHOTEL: *(arms on each other’s shoulders, they sing in chorus while the door shakes)* “Angel pure, angel radiant!”

DUCHOTEL: *(While MORICET continues singing at the top of his voice to cover the screams)* This is boring, you know. I say, you’re boring me with your Faust. I’m going to the concierge. You go to Madame Cassagne. *(Shouting to MORICET who is still singing)* Did you hear what I said? *(MORICET, without interrupting his song, nods yes)* Very well, I’ll see you there! *(He leaves)*

MORICET: *(Slams the door behind DUCHOTEL and leans exhausted on the door frame)* Oh, my god! What a business! *(The door right shakes furiously)*

LÉONTINE: *(Off; furious)* Open! Will you open this door?

MORICET: I’m coming! I’m coming! *(He crosses and opens the door, right)*

SCENE XII MORICET, LÉONTINE

LÉONTINE: *(Furious)* Is that your idea of a joke, locking me up in there and leaving me to bellow at the top of my lungs?

MORICET: *(Calmly)* Oh! Were you calling? *(Altering his tone, very urgent)* Léontine! I must leave you for a moment. In heaven’s name, don’t stick your nose outside that door!

LÉONTINE: What are you saying?

MORICET: I can’t explain right now! If anybody knocks, don’t open the door! I have to go and then I’ll come back. *(He goes out the DL door)*

LÉONTINE: *(Bewildered; abruptly)* Well! What does he do? He goes out the door himself! *(Running to the door, opening it and calling)* Moricet! Moricet! What is he doing now? *(Crossing DR)* Oh! No! I’ll get my cloak and go down to the concierge, that’s the only thing to do. *(Goes into the side-room)* What a night! My God! What a night! *(She leaves the DL door open)*

(As LÉONTINE goes out, DUCHOTEL enters, holding a bottle of smelling salts and one of orange extract).

DUCHOTEL: *(Coming down)* Here we are, now. I’ve found some salts and orange extract, if we need them. Have a look, Moricet! I could have sworn he was in here. *(He crosses toward the side-room; at that moment, from the side-room, comes the sound of a chair falling over)* Ah! In there. *(Knocking on the door, right, without opening it)*

Come on, now, let's go! *(He crosses back to the left door)*

LÉONTINE: *(Entering)* Well, it's about time! *(Recognizing DUCHOTEL's back)* Good heavens! My husband! *(Dumbfounded, she looks quickly for a place to hide. She spies the bedspread that MORICET has placed on the back of the sofa, ducks behind the sofa, under the spread so that she is completely covered)*

DUCHOTEL: What? *(LÉONTINE rises beneath the blanket as DUCHOTEL turns)* What is that?

(LÉONTINE, under her blanket, tries to cross toward the door DR)

DUCHOTEL: My God! It walks! It's a ghost!

LÉONTINE: *(A beat; ghostly)* Woooooo!

DUCHOTEL: *(LÉONTINE has trouble finding the door)* That's just someone disguised as a ghost. *(LÉONTINE, walking blindly, is about to bang into the fireplace)* Take care, lady. You'll catch fire! *(LÉONTINE backs away from the fire to the front of the sofa; aside)* This must be the wildcat in question! *(Aloud to LÉONTINE)* Fear not, Madame! I will respect your anonymity! I only came to find out if Monsieur Moricet was still here. *(LÉONTINE shakes her head under the blanket)* He's gone? *(LÉONTINE nods her head)* Thank you, Madame, that's all I wanted to know. *(He bows deeply, LÉONTINE answers with a curtsy)* Sorry to have troubled you. *(He crosses to the door and bumps into MORICET who comes in quickly, all puffed)* Ah! You're here!

MORICET: You!

DUCHOTEL: Yes!

(LÉONTINE, under the blanket, falls onto the sofa)

MORICET: *(noticing LÉONTINE)* And her! *(He pulls DUCHOTEL to him)* She! *(He spins DUCHOTEL so that MORICET is between them)* And him! *(He looks out to the audience)* And me!

DUCHOTEL: What are you doing?

MORICET: *(Releasing him; briskly)* Nothing, nothing.

DUCHOTEL: *(Indicating LÉONTINE)* Oh? Really? You call that nothing?

MORICET: *(Forcing a laugh)* Yes, yes! *(Aside)* Oh! My God! If he knew!

DUCHOTEL: *(Altering tone)* Tell me, you went down there?

MORICET: *(Not hearing)* Heavens, no! No! No! Yes! Yes!

DUCHOTEL: What? No! Yes! Did you do it or not?

MORICET: Of course! Yes! I've done it. I bled her!

DUCHOTEL: Bled her? But you don't bleed someone for that!

MORICET: *(With great indignation)* You think I don't know that? But when you are unsure of the cause of the illness, that's all you can do. Very well, come, come. She's waiting for you. *(He pushes DUCHOTEL toward the door)*

DUCHOTEL: *(Resisting)* Alright! Alright! I understand: you're in a hurry to . . . *(Just at the door, he ducks under MORICET's arm and comes back in a bit)* I must say, your wildcat is quite something – under the covers.

MORICET: Yes, yes! It's a treatment. I'm curing her of . . . claustrophobia!

DUCHOTEL: Oh, really? *(Starting for the door)* Well, goodbye, you lucky old tomcat!

MORICET: *(Holding the door wider)* Goodbye!

DUCHOTEL: *(Turning back and stepping in the direction of LÉONTINE, with a jesting bow)* Madame! *(LÉONTINE rises and curtsies; MORICET crosses to the door – Cheerfully to MORICET)* Well! Good luck to you! *(He exits)*

MORICET: Thank you! *(He begins to shut the door)*

DUCHOTEL: *(Coming back in)* Oh! And . . . think of me!

MORICET: I couldn't help but!

(DUCHOTEL goes out, laughing)

Ouf!

(He shuts the door, turns the key and, exhausted, leans against it)

SCENE XIV MORICET, LÉONTINE

LÉONTINE: *(Tossing off the blanket and sitting on the sofa)* Gone! I was so frightened! I was certain my legs were showing.

MORICET: *(Coming down)* Ah! What a mess! My God! What mess!

LÉONTINE: *(Bashing and punching the spread into a ball)* What do we do now? I assume that

we leave, yes?

MORICET: Leave! Never, never, never! Never, ever, ever!

LÉONTINE: But if my husband comes back and sees me, he'll . . . see me!

MORICET: Exactly! If we leave, we're bound to run into him! Here, we're out of sight. *(Crossing to the entrance door)* The door is shut and locked, I'll put the key on the night table and no one can enter. *(He puts the key on the night table at the head of the bed)*

LÉONTINE: *(Forcing herself to rise and moving left with the blanket in a ball in her arms)* If only I'd never come! If only I'd never come. *(She drops her head on the blanket, which she holds as she would a pillow)*

MORICET: Courage! There's no danger at the moment. The best thing we can do is to try to sleep. Then tomorrow morning, you can calmly return home like a person returning from her god-mother's. *(He crosses to the bed)*

LÉONTINE: You think that I could sleep! *(She heads to the door right)*

MORICET: Well, try! I'll try to do the same! Good night! *(He removes his evening coat and hangs it on the back of the chair at the foot of the bed)*

LÉONTINE: *(Curtly)* Good night! *(At the door, with frenzy)* I will never forgive you for this! Never! *(She goes into the side-room, taking the spread)*

MORICET: *(As the door closes, with one hand raised, he blows a raspberry)* Ah! *Pfutt!*

LÉONTINE: *(Reappearing)* What did you say?

MORICET: *(Taking a woebegone air, hand on brow)* I said: "Ah! Woe, woe, woe!"

LÉONTINE: Oh? Good! *(She goes back into the side-room and shuts the door)*

MORICET: *(Shrugging)* Oh! Very nice! This is what we've come to. *(Taking off his vest, and unbuttoning the front of his suspenders which he flips behind)* I had a bright idea when I thought to climb into that wildcat's lair! *(At the side of his bed, arranging the blankets)* Poor little woman! She will have a rough time of it, all by herself in there! *(Philosophically)* On the other hand, I shall do just fine! Oh! Just try to catch me seducing any more "experienced" women! *(Crossing to the entrance door)* Is that properly shut? Yes. No danger of Duchotel crashing in. I shall go to bed. *(He extinguishes the lamp on the piano; night; he sits on the bed, and removes his shoes, which he drops on the floor, one after the other)* Well, well, well. You might not believe it, but I am one lucky fellow! Me here, she there, for a start. *(He unbuttons his pants, and pushes them down, rising as he does, so that*

his pants are around his ankles.) This would be a good plot for a farce. (He lays the pants on the seat of the chair with his evening coat.) Ah! Go to sleep, fool! That's the best thing you can do. (He climbs into his bed, slides between the blankets which he arranges as best he can, then sinks back onto his pillow) All of this nonsense has worn me out. (He snuggles beneath his blankets. – Yawning) To the devil with all experienced women!

(Pause – LÉONTINE enters down right)

LÉONTINE: *(Coming in with her candlestick in hand and crossing to the sofa – while walking)* You're already in bed, are you? *(She takes a cushion from the sofa)*

MORICET: *(Sitting up half-way)* Yes! As I have nothing else to do!

LÉONTINE: *(She feels the cushions)* As long as you are quite comfortable! So long as you're comfortable, nothing else matters.

MORICET: *(Laying back on his pillow)* It's . . . You came back to say that?

LÉONTINE: *(Dryly)* No, I came back to find a cushion to lay my head upon.

MORICET: Well! Have you found one?

LÉONTINE: *(Acidly, cushion under her left arm, candlestick in right hand)* Yes, I have! *(Crossing a little to him)* I suppose it doesn't matter to you that I must spend the night on a *chaise-longue*! Monsieur is lying in comfortably in bed . . .

MORICET: *(Pleading)* Oh! Come now, Léontine!

LÉONTINE: . . . And monsieur will sleep calmly with the knowledge that he has done his duty.

MORICET: *(Irritated, he turns his back is to LÉONTINE)* Nag, nag, nag . . .

LÉONTINE: *(Warming to her tirade)* Monsieur nearly destroyed the reputation of an honest woman, because, without that fortuitous blanket, that's what would have happened. I was caught, *in flagrante delicto*. I am a guilty woman. And you! Will you tell me that you are a gentleman? Is that it? *(Crossing to the bed)* Come now, I dare you to say that you are a gentleman! *(MORICET, asleep, answers with a magnificent snore.)* He is asleep! Oh! *(She raises the cushion to throw it, but stops, then stomps to the side-room and enters it, slamming the door. – Darkness. – MORICET continues to sleep)*

SCENE XVI MORICET, GONTRAN

(The sound of a key in the lock of the DL door, the door opens carefully and GONTRAN appears)

GONTRAN: Oh! Goodness! It's dark in here. And I have no matches. *(He feels his way to the right side of the table – and his hand goes into the radish dish – he tries to dry his hand, then speaks softly as he moves in the direction of the bed)* Don't worry, Urbaine, my little cuddlekins, it's just me, Gontran. *(Aside)* She doesn't answer. She must be asleep. *(He goes back to the entrance door, takes the keys out of his pants pocket, shuts the door and locks it from inside, puts the keys back in his pocket)* It's very nice to have a key, I can drop in any time I get the urge. *(Heading for the bed)* Thankfully, she always has the urge.

(MORICET snores. GONTRAN moves right)

Yes, she's asleep, my little cuddlekins, I can hear her steady, gentle breathing. We'll soon change that. *(New, more violent snoring)* But she seems to have a bit of a cold; I hope she's not too sick! No! Never! I'll wake her with a kiss: that's the best way to waken someone. *(He comes close to the bed, the snoring increases)* Oh! She has a very bad cold! *(He kisses MORICET on the cheek who growls in his sleep)* She's fast asleep! *(He climbs into the bed and snuggles up to MORICET, putting his arms around him)*

MORICET: *(Half asleep)* What's going on?

GONTRAN *(Pulling away)* A man!

MORICET: Léontine, is that you? *(He puts his arm around GONTRAN's neck)*

GONTRAN *(Terrified)* Let go of me! *(GONTRAN pushes him away)*

MORICET: *(Waking)* Aaah! *(Jumping up, he hits GONTRAN with a pillow)*

GONTRAN: Aaah! *(He hits MORICET with a pillow)*

LÉONTINE: *(Off)* Aaah!

MORICET: Who are you?

GONTRAN: Who are you?

LÉONTINE: *(Off)* Who is that?

(The two men, shouting, hit each other with the pillows; the three continue to shout and scream; GONTRAN falls off the bed between it and the wall and disappears)

MORICET: *(Bouncing around the bed, searching madly in the darkness)* Who is it? Who's there? There's a man in here! Oh, my God! Where are the matches? *(He puts on*

his slippers quickly and runs to the side-room door) And Léontine? He's gone in with Léontine! (He goes into the side-room)

LÉONTINE: *(Off)* Who's there?

GONTRAN *(Who has crawled under the bed, comes out of his hideout and runs toward the closet right)* Oh, my God! It's Urbaine's gorilla! He'll kill me! Quickly! Into the closet! *(He runs into the closet, right)*

SCENE XVII MORICET, LÉONTINE, GONTRAN in closet, then BRIDOIS

MORICET: *(Babbling incoherently to an equally terror-stricken LÉONTINE; she precedes him with a lighted candle in her hand)* I tell you there was a man here!

LÉONTINE: *(Babbling)* But where is he? Where is he?

MORICET: *(Crossing between the table and the piano and stopping near the table)* I don't know! Search! Search!

(They search everywhere, MORICET from the left to above the table, LÉONTINE near the bed)

LÉONTINE: Where did you see this man?

MORICET: *(Busy in front of the table and moving toward the sofa)* There! In my bed! He kissed me! *(He lays on his stomach and looks under the sofa)*

LÉONTINE: *(Searching toward the DL door)* Oh, you're mad! It was a nightmare!

MORICET: *(Rising)* It certainly was. He kissed me!

LÉONTINE: *(Lights the lamp; the room brightens; inspects the door lock)* And look! The door is still locked! He must have entered by the keyhole!

MORICET: *(Crossing to LÉONTINE, with a foolish air)* The door is locked?

LÉONTINE: *(Holding the candle to the lock)* Here, sissy, look!

MORICET: *(Crossing back right to the fireplace)* She's right! But I'm not mad, I'm not delirious! *(Touching his cheek and diagnosing himself)* No fever. I felt fine when I went to bed. *(He looks into the fireplace mirror and sticks out his tongue)*

LÉONTINE: *(She blows out the candle, crossing centre)* See, it was a nightmare.

MORICET: *(Not knowing whether to believe it)* A nightmare?

LÉONTINE: *(In front of the table, she sits on the chair right of the table and puts down the candle)* If this is just some trick to get me into your bed . . .

MORICET: *(Collapsing on the sofa)* Léontine, I beg your pardon! I don't like this either, you know.

LÉONTINE: *(Furious)* Yes! Well, there are plenty of things I'd rather be doing! Oh! What a night! My God! What a night!

MORICET: Oh! What a night! Well, thank God, all of the craziness is over.

(They sit there a moment, exhausted, without saying anything. Suddenly, there are three loud knocks on the entrance door, slightly spaced apart. At each knock, they jump.)

LÉONTINE: *(In a small strangled voice)* Someone knocked!

MORICET: *(The same)* Yes.

BRIDOIS: *(Off)* Open! In the name of the law!

MORICET and LÉONTINE: *(Jumping up)* The police!

(They rush in opposite directions, he toward the entrance door, she toward the side-room door; during the following, the knocking continues)

LÉONTINE: *(Frantic)* We are lost!

MORICET: *(Equally frantic, looking about for somewhere hide her)* Oh! My God! Hide!

LÉONTINE: *(Running in all directions)* But where? Where? *(Opening the side-room door)* This room has no exit!

BRIDOIS: *(Off)* Open! Or we'll break down the door!

LÉONTINE: Ah! In the bed! *(They both hide in the bed and pull the covers over their heads)*

MORICET: *(After a moment)* No! Not in the bed! That's the first place he'd look!

LÉONTINE: *(Running to the closet and opening the door)* Oh! The closet!

MORICET: *(Stopping her again)* That's the second!

(He pulls her away from the closet and GONTRAN reaches out and slams the door; they both do a take toward the closet at the noise)

- LÉONTINE: *(After a beat)* The window! *(She runs for the French windows)*
- MORICET: *(Stopping her)* Not the window; we're on the second floor!
- LÉONTINE: *(Frantic, she turns and twists about with her back to the audience)* Then where? Where? Moricet, I beg you . . . !
- MORICET: *(As crazy as she)* How should I know? But get a move on! Shake your fanny!
- BRIDOIS: *(Off)* It's useless to flee! We know you're in there! Open up!
- MORICET: *(Angrily, speaking toward the door)* Yes, yes, yes! Hold your horses! *(To LÉONTINE)* There's only one way out of this! We must be daring! *(He crosses to the chair where his clothes are and puts on his evening coat, without remembering that he is still in underpants and slippers)* We must be calm! *(Buttoning the coat)* We must have *savoir-faire*. Oh, my God! *(Indicating his hat which is on the mantel)* My hat! My hat! *(She hands it to him; he puts it on)* And go along with whatever I say!
- BRIDOIS: *(Off)* Are you going to open the door or do we get to break it down?
- MORICET: *(Opening the door)* Really, officer. Calmly, calmly! Enter!
- BRIDOIS: *(Entering and speaking to the wings)* Wait there, the rest of you! *(Muttering from off; BRIDOIS is in plain clothes)*
- MORICET: *(Takes gloves from the pocket of his evening coat and puts them on, thinking himself faultlessly clothed)* And what possible reason can you have for pounding on my door at this hour of the morning?
- BRIDOIS *(Very officious, removing his hat and showing his badge, which he pulls from his pocket)* I'll give you a reason! *(Altering his tone)* But first, I am most sorry, monsieur and madame, to disturb you in this fashion, but the law is the law . . . *(With a small bow)* And being men of the world, we understand these things.
- MORICET: *(Annoyed)* Yes, yes, yes! Very well!
- (BRIDOIS is near the table. MORICET and LÉONTINE stand opposite him and hold hands for mutual courage)*
- BRIDOIS *(Putting his badge in his pocket)* This said, I come, monsieur . . . Or rather Madame . . . at the complaint of your husband, to determine the presence of monsieur in your domicile, at this late hour of the night!
- MORICET: *(With aplomb)* But, monsieur, I don't understand. I am married . . .

- BRIDOIS: Tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk.
- MORICET: . . . and Madame is my wife!
- BRIDOIS *(Bored)* Yes, of course! We know all about it! We hear it every day! *(Another small bow)* As a gallant gentleman, I approve your lie! But as an instrument of the law . . . *(Laying his hat on the chair by the table and taking a notebook from his pocket)* Your name, please?
- MORICET: Doctor Moricet!
- BRIDOIS *(Writing)* And you, Madame?
- LÉONTINE: *(Bewildered)* Me?
- MORICET: *(Quickly)* Well . . . Madame Moricet, of course.
- BRIDOIS: Oh! Why are you making this difficult? We know very well that madame isn't Madame Moricet.
- LÉONTINE and MORICET: *(Turning to each other, with tiny voices)* God!
- BRIDOIS: Madame is, of course, Madame . . . *(checks his notebook)* Cassagne.
- MORICET and LÉONTINE: *(Not believing their ears)* Madame – ! – Cassagne?
- MORICET: Madame Cassagne! You said – he said . . . Madame Cassagne?
- LÉONTINE: *(Beaming)* Yes, yes! He said Madame Cassagne.
- MORICET: *(Grabbing BRIDOIS and dancing in a circle)* Oh! The wonderful police force! The wonderful police force! *(Very calmly)* It's the opposite, officer!
- BRIDOIS *(Disconcerted)* Opposite?
- MORICET: *(Stopping near LÉONTINE, centre)* Madame Cassagne's is opposite! The other side of the building!
- BRIDOIS *(Right of the table, to the audience)* Just a moment. The concierge told me: "The second door on the right." And this is the second door on the right.
- MORICET: *(Turning him away from the audience)* Yes! But the stairs goes in this direction – there! So that this is your right! *(He picks up BRIDOIS's right hand and shakes it about)*
- BRIDOIS *(Abashed)* Oh! Monsieur, I've made a terrible mistake! I turned myself about, so

that my right has become my left.

MORICET: *(Patronizing)* Don't mention it, monsieur! But don't drag people out of bed at this hour for a mistake like that again!

BRIDOIS *(Getting his hat)* Monsieur, I am very sorry. *(Bowing)* Monsieur, Madame. *(MORICET accompanies him to the door)* Please! Carry on! *(He looks down at MORICET's lack of pants)* Carry on! *(Speaking to the wings)* It's the other side! *(MORICET slams the door on him)* Oh!

MORICET: "Carry on!"

LÉONTINE: *(Sitting on the sofa)* Oh! No, no! It's too much! It's too much!

MORICET: *(Sitting on the chair right of the table)* Léontine!

LÉONTINE: What?

MORICET: It's too much!

LÉONTINE: I just said that.

MORICET: I wasn't listening.

LÉONTINE: *(Rising and crossing left)* Well! You've certainly capped off this evening.

MORICET: *(Crossing down a little)* Is that my fault? They came for Madame Cassagne! Well, I have sent them to Madame Cassagne.

LÉONTINE: *(Shrugging, furious)* So?

MORICET: *(Suddenly grabbing her and pushing her face into his chest)* Oh, my God!

LÉONTINE: *(Voice muffled in his chest)* What is it!

MORICET: *(Aside)* And Duchotel is with her! He will be caught for sure.

LÉONTINE: What is it? What is the matter?

MORICET: Nothing! Nothing! *(He releases her; aside)* Oh! The poor man! *(He unconsciously mimes rattling of prison bars. As he thinks, he becomes more agitated, and the mime becomes a little dance where he stamps his feet and shakes the imaginary prison bars)*

LÉONTINE: *(Crossing to him, furious)* So, you're happy about all of this, are you?

MORICET: No, I'm not happy! Do I look like I'm happy?

LÉONTINE: Yes! You're positively dancing for joy! *(Going toward the side-room)* Oh! That man! That man! *(She goes into the side-room)*

MORICET: *(Running after her)* But, Léontine! Listen to me! Listen!

(He follows her, leaving the door open. At the French windows, left open by LÉONTINE, DUCHOTEL appears; he bursts in, his clothes in disarray, hat on his head, but jacket only half on, his gun-bag on his shoulder, in his underwear)

DUCHOTEL: *(Crazy, charging left and right like a trapped animal)* I must hide! I must hide! Where can I . . . ? *(He suddenly notices that he is in his underwear)* Oh! My God! My pants! I've forgotten my pants! I can't escape like this! *(Noticing MORICET's pants)* Moricet's pants! Ah-ha! I am saved. *(He sits on the chair and puts the pants on hastily without bothering with the suspenders, which dangle behind)* There! Now, I am saved. *(He runs to the door and opens it with the key left in the lock by MORICET)*

GONTRAN *(Peering out of the closet)* It's gone quiet. I can escape. *(Noticing DUCHOTEL)* My uncle!

DUCHOTEL: *(Seeing him)* My nephew!

BOTH: AAH!

(GONTRAN slams the closet door; DUCHOTEL runs off. A commotion of voices on the balcony and two plain clothes policemen appear; MORICET, drawn by the noise, runs out of the side-room)

MORICET: What's all the noise out here?

FIRST OFFICER: The man in his underwear! There he is! That's our man!

MORICET: What are you people doing here?

FIRST OFFICER: *(Running toward him)* Got you!

MORICET: *(Running around the room, followed by the officers)* What do you want? *(Sudden realization)* You want to arrest me!

(MORICET tries to run through the French doors, but MME. LATOUR runs in)

MME. LATOUR: Monsieur! I'm shocked!

MORICET: *You're shocked!*

(MORICET has continued around the table; he is seized by the second officer; from here to LÉONTINE's entrance, the whole builds to a general hubbub)

BOTH OFFICERS: You're nicked!

MORICET: I'm not Nicked! I'm Moricet! *(Bellowing)* Let me go!

FIRST OFFICER: *(Both officers trying to carry MORICET)* We'll teach you to run on balconies in your underwear!

MORICET: *(Struggling as the second officer opens the door)* I already know how!

MME. LATOUR: This is a respectable house!

MORICET: This is a mad house!

(GONTRAN opens the closet)

GONTRAN: Moricet!

MORICET: Gontran!

MME. LATOUR: The schoolboy!

(GONTRAN slams the closet door)

SECOND OFFICER: *(speaking out the door)* We've caught him!

MORICET: You're all mad!

BRIDOIS: *(Off)* Bring him along here!

MORICET: Help! Help!

FIRST OFFICER: That's enough! You can explain it to the commissioner.

CASSAGNE: *(Off)* Where's my wife!

(The OFFICERS drag the struggling MORICET out)

MME. LATOUR: *(Following them)* It's all married people here! Well, some married people here!

CASSAGNE: *(Entering through the French doors and crossing directly out the DL door)*
Where's my wife!

(MME. LATOUR and CASSAGNE follow the OFFICERS and MORICET out the DL door; the noise continues off)

LÉONTINE: *(Running out of the side-room in time to see MORICET dragged off)* Ah! My God! What's going on?

GONTRAN *(Sticking his head out of the closet and seeing LÉONTINE)* My aunt!

LÉONTINE: *(Recognizing GONTRAN)* My nephew!

GONTRAN: AAH! *(He slams the closet door)*

LÉONTINE: AAH! *(She faints)*

CURTAIN

MISTER CHASE!
ACT III

(The set is the same as the first act; at rise, the stage is empty. The door bell is heard, then the entrance door opens. BABET enters, followed by MORICET)

MORICET: Madame is here?

BABET: *(At the door)* Madame returned from the country at first light, monsieur.

MORICET: *(Also at door)* She made it! And monsieur?

BABET: Not yet returned.

MORICET: Well! Announce me, please.

BABET: *(Seeing LÉONTINE coming)* Here is madame, monsieur.

LÉONTINE: You! *(To BABET)* You may go.

BABET: Yes, madame. *(She exits)*

LÉONTINE: It's about time! *(They come downstage)*

MORICET: I was up all night, but how are you after last night's dramas?

LÉONTINE: I thought I was going mad! You, disappearing in the arms of the police, the windows open, Gontran popping out of the closet! And, what was Gontran doing there? The house turned upside down. I ran, half-dressed, into the street, with my mind reeling.

MORICET: *(Consoling her)* There, there! There, there!

LÉONTINE: Everybody was staring – who knows who recognized me? I managed to get my clothes on when a disgusting man with vermouth on his breath walked up and said: "Hey, girlie-girl, will you take twenty francs?" *(After a beat)* I ask you, do I look as though I would take twenty francs?

MORICET: Maybe he was looking for change.

LÉONTINE: I hired a cab and said to the driver: "Circle the Champs-Élysées!" We spent the rest of the night doing that. I now know the Champs-Élysées by heart! *(She sits on the pouffe)*

MORICET: My poor Léontine! *(Altering his tone)* Did you get my letter explaining . . .

- LÉONTINE: Yes! You've certainly enlightened me about my husband! When I think that you tried to make me believe that a husband who pretends to be going out hunting isn't a husband who is actually going in to his mistress!
- MORICET: *(Astounded)* Me? Well, that's a bit much!
- LÉONTINE: That's where he was, Mon-sieur Du-cho-tel – with Ma-dame Cas-sag-ne!
- MORICET: There's a lot more to it than that! Your husband went hunting without a permit, but it's me who'll pay the fine!
- LÉONTINE: *(Rising and crossing down to MORICET)* Well, if you had just taken the officer in charge aside and explained it to him.
- MORICET: You think I didn't try? I explained until I was blue! He said: "A man was in the room with madame; this man fled without his pants; a man was captured in the same condition! I don't have to know more and besides, I'm off duty in a few minutes."
- LÉONTINE: You should have insisted!
- MORICET: I couldn't insist. He left. But I won't let it end there! I'm going to have the police commissioner come here and make Duchotel explain it all!
- LÉONTINE: Absolutely!
- MORICET: Absolutely! Why should I sacrifice myself? If we two had been caught, would your husband have sacrificed himself for us? I think not!
- LÉONTINE: Just so! As for me, I know what remains to be done: divorce!
- MORICET: Divorce?
- LÉONTINE: Absolutely! He knows nothing of my escapade yesterday! Therefore, I have the high ground! And so not the least trace of my adventure remains, will you kindly return my letter?
- MORICET: What! You want your letter back?
- LÉONTINE: *(Insisting)* Absolutely!
- MORICET: *(Searching in the pockets of his coat, then of his pants)* Oh! After everything I've done for you! *(Resigned)* It goes beyond . . . *(Changing tone)* Oh, for heaven's sake, where have I put it? *(Abruptly)* Oh! My God!

LÉONTINE: *(Frightened)* What?

MORICET: Oh! My God! My God!

LÉONTINE: What?

MORICET: *(In a strangled voice)* It's in my pants!

LÉONTINE: Your pants?

MORICET: And your husband is parading around in them, now!

LÉONTINE: We're done for! We're done for!

MORICET: My God! What will we do?

LÉONTINE: You should have been more careful! *(She crosses to left)*

MORICET: How could I know he would take my pants?

LÉONTINE: You never think ahead! He's bound to read it.

MORICET: Never! They're not his pants; he'd never read them.

LÉONTINE: What do we do?

MORICET: *(Downstage)* Eh? Well, you're a woman; you can explain it away.

LÉONTINE: *(Crossing down to him)* Oh! Yes! How?

MORICET: Well! For example that the . . . that the . . . *(waving his hand vaguely)*

LÉONTINE: *(Shaking his hand)* Thank you!

MORICET: Well, something!

LÉONTINE: Oh, leave me alone!

MORICET: Listen, the police commissioner is waiting for me.

LÉONTINE: Yes, go! Go! *(She crosses up)*

MORICET: I expect I shall have to explain until I'm purple, this time. *(He exits)*

LÉONTINE: *(Pacing in agitation)* Oh, that man is exasperating; he has no foresight. When a woman gives you a compromising letter, you don't cram it in the pocket of your

pants. No! You say to yourself: “What would happen if her husband puts on my pants?” It’s blindingly obvious! But no, he wouldn’t think of that. What will I tell my husband? (*Copying MORICET*) “That the . . . that the . . .” like Moricet says. That won’t do and I will lose my beautiful life for a . . . trifle! (*She sits right of the table*) Oh! No, no, it can’t happen. It’s impossible!

BABET: (*Coming in*) Madame, Monsieur Duchotel is getting out of a cab.

LÉONTINE: Oh, is he? (*Significantly*) Well, let him in. (*BABET exits*) I’ll know at once if he has read the letter; and if, by happy chance, he knows nothing, ha! Ha! HAAA! We’ll have a little fun, Mon-sieur Du-cho-tel! I’m going to let you hang yourself!

BABET: (*Entering*) Here is monsieur, madame!

DUCHOTEL: (*Dressed as in the first act, except that he is wearing MORICET’s pants from the second act, his gun in its case on his shoulder. He is carrying a huge basket which he holds out to be sure it is seen*) Darling? Where are you, darling?

(*He puts the basket on the chair, upstage left*)

LÉONTINE: You! Back already?

DUCHOTEL: Ah! Leontine! My Leontine! (*He runs to her and kisses her*)

LÉONTINE: (*As they part; aside*) He knows nothing!

DUCHOTEL: (*In crossing, he places his gun and his hat on the secretary desk right; aside*) She knows nothing!

LÉONTINE: And were you too wearied to continue with your . . . hunt?

DUCHOTEL: Oh! No! Just the opposite! I’m rejuvenated! We had a magnificent hunt!

LÉONTINE: (*Lightly*) Oh! I’m so pleased! Were you not cold?

DUCHOTEL: (*Thoughtlessly*) No! I was hot!

LÉONTINE: (*Quickly*) You were hot?

DUCHOTEL: (*Remembering himself*) I was hot . . . in my heavy clothes! At any rate, I’ve returned to you. It’s funny how I feel when I’m without you! Cassagne absolutely didn’t want to let me go.

LÉONTINE: (*Lightly*) Really?

DUCHOTEL: But I wouldn’t hear any objections. I said to him: “We have hunted for five hours.

That's enough! It's time I got back to my beloved little wife." *(He kisses her)*

LÉONTINE: *(Aside)* Oooh, liar!

DUCHOTEL: If you could have seen the chase we had! It was glorious: up hill and down dale, through thicket; through thin.

LÉONTINE: I'm so glad. *(Casually)* Is that why you changed your pants?

DUCHOTEL: What? Uhm! Yes. Precisely! You noticed, did you? Women notice everything!

LÉONTINE: They're a bit big!

DUCHOTEL: They're a bit big. You see, I was soaking wet, fell in a creek, and Cassagne, my good friend Cassagne, says to me: "You had better change your pants; I'll give you an old pair of mine!"

LÉONTINE: Ah! Of course!

DUCHOTEL: And, there they are, you see. He's not quite my size, is he? But, sooner this than catch cold, eh? *(To BABET)* Go, find me a pair of pants.

BABET: Yes, monsieur. *(She exits)*

DUCHOTEL: *(Crossing above the table and down left)* Oh! What a beautiful hunt! You have no idea.

LÉONTINE: *(Seated, listening to him with feigned interest; she places both elbows on the table and crosses her hands below her chin)* Oh, do tell me every detail!

DUCHOTEL: Well, I tell you, I outdid myself; I was amazing! I made a double!

LÉONTINE: *(Rising and clapping her hands)* A double! Oh!

DUCHOTEL: Yes! A big buck on the left who leapt up and as he did so, flushed a partridge. Up with my gun! Bang, bang! I killed Cassagne!

LÉONTINE: *(A take)* What? You killed Cassagne?

DUCHOTEL: Yes. What? Oh! I mean, I amazed him!

LÉONTINE: Oh, I see! And the game? Did you kill it also?

DUCHOTEL: *(Confused)* Well, of course! Both, my dear! That's the reason that Cassagne . . .

LÉONTINE: . . . was killed!

- DUCHOTEL: Was . . . what? Yes. Oh! But I must show you what I've bagged! *(He takes the basket upstage; it is tied with twine)* Do you have a pair of scissors?
- LÉONTINE: *(Rising)* I'll go find some. I am so curious to see what you bagged on your . . . hunt! *(She crosses to the door left)*
- DUCHOTEL: *(Crossing down to right of the basket)* Oh! I'll show you everything!
- LÉONTINE: *(Aside)* Oooh, liar! *(She exits left)*
- DUCHOTEL: *(Crossing down quite to the apron)* Ouf! That's one load off my mind! The story of my double has done the trick nicely. Just the right touch of detail to add colour. This game basket fills the bill, as well! And, what a bill! Forty francs! Plus tax! *(He places the basket on the table)* I said to the butcher or rather I yelled to the butcher, because he was deaf as a post: "Give me a few choice parts of game, with hair and feathers still on, all packed away in a basket." He certainly tied it up very neatly. Oh-oh! Where is the bill? *(He searches in the pocket of his pants and produces LÉONTINE's letter to MORICET)* My wife's handwriting; that can't be it. *(He puts the letter in the side pocket of his jacket, then takes a bill from another pants pocket)* Ah! There's the bill! *(Ripping it up)* No point in leaving compromising evidence about! *(He throws the paper on the fire, then crosses back to right of the table)*
- LÉONTINE: *(Entering with scissors and crossing to the table)* Now, where is this basket? I am in such a hurry to see what's in it.
- DUCHOTEL: *(Showing the basket on the table)* It's right there, my love. Look in there and you'll discover the results of my hunt. *(He crosses down right)*
- LÉONTINE: *(Left of the table and opposite DUCHOTEL)* You are certain that everything there is from your hunt?
- DUCHOTEL: *(With a bit less assurance)* What do you mean? Of course! Have a look.
- LÉONTINE: It's just that you sound to me like a man who wasn't hunting at all.
- DUCHOTEL: Oh! We're back to yesterday, are we? After I told you all about my hunt! All about my double! When I bring you a full game basket!
- LÉONTINE: Yes, full of rabbits and hares!
- DUCHOTEL: *(Quickly)* Oh! No! Not this time! *(He sits on a chair right, near the secretary desk)* Open it up! You'll find out. Open it up!
- LÉONTINE: *(Who is opening the basket)* I'm doing just that! *(Looking into the basket)* Well, congratulations! All of this from one hunt?

DUCHOTEL: *(With satisfaction)* Yes.

LÉONTINE: *(Taking a large ceramic dish of pâté out of the basket)* This?

DUCHOTEL: Of course . . . *(Sitting up)* What!

LÉONTINE: *(Another pâté, then another)* And this? And this? All from your hunt, is it?

DUCHOTEL: *(Staring at the dishes)* But, it's . . . it's . . . it's . . .

TOGETHER: . . . pâté!

DUCHOTEL: *(Affecting to laugh and crossing to the table)* Ha! Ha! Ha! Yes, I must say, it's certainly very odd! You know, that the . . . that the . . . *(waving his hand vaguely)*

LÉONTINE: *(Shaking his hand)* Thank you!

DUCHOTEL: Well, something!

LÉONTINE: Oh! Enough lying!

DUCHOTEL: No, but you must understand . . .

LÉONTINE: *(Dropping the pâtés back into the basket)* I do understand!

DUCHOTEL: *(Aside)* Oh! That idiotic butcher! *(To LÉONTINE)* Now look, Léontine . . .

LÉONTINE: *(Above the table)* Don't talk to me!

DUCHOTEL: *(Aside, left)* I said to him: "All packed away in a basket", he hears: "All pâtés in a basket." *(To LÉONTINE)* Léontine, you don't believe me?

LÉONTINE: I'll never believe anything you say again!

DUCHOTEL: Oh!

LÉONTINE: Because you never went hunting ! You never even went to Liancourt!

DUCHOTEL: Oh!

LÉONTINE: And, as for your Cassagne, not only was he not hunting with you yesterday, but he has never been hunting in his life.

DUCHOTEL: Really! And what makes you say that?

LÉONTINE: *(Crossing down right of the table)* Because he told me so himself.

DUCHOTEL: *(In a small voice)* He's been here?

LÉONTINE: No later than yesterday, just as you were leaving.

DUCHOTEL: *(Aside)* Oh, this is bad.

LÉONTINE: Ha-ha! That's taken the wind out of your sails, hasn't it?

DUCHOTEL: *(Forcing a casual air)* Me? No! Listen! Just because Cassagne tells you something that doesn't mean you should believe it. *(With assurance)* Don't you know about Cassagne? He had a touch of the sun. Yes, he had a touch of the sun – out there in Africa – and since then his memory has gone, poor fellow. So, you said to him: "Have you ever been hunting?" And he said: "No." And he is perfectly sincere! He can't remember, you see! Not a hunter, him! Ha! Well, let's see him stand here and say that! Right here in front of me! Right here!

SCENE V The same, BABET, CASSAGNE

BABET: *(Entering and announcing from the door)* Monsieur Cassagne!

LÉONTINE: Good! Now, he can stand here and say that!

DUCHOTEL: *(Aside)* Oh! The fool.

CASSAGNE: *(Entering; his hat is battered and his cane is tied together with ribbon)* Good morning, madame! *(He stops short, then hands hat and cane to BABET; turning to DUCHOTEL)* Good morning, my dear fellow.

DUCHOTEL: *(Crosses quickly to CASSAGNE, brings him down, keeping between CASSAGNE and LÉONTINE)* Ah! There you are! *(Low and fast)* Sssh! Not a word!

CASSAGNE: *(Who does not understand. Loudly)* What?

(BABET exits)

DUCHOTEL: *(Shaking his hand)* Oh! This is good, Cassagne! *(Low)* We have been hunting together!

CASSAGNE: *(Loudly)* No! No!

DUCHOTEL: *(Low)* Yes! Yes! *(Loudly and casually)* And . . . how have you been since this morning?

CASSAGNE: *(Breezy)* Oh! Since this morning, since yesterday, since the-day-before-

yesterday.

DUCHOTEL: *(Covering)* Yes, yes, I know what you mean! *(Aside)* The fool!

LÉONTINE: *(Crossing to them and taking CASSAGNE from her husband's custody)* My husband asked you how you've been since this morning particularly! Since he last saw you after you went hunting.

CASSAGNE: *(Without understanding)* What?

DUCHOTEL: *(Making gestures behind LÉONTINE's back)* Yes, yes, you know! After we went hunting!

CASSAGNE: *(Not understanding)* After we went hunting?

DUCHOTEL: Yes! *(He makes more gestures but stops suddenly when LÉONTINE turns to look at him)* You recall my double, don't you? The partridge? And the buck? Up he leaps! Bang! Bang!

(As LÉONTINE looks away, DUCHOTEL nods vigorously until CASSAGNE starts to nod back)

CASSAGNE: Ah! *(After a moment of nodding, staring at DUCHOTEL as though he were an idiot)* What are you going on about?

DUCHOTEL: *(To LÉONTINE, with assurance)* You see, he's starting to remember, now.

LÉONTINE: *(Crossing to the table)* Over here, we have the results of your exploits. *(DUCHOTEL coughs several times to get CASSAGNE's attention)* Have you caught a cold?

DUCHOTEL: *(Lowering his cough and tapping his chest)* What? Me? No!

LÉONTINE: *(Lightly)* Well, something's been caught. *(To CASSAGNE)* What a slaughter you two have achieved, killing all of this! *(She tilts the basket toward CASSAGNE to show him the contents)*

CASSAGNE: *(Crossing to left of the table and looking into the basket)* But it's pâté!

LÉONTINE: Indeed, yes! My husband's prey!

CASSAGNE: *(Laughing)* You hunt pâté, do you?

DUCHOTEL: *(Across the table, opposite CASSAGNE)* What! No, you know better than that! The . . . the . . . the . . . *(Altering his tone)* Why do you have to act like an imbecile?

CASSAGNE: Why would you say such a thing!

LÉONTINE: Good heavens! You were out there hunting pâté with him . . . weren't you?

CASSAGNE: But . . . me?

DUCHOTEL: But, yes!

CASSAGNE: *(Crossing down to her)* But no!

LÉONTINE: *(Crossing back to left of the table)* But, no?

CASSAGNE: But no!

DUCHOTEL: BUT YES! BUT YES! *(To LÉONTINE)* You see, my love, it's just as I told you, he can't remember things, because of his touch of the sun.

CASSAGNE: My touch of the sun?

DUCHOTEL: Of course! When you were in Africa!

CASSAGNE: *(Scoffing)* I don't remember ever being in Africa!

DUCHOTEL: Naturally, you don't remember ever being in Africa, because of your touch of the sun! *(To LÉONTINE)* You see what a sad case it is. *(LÉONTINE is once again sitting with her elbows on the table, fingers entwined under her chin)* What are you doing?

LÉONTINE: I'm admiring your acting ability.

DUCHOTEL: Me?

LÉONTINE: You could be a great actor, my dear. But you have a poor opinion of me if you think you could deceive me with such a miserable story!

(She crosses down left. CASSAGNE, who has listened without understanding, seeing that an argument is brewing, crosses carefully, along the walls, using the table, curioes, etc., for support; he eventually ends up extreme right.)

DUCHOTEL: Léontine, I implore you.

LÉONTINE: Get away from me! Did you think I wouldn't know that your hunting deer was simply an excuse for chasing dears? No, I saw through it at once and I said: "He's an unfaithful man!" But why be redundant? "He's a man!" *(She crosses*

triumphantly to the fireplace and pulls the bell pull)

DUCHOTEL: *(Following)* Léontine . . .

LÉONTINE: Go away. You're annoying me.

SCENE VI The same, BABET

BABET: *(Enters with DUCHOTEL's pants folded over her arm)* Madame rang?

LÉONTINE: *(Going upstage left, indicating the basket)* Yes, take that away!

BABET: Yes, madame! *(Handing DUCHOTEL his pants)* Here are the pants that monsieur asked me to find. I had to brush them first. *(Crossing down to the table and seeing the contents of the basket)* What's this? Oh! It's all pâtés!

LÉONTINE: No, it's not. It's just desserts! Leave!

BABET: *(Surprised)* What? Yes, madame. *(She exits upstage, carrying the basket)*

DUCHOTEL: *(Pleading)* Léontine?

LÉONTINE: No! *(She exits left, slamming the door)*

CASSAGNE: *(Seated near the secretary desk, to himself)* They're having a quarrel! They're having a quarrel!

DUCHOTEL: *(Crossing above the table, he lays his pants on it and crosses down, to CASSAGNE)* Oh you triple-damned boob, can't you ever shut up!

CASSAGNE: *(Still seated)* What?

DUCHOTEL: Can't you understand anything? Could you not grasp that I had told my wife I gone to visit you – that I was using you as an alibi?

CASSAGNE: Why would you do that?

DUCHOTEL: *(Thoughtlessly)* Because I had actually gone to visit your . . . uhm! Your . . . And anyway, what's that to you?

CASSAGNE: Huh?

(DUCHOTEL, on these last words, has gone to the table and turning the chair right of the table to face upstage, he sits in it and begins to change his pants)

- DUCHOTEL: *(While changing pants)* This is insane! There you are – it’s years since you’ve come to see me – I use you as a perfectly good alibi and, the very day I’m supposed to be in the country with you, you choose to drop in at my house.
- CASSAGNE: *(Rising and crossing left)* How could I know?
- DUCHOTEL: *(Still changing pants)* When you’re in the habit of not setting foot in someone’s house, the first thing to do before showing up at the door is to say to yourself: “Wait a minute! I’d first better find out if he’s using me as an alibi.”
- CASSAGNE: I’m not a mind-reader!
- DUCHOTEL: *(He stands and buttons his flies, back to the audience)* No, you’re not a mind-reader! No one’s ever going to accuse you of that! Especially those whose lives you’ve ruined!
- CASSAGNE: Do you get this grouchy every time you change your pants?
- DUCHOTEL: *(Folding the pants he has just taken off and doing up his belt)* All right, what do you want? What are you doing here?
- CASSAGNE: Oh! Well! Yes! You may find that I have been indiscreet.
- DUCHOTEL: *(Laying the rolled pants on the table and sitting opposite CASSAGNE. Between his teeth)* Oh! Possibly! Possibly!
- CASSAGNE: I have made an appointment here with the police commissioner.
- DUCHOTEL: *(Choking)* Here?
- CASSAGNE: *(Pleased with himself)* Yes.
- DUCHOTEL: Well, there’s something! You invited the police commissioner here?
- CASSAGNE: Yes, yes! I wanted you present for advice. Oh! But I must tell you! I have the pleasure of announcing some wonderful news! Last night, I caught my wife with another man! Isn’t that wonderful?
- DUCHOTEL: *(Shaking his hand)* Congratulations. You caught your wife?
- CASSAGNE: *(Delighted)* *In flagrante delicto!*
- DUCHOTEL: But, think! “You caught your wife”. Your wife! You caught nothing at all, if you didn’t catch her lover as well! *(He rises)*
- CASSAGNE: *(Rising as well)* Excuse me, but that’s just what we did!

DUCHOTEL: You caught the lover?

CASSAGNE: We caught the lover!

DUCHOTEL: *(Aside, crossing down)* It wasn't me!

CASSAGNE: His name is Moricet!

DUCHOTEL: *(Altering his tone)* What?

CASSAGNE: Moricet. He's a doctor!

DUCHOTEL: And . . . he admits it?

CASSAGNE: No, he denies it, the scoundrel!

DUCHOTEL: And, you confronted him yourself?

CASSAGNE: No, the police took him away before I even laid eyes on him. But his pants betrayed him! Pants which he had forgotten in his flight!

DUCHOTEL: *(Aside)* My pants! They're in the shrubbery!

CASSAGNE: Anyway! I wanted to ask you, don't you know a Moricet?

DUCHOTEL: *(Forcing a casual air)* What! Me? Not at all! Moricet? No, I don't know anyone of that name!

SCENE VII The same, BABET, then MORICET

BABET: *(As before)* Monsieur Moricet. *(She exits)*

DUCHOTEL: *(Aside, changing tone)* Of course. Perfect! *(Passing his hand over his face)* It's all timing, isn't it?

CASSAGNE: *(Struck by the announced name)* Moricet?

DUCHOTEL: *(Regaining his composure)* Hmm? Yes.

CASSAGNE: But, you told me you don't know any Moricet!

DUCHOTEL: *(With disconcerting calm)* Who said that?

CASSAGNE: You! To me!

DUCHOTEL: Me? I said that? Never in my life.

CASSAGNE: I just asked you if you knew a Moricet.

DUCHOTEL: Oh, you said “Moricet”! I thought you said “Mourussec”.

CASSAGNE: What? What? “Mourussec!”

DUCHOTEL: I assure you, I distinctly heard you say “Mourussec”, without a doubt you said “Mourussec” because, good heavens! if you had said “Moricet”, well, certainly, I know a Moricet.

CASSAGNE: *(Lowering his eyebrows)* What, you mean the same Moricet?

DUCHOTEL: No, no, no. Of course not. *(A beat)* He’s my tailor! *(He crosses upstage)*

CASSAGNE: Indeed? Your tailor! And is he good?

DUCHOTEL: Excellent. *(He sees MORICET who enters briskly, runs to him in order to grab his arm and stop him coming further in)*

MORICET: *(Without seeing CASSAGNE)* So, you’re here! You got me arrested, you!

DUCHOTEL: *(Low and quickly to MORICET)* Sssh! Quiet! It’s the husband!

MORICET: *(Loud)* What? What did you say?

DUCHOTEL: *(Low)* I said: “It’s the husband!” It’s Cassagne!

MORICET: Oh? Well, so much the better!

DUCHOTEL: *(Low)* No, it isn’t! Keep quiet! *(Aloud, laughing casually)* Ha, ha, ha! So, how are you doing?

MORICET: Yes, pretend there’s nothing the matter. I want you to explain what . . .

DUCHOTEL: *(Quickly and low)* Yes, yes! Shortly, I will explain everything. Shortly.

CASSAGNE: *(Crossing toward DUCHOTEL; low voice)* I’m sorry, what did you say?

DUCHOTEL: *(Low)* What?

CASSAGNE: *(Beside DUCHOTEL; low)* Oh, you were speaking to your tailor?

DUCHOTEL: *(To CASSAGNE; low)* What? Yes, I was. My idiot tailor! *(Normal voice; distracted)* My dear Moricet, may I present my friend Cassagne?

CASSAGNE: *(Very agreeable)* Delighted, monsieur!

MORICET: *(Casually)* Too kind! *(To DUCHOTEL)* Once again, I demand that you explain to me what . . .

DUCHOTEL: *(Pushing MORICET left)* Yes! Shortly, see! What's your hurry? *(Pushing CASSAGNE right)* He's always in a hurry!

CASSAGNE: Yes, yes. *(To DUCHOTEL)* Pardon, wait a moment.

DUCHOTEL: What?

CASSAGNE: *(Crossing in front of him to MORICET)* Wait a bit! *(To MORICET)* I hope you won't mind, monsieur, if I mix a little business with pleasure. I'm in need of a dozen shirts.

MORICET: Monsieur?

DUCHOTEL: *(Talking to himself)* Oh, fine!

CASSAGNE: I'd like something of good quality, for fourteen *francs*, no more!

MORICET : *(After a small beat)* What do you want me to do? Make them?

CASSAGNE: *(Pleased with himself)* Yes!

DUCHOTEL: *(Popping between both men and pushing CASSAGNE right)* Yes, he's in desperate need of shirts!

CASSAGNE: I'm in need of a tailor!

MORICET: Aren't we all? But it's not shirts I need, it's pants! And as I have run into you, monsieur, I'd like to have a word with you.

CASSAGNE: With pleasure, sir.

DUCHOTEL: *(Running between them to hinder them from speaking)* What? No, no, no!

CASSAGNE and MORICET: Yes, yes, yes!

DUCHOTEL: No, I tell you. We have no time!

MORICET: *(Annoyed, crossing upstage)* Oh!

CASSAGNE: *(Insistent)* But monsieur wished to speak to me!

DUCHOTEL: *(Crossing to him and pushing him right)* No! He wants to explain the way to make a shirt; it's an obsession he has. *(A beat while they look over toward*

MORICET, who has his hand deep in his pants, tucking in his shirt) You wouldn't be interested. Now, out you go!

CASSAGNE: *(Speaking to DUCHOTEL over his shoulder, while DUCHOTEL pushes him in the direction of the door right)* But why?

DUCHOTEL: *(Still pushing)* Because . . .! *(Thinking quickly.)* . . . he has to take my measurements! *(Stopping and drawing himself up with dignity)* I will be nude. *(Pushing CASSAGNE)* Now, out you go!

CASSAGNE: *(Letting himself be pushed)* Very well! And the police commissioner?

DUCHOTEL: *(Turning him by the shoulders)* I'll call you when he gets here. Out!

CASSAGNE: Well . . . don't forget. *(He exits to right)*

DUCHOTEL: *(Closing the door)* No! *(Collapsing against the door)* Ouf! What a morning! *(Making a violent effort to renew the struggle, he turns briskly to MORICET who, during the preceding, has arrived at the extreme left)* Now you! What was it you had to say to me?

MORICET: You have to ask! My pants! Where are my pants?

DUCHOTEL: What! All of that for . . .? If you had waited . . .! There they are! I didn't lose your pants! *(Takes the pants from the table where he laid them and hands them to MORICET)*

MORICET: *(Grabbing them and holding them to his bosom, like a lost treasure)* Ah!

DUCHOTEL: So much drama for day-wear.

MORICET: *(With feeling)* And the . . . the things that were in them?

DUCHOTEL: *(Annoyed)* They're all there. Really! Did you think I'd search your pockets?

MORICET: *(Aside)* We've got the letter back! *(Aloud)* And now, you can explain yourself! Did you have a good time, last night?

DUCHOTEL: Me?

MORICET: Don't you know what your little balcony scene cost me?

DUCHOTEL: *(Commiserating)* Yes, you were arrested in my place.

MORICET: Yes!

- DUCHOTEL: Well, I'm sorry, but what do you want me to say? Sooner you than me!
- MORICET: *(Astonished)* "Sooner you than me!" You get away scot-free, I pay the penalty, and it's you that got me into it in the first place!
- DUCHOTEL: How is it my fault you were arrested?
- MORICET: *(Not believing his ears)* Oh!
- DUCHOTEL: For the honour of a woman of whom I am the lover, I risk breaking my neck, climbing out windows, crossing balconies. I accomplish feats of heroism worthy of D'Artagnan himself. I have everything under control, and because some blundering fool in his underwear throws himself in the arms of the police . . .
- MORICET: *(Shouting)* You took my pants!
- DUCHOTEL: *(Calmly)* Why didn't you have them on? If the Academy of Medicine knew about this!
- MORICET: I suppose you think this is the end of it?
- DUCHOTEL: I don't think anything. I only know this: I am not now arrested; I was not then arrested; I have never been arrested! I wasn't even there!
- MORICET: Oh! *(He raises his hands and moves forward to strangle DUCHOTEL)*
- DUCHOTEL: *(Pushing MORICET away)* Ssh! My wife!

SCENE VIII The same, LÉONTINE

(LÉONTINE enters left and crosses toward the secretary desk without noticing the others, brooding. She holds a newspaper and papers in her hand. Crossing and without stopping, she throws the newspaper on the table, and goes to the desk to arrange the papers)

- DUCHOTEL: *(Aside, when he has seen the way LÉONTINE throws the newspaper)* She hasn't calmed down, yet.
- MORICET: *(Left)* Good morning, madame!
- LÉONTINE: *(Opening the secretary desk, with a cold tone)* It's you, Moricet? Hello!
- DUCHOTEL: *(Pouting like a child seeking pardon)* Léontine!
- LÉONTINE: *(Coldly, over her shoulder)* What?

- DUCHOTEL: Are you going to be angry with me forever?
- LÉONTINE: *(With a forced laugh, shutting the desk)* Me? Hah! I have much better things to think of. *(Casually to MORICET who, during this, has thrown the pants over his shoulder)* What pants are those on your shoulder? *(A sudden look of dread from DUCHOTEL)*
- MORICET: These? These are the pants that Duchotel returned to me.
- DUCHOTEL: *(Aside)* Oh! The idiot!
- LÉONTINE: *(Lightly, to DUCHOTEL)* Really? You've given Monsieur Cassagne's pants to Moricet?
- DUCHOTEL: No! No, no, no! I haven't given him anything! Only, I was about to leave and I didn't know where to put them, so I threw them over his shoulder. But now I'm going to take them back. See! *(He grabs the legs of the pants which are hanging down MORICET's back)*
- MORICET: *(Turning quickly and grabbing the top the pants)* What! No! No!
- DUCHOTEL: *(Pulling on the legs)* Yes! Yes!
- MORICET: *(Pulling on the top)* No!
- DUCHOTEL: *(Still pulling)* Yes! Let go, you . . . !
- LÉONTINE: *(With a dry innocence)* Yes, let go, Moricet. After all, the pants belong to Monsieur Cassagne.
- MORICET: Nothing of the sort! *(Jerks abruptly and the pants slip through DUCHOTEL's hands)* They re mine!
- DUCHOTEL: *(Low, to MORICET)* You idiot!
- MORICET: Oh, that's nice. That's very nice!
- DUCHOTEL: *(Crossing upstage, with an aggravated tone)* The beast!
- MORICET: *(Low and quickly, to LÉONTINE)* For heaven's sake! Did you forget your letter is in the pocket?
- LÉONTINE: *(Imperturbably calm)* I knew you'd never give them up.
- MORICET: *(Aghast at such composure)* Oh! *(Aside)* She is astounding!

(During the following, he rolls up the pants and places them on the mantelpiece)

DUCHOTEL: *(Like a man who has made a decision)* Very well! Yes, Léontine, it's true. I won't conceal it; I love you too much to hide it. The pants belong to Moricet!

LÉONTINE: *(Triumphant)* Exactly! Now we come to the truth! And what else do you confess? Do you confess all about your hunting?

DUCHOTEL: Yes, I confess it all, all of it. I can defend none of it.

LÉONTINE: Ah-ha!

DUCHOTEL: No, I was not hunting, not with Cassagne or with anyone else.

LÉONTINE: I knew it!

SCENE IX The same, CASSAGNE

CASSAGNE: *(At the door right)* Excuse me, Duchotel, you didn't forget me?

DUCHOTEL: What? No, no!

CASSAGNE: *(To LÉONTINE)* Ah! Madame! I wanted to speak with you. *(Low to DUCHOTEL)* You'll see! *(Aloud to LÉONTINE)* I've thought about your question, all this while, about hunting. And I remember now that we have been hunting together, Duchotel and I!

DUCHOTEL: *(Jumping)* What? *(LÉONTINE and MORICET explode with laughter)*

LÉONTINE: *(Lightly)* Really?

MORICET: *(Aside)* He has such good timing!

DUCHOTEL: *(Aloud, to CASSAGNE)* What are you doing! Why would you tell such lies?

CASSAGNE: But . . . but . . . but . . . but!

DUCHOTEL: *(Calmly)* My wife knows perfectly well we have never hunted together. Why would you come up with such a pack of lies?

CASSAGNE: *(Disconcerted)* But . . . ! It's you who told me to.

DUCHOTEL: *(Crossing his arms)* No, no, no! *(To the others)* He's such a liar! *(To CASSAGNE)* Alright, that's enough! Get in there! *(He pushes CASSAGNE toward the door right)*

- CASSAGNE: You never know what foot to start dancing on with you!
- DUCHOTEL: Well, don't dance! Who asked you to dance? And get in there!
- CASSAGNE: *(Letting himself be pushed)* Oh! Fine, fine, fine! But remember: the police commissioner is coming.
- DUCHOTEL: *(Pushing)* Yes, yes!
- CASSAGNE: *(As he exits)* Oh! What gyrations!
- DUCHOTEL: *(Slams the door after CASSAGNE, turns to the others without leaving the door; calmly after a beat)* He's had another touch of sun.
- LÉONTINE: *(Leaning against the table, casually)* Which police commissioner was Cassagne speaking of?
- DUCHOTEL: *(Crossing to her)* What? Oh! That! Nothing! It's of no importance. His wife was caught *in flagrante delicto*.
- LÉONTINE: *(Innocently)* With you?
- DUCHOTEL: *(Thoughtlessly on the same tone)* With me. *(Recovering)* No! Why would you say such a thing? "With me!" Would the husband would be here if it were me?
- LÉONTINE: Very well, but you were chasing your mistress, weren't you?
- DUCHOTEL: Me? I wasn't chasing my mistress . . . A mistress! Me? Never, never, never! Moricet?
- MORICET: *(During this, has sat near the fireplace, almost back to the audience)* I don't know, my friend, I don't know.
- DUCHOTEL: *(Between his teeth)* Thank you!
- LÉONTINE: Then, why all these pretended hunting trips?
- DUCHOTEL: What? Well! That's . . . a surprise! A surprise that I was preparing . . . for you.
- LÉONTINE: *(Blows a raspberry)* Pppht!
- DUCHOTEL: On my honour, a little house at the seashore that I wanted to rent for you.
- LÉONTINE: Then why all the mystery? There's a woman involved at the bottom of this.

DUCHOTEL: No, a house, a little house! There's no woman's bottom involved!

LÉONTINE: *(With a lyric indignation)* And me, all of this time, I have been a loving wife! A loyal wife! A faithful wife! Have I not, Moricet?

MORICET: *(Still seated; in fervent agreement)* Yes, yes!

DUCHOTEL: But me, too! I'm the same. Am I not, Moricet?

MORICET: *(Disbelieving)* Yes, yes!

LÉONTINE: I, I have never deceived my husband! Have I, Moricet?

MORICET: No! No!

DUCHOTEL: Well, I have never deceived my wife! Have I, Moricet?

MORICET: *(To calm them both)* No, no! You are both equally faithful! There!

SCENE X The same, BABET, then GONTRAN

BABET: *(Entering upstage and announcing)* Monsieur Gontran!

ALL: *(Jumping)* Gontran!

(MORICET instinctively moves near to LÉONTINE who moves toward MORICET. DUCHOTEL turns every which way and is left by himself. All three stand frozen in place; BABET exits as GONTRAN enters. There is a glacial pause)

GONTRAN: *(Stopping upstage where they can't see him and crossing his arms with a mischievous shake of the head)* Now! What were you doing last night at 40 Rue d'Amour?

ALL: *(Jumping)* Oh! *(General cough, to cover GONTRAN)* Hem! Hem! Hem!

DUCHOTEL: *(Who moves around to the right of the table and goes to GONTRAN)* Ah! It's Gontran! Good old Gontran!

(He moves as though to speak to him sotto voce and in doing so crosses with him down right of the table)

LÉONTINE: *(Who has done the same but left of the table, arriving too late to reach GONTRAN, moves down to left of the table and runs to GONTRAN)* Gontran, you are here! *(She seizes him by the left hand and draws him to her. DUCHOTEL pulls GONTRAN by the right hand. LÉONTINE pulls GONTRAN back to her, aided by*

MORICET. *To DUCHOTEL*) Don't pull on him like that! He's not a bell rope!

DUCHOTEL: *(Pulling GONTRAN back to him)* It's you doing the pulling!

LÉONTINE: *(Pulling GONTRAN to herself)* Me?

MORICET: It's all you!

(They continue to pull GONTRAN right and left)

LÉONTINE: *(Continuing)* Will you let go!

DUCHOTEL: *(Continuing)* You let go!

GONTRAN: *(Astonished and practically pulled apart)* What is going on here?

(DUCHOTEL has gives a violent jerk to GONTRAN, who slips from LÉONTINE; she is flung left to MORICET)

DUCHOTEL: *(Taking GONTRAN right before LÉONTINE can recover herself, in a low voice)*
Not a word about last night! Five hundred francs for you!

(He gives GONTRAN's shoulder a light shove, sending him toward LÉONTINE, and takes a casual air)

LÉONTINE: *(Who has run after GONTRAN, grabs him and pulls him left; in a low voice)* Not a word about last night! Five hundred francs for you.

(She gives GONTRAN's shoulder a light shove, sending him toward DUCHOTEL, and takes a casual air; MORICET does the same)

GONTRAN: *(Pleasantly surprised)* Well! Well!

(DUCHOTEL is right, by the desk, LÉONTINE and MORICET below the pouffe. GONTRAN is up right of centre, confused)

DUCHOTEL: *(Aside)* There, now, at least, he won't go sticking his foot in his mouth.

LÉONTINE: *(Low to MORICET)* We escaped beautifully!

MORICET: *(Low)* Beautifully!

(A peal of door bells sound, making them all jump. All three take on a look of dejection at the unexpected new complication. LÉONTINE and MORICET instinctively come together. DUCHOTEL, overwhelmed, passes his hand over his face. No one moves through the

following)

DUCHOTEL: *(Depressed)* Well . . . someone rang.

LÉONTINE: *(The same, with a small nod and a false smile)* Someone rang, yes!

MORICET: *(Utterly unnecessarily)* Yes, someone rang!

(A beat)

DUCHOTEL: *(The same)* I have no idea who it could be!

LÉONTINE: *(The same, shrugging)* Nor do I!

MORICET: *(The same)* Me, neither!

BABET: *(Enters upstage and announces)* Commissioner Bridois to see you!

DUCHOTEL: *(The same, without moving)* Ah! It's Commissioner Bridois!

LÉONTINE: *(The same, confirming)* It's Commissioner Bridois!

MORICET: *(The same)* It's Commissioner Bridois!

DUCHOTEL: *(To LÉONTINE)* Do you know Commissioner Bridois?

LÉONTINE: Me? Not at all. *(To MORICET)* Do you know Commissioner Bridois?

MORICET: Never met the man in my life!

DUCHOTEL: Nor I! *(To BABET)* Show in the complete stranger. *(All three wait, facing the audience and visibly worried; to the others, lightly)* Ha, ha, ha!

LÉONTINE: *(Lightly)* Ha, ha, ha!

MORICET: *(The same)* Ha, ha, ha!

GONTRAN: *(Who has been staring at them)* What the hell's the matter with them?

DUCHOTEL: *(With sudden energy)* Well! *(To GONTRAN)* It's so nice to have seen you!

LÉONTINE and MORICET: *(In chorus)* Yes, yes, so nice! So nice to have seen you!

DUCHOTEL: *(Pushing GONTRAN right of the table)* We'd better not hold you up; you'll be late for your curfew.

GONTRAN: It's eight in the morning!

DUCHOTEL: *(Low voice, pushing GONTRAN, upstage)* Wait for me in the living room, I'll give you the five hundred *francs*. *(He moves downstage)*

GONTRAN: Well. *(To LÉONTINE)* Goodbye, Auntie!

LÉONTINE: *(Moving up left, crossing to him)* Goodbye, Gontran. *(Low and quickly)* Wait for me in the living room, I'll give you the five hundred *francs*.

GONTRAN: Well! *(Aside, while LÉONTINE moves downstage)* To the living room!

(He exits through the door left, to the living room)

SCENE XI The same, BABET, then BRIDOIS

BABET: *(Speaking to the wings)* If Commissioner Bridois would step this way!

MORICET: What next?

(BRIDOIS enters, carrying a bundle under his arm which is DUCHOTEL's pants from Act I)

BABET: Commissioner Bridois!

(She exits upstage)

BRIDOIS: Gentlemen! Madame!

(At the sound of BRIDOIS' voice, DUCHOTEL, LÉONTINE, MORICET turn at the same moment toward him, then bounce immediately back to face downstage)

ALL THREE: It's him!

LÉONTINE: *(Low, to MORICET)* It's him and he'll recognize us!

DUCHOTEL: *(Aside)* It's him! And my wife is here. *(Crossing to LÉONTINE and mumbling)* It's . . . uhm . . . it's . . . uhm . . . it's this business of Cassagne's I was telling you about!

LÉONTINE: *(Mumbling as well)* It's . . . it's . . . yes, yes.

BRIDOIS: *(Crossing down)* Monsieur Duchotel?

DUCHOTEL: *(Running to BRIDOIS and caught up in his lies)* It's him! *(He points an accusing*

(finger at MORICET, then catches himself) Uh! Sorry. That is . . . it's me!
(Affecting an attentive air as though he had nothing to fear) You're here about the Cassagne affair, I believe. Monsieur Cassagne is in there at the moment. I will fetch him. Monsieur Moricet is here already.

(He tries to move BRIDOIS right)

BRIDOIS: *(Without moving)* Yes, indeed! *(Bowing)* And Madame Moricet, of course.

LÉONTINE and MORICET: *(Aside)* The boob!

DUCHOTEL: *(Who has stopped at BRIDOIS' words)* What's this? Madame Moricet? *(Indicating LÉONTINE)* This is Madame Duchotel, my wife!

BRIDOIS: *(Disconcerted)* Ah! *(Beat)* It is?

LÉONTINE: *(Smiling through very tight teeth)* Yes, yes, of course.

MORICET: *(Same)* Madame Duchotel! Yes, yes!

DUCHOTEL: Naturally.

BRIDOIS: *(Disconcerted; looks to MORICET)* Ah? *(To DUCHOTEL)* Ah? *(To LÉONTINE)* Ah! *(Enlightened, he crosses left, whistling "The Marseillaise". DUCHOTEL exits right)*

LÉONTINE: *(The instant that DUCHOTEL exits; crossing to BRIDOIS)* Monsieur, please let me explain.

MORICET: *(Following her)* It's very simple.

BRIDOIS: *(Stopping them, with the air of a worldly wise man)* Ah, ah, ah, Madame! The policeman's eyes are closed *(A small bow)* and the man of the world knows nothing. *(Tapping the side of his nose)*

LÉONTINE: Ah! The . . . ?

BRIDOIS: We are both, madame, professionals.

MORICET and LÉONTINE: *(with a sigh of relief)* Ah! *(They turn away and start to cross right, then look at BRIDOIS in shock)* Ah!

(They continue to cross. BRIDOIS crosses right of the table on which he places the bundle which he has held so far)

SCENE XII **The same, DUCHOTEL, CASSAGNE**

DUCHOTEL: *(Entering with CASSAGNE)* Here is Monsieur Cassagne!

CASSAGNE: *(Cutting in front of DUCHOTEL and crossing to BRIDOIS)* Commissioner, I've asked you to come here because I want my good friend Duchotel to be present when you go into this.

DUCHOTEL: *(Right, to LÉONTINE, left)* You see?

BRIDOIS: I have, in fact, come at the request of the defendant himself, who emphatically denies the charges against him, and who tells me that it is here we shall undoubtedly discover the real culprit.

(MORICET crosses toward BRIDOIS, passing CASSAGNE)

MORICET & CASSAGNE: Precisely!

CASSAGNE: *(Noticing MORICET beside him.)* Oh! This is not a good time, tailor. *(He pushes MORICET upstage)*

DUCHOTEL: *(To LÉONTINE, not wanting her to hear)* Darling, this is a very personal matter for Monsieur Cassagne, perhaps it would be best if you left.

CASSAGNE: *(Briskly and very happily)* Not at all! I beg you to stay, madame.

DUCHOTEL: *(Aside)* How many feet can he stick in his mouth at once?

(They draw up chairs and are seated: LÉONTINE, left, on the chair near the fireplace; MORICET, left of the table; BRIDOIS, right of the table; CASSAGNE, on the pouffe; DUCHOTEL turns the swivel chair at the desk to sit on. The group sits horseshoe fashion)

BRIDOIS: Perhaps, we should begin by recalling the facts. Last night, I surprised a Madame Cassagne *in flagrante delicto* – *(To LÉONTINE)* – in the act, Madame, of adultery. This was at the petition of Monsieur Cassagne.

CASSAGNE: *(Cutting him off, rising)* Just so! *(He bows and sits)*

BRIDOIS: *(Rising)* Monsieur? *(He bows and sits)*

CASSAGNE: *(Rising)* I present myself. I am the husband. I am Cassagne. *(He bows and sits)*

BRIDOIS: *(Rising)* Ah! Of course. *(He bows and sits. CASSAGNE starts to rise but a glare from BRIDOIS stops him)* We next had the duty of capturing her . . . correspondent, who had escaped in his underwear! We knew tracing him would not be difficult. I loosed my agents on his trail and five minutes later, they brought me a fellow matching the . . . description. That man was . . . Monsieur Moricet!

- MORICET: Objection! It's simply coincidence! This is a miscarriage of justice!
- CASSAGNE: *(Shouting in surprise and rising)* Ah!
- ALL: *(Jumping up)* What?
- CASSAGNE: *(Pointing a finger at MORICET)* You . . . ! . . . don't make shirts!
- MORICET: I what?
- CASSAGNE: *(Finally understanding)* Nothing! Nothing! *(Low, to DUCHOTEL)* You told me he was a tailor.
- DUCHOTEL: *(Laughing it off)* Well, he was nabbed in his *shirt-tails*. *(Change of tone)* I was simply trying to forestall a violent scene! You are so emotional!
- (They sit once more)*
- BRIDOIS: *(Picking up where he left off)* Monsieur Moricet makes the most absolute denials, and, while circumstantial evidence is heavy, I must say that other evidence supports him. We have, for instance, the pants. They don't fit him at all.
- MORICET: And if they don't fit, you must acquit!
- BRIDOIS: *(Rising and picking up the bundle)* I have brought the evidence with me.
- DUCHOTEL: *(Rising and moving in front of CASSAGNE, briskly to BRIDOIS)* This is useless! What need have you of the correspondent? You've caught Madame Cassagne with a pair of pants! Surely, that should be enough.
- CASSAGNE: *(Jumping up)* It's enough for me!
- DUCHOTEL: For me, as well. *(He goes back to his seat)*
- BRIDOIS: Not for the law! It's not enough that the woman should be caught . . . *tête-à-tête*. With or without pants, that does not constitute *flagrante delicto*. *(He has picked up the bundle and, on these last words, the pants unroll)* Wait! There's something in the pocket!
- ALL: *(Leaning forward)* Oh!
- DUCHOTEL: *(Aside)* Oh! In front of my wife! She'll know the whole thing, now! *(Looks toward LÉONTINE who has crossed her arms, nodded her head, with a satisfied air, and is now staring at her husband)* She already does!

- BRIDOIS: Now, what will we find here? *(He holds the pants waist high.)*
- CASSAGNE: Yes, what?
- DUCHOTEL: *(He jumps up and stands by Bridois)* You won't find anything! What are you going to do, Commissioner? *(He grabs the pants and holds them up)* Go out into the street and try the pants on everyone who passes by? *(He realizes that he is holding the pants at waist height, showing that they will fit him)* It's impossible. The case should be shelved. *(He throws the pants back to BRIDOIS)*
- BRIDOIS: Pardon me, monsieur, we don't shelve cases that easily – any more.
- DUCHOTEL: *(Aside, in a fit of despair)* Oh! No way out. No way out.
- GONTRAN: *(Entering and coming between BRIDOIS and DUCHOTEL)* Have you all forgotten about me in the living room? *(Seeing the pants)* Oh! My pants!
- ALL: What?
- DUCHOTEL: *(Jumping up)* His pants! You heard? His pants! He said "his pants!"
- GONTRAN: *(Who doesn't see the trap)* Of course! What are they doing here?
- DUCHOTEL: Nothing! *(Low)* Five hundred francs to keep saying they're your pants!
- GONTRAN: What?
- BRIDOIS: *(Surprised, to GONTRAN)* You acknowledge these pants are yours?
- GONTRAN: More than ever!
- BRIDOIS: You acknowledge that you were, last night, at 40 *Rue d'Amour*?
- GONTRAN: What! How did you know?
- DUCHOTEL: *(Moving between BRIDOIS and GONTRAN)* He admits it, gentlemen, you see, he admits it!
- ALL: *(Amazed)* Oh!
- GONTRAN: *(Simply)* Well, yes! Why not?
- DUCHOTEL: There it is! Case closed! *(Low, to GONTRAN, clapping him on the back)* Good man! *(He crosses around GONTRAN and ends up behind him)*
- BRIDOIS: *(Taking out his notebook, to GONTRAN)* Your name?

GONTRAN: Monsieur?

BRIDOIS: Your name?

GONTRAN: *(Aside)* They're insane! *(Aloud)* Gontran Morillon, why?

CASSAGNE: And what were you doing last night at 40 *Rue d'Amour*?

GONTRAN: Well, really! I . . . I . . . I was with my little cuddlekins!

ALL: *(Shocked)* Oh!

CASSAGNE: *(Furious)* Your "little cuddlekins!" Your little cuddlekins, sir, is also mine!

GONTRAN: *(Flabbergasted)* Yours! *(Suddenly)* My God! It's the gorilla! *(He leaps into DUCHOTEL's arms)*

ALL: *(Including CASSAGNE)* The gorilla?

CASSAGNE: I'll give you the gorilla! *(DUCHOTEL puts GONTRAN down; CASSAGNE crosses to BRIDOIS)* Do your duty, Commissioner, do your duty!

GONTRAN: *(Disconcerted)* Commissioner?

CASSAGNE: I count this as a gift. At last, a divorce.

GONTRAN: Divorce! Wait! Just who are you? You're not her pi . . . pi . . . !

CASSAGNE: Her WHAT?

GONTRAN: Her . . . nothing.

CASSAGNE: I, sir, am her husband!

GONTRAN: *(He faints into DUCHOTEL's arms; waking)* It's Monsieur des Voitures! *(He stands; to CASSAGNE)* Oh! Monsieur, I didn't know she was married! I swear she said nothing about it!

CASSAGNE: That's enough, Monsieur! I know all I need to know and I will take action this very instant! Gentlemen, madame, good day!

(He exits upstage)

GONTRAN: *(Following)* Monsieur! Wait! Monsieur!

DUCHOTEL: *(Trying to delay GONTRAN)* No, no, no! Let him go!

GONTRAN: I will not. Wait! Monsieur!

(He exits after CASSAGNE)

MORICET: *(Aside)* I don't understand anything about this.

DUCHOTEL: *(Aside, and coming back down)* Ouf! That's another load off!

BRIDOIS: *(Taking his hat)* I see my work here has ended. Monsieur Moricet, it remains that I should make my apologies to you.

MORICET: Quite all right, Commissioner.

BRIDOIS: *(To LÉONTINE)* Madame, my professional respects! *(LÉONTINE smiles, then gasps)* Monsieur Duchotel, your servant.

DUCHOTEL: *(Very agreeable)* Of course. I'll show you out.

BRIDOIS: *(Same)* Don't disturb yourself.

DUCHOTEL: *(Crossing up)* Not at all. This way. *(BRIDOIS passes behind him)* Oh! A chill just ran up my spine!

(They exit)

SCENE XIV MORICET, LÉONTINE, then DUCHOTEL

MORICET: Well, I'd call that a delightful little farce!

LÉONTINE: If you think that this has changed my plans one little bit . . . ! It may have fooled the commissioner, but not me. *(Change of tone)* Oh, and since we're alone, kindly give me my letter.

MORICET: Ah! Yes, of course! Where are my pants? *(He takes them from the chimney where they have been and crosses down front)* It's pants day, today!

LÉONTINE: *(Urgently)* Yes, fine! You can play with words after!

MORICET: It's here; it's here. *(They each take the pants by one side of the belt and MORICET digs in the different pockets)* The back pocket, nothing! The money pocket, oh!, my handkerchief. *(He transfers it to his current pants. Still searching)* Side pocket. A cork-screw? Oh! It's from yesterday. I had gone to find it when you had your change-of-heart – when you were playing four hands.

LÉONTINE: *(Urgently)* Yes, yes, hurry up!

MORICET: *(Searching the pockets)* All right. Where is the letter? Oh, this is too much! It's not there!

LÉONTINE: Not there? Look! Look! Look hard.

MORICET: It's not there to look for! *(Showing her the pants)* See? One leg! Two legs! That's all I've got!

(They continue to fumble desperately, each in a pocket, noses down into the pants. During this, DUCHOTEL re-enters and comes down between them as they hold the pants between them right at the height of his belt)

DUCHOTEL: *(Looking down into the pants)* Well. What are you doing there?

MORICET: *(Disconcerted)* What? . . . Uhm! *(Not knowing what to say)* I was showing my pants to Madame Duchotel.

DUCHOTEL: *(Shrugging it off)* Ah. Interesting. *(Change of tone, to LÉONTINE with aplomb)* So, there! You see? Who would believe it? Gontran! Madame Cassagne's lover! My nephew's growing up!

LÉONTINE: *(Cunningly)* Yes, yes! *(Aside)* Oooh, liar . . . !

DUCHOTEL: When I think that you actually suspected me! What a boy!

LÉONTINE: *(With assurance)* Oh! That didn't surprise me. Gontran told me about it long ago.

DUCHOTEL: *(Change of tone)* What?

LÉONTINE: *(With amazement)* You didn't know he spends every weekend with her?

DUCHOTEL: No! *(To MORICET)* Can it be true?

LÉONTINE: *(“Twisting the dagger”)* Of course, he couldn't spend time with her if you hadn't loaned him all that money.

DUCHOTEL: *(Smothered)* If I didn't . . . ? Think of it! It's me who pays! *(Aside)* It's me who pays twice!

LÉONTINE: *(Same business)* Only, what upsets the poor boy so much is that it seems she also has an old pantaloon who looks after her as well.

DUCHOTEL: *(Stung)* An old . . . ! Who said that?

LÉONTINE: She did ! To him!

DUCHOTEL: An old pantaloon! What kind of talk is that! She couldn't possibly have said that!
An old . . . pantaloon!

LÉONTINE: *(Cunningly)* Well, isn't that what you are?

DUCHOTEL: *(With conviction)* I am not old!

LÉONTINE: *(Putting her hand on his shoulder)* Ah! But you are a . . . ?

DUCHOTEL: *(Realizing his mistake)* What? No! No, I didn't say that!

MORICET: *(Coming back from the chimney where he has placed the pants, giving him a dig with the elbow. Teasing)* Look out, you're on a slippery slope!

DUCHOTEL: *(To MORICET, pushing away his elbow)* Oh! You bother me!

LÉONTINE: *(Triumphant)* Caught with your fingers in the pâté!

DUCHOTEL: *(Searching for a way out)* No, no. I can explain . . .

LÉONTINE: Enough! I know it all!

DUCHOTEL: No!

LÉONTINE: *(Pointing an accusing finger with each new sentence)* I know it was you last night with Madame Cassagne!

DUCHOTEL: No!

LÉONTINE: I know it was you the police burst in on!

DUCHOTEL: No!

LÉONTINE: I know it was you who escaped over the balcony in your underwear!

DUCHOTEL: *(Pinned, he finally bursts out.)* Oh! YES! I WAS WITH MADAME CASSAGNE LAST NIGHT! There! *(A beat)* Oh! I feel so much better.

MORICET: Well, I think I should be going, now.

(He starts to exit)

LÉONTINE: No! Stay! *(To DUCHOTEL)* Monsieur, it is finished between us.

- DUCHOTEL: *(Boyishly)* Oh! Léontine. Forgive me. Please, please, please?
- LÉONTINE: I shall never forgive you!
- DUCHOTEL: *(Same business)* Oh! Come on! *(To MORICET)* Are you going to stand there and say nothing? Help me!
- MORICET: Of course. *(To LÉONTINE, with profound indifference)* Now, Léontine, you must see, you must see . . .
- DUCHOTEL: There, you see, listen to him! I swear that I'll never even think of Madame Cassagne, again! *(Seeing LÉONTINE's look)* Not she, or any other.
- LÉONTINE: Yes, you say that now!
- MORICET: *(Mechanically and without noticing what DUCHOTEL has promised)* Yes, he says that now! He says that now.
- DUCHOTEL: Oh, shut up if that's all you can say. *(To LÉONTINE)* All the secrets, the hunting, the baskets! *(As if he was making a big confession)* And by the way . . . that basket. I had better tell you: there's a big surprise coming to you when you pay the bill at the butcher! *(He is ready to laugh with LÉONTINE, but she stays stony, and he continues with dignity)* No, really. Here's the bill. *(He searches his pockets and finds LÉONTINE's letter; he has it in his hand when he remembers)* No, I tossed the butcher's bill on the fire. *(A beat; looking at the letter)* Then, what's this?
- LÉONTINE: *(Nervously, moving instinctively to MORICET)* My letter!
- MORICET: *(Same business)* Oh!
- DUCHOTEL: *(Who has opened the letter; to LÉONTINE)* It's from you.
- LÉONTINE: *(Rushing to her husband to take the letter)* Yes, yes, I know!
- DUCHOTEL: *(Letter in his right hand and without taking his eyes off it, he keeps LÉONTINE away with his left hand)* Just a moment, now!
- LÉONTINE and MORICET: *(Aside, fearful)* God!
- DUCHOTEL: *(Reading)* "My love, I have no words. As of this moment, there is no longer a barrier between us." *(Aloud)* What did you write this for, and when?
- LÉONTINE: *(Fumbling)* I don't remember!
- MORICET: *(Intervening)* Uh! It was one night . . .

DUCHOTEL: What are you sticking your oar in for? You're always sticking your oar in! What do you know about it? *(Resuming his reading)* "Free to act as I will, I shall come to you at once." *(A scream)* Ah!

LÉONTINE and MORICET: *(Fearful)* What?

DUCHOTEL: *(Simply, looking at them)* I know!

LÉONTINE and MORICET: *(Aside and hoarsely)* He knows.

DUCHOTEL: *(Fingers pinching the bridge of his nose, trying to remember)* It was one or two days before our elopement! *(MORICET and LÉONTINE look astonished while DUCHOTEL continues reading)* "Know that I only do this because *he* has driven me to it." *(To them)* Exactly! "He". *(To LÉONTINE)* Your father!

MORICET: Huh?

DUCHOTEL: *(With conviction)* Yes. There's no other possible explanation.

(MORICET and LÉONTINE repress a snort of laughter)

(To LÉONTINE) Would you believe it? I don't recall this letter at all.

LÉONTINE: *(Taking the high ground; reproachfully)* Oh! How could you not?

DUCHOTEL: *(Forestalling another argument)* Oh! Now, I remember. I remember it very well! And now, Leontine, in remembrance of that happy time, in remembrance of the moment when you wrote this letter, forgive me!

LÉONTINE: *(Crossing right)* Never!

SCENE XV **The same, GONTRAN**

GONTRAN: *(Coming in upstage)* Monsieur des Voitures didn't want to hear a word!

DUCHOTEL: Gontran, help me to persuade your aunt!

GONTRAN: *(Not understanding)* Me?

DUCHOTEL: Leontine, I promise: in the future I shall be the model husband!

MORICET: *(Joining in)* Forgive him, madame!

DUCHOTEL: *(To MORICET)* You're sticking your oar in again!

MORICET: It's a big boat you have to row.

DUCHOTEL: Keep quiet, just the same.

LÉONTINE: I shall never forgive him!

DUCHOTEL: *(Furious, crossing down right)* Oh!

GONTRAN: *(Low, taking LÉONTINE centre)* Auntie, permit me to plead with you.

LÉONTINE: You're wasting your breath.

GONTRAN: *(Lower)* Let me plead with you, in the name of the lady whom I saw last night . . . at 40 *Rue d'Amour*.

LÉONTINE: *(Disconcerted)* At 40 *Rue d'Amour* . . . ? *(Briskly crossing to DUCHOTEL)* Of course! Fine! Absolutely! I forgive you.

ALL: Ah!

LÉONTINE: Very well, but no more hunting! Say you'll never again go to the chase.

DUCHOTEL: *(Embracing LÉONTINE)* I may still chase, but it will be at home! This is the end of Mister Chase!

LÉONTINE: *(Arms around DUCHOTEL)* And me, I get my husband back!

DUCHOTEL: *(Arms around LÉONTINE)* And me, I get my wife back!

GONTRAN: *(Suddenly realizing)* And me, I shall have to get a new cuddlekins!

MORICET: *(Unrolling the pants)* And me, I get my pants!

CURTAIN

END OF PLAY