

HONEYMOON À TROIS

A French Farce

Homage to Feydeau.

David Cole

September 1967
June-July 1972

CHARACTERS

JOSIE

OCTAVE

M. TARABISE, father of JOSIE

M. DESPANNES, father of OCTAVE

ARTHUR ÉLOUX, in love with JOSIE

JEANINE, a waitress

GYPSY VIOLINIST

The setting is a beach resort
on the coast of Normandy.

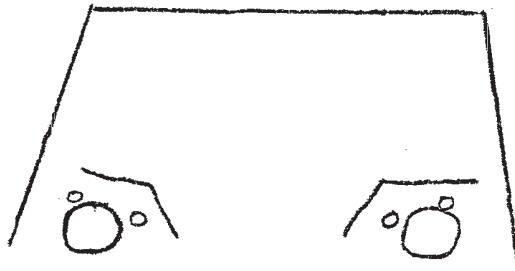
The period and acting style should
be those of the Feydeau farces.

Names should be given their French
pronunciation.

(Before rise, vigorous a cappella madrigal music is heard.

The curtain rises on the dining-patio of a beach resort in Normandy. The interior of the hotel (painted on a drop) can be vaguely made out through a row of white French doors that runs across up-stage. At intervals along the row of French doors stand several potted palms. Up-stage center, a waiter's "station". The floor of the patio is a pattern of blue, pink and off-white inlaid stone. The color scheme as a whole should have a pastel quality.

On either side of the stage, down-left and down-right (but not too far down), stands a round patio dining table with two matching chairs per table. Each table is screened off from the other and from the rest of the patio by a folding screen placed to its onstage side, thus:



At the down-left table sit OCTAVE's father, M. DESPANNES, and JOSIE's father, M. TARABISE. M. DESPANNES is to M. TARABISE as Lionel Barrymore to Wallace Beery. During the opening scene between JOSIE and OCTAVE the two fathers pantomime eating, drinking and highspirited conversation.

At the down-right table sit JOSIE, right, and OCTAVE, to her left, holding hands on the table and giggling to each other. A GYPSY VIOLINIST, down-right of JOSIE, is serenading them with the Lohengrin Wedding March. JEANINE, a fresh-faced, fair, unintelligent looking waitress stands up-left of OCTAVE, holding an opened bottle and two poured glasses of Champagne on a tray. She regards OCTAVE and JOSIE with a dazed, sentimental expression.

The VIOLINIST finishes the piece, and bows. JOSIE smiles and makes delicate, soundless applause; OCTAVE reaches into his pocket and hands a coin to the VIOLINIST, who bows again and begins to retire. JEANINE sets down the glasses and the bottle and then, holding the tray in both hands up against her apron, falls back into dreamy contemplation of OCTAVE and JOSIE. The VIOLINIST, suddenly noticing that JEANINE is not withdrawing with him, interrupts his bowing and hustles her off, up-left, berating her in pantomime as they go.

OCTAVE peers around the screen, while JOSIE tries to stifle her laughter. When the VIOLINIST and JEANINE are off, OCTAVE waves JOSIE the "all clear," and they both burst into uncontrolled laughter. Apparently their giggles during the serenade were not newlywed nervousness, but the signs of a suppressed private joke. Now, as they give themselves up to their laughter, OCTAVE mimics the impassioned VIOLINIST, and JOSIE the mooning JEANINE--which renews their mirth. Finally, they settle back exhausted, and JOSIE looks affectionately at her companion.)

JOSIE

Dear Octave! How infinitely kind of you to come on our honeymoon.

OCTAVE

Well, now, Josie, how could you ever have managed otherwise?

JOSIE

It's a tremendous favor.

OCTAVE

A favor? Josie: When every backside in the nursery longed to take upon itself the consequences of your indiscretions with the jam-jar, whose backside did you invariably select? When any one of a dozen young geometricians would gladly have avenged the assaults of Euclid upon your tender brain, from whose lessons did you unflinchingly condescend to crib?

(To each of these questions JOSIE has replied with a prettily reluctant nod, as if native truthfulness were prevailing over delicacy.)

And now you speak to me of favors? Ah, my benefactress from earliest youth--I owe you a favor.

JOSIE

But it must be so boring for you.

OCTAVE

Not really; there are so many lovely women about, have you noticed?--so many more than there would have been if we really were at Deauville, as our fathers suppose. That little waitress who brought in the wine, for instance; I shall be having a word with her later, I expect.

JOSIE

Now, Octave, you will remember you're a married man.

OCTAVE

Eh?

JOSIE

A bridegroom on his honeymoon doesn't chase serving-girls. It could start talk.

OCTAVE

Good heavens, am I actually expected to be faithful to you?

JOSIE

Do you want to spoil everything?

OCTAVE

What a question! Here I've laid out thousands of francs for you, risked my father's displeasure for you, falsified public documents for you--

JOSIE

But it will all have been for naught if you now act in such a way as to arouse suspicion!

OCTAVE

(makes as if to answer, and then slumps back)
Of course you're right. Confound those fathers of ours,
anyway! What a rigamarole we're being put through just
because it's always been their idea we should marry.
Well, I suppose I can kiss that little waitress goodbye.

JOSIE

Just be a little patient, my friend; once Arthur and I
are wed, you can have all the little waitresses you like.
And that, I must say, is an unusually tolerant attitude
in a young wife.

(consults her watch)

Oh! by this time tomorrow...!

OCTAVE

You can joke, but the whole situation's a damned nuisance.

JOSIE

No worse than a nuisance, I hope. Octave, are you sure
they can't do anything to us for bribing that clerk?
Those forged papers, that sham ceremony--I feel vaguely
bigamous.

OCTAVE

(shrugs)

To marry two wives is felony; to marry none is nothing worse
than... unsociable. At any rate, there was no help for it.
Your father would never have let you out of his sight,
except to go on your honeymoon with me. Even then he seemed
uneasy--as if you might have Arthur waiting in the wings.

JOSIE

As indeed I have. But please, Octave, if you don't mind, let's drop the subject of my father; I have the strangest feeling he's here with us somehow...

OCTAVE

Josie, that's ridiculous; you know both our fathers believe us to be at Deauville.

JOSIE

Still, I feel...

OCTAVE

Josie, these are the workings of remorse--and you've no call to be wasting remorse on two old dinosaurs who did everything in their power to ruin our lives.

JOSIE

Don't you dare call my father a dinosaur; I wouldn't take that from you if you were my husband--

(stops short, her eyes agleam with a mischievous realization)

Octave!

OCTAVE

(gruffly)

What?

JOSIE

Our first fight!

OCTAVE

(in disgust)

Aaaagh!

JOSIE

Anyway, you're quite right about my father; I've only to remind myself of his whole behavior toward Arthur--

OCTAVE

To take such a dislike to the man you adore merely because he happens to be an enthusiast of the Early Madrigal Movement!

JOSIE

The Golden Age of French Polyphony! But you'd have thought Arthur was some kind of swindler or degenerate or something, to hear my father. It's quite incomprehensible, really.

OCTAVE

Anyone that irrational deserves to be tricked. Cries out to be tricked.

M. TARABISE

(calling)

All right, young lady!

(JOSIE jumps.)

OCTAVE

What's the matter?

JOSIE

I thought... I seemed to hear my father calling me.

M. DESPANNES

(calling)

Waitress! We're done. You can bring the check now.

OCTAVE

Nonsense, that was just the fellow at the next table calling the waitress.

(Enter JEANINE to M. DESPANNES and M. TARABISE; they mime paying the check during the following.)

There was something familiar about that voice, though...

JOSIE

(jumps up)

Oh! Arthur will be getting in any minute; I must walk down to the station and meet him. Just think, Octave! By this evening, ~~erow~~, I shall be married!

OCTAVE

For the second time in two days.

JOSIE

Will you do me a favor? Run over to the mail-desk and see if there are any messages; perhaps Arthur has been delayed.

(anxiety breeding anxiety)

Or found out. Or injured. Or--

(gasps as the Ultimate Possibility strikes her)

Octave, run, fly, how can you sit there when my love's life is in danger?

(Without giving him a chance to answer, JOSIE exits up-right.)

OCTAVE

But Josie, what--

(sighs resignedly)

Certainly, Josie. Of course, Josie. I couldn't be more under the woman's thumb if I were married to her. Ah, well: a few hours more of it, and I shall be at liberty; how many

husbands have the end so clearly in view?

(starts to exit, center; at the same moment JEANINE curtsies to M. DESPANNES and M. TARABISE and begins to cross toward center, stuffing the tip she has just received into her bosom.)

There's the charming waitress. Of course Josie's right: I mustn't start anything now. Still, one might plant the seed...

(crosses to her, center, and bows)

Mademoiselle.

JEANINE

(curtsies)

Monsieur?

OCTAVE

How do they call you, Mademoiselle?

JEANINE

Jeanine, Monsieur.

OCTAVE

You're awfully pretty, Jeanine. Would you like to come sip some brandy with me when you get off?

JEANINE

But Monsieur is on his honeymoon!

OCTAVE

My honeymoon--ah, yes. But that's not quite as it appears, my honeymoon. It's quite an exciting story. Does Jeanine like exciting stories?

JEANINE

Passionately, Monsieur!

OCTAVE

Good! Then you can meet me here after work and I'll tell you mine. Agreed?

(JEANINE starts to protest)

Fine. Till later, then, Mademoiselle Jeanine.

(bows and exits up-right. JEANINE smiles mischievously, shrugs, and exits up-left.)

M. TARABISE

(as he and M. DESPANNES smoke their cigars)

Despannes, you've got to hand it to me; this was a marvellous idea.

M. DESPANNES

Yes, Tarabise, it's a very interesting experience.

M. TARABISE

Ought to be mandatory--required by law. After all, when two young folks marry, it's not just themselves they're hitching: two whole families are now also wedded "till death do us part." The young folks go off by themselves to get acquainted--an excellent idea, everyone agrees. But the families? Oh, they sigh with relief the minute the ceremony's over; they're through with each other till the first christening at least.

M. DESPANNES

In contrast to which, you proposed--

M. TARABISE

A Honeymoon for Inlaws! That's the ticket, Despannes! Let that be our contribution to the social ferment of the age.

M. DESPANNES

But to carry your reasoning through--

M. TARABISE

Not that we're exactly strangers, of course, you and I, eh, Despannes. The Goddess of Commerce joined our interests long before the Goddess of Love ever concerned herself with joining our children's hearts. And here let me pause--

M. DESPANNES

Oh, by all means, Tarabise!

M. TARABISE

(going right on)

--to reflect upon the wisdom of this arrangement. Despannes: in an age when good sense is rare, what consummate good sense that the heir to a celebrated house of pomades

(indicates DESPANNES)

should wed the daughter of France's fourteenth-largest wig manufacturer.

(indicates himself)

Good sense, did I say? Poetry! Harmony! Genius!

(a little nervously)

Still, more is required for a successful marriage than that your salves should be on cordial terms with my horsehair...

M. DESPANNES

But look here, Tarabise: to be perfectly consistent with your theory, we ought to have gone along with our son and daughter. That way, everyone would now be getting to know everyone.

M. TARABISE

Hold on! Let not custom prevail over theory, but neither let theory prevail over experience. No, no, Despannes: We are here, and Octave and Josie are in Deauville, and that

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is all very much as it should be. We have written to them to inform them of our project; beyond that, let us do--let us contemplate--nothing to disturb the balance.

M. DESPANNES

Oh, my, certainly not! When I think how close the marriage came to falling through--

M. TARABISE

Pardon me, Despannes, but it is not quite delicate of you to allude--

M. DESPANNES

Oh! I sincerely beg your pardon.

M. TARABISE

However happy the outcome, it cannot give me pleasure to be reminded of my daughter's folly--

M. DESPANNES

Then by all means let's drop it.

M. TARABISE

--to cast my thoughts back over the period of her infatuation that warbler... that eighth-note... that fa-la-la...

M. DESPANNES

You're quite right, it won't bear thinking of.

M. TARABISE

--to pass in review the whole sad course--

M. DESPANNES

(alarmed)

Oh! Absolutely not the whole sad course!

M. TARABISE

And when I think of how your son Octave, a wholly admirable young man, if somewhat heavily pomaded--which under the circumstances--

(a gracious nod to M. DESPANNES)

I say, when I think of how your son Octave languished and pined...

M. DESPANNES

Actually, Octave was abroad almost the whole time of Josie's acquaintance with Arthur.

M. TARABISE

(impatiently)

Well, then, would have languished and pined--what interests me is the contours, as it were, of the situation.

M. DESPANNES

(not quite understanding)

Ah, yes, the contours... But, you know, Tarabise, I must confess I've always been rather at a loss to understand the violence of your feelings concerning this Arthur Éloux. It's true, I've never met him--there may be something in his manner that ~~causes~~ causes instant dislike--but so far as I've ever been able to make out, your whole aversion for him comes of his being a member of the Early Madrigal Society.

M. TARABISE

Despannes, I don't know what it is, but you seem to be able to elicit confidences from me; perhaps it is that we are relations, perhaps you possess some strange power...

M. DESPANNES

(aside)

The strange power of not being able to get a word in.

M. TARABISE

At any event, I am about to tell you something which I have never dared to admit to Josie or to anyone--scarcely even to myself.

(lowers his voice and leans forward over the table;
M. DESPANNES does likewise.)

I have no objection whatsoever to Arthur Éloux!

(sits back to enjoy the sensation)

M. DESPANNES

But, my good Tarabise, your very violent pronouncements!

TARABISE

The product, I blush to say, of a bizzare misunderstanding. When Josie first announced that she had fallen in love with a member of the Early Madrigal Society, I am afraid that--having no idea what that organization might be--I leapt to the conclusion that it was one of those ascetic-communistic sects violently opposed to manufacture in general and to the wig and cosmetic trade--of which I have the honor to be a pillar--in particular. How could I permit my daughter to marry a man whose beliefs--as I thought--struck at the very heart of all her father stood for?

M. DESPANNES

But you could not long have continued in such an error?

M. TARABISE

No. It soon became clear from Josie's remarks that the Early Madrigal Society concerned itself exclusively with choral music and had no views whatever in the matter of the wig industry. But what could I do? Josie must never learn of the error of her adored father; so, for her sake, I was forced to make a great show of opposing Arthur and his madrigals long past the time when I felt any inclination to do so.

M. DESPANNES

Poor Tarabise.

M. TARABISE

Such are the straits to which love of our children may drive us.

M. DESPANNES

There's a bright side, though.

M. TARABISE

What's that?

M. DESPANNES

Now that I know you aren't an enemy to music, I can feel free to suggest we attend the after-dinner concerts here. They're the thing, you know, in this place.

M. TARABISE

Of course, my dear Despannes--provided that there are no madrigals on the bill. That's still rather a sore spot.

M. DESPANNES

No, no, it's a string trio, I believe.

M. TARABISE

(rising)

I tell you what: why don't I trot over to the Salon and check the program--honeymooners anticipating each other's every wish, eh, Despannes?

M. DESPANNES

That would be most kind of you, Tarabise.

M. TARABISE

Oh, and perhaps you'd run over to the mail desk and see if there's any reply to that note we sent Octave and Josie.

M. DESPANNES

Of course; as soon as I finish my cigar.

(Exit M. TARABISE. M. DESPANNES sits puffing on his cigar.)

A tenor voice running over the fa-la-la section of some madrigal is heard offstage, and in a moment its possessor, ARTHUR ÉLOUX, appears.)

ARTHUR

Rather a letdown, their not being at the station. But I suppose Josie didn't get my wire about making the earlier train--we probably crossed on the road to town. Well, they've got to be coming back here; the best thing I can do is stay in one place. A harmless enough mixup, if only I didn't have this premonition... Perhaps a cigar would calm me.

(ARTHUR searches pocket after pocket for a cigar, with mounting annoyance. As he does so, M. DESPANNES, still smoking, gets up and starts to leave, but stops, amused, when he notices ARTHUR.)

M. DESPANNES

Monsieur, you give yourself away.

ARTHUR

(jumps)

I beg your pardon, Monsieur?

M. DESPANNES

Nothing can be the object of so frenzied a search but a long anticipated, maddeningly absent cigar. Allow me to offer you one of mine.

ARTHUR

(relieved)

Most kind of you, Monsieur.

(M. DESPANNES gives ARTHUR a cigar and a light.
They stand smoking together.)

M. DESPANNES

Now if you will allow me to continue my impertinent attempts to read your thoughts, I should guess you are on your honeymoon.

ARTHUR

(startled)

Eh?

M. DESPANNES

A man whom a good cigar does not relax is either on his last legs or on his honeymoon. You seem too vigorous for the former.

ARTHUR

(aside)

Whew! I thought he was on to us for a moment there.

(to M. DESPANNES)

Well, yes, I am after a fashion on my honeymoon, yes...

M. DESPANNES

Please, I understand your reluctance; what can be said on such a subject? There is something absurd about an experience so utterly unique to the participants, so utterly commonplace to anyone else.

ARTHUR

Oh, my honeymoon's far from commonplace, I can assure you.

M. DESPANNES

Excuse me; my philosophy of honeymoons is, like most philosophies, not very considerate of the individual.

(aside)

After two days with Tarabise, it's a pleasure to find someone I can lecture.

(to ARTHUR)

To you, I am sure, your honeymoon is the heaven of heavens; but surely you will allow that to a disinterested third party--

ARTHUR

Oh, I think most people would share my view.

M. DESPANNES

Do you? Well, then, isn't it remarkable that in an area with so little room for variation, two men should meet who each believe they've found a way of being distinctive.

ARTHUR

Two men?

M. DESPANNES

My friend: I, too, am on a honeymoon so extraordinary that even without hearing the circumstances, I venture to say yours can hardly equal it.

ARTHUR

Oh, it's not so unheard of for a gentleman of your years--

DESPANNES

(testily)

My years, sir? What have my years to do with it? No more unusual to be on a honeymoon at sixty rather than twenty than to be on a honeymoon at Deauville rather than here.

(ARTHUR jumps.)

No, if that's your idea of distinctive circumstances--!

But come, let's hear your story, and we'll see.

ARTHUR

(aside)

What a peculiar guy. He seems to feel someone's going to give him the croix de guerre for his honeymoon. Oh, well, I have to kill the time somehow and I don't see what harm it can do.

(to M. DESPANNES)

Monsieur, I have the honor to be on a honeymoon with somebody else's wife.

M. DESPANNES

Hm... That is, I grant, a somewhat unusual circumstance-- though perhaps, in this day and age, not quite so unusual

as it should be--anyway, nowhere near so strange a case as my own.

(puts his arm around ARTHUR conspiratorially)

I, Monsieur, have the honor to be on a honeymoon with another man.

ARTHUR

(instant change of manner)

Ah. Monsieur, your servant.

(exits abruptly)

M. DESPANNES

Young man, wait a minute! Young man! Now what could I have said that--? Ah, well, I'd best run over to the mail desk and see if there's any word from Octave and Josie.

(Exit M. DESPANNES. Re-enter ARTHUR, looking cautiously about to make sure that M. DESPANNES is gone.)

ARTHUR

Isn't that disgusting, the way they just walk up to you in broad daylight, in a public place?

(Enter M. TARABISE with the concert program, looking around for M. DESPANNES.)

Where can Octave and Josie have got to? If they did go to the station, they ought to have been back by now.

M. TARABISE

(looking around, but not noticing ARTHUR)

Hm, Despannes must have gone ahead to get the mail.

ARTHUR

(sees M. TARABISE)

Josie's father! What the--! It can only mean one thing:

he's on to us. My best course is to throw myself on his mercy and hope for the best. I just wish Josie were here for me to throw her.

M. TARABISE

(turns to leave and sees ARTHUR)

Arthur! What the devil are you doing here?

ARTHUR

(falls to the ground and clasps the knees of M. TARABISE)

Monsieur Tarabise--

M. TARABISE

Ooof! Arthur, what's the meaning of this?

ARTHUR

Esteemed parent of the divine Josie--

M. TARABISE

Let go of my legs, man.

ARTHUR

Wronged father of an obstinate child--

M. TARABISE

Arthur, stop it!

ARTHUR

Try to understand; we never meant to deceive you...

M. TARABISE

Take your paws off me!

ARTHUR

Only when there was no other way... Can you find it in your heart to forgive us?

M. TARABISE

Forgive you? I forgave you long ago. And besides, that's all over. Josie is happily married to Octave.

ARTHUR

(suddenly facing out with a fiendish smile, his arms still clasped around M. TARABISE's knees)

He doesn't know!

(leaps up and begins to pace back and forth)

M. TARABISE

Besides, I was never really angry at you, it was all a mistake.

ARTHUR

(aside, as he paces)

He doesn't know! Now to keep him from finding out!

M. TARABISE

It's I who should be asking your forgiveness.

ARTHUR

(preoccupied)

Oh, quite all right, quite all right, no hard feelings, I assure you. Now if you'll excuse me--

M. TARABISE

You don't know what it is to live with the thought of having ruined three young lives.

ARTHUR

Oh, that's a distinct overstatement, really.

(tries to leave)

M. TARABISE

We old people, we think we know, but we spread misery like the typhus.

ARTHUR

I've had my shots, please don't concern yourself.

(aside)

All we need is for Josie to come breezing in here now.

M. TARABISE

(falls to the ground and clutches the knees of ARTHUR, who struggles to free himself)

If it wasn't for me, my daughter wouldn't be married to that tin of pomade.

ARTHUR

(blurts it out)

She's not!

M. TARABISE

(instantly suspicious, releasing ARTHUR's knees)

Eh?

ARTHUR

Uh... I mean, she doesn't exist for me any more; I'm quite over her. So if you've nothing further--

M. TARABISE

(Rises)

Just a moment. What are you doing here anyway?

ARTHUR

(with a faint nervous laugh)

I might...you know...ask the same of you, you know... ha, ha...

M. TARABISE

I'm here on vacation; but you could never afford a place like this.

ARTHUR

Uh, no. I'm here...uh...in my professional capacity. Yes... my madrigal group is performing here.

M. TARABISE

But I've just picked up the program; it's all string trios.

ARTHUR

String trios. Yes. Quite. But...uh... there's been an illness; we're the replacement. This has been a terrible season for string trios. They're dropping like flies all up and down the channel coast. Frightful.

(begins backing out)

Well, now, if you'll excuse me, I have to rehearse. So nice running into you. Tell Josie I think of her sometimes.

(a flicker of suspicion from M. TARABISE)

But not what you'd call often. Oh, no. Quite seldom. Maybe once a week. Hardly ever.

(aside)

What lucky stars I have help me to find Josie before he does!

(Exit)

M. TARABISE

A baleful coincidence! I'm sure Despannes will want to hear my impressions while they're still fresh.

(The concert program in his hand catches his eye.)

I must remember to tell him about the change in the program.

(Exit M. TARABISE. Enter M. DESPANNES and OCTAVE, the former in extremely good spirits, the latter looking nervously around him.)

M. DESPANNES

An enchanting surprise! I go in search of a letter from my son and return with the original. My dear boy, how are you, how goes everything?

OCTAVE

Oh, delightfully, papa... a slight change in plans, that's all...

(aside)

If that little waitress keeps our rendez-vous, I'm finished.

M. DESPANNES

Octave, why are you so nervous? A couple of days of marriage shouldn't have made you quite a stranger to your papa.

Oh, but you needn't say it; I can see it in your eyes. Papa is not exactly welcome on the honeymoon.

(OCTAVE makes a polite gesture of contradiction.)

But there's no need to deny it, I quite agree. And if M. Tarabise and I had had the least inkling that you and Josie--! Why, Tarabise feels even more strongly on this point than I do!

OCTAVE

(aside)

Monsieur Tarabise here, too! That means he's drifting about the hotel somewhere; and Josie must be back from the station and drifting about the hotel somewhere; and the wire from Arthur said he'd made the earlier train, which means that by now he's drifting about the hotel somewhere. So it's only a matter of time-- and not much time--before they all drift into each other's laps
Ohhh!

M. DESPANNES

(catching OCTAVE's last sigh)

Why, my poor boy, something is the matter! Is there...
is everything all right between you and Josie?

(aside)

Oh, these arranged marriages! If I had it to do over again,
all the wig discounts in France wouldn't lead me to barter
my son's happiness.

OCTAVE

Oh, everything's fine, Papa. Josie and I, we're really
giving each other a whirl.

M. DESPANNES

Then you're... I mean, she's, as a woman, as a wife...uh...
satisfactory?

OCTAVE

How should I know?

M. DESPANNES

Eh? Not know?

OCTAVE

I mean, uh, a man in love can't very well be objective, can he?

M. DESPANNES

Ah, that's the stuff--fervor, abandonment, passion! That's
the way! Well! I'm much relieved; you seem to be on top of
the situation.

OCTAVE

(aside)

I think I am--so long as my little Jeanine doesn't come strolling in.

M. DESPANNES

But tell me, what made you decide to leave Deauville?

OCTAVE

Oh... any one of a hundred reasons.

M. DESPANNES

That bad, was it?

OCTAVE

Oh, no; charming spot, Deauville. But Josie, you see, wanted a change of scene.

M. DESPANNES

Change of scene! But you'd only been there one afternoon!

OCTAVE

That's true, but--

(inspiration)

You know how passionately fond Josie is of music?

M. DESPANNES

What has that got to do with it?

OCTAVE

Well, Deauville is not what one would call musical.--

Hardly so much as a marching band. So...we... pulled up stakes and came here.

(aside)

If he swallows that, he's worthy to be the father of a dupe like me.

M. DESPANNES

Alas, Octave, what's the use of deceiving ourselves? Josie was never musical. Her fascination with music dates from her fascination with Arthur Éloux; and if she's still harping on music, that can only mean Arthur is not far--

OCTAVE

(starts)

Eh?

M. DESPANNES

--from her mind. Banish him thence, Octave! Or at least, don't drive forty miles out of your way to revive the association. You've got to keep a woman occupied! Besides, Octave if you begin falling in with your wife's whims on the honeymoon, what will you be by the silver anniversary? A slave, sonnyboy, a heathen slave!

OCTAVE

Father, I've learned my lesson, and I promise you, once we're out of this, I'll never succumb to one of Josie's whims again.

(aside)

That in all sincerity!

M. DESPANNES

Good boy, good boy! Now perhaps you and Josie will have dinner with Tarabise and me, and then the two old men will take themselves out of the way. By the way, where is Josie?

OCTAVE

I told her to meet me at the mail desk--or was it back at our room? Suppose you go check the mail desk--

(aside)

That's the one place I'm fairly certain she won't be--

(aloud)

and I'll check back at the room.

M. DESPANNES

Right. And remember, Octave: keep her occupied.

(Exit)

OCTAVE

She keeps me occupied enough for the both of us. Thank you, Jeanine, for being so blessedly unreliable! Now if I can only find Josie and Arthur!

(Exit OCTAVE. Enter JOSIE.)

JOSIE

Well! Arthur and I seem to have crossed paths. In all likelihood he's wandering around the hotel looking for me, just as I'm wandering around after him--how silly! Well, he can't wander far.

(She sits behind the screen at the table, left. ARTHUR frantically crosses the stage from left to right, and exits--neither seeing nor seen by JOSIE. OCTAVE frantically crosses the stage from right to left, and exits--neither seeing nor seen by JOSIE. JOSIE stretches and yawns.)

How smoothly everything is going! I just hope Octave won't spoil everything by his behavior with that little Jeanine.

(Enter M. TARABISE. Him JOSIE sees.)

My father! What can it mean? Let's see: whatever he's doing here, he can't know anything. The best thing I can do is get the start of him.

(thinks for a moment, shows that she's "got it,"
and whirls around toward M. TARABISE.)

Oh, my father, my sainted rescuer, thank heavens the nightmare
is over, you've come!

(falls upon M. TARABISE's breast)

M. TARABISE

Bless me, it's Josie! Dear girl, what in the world are you
doing here?

JOSIE

Oh, you may well ask, you may well ask!

M. TARABISE

(aside)

First Arthur turns up--and now Josie. Can it be that...?

No. My daughter is married, on her honeymoon, she would never...

(aloud)

Josie, please stop crying and explain yourself. You're
supposed to be at Deauville, with Octave, on your honeymoon.

What are you doing here?

JOSIE

Pursuing my ruin, my shame.

M. TARABISE

(aside)

Oh! That sounds like we're getting onto the subject of Arthur.

(aloud)

Josie: could your presence here possibly have anything to do with
the fact Arthur Éloux is also a guest at this hotel?

JOSIE

Arthur? Here? My shame is complete! But I am justly served: let Arthur laugh his fill at the sight of her who jilted him scorned and mocked by the brute you gave her!

M. TARABISE

Eh? How's that? Octave scorns you? On the second day of your honeymoon? Where is Octave? Why aren't you at Deauville?

JOSIE

(making a "brave effort")

At Deauville, at the hotel, at our first meal together--

("breaks down"; M. TARABISE encourages her to go on.)
we were waited on by a quite ordinary, unspeakably common blond waitress, some Jeanette or Jeanine--I didn't think it concerned me to get her name.

M. TARABISE

No, of course; it was of no importance.

JOSIE

Ah, you may say so; but this person of no importance soon grew all-important to my fine husband.

M. TARABISE

You mean--!

JOSIE

Octave, who had never known what it was to love; Octave, forced into a hated marriage by cruel parents; Octave, who had never cared ten sous for me--now discovered the meaning of passion. We had to wade through twelve orders of poires normandes so that he could keep his charmer in view; and when he learned she was to leave next day for a job here, he pre-

sented me with an ultimatum: either I could accompany the philanderer on his quest, or remain behind--an abandoned bride. What could I do? To avoid scandal, I came.

M. TARABISE

Monstrous!

JOSIE

Aye, monstrous. A cuckoldette on my honeymoon! But

(very anxious that this come through)

no worse than was to be expected of a forced and loveless union. Ah, but it's over; the nightmare is over: my loving father has come to take me away.

M. TARABISE

Well, my dear, it's rather embarrassing, but--

JOSIE

What! You haven't come to take me away?

M. TARABISE

Well, you see, dear child, I'd no idea--

JOSIE

Then what are you doing here?

M. TARABISE

I'm on a little journey with Monsieur Despannes--

JOSIE

(aside)

Oh, dear, I do seem rather to have screwed Octave.

M. TARABISE

--the idea being, that while you and Octave were getting better acquainted, Despannes and I might--

JOSIE

Consorting with the parent of your child's ruin? Ah!

M. TARABISE

Yes, but you see, I hadn't the least idea--I mean, you'll admit, it's the last thing one would expect from a quiet, inoffensive--

JOSIE

(rather anxiously, sensing that her story is starting to show cracks)

Uh, but you know how passion can drive a person--

M. TARABISE

(rather shrewdly)

Yes, I do... Josie, are you quite sure there's no connection between your presence here and Arthur Éloux's?

JOSIE

Oh, summit of my grief! I stay with an unworthy husband so as not to shame the father who gave him to me--and my reward is to hear that father call me "liar" to my face. But enough. Farewell. I should have stayed in Deauville. I should have--

M. TARABISE

Now, Josie, hold on. Nobody's calling you a liar. I just think you may be exaggerating a bit.

(Enter OCTAVE and JEANINE.)

JOSIE

Exaggerating, am I? Look!

(indicates OCTAVE and JEANINE. Aside:)

Oh, Octave! Did I say your carrying on with Jeanine would spoil everything? Now I see it's going to save the day!

M. TARABISE

(starting toward OCTAVE)

Why, the dastard! I'll--

JOSIE JOSIE

(restraining him)

First hear all the fine things he'll say to the trollop, this nice husband you've saddled me with. Come behind the screen and listen,

(aside)

but not too carefully.

(She takes him behind the screen to the table, left.)

OCTAVE

Good heavens, Jeanine, what an incredible thing to do, to come to my room like that! I told you to meet me here.

JEANINE

(demurely)

I was just trying to save Monsieur time.

OCTAVE

Fine, very good, but suppose my wife had come nosing in?

(Here, as at other appropriate moments during the following, M. TARABISE makes as if to reveal himself, but is restrained by JOSIE.)

JEANINE

Oh! Monsieur is right. I am a terrible girl, I'm doing a terrible thing. Oh, poor young lady!

(makes as if to leave; OCTAVE catches her)

OCTAVE

Oh, now hold on, dear child; there's no need to distress yourself on my wife's account. You've nothing to reproach yourself with there, believe me.

JEANINE

How can Monsieur say so? I see Monsieur is not very nice to women.

OCTAVE

But I am. Very nice. When I take a fancy to one. But that "wife" of mine--!

(gesture of exasperation)

M. TARABISE

(aside)

Shameful!

JEANINE

Monsieur is on his honeymoon!

OCTAVE

What then? I couldn't be wearier of the woman on our golden wedding.

JOSIE

(aside, to M. TARABISE)

You see how he talks?

M. TARABISE

(aside, to JOSIE)

Brute! Utter brute!

JEANINE

Then why ever did Monsieur marry her?

OCTAVE

Oh, a forced match, family connections...

JEANINE

Still, if Monsieur wants my opinion, Monsieur is obliged to make a go of it. I have very strong feelings on these subjects.

OCTAVE

(aside)

Good heavens, does the chit suppose I've come to her for marriage counselling?

M. TARABISE

(aside, to JOSIE)

The girl seems to have preserved some decency.

JEANINE

I will speak frankly, like the good Norman girl I am. Monsieur is very charming to me, or I would not have gone to his room; but I have thought better of it since.

(draws herself up)

I will not have to do with a married man until he has given his marriage a chance!

OCTAVE

(aside)

Professional ethics of a chambermaid!

(to JEANINE)

Look, Jeanine, is your only objection to me the fact that I'm married?

JEANINE

And on your honeymoon!

OCTAVE

How if it should turn out that I'm not married--

JOSIE

(aside, quickly, to M. TARABISE)

You see the lengths he'll go?

OCTAVE

--and that I'm on someone else's honeymoon.

(As a diversionsary tactic, JOSIE gives a piercing sob, aside. M. TARABISE puts his arm around her and then looks glaringly at OCTAVE.)

JEANINE

Monsieur is talking in riddles.

OCTAVE

No, I am being quite plain. The lady you see me with is not my wife.

M. TARABISE

(aside)

Who would have believed this? He's as oily as one of his father's pomades.

JEANINE

What! But Monsieur and the young lady sleep in the honeymoon suite, eat at the honeymoon table--

OCTAVE

(with a blithe wave of his hand)

Nevertheless.

JEANINE

But at luncheon only this afternoon I heard Monsieur refer to his wedding reception!

OCTAVE

Oh, we had a wedding reception. But it was all fake.

M. TARABISE

(aside)

Blatant, blazing impudence!

JEANINE

But it does not make sense. Why would Monsieur do such a thing?

OCTAVE

Well, you see--

JOSIE

Not too much (aside) detail, please.

Not too much detail, please, Octave!

JEANINE

(puts her finger on OCTAVE's lips)

Wait! Do not tell me clumsy lies. It would spoil everything.

JOSIE

(aside)

It certainly would! Thank you, Jeanine!

JEANINE

Monsieur would have me believe she is only your mistress--
bien, she is only your mistress.

OCTAVE

Oh, she's not even that; she's nothing to me.

M. TARABISE

(aside)

So she should be, if I had the power to make her so again.

JEANINE

(reflecting)

No, a mistress, that is all right. I do not consider a
mistress.

OCTAVE

You don't? Oh, well, in that case, what she really is,
is a girl I plucked out of a Spanish brothel--

M. TARABISE

(aside)

This goes beyond anything!

JOSIE

(aside)

That really is getting a bit gamey.

OCTAVE

One of those ones with a passion for respectability, you know.

JEANINE

(in tears)

Oh, I beg Monsieur not to tell such lies! If Monsieur can say

such things of his lovely wedded wife, what will he say to the next girl of Jeanine?

OCTAVE

Very well, then, here's the plain truth: I've pretended to marry Josie so she could get away from her father and--

(JOSIE on pins and needles)

JEANINE

Oh, worse and worse! Listen to Monsieur! Next Monsieur will be telling me he is conducting the young lady to a convent!

OCTAVE

Oh, I wish I were, she gives me nothing but trouble.

M. TARABISE

(aside)

She gives you! Josie, I am going to wring that man's neck.

JOSIE

(aside)

No, wait, Papa, leave me alone with him. Perhaps if I confront him in the act, it may move him to repentance.

M. TARABISE

(aside)

But Josie--

JOSIE

(aside)

Please, Papa--give me just a few moments with him and then-- let a raging father do his worst!

M. TARABISE

(aside) Very well

Very well.

(muttering as he leaves)

Pretended to marry her to deceive her father!... Of all the... !
I'm going to ease my mind by letting that greaseball
Despannes know what kind of a son he's got.

(Exit)

OCTAVE

Jeanine, look--

JOSIE

(comes from behind the screen)

Well, Octave.

(OCTAVE and JEANINE whirl around; JEANINE gasps.)

OCTAVE

Josie!

(slight pause)

Am I glad to see you!

(JEANINE looks openmouthed at OCTAVE.)

I've been hot on your trail for hours.

JOSIE

(giving the fisheye to JEANINE)

Hot on my trail, eh?

JEANINE

(flings herself at JOSIE's feet)

Oh, please, Madame, nothing happened, I swear to you; please
do not complain or I will lose my place.

OCTAVE

Josie, do you realize that our fathers are here, in town,
in the hotel?

JOSIE

(in mock surprise)

No! Octave, do you realize that my father and I watched
your entire love scene from behind that screen?

JEANINE

Oh, Madame!

(eagerly)

Then Madame saw how steadfastly I resisted--

(continues to paw JOSIE, who totally ignores her)

OCTAVE

(extremely nervous)

Overheard, did you, heh, heh! Probably sounded a bit
gamey, some of it--eh, Josie? Teeny bit on the strong side, eh?

(officiously confidential)

Just trying to fire the imagination, you know. Spot of
melodrama, ha, ha.

JEANINE

Never, Madame, did I ask him to make up such lies!

JOSIE

(to OCTAVE, sweetly)

A Mexican brothel, wasn't that it?

OCTAVE

Ha, ha, Spanish, actually.

(pointing violently at JEANINE)

Technique, you know, Josie. Trappings.

JEANINE

Madame must know that never for a moment could I believe such a thing of Madame!

JOSIE

(to OCTAVE)

Technique, eh, mon vieux? Trappings?

(keeps him squirming a long moment--then pinches his cheek affectionately)

It's lucky you've already got a girl, if that's your idea of how to win one.

OCTAVE

Then you forgive me, Josie?

JEANINE

And me, madame? Oh, I am sensible I have wronged you!

JOSIE

(to JEANINE, as if just now becoming aware of her presence)

How in the world could you have wronged me? Yes, Octave, I forgive you--only, please: leave the ladies alone until after we find my lover.

JEANINE

(openmouthed)

Oh! you terrible people---Madame as much as Monsieur!

OCTAVE

(to JOSIE)

He's here! Arthur's arrived!

JOSIE

Have you seen him?

OCTAVE

No, but there was a wire at the mail desk saying he'd made the earlier train; he must have been here for some time now.

JOSIE

Long enough for him and my father to have run into each other. But I don't seem to be able to run into him.

(The fa-la-la section of a madrigal, tenor part, is heard offstage.)

Arthur!

(JEANINE looks around her puzzled. Enter ARTHUR. JOSIE flies to his arms.)

Darling! Thank heavens you're here.

(They kiss.)

ARTHUR

I'm here, you're here, your father's here, everybody's here.

(sticking one hand out to OCTAVE from amidst his embrace)

Hello, Octave, how are you? Everything going all right?

JEANINE

(aside)

Oh! Such people!

OCTAVE

(to ARTHUR)

Everything was going fine, until our fathers showed up. I wish I knew how to account for this sudden glut of fathers.

JOSIE

(to ARTHUR)

Everybody's been conning everybody. It's hopeless.

ARTHUR

Who thinks what?

OCTAVE

I've made my father believe I brought Josie here because she insisted on being where there was music.

JOSIE

He's going to get quite a serenade when my father gets hold of him. I've made him think Octave dragged me here in pursuit of this person.

(indicates JEANINE)

ARTHUR

(just noticing JEANINE)

Oh! Who's this?

JOSIE

Octave's side-interest.

JEANINE

I think you are all a pack of wickedness.

(aside)

And I'm beginning to believe some of those stories Monsieur Octave told me.

JOSIE

(to ARTHUR)

But darling, how did you ever explain your presence to father?

ARTHUR

I made Monsieur Tarabise believe I'm here giving a recital.

JOSIE

Oh, dear, with his hatred of madrigals...

ARTHUR

I think you may have exaggerated that... Well! The problem seems to be that we have given the same people rather different impressions.

OCTAVE

The minute they start comparing notes, we're sunk.

ARTHUR

Ah, but my dear Octave, there is something else to do with notes besides compare them.

OCTAVE

I'm sorry, I'm afraid I don't--

ARTHUR

Counterpoint, my dear boy, counterpoint: the art of interweaving diverse strains.

JOSIE

Dearest, you know how fond I am of your music, but really, this is not the moment for a madrigal.

ARTHUR

Ah, but it is! A madrigal of deceptions. A skillful harmonizing of discordant accounts. Come and let me teach you your parts.

JEANINE

If Messieurs and Madame are through with me--

ARTHUR

Oh, I'm afraid we can't dispense with you; it would ruin the balance.

JEANINE

But, Monsieur, I am tone-deaf!

ARTHUR

All you have to do is move your lips; we'll put the words in your mouth.

OCTAVE

(looking off in one direction)

Here comes my father!

JOSIE

(looking off in the opposite direction)

And here comes mine. There's one pair of honeymooners headed straight for the skids.

ARTHUR

Let's go somewhere and practise our parts. Some of our reputations may get a bit lost in the ensemble, but it'll all come out right, I promise.

JEANINE

But, Monsieur, my reputation is to me--

JOSIENE

Do as your told, chit, or I'll have you discharged for carrying on with my husband.

JEANINE

(pertly)

Which one, Madame?

(Exit OCTAVE, JOSIE, ARTHUR and JEANINE. Enter, from opposite sides of the stage, M. DESPANNES and M. TARABISE.)

M. DESPANNES

Ah, Tarabise, I've been looking high and low for you. There's a wonderful surprise; our children are here.

M. TARABISE

Viper! Father of vipers! Founder of a house of vipers!

M. DESPANNES

My dear Tarabise--

M. TARABISE

"Dear"? What can be dear to such a villain? His own family must be a horror to him!

M. DESPANNES

Will you sit down?

M. TARABISE

Break bread with such a scoundrel? Never!

M. DESPANNES

My good Tarabise, if you are going to scream absurdities at me, I insist that you do so in the privacy of a booth.

(They sit at the table, right--M. TARABISE reluctantly.)

Now, if you could possibly manage to say what's wrong sometime in the next hour or so, I should like to have dinner with my son and daughter-in-law.

M. TARABISE

Do you presume to join their names in my hearing, Monsieur?

M. DESPANNES

What heaven hath joined--

M. TARABISE

You have the effrontery to invoke heaven on behalf of that flyspot... that grease-stain..

M. DESPANNES

Do you mean--?

M. TARABISE

I mean that your son is no fit husband for my daughter!

M. DESPANNES

(aside)

Uh-oh. Someone's been telling him how Octave gave in to Josie about coming here for ^{the} music.

(aloud)

Now, Tarabise, you must give me leave to say that you are not being quite fair.

M. TARABISE

Not fair?

M. DESPANNES

You are attaching far too much importance to a single moment of weakness--

M. TARABISE

Single moment of weakness!

M. DESPANNES

--a mistake any young man, out of fondness for his bride, might make.

M. TARABISE

Fondness for his bride!

M. DESPANNES

Ah, Tarabise! Think back to the early days of your own marriage. Were there never moments when, departing somewhat from the strictest prudence, you--

M. TARABISE

Do you accuse me, Monsieur, of having--

M. DESPANNES

I accuse you of nothing! Surely it is on his honeymoon, if ever, that a man may be excused for showing himself a bit uxorious.

M. TARABISE

A bit uxorious!

(suddenly realizing that there is a crossed wire somewhere)

Despannes, to what action of your son's do you imagine I am alluding?

M. DESPANNES

Why, to his having left Deauville at Josie's insistence because there was no music there.

M. TARABISE

(choked with astonishment)

At Josie's insistence... no music...! Is that what Octave told you they're doing here?

M. DESPANNES

Of course. What else?

M. TARABISE

My dear Despannes: Octave has come here in pursuit of a waitress he met at the hotel in Deauville. Josie has come here in pursuit of the faithless Octave.

M. DESPANNES

Good heavens, Tarabise, what an idea!

M. TARABISE

An idea, you say?

M. DESPANNES

Where did you ever hear such a story? Who could have an interest in making you believe such nonsense?

M. TARABISE

Despannes, I saw them?

M. DESPANNES

Who?

M. TARABISE

Your son and his mistress.

M. DESPANNES

Really? Doing what? Was she tossing his omelet--or setting his heart aflame with her desserts flambés.

M. TARABISE

He was making love to her.

M. DESPANNES

Oh, now really, Tarabise.

M. TARABISE

Making love to her and telling her the most unrepeatable lies about Josie--how she wasn't his wife at all but someone he'd plucked out of a Chilean brothel--

M. DESPANNES

Tarabise, you were right: This honeymoon for inlaws is an excellent idea; one does indeed learn many things. I, for example, have learned that I must watch my grandchildren for signs of an inherited Tarabise lunacy!

M. TARABISE

I tell you I saw them, right here on this patio, just after I had finished talking with Arthur Éloux--

M. DESPANNES

I beg your pardon--talking with whom?

M. TARABISE

Arthur. Arthur Éloux, Josie's old flame.

M. DESPANNES

Um-hm. And what is this old flame doing on Josie's honeymoon?

M. TARABISE

Good heavens, he's not on Josie's honeymoon, he's here giving a madrigal recital.

M. DESPANNES

But the program you showed me is all string trios.

M. TARABISE

Yes, but they had to cancel the trios; Arthur's the replacement. Look here, I really don't see what--

M. DESPANNES

It might interest you to know that as I passed the Grand Salon just now, I distinctly heard the sound of a string trio.

M. TARABISE

Well? What of it? What are you suggesting?

M. DESPANNES

Clearly, Arthur was lying to you about his real reason for being here.

M. TARABISE

Damn it, what other reason could he have?

M. DESPANNES

He might, of course, simply be on holiday...

M. TARABISE

No, no, he could never afford this place.

M. DESPANNES

Quite. Well, then, it pains me to say so, but I don't see that I need be any daintier in my allegations than you've been in yours.

M. TARABISE

What allegations? What do you mean?

(JOSIE and ARTHUR tiptoe onstage, up-center)

M. DESPANNES

Well, it seems obvious that neither Josie's nor Arthur's real reason for being here has anything to do with music--except possibly a love-duet.

M. TARABISE

Will you be plainer, please.

M. DESPANNES

Josie claims to have brought Octave here for the music-- but there is Arthur. Arthur claims to be here giving a recital--but there is Josie. What do you see, Tarabise, as you contemplate the situation: two lovers of music, or simply--two lovers?

M. TARABISE

Yes, but what about Octave and that waitress of his?

M. DESPANNES

Oh, a mere invention of Josie's--a smokescreen.

(JOSIE looks anxiously at ARTHUR; he gives her a reassuring pat.)

M. TARABISE

But, look here, Despannes, I tell you I saw him and the girl--

M. DESPANNES

But what you have not seen is Josie and Arthur.

(ARTHUR signals to JOSIE "that's our cue." JOSIE and ARTHUR overplay the following scene for M. TARABISE's and M. DESPANNE's benefit--as do OCTAVE and JEANINE their subsequent scene--pausing to catch the drift of the fathers' aside comments.)

ARTHUR

Josie!

JOSIE

(pretending just then to turn and see him)

Arthur! What are you doing here?

(M. TARABISE would go to them; M. DESPANNES restrains him.)

M. DESPANNES

(aside, to M. TARABISE)

No, wait; let them reveal themselves; we'll see.

(takes another look at ARTHUR)

Good heavens, is that Arthur Éloux? I met him before and he said he was on a honeymoon with another man's wife.

JOSIE

Arthur, whatever are you doing here?

M. TARABISE

(aside, to M. DESPANNES)

Well, not your son's wife. You can see how surprised she is to see him.

(M. DESPANNES makes a gesture that they should defer judgment.)

ARTHUR

(conspicuously lying)

Oh... my madrigal group... a recital tour...

M. TARABISE

(aside to M. DESPANNES)

Just as I said.

(same gesture from M. DESPANNES)

ARTHUR

Ah, Josie, I can't lie to you! I am here because the woman I love is here!

(JOSIE turns melodramatically away.)

M. DESPANNES

(aside, to M. TARABISE)

Just as I said, rather.

M. TARABISE

(aside, to M. DESPANNES)

It only shows Arthur is a scoundrel--which I never doubted.
But Josie's in the clear: she's as flabbergasted as we are.

JOSIE

Arthur, leave me now, and I will pretend never to have
heard those words.

M. TARABISE

(aside)

Noble girl!

ARTHUR

How can I leave you, now or ever? A love such as mine--
dare I say, "such as ours"?

JOSIE

You speak of what may never be. Bethink you, I am wed.

ARTHUR

Aye, indissolubly--to me, in heaven, where true marriages are
made in despite of fathers.

JOSIE

No, my poor Arthur, however you--well, there can be no harm
in confessing what cannot be hid--however we might wish it,
I am married to Octave.

M. TARABISE

A heroine of early romance!

ARTHUR

In your heart, Josie?

JOSIE

Arthur, my heart is no longer your concern.

M. TARABISE

(aside, to M. DESPANNES)

Brave girl! True heart! Plaindealing! Puts you to shame---
you and that son of yours.

M. DESPANNES

(aside, to M. TARABISE)

My dear Tarabise, your daughter shows herself capable of the
bare minimum of respectable behavior; my son is entitled to no less.

M. TARABISE

(aside, to M. DESPANNES)

I'll tell you what your son is entitled to--

ARTHUR

Josie--

M. DESPANNES

(aside, to M. TARABISE)

Shhh!

JOSIE

Arthur, would it not be kinder not to protract this painful
scene?

ARTHUR

Answer me one question and I am gone. Though you seem to deny
everything that was between us, you will not deny me the truth.
All I seek to know, that I may quit you with a tranquil
(if broken) heart, is whether Octave is making you happy.

JOSIE

That is so difficult; we have been married such a short time--

ARTHUR

Do not prevaricate with me, Josie; my devotion has merited plainer dealing.

JOSIE

You chide me justly. Oh, how I wish I could lie to you and so assure your peace--and my own. How I should like to take away all coloring of an excuse for your continued pursuit of me--to seal your lips and stay your hand. But, as you say, you have deserved better. Hear, then, the truth you have deserved to hear.. Octave is... no husband to me.

M. TARABISE

(aside, to M. DESPANNES)

Ha! You see? Here it comes.

ARTHUR

Ha! Is it money? cards? drink? Oh, press me no further

JOSIE

Oh, press me no further! Complain to my old flame of my new husband--cannot you feel the falseness of my position?

M. TARABISE

(aside, to M. DESPANNES)

See how she wrestles with her delicacy!

ARTHUR

But perhaps I may be of some assistance. If it were money, for example, I could, without wishing to create the least shadow of obligation--

M. TARABISE

(aside, to M. DESPANNES)

You know, that's not a bad fellow, that Éloux; I may have been a bit hasty about him.

M. DESPANNES

(aside, to M. TARABISE)

If I could forget what I heard him say before about being on someone else's honeymoon, he seems a not undeserving young man. I have heard nothing to make me suppose my son any less so.

M. TARABISE

(aside, to M. DESPANNES)

Your son? That weasel!

JOSIE

Dear Arthur! But I am afraid Octave's failings are not such as a third party can redress. Indeed, we have had rather too much of third parties already.

ARTHUR

Josie! Do you mean...?

JOSIE

Yes, Arthur. We have been married one day, and already Octave has been unfaithful.

M. TARABISE

(aside, to M. DESPANNES)

Was that outright enough for you, Despannes? Or would you like the poor girl to take an ad in the paper?

M. DESPANNES

M. DESPANNES

(aside, to M. TARABISE)

Bah, Tarabise--how can you be so blind? It's obvious what the girl is doing: she's giving herself an excuse.

M. TARABISE

(aside, to M. DESPANNES)

Despannes, that is about as likely--! Despannes, I tell you I have seen that to which my daughter alludes.

M. DESPANNES

(aside, to M. TARABISE)

I have no way of knowing what you think you may have seen. I have heard nothing but nonsense and seen nothing at all.

(Enter OCTAVE, with a cigar, swaggering.
JEANINE hangs adoringly on him.)

M. TARABISE

(aside to M. DESPANNES)

There! There comes some of my nonsense on your son's arm.

OCTAVE

(very consciously playing the ladykiller; to JEANINE)
Don't press too close, lambie; there's plenty for everybody.

ARTHUR

Good heavens!

M. DESPANNES

(aside)

Good gracious!

M. TARABISE

(aside)

Good God!

JOSIE

(aside)

Good show!

JEANINE

Oh, Monsieur Octave, everything I have is yours--my body,
my soul, my all.

OCTAVE

Better keep a little for a rainy day, sugar; I'll light you
up bright, but I won't keep you burning long.

M. TARABISE

(aside)

Oh, my poor little girl--how could I ever have flung you to
this brute?

M. DESPANNES

(aside)

My son--I don't recognize him. Thank heaven his mother never
lived to see the day.

JEANINE

(to OCTAVE)

Better an hour with you than a lifetime with an ordinary man!

OCTAVE

Well, now, an hour I think we can manage.

(JOSIE makes as if to faint and falls into ARTHUR's
arms. OCTAVE looks around.)

Well! Touching little scene! Josie and lover in a fast embrace.
How are yuh, Arthur; don't let me intrude.

ARTHUR

Monsieur, see the effect of your conduct on your wife!

OCTAVE

That's nothing, you should see the effect on the other girls.

(slaps JEANINE's behind. JEANINE, giggling, pulls him down and gives him a kiss. JOSIE "comes to," sees what's going on, and "faints" again.)

M. DESPANNES

(aside)

Why, the unfeeling--!

M. TARABISE

(aside)

How much more of this--?

JOSIE

Oh, Arthur, cover, cover my eyes that I may not look upon my husband in the arms of a tramp!

JEANINE

Better a tramp, better anything than a fool who cannot keep the love of Monsieur Octave!

(JOSIE "swoons" again.)

M. TARABISE

My child set upon by her husband's

whore!

M. DESPANNES

(aside)

I am well paid for thinking I could "arrange" young hearts.

JOSIE

("coming to")

Octave! How can you treat me this way?

OCTAVE

Tut, Josie, don't blame me. I never lured you into this marriage of ours; for that you can thank your esteemed papa.

M. TARABISE

(aside)

His words strike upon my conscience!

JOSIE

Arthur, protect me from the insults of this monster.

ARTHUR

Alas, Josie, my privilege of resenting your wrongs departed with my privilege of loving you. May heaven guard your honor better than your husband shows any signs of doing.

JOSIE

Then take me away from him!

ARTHUR

No, Josie, that I cannot do. I shall not take advantage of this man's baseness to become as base as he

(JOSIE "swoons" into ARTHUR's arms again. OCTAVE and JEANINE keep embracing.)

M. TARABISE

(aside)

Noble boy!

M. DESPANNES

(aside, to M. TARABISE)

Noble indeed!--the husband that noble girl deserves.

(ARTHUR, JOSIE, OCTAVE and JEANINE all drop their respective poses, and suddenly all take a sharp listening position; ARTHUR gestures "Now it's coming!")

M. TARABISE

But alas, the deed is done.

M. DESPANNES

Alas, yes; Josie and my contemptible son are man and wife.

But if it were yet to do--

M. TARABISE

Oh, if it were yet to do, on my soul, Josie should marry Arthur Éloux.

M. DESPANNES

I should raise no objection, I should help to join their hands.

ARTHUR

Would you repeat that, please?

M. TARABISE

(without stopping to think where the request is coming from)

Josie should marry Arthur Éloux.

M. DESPANNES

(likewise)

I should help to join their hands.

ARTHUR, JOSIE, OCTAVE and JEANINE

(falling to their knees)

We take you at your word!

(M. DESPANNES and M. TARABISE exchange a look, then rush out from behind the screen.)

M. TARABISE

Josie! What's the meaning of this?

JOSIE

Oh, Papa, Arthur and I are so grateful!

M. TARABISE

What the devil are you talking about?

ARTHUR

Well, just heard you say, if you had it all to do over again, Josie should marry me.

JOSIE

Well, you have it all to do over again. Octave is not my husband.

M. TARABISE

You mean you wish he weren't. No more heartily than I, I assure you.

M. DESPANNES

Besides, Josie, even if you were at liberty to exchange my worthless son for Monsieur Éloux, I'm not sure you'd be getting an improvement.

ARTHUR

(aside, indicating M. DESPANNES)

Oh, so that was Octave's father!--and Monsieur Tarabise was the "other man" on his honeymoon. I'm afraid I'm going to be paid back for the conclusion I jumped to. But what can he think he has on me?

(aloud, to M. DESPANNES)

No offense, Monsieur, but I don't see what you could possibly know about me that would make me an unfit husband for Josie.

M. TARABISE

I don't understand you people! You all talk as if there'd never been a certificate drawn, a ceremony held...

M. DESPANNES

(to ARTHUR)

Will you deny that on this very spot, not an hour ago, you impudently declared yourself an adulterer?

(Sensation)

ARTHUR

Why, Monsieur, I never gave myself any such character!

M. DESPANNES

Never used the word, I grant you, but did not you boast to me that you were on somebody else's honeymoon?

ARTHUR

Why, that much is true: I'm on Josie and Octave's honeymoon. But Josie and Octave were never married.

M. TARABISE

But the certificate--?

M. DESPANNES

The ceremony--?

ARTHUR

All sham and invalid, we took good care.

M. TARABISE

But why--?

OCTAVE

To get Josie out from under your thumb long enough for Arthur to elope with her.

JEANINE

Then Monsieur and Mademoiselle are not married?

OCTAVE

No, Jeanine, nobody less.

~~JEANINE~~ JEANINE

Oh, Monsieur! This is going to make a great difference in my attitude toward Monsieur.

OCTAVE

Flexible girl!

M. DESPANNES

(to OCTAVE)

My dear boy, then it was not in earnest--?

M. TARABISE

A moment, Despannes.

(to OCTAVE)

Do you mean to say you mistreated my daughter like that without even being married to her?

OCTAVE

Monsieur forgets that it was all in seeming.

M. TARABISE

A seeming husband should have behaved with more seeming decency.

OCTAVE

Permit me to call Monsieur's attention to a seeming inconsistency: had I not acted badly, you had never come to prefer Arthur; had you never come to prefer Arthur, you would never have given your consent to his marriage with Josie--

M. TARABISE

Eh! I don't recall I have given my consent to it.

JOSIE

Oh, papa!

M. DESPANNES

Octave, you are not by any chance on your knees with the object--?

OCTAVE

(hastily rising)

No, Papa. I've had enough of marriage for a while. If it's this exhausting with someone else's wife, what must it be like with one's own?

M. DESPANNES

A question which every bachelor would do well to ask himself even without benefit of these remarkable circumstances.

Well, Octave, your first marriage has been at my expense; your next shall be at your own.

(OCTAVE helps JEANINE up.)

JOSIE

Father, wo(to M. TARABISE)

Father, won't you echo those generous words of Monsieur Despannes?

ARTHUR

(rising)

Monsieur Tarabise, you know I love Josie and you know that I am neither an adulterer nor a cad.

M. DESPANNES

Come, Tarabise. Perhaps we've been tricked, but the remorse we felt at our children's misery was real enough.

OCTAVE

What possible further objection can there be?

M. DESPANNES

(to M. TARABISE, meaningfully)

Unless, of course, that well-known aversion to madrigals of yours...

JOSIE

(rising)

Papa, is that it?

M. TARABISE

Well...

JOSIE

If so, I think you owe us all an explanation of your feelings.

M. DESPANNES

(aside, to M. TARABISE)

Come, give your consent at once, or I'll tell the world how you mistook soloists for socialists.

M. TARABISE

(aside, to M. DESPANNES)

Please, Despannes, not that!

(aloud)

All right, all right--a truce to madrigals. But there's still a very important question:

(turning to ARTHUR)

How do you propose to support my daughter? What do you do for a living, Éloux, when you're not warbling?

ARTHUR

I work in my father's hairpin factory.

M. TARABISE

Hairpins? We manufacture wigs... and you manufacture hairpins? Why, they're made for each other!

OCTAVE

(aside)

Who--Josie and Arthur, or the wigs and the hairpins?

M. TARABISE

My dear boy, take her, she's yours. Wigs and hairpins...!

JOSIE

Oh, Papa, thank you!

(flies to ARTHUR's arms. Enter the GYPSY FIDDLER.)

ARTHUR

Fiddler, the Wedding March!

(The FIDDLER begins to play the Mendelssohn wedding march, finishing it just on the last line.)

Monsieur Tarabise, I promise to make Josie a loving husband and you a good son-in-law, even if you have behaved like an old dinosaur--

(OCTAVE signals frantically to ARTHUR not to use that word--but too late.)

JOSIE

Arthur! How can you use such a word to my father?

ARTHUR

Well, now, Josie, you can hardly deny--

JOSIE

However that may be, this is neither the time nor the place--

ARTHUR

Hullo! Do you suppose I'll be dictated to in this manner?

JOSIE

Ah, if you really loved me--!

JEANINE

(to OCTAVE, knowingly, indicating JOSIE and ARTHUR)

The honeymoon is over.

OCTAVE, ARTHUR, JOSIE, M. DESPANNES
and M. TARABISE

Oh, I hope so!

CURTAIN

Loud a cappella madrigals under
curtain calls.