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Pajama Tops

A Play in Three Acts

by Mawby Green and Ed Feilbert

Based on the French Farce

Moumou

by Jean de Letraz

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



New York Hollywood London Toronto

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THE CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

CLAUDINE

INSPECTOR LEGRAND

YVONNE CHAUVINET

GEORGES CHAUVINET

LEONARD JOLIJOLI

BABETTE LATOUCHE

JACQUES

* * *

The entire action takes place in the living room of the villa "Clair de Lune" in Deauville, France. The time is the present.

ACT ONE

An afternoon in August.

ACT TWO

One hour later.

ACT THREE

The next morning.

Pajama Tops

ACT ONE

The living room of the villa "Clair de Lune" in Deauville. Upstage Left there is an arch to hall with a few steps going up to the bedrooms. This hall also leads to the front door of the villa. Door Downstage Left leads to study; door Downstage Right to dining room and kitchen. French windows Upstage Right lead to garden and beach. Against wall, between arch and door Downstage Left, is a bar and bar stool. The sofa is Right Center and an armchair is few feet Left. A straightback chair is next to door Downstage Left, its mate next to door Downstage Right. The furnishings are bright and summery.

An afternoon in August. The curtain rises; the doorbell tinkles. There is a pause of three beats, then CLAUDINE comes bouncing out door Downstage Right and bounces across the room to answer the door. CLAUDINE has a lot to bounce with.

INSPECTOR. (Offstage.) I'm Inspector Legrand . . . of the Deauville Police.

CLAUDINE. (Offstage.) Come in, Inspector! (CLAUDINE re-enters, followed by INSPECTOR LEGRAND, wearing khaki shorts, khaki jacket and a pith helmet. He might be on a safari. Getting a good look at CLAUDINE'S scanty attire, the INSPECTOR pauses. He is in his sixties, with a twinkle in his eyes and those eyes for women.) Please do. Now, what can I do for you?

INSPECTOR. Well, er . . .

CLAUDINE. Yes, Inspector?

INSPECTOR. Well, er . . . is anybody home?

CLAUDINE. Only the Madame.

INSPECTOR. I'd like to see her.

CLAUDINE. She's undressing .

INSPECTOR. I'd still like to see her.

CLAUDINE. She's putting on her bikini.

INSPECTOR. Well, that's better than nothing! (*With a chuckle.*) What am I saying!

CLAUDINE. Would you care for a drink?

INSPECTOR. No, thank you.

CLAUDINE. A cigarette?

INSPECTOR. No, thank you. I have this. (*Takes out cigar.*)

CLAUDINE. Ooh! (*Picks up lighter.*) Let me light it for you, Inspector. (*Lights his cigar.*) There! (*Remains close to him.*)

INSPECTOR. You're really most obliging.

CLAUDINE. (*Replacing lighter.*) Oh, that's nothing. Really nothing.

INSPECTOR. I wouldn't say that. (*Sits sofa.*) What's your name?

CLAUDINE. Claudine . . . Claudine Amour.

INSPECTOR. Claudine Amour. It fits you to a tee.

CLAUDINE. You think so? (*Jumps on sofa, on her knees facing him.*)

INSPECTOR. Oh, yes! . . . Have you been here long?

CLAUDINE. In this house? (*As though it were ten years.*) A whole month! (*Squirming on sofa, physically restless.*) Isn't that dreadful!

INSPECTOR. I see you don't like to stay in the same position too long.

CLAUDINE. I'm here merely to finish up my studies. I'm preparing myself for a very delicate profession.

INSPECTOR. Yes? And what profession . . . (*CLAUDINE pokes him with her shoes.*) Oooh! Watch those heels! And what profession would that be?

CLAUDINE. Oh, how can you describe it? Words are so inadequate. You can't say cocotte . . .

INSPECTOR. Why not? Cocotte . . . prostitute . . . hooker . . .

CLAUDINE. Really, Inspector! The words you choose. This is *not* the oldest profession. It's quite superior. I want to become a grande courtesan . . . like Madame DuBarry!

INSPECTOR. Call the song what you like but the tune is still played on the same instrument.

CLAUDINE. Oh, I'm disappointed in you, Inspector. You have no sense of nuance. Look at me. I've studied astrology . . . numerology . . . even demonology.

INSPECTOR. No!

CLAUDINE. Yes! I can raise the devil!

INSPECTOR. You don't say! (*Puts his hand on her knee.*)

CLAUDINE. I once kept house for an antique dealer and what I don't know about old pieces isn't worth knowing. (*She removes his hand and he slaps his knee in disappointment. She rises.*) I have been a model, studied art, music, literature . . .

INSPECTOR. All that, and what are you now?

CLAUDINE. At the moment, personal maid to Madame Chauvinet . . . one of the most fashionable women in Deauville. She's taught me how to give an intimate supper for two or a banquet for a hundred. I'm equipped to receive the very best people . . . shahs and sheiks, ambassadors and bishops.

INSPECTOR. Do you expect to receive many bishops?

CLAUDINE. In my profession, a girl must be prepared to entertain anyone. All I'm waiting for now is the opportunity.

INSPECTOR. Ah, if I were twenty years younger . . .

CLAUDINE. You would still be wasting your time, Inspector. A policeman can guard a special jewel but he certainly can't afford one.

INSPECTOR. My dear, I can't even . . . I'm like this cigar here.

CLAUDINE. How's that, Inspector?

INSPECTOR. Burned out.

CLAUDINE. All you need is a little light, m'sieur
(*Gets lighter from table and crosses to INSPECTOR.*)

INSPECTOR. Light, hell! Even a bonfire wouldn't help me!

CLAUDINE. (*Laughs and returns the lighter.*) What I need is to make a splash . . . get myself talked about . . . my picture in the papers! That's the only way to start a career . . . cause a sensation!

INSPECTOR. Ah, what you need is publicity.

CLAUDINE. Yes, what I need is a nice notorious scandal!

INSPECTOR. It seems we have something in common.

CLAUDINE. (*Behind the sofa, over his shoulder.*) We do?

INSPECTOR. (*Confidentially.*) I'm in exactly the same position as you!

CLAUDINE. What? You want to become a grande courtesan too?

INSPECTOR. Yes! . . . No! No, no, no, no, no. I'm not the type. But in order to finish my career in a blaze of glory, I need a notorious scandal to break my way too. And there's a chance . . . a small chance . . .

CLAUDINE. (*Eagerly.*) Yes, Inspector? (*Comes round the sofa and sits next to the INSPECTOR.*)

INSPECTOR. (*Taking out envelope from pocket.*) I have just received this report. A much wanted swindler is heading in this direction. He may be in Deauville now. He may be . . .

CLAUDINE. (*Putting her forehead next to his.*) Oh, we must put our heads together, my sweet, sweet Inspector. Who knows? We may be able to help each other!

INSPECTOR. Well, I'll certainly do my part. (*YVONNE CHAUVINET in a bikini enters from hall. He rises.*) Ah! Madame Chauvinet . . .

YVONNE. Inspector Legrand. How nice!

INSPECTOR. The pleasure's mine, madame. (*Kisses her hand.*)

YVONNE. (*Spotting CLAUDINE on sofa.*) Claudine! (*To INSPECTOR.*) Excuse me just a moment. (*Crosses to CLAUDINE.*) Comfortable?

CLAUDINE. Very.

YVONNE. That's a pretty nothing you're wearing.

CLAUDINE. Oh, thank you!

YVONNE. But it's not your uniform!

CLAUDINE. (*Rises.*) Oh! Yes, madame . . . I mean no, madame . . . I'll take it off right now! (*Starts to remove her "nothing."*)

YVONNE. And bring me my beach bag . . . immediately!

CLAUDINE. Yes, madame! (*Exits hall.*)

YVONNE. I must apologize for my maid. I can't imagine what you must think of her.

INSPECTOR. Don't try, madame. But I don't think she did me any harm.

YVONNE. You wish to speak to me, Inspector?

INSPECTOR. I really came to see Monsieur Chauvinet . . . but it can wait. You certainly look ravishing in that bikini.

YVONNE. (*Amused . . . an old game with an old friend.*) Flatterer!

INSPECTOR. And if I were twenty years younger . . .

YVONNE. I should still be playing with my doll . . .

INSPECTOR. That's true.

YVONNE. Can I offer you anything else?

INSPECTOR. No, madame. So far they haven't discovered a substitute. I'll drop back later to see your husband, if I won't be disturbing you.

YVONNE. (*Extending her hand.*) Anytime. You're always welcome, Inspector.

INSPECTOR. (*Kissing her hand but keeping his eyes on the bikini.*) And I hope to see more of you later . . .

YVONNE. Yes . . . (*Reacts, then laughs.*) Really, Inspector!

INSPECTOR. (*Waving.*) So long . . . for now! (*He eyes CLAUDINE entering, then exits hall.*)

CLAUDINE. Your bag, madame.

YVONNE. So, you entertain my visitors . . .

CLAUDINE. No, madame. I was only practising!

YVONNE. The way you practise on my husband, I suppose. (GEORGES CHAUVINET enters from the study, carrying a small valise. He is about forty, a man who likes to have things comfortable and abhors complications. In excellent spirits, he is humming as he enters.) Oh, there you are, dear!

GEORGES. Yes, angel.

YVONNE. You just missed Inspector Legrand.

GEORGES. Oh? Anything up?

YVONNE. Not really. He just looked in. He'll be back.

GEORGES. Good. (Crosses to CLAUDINE.) Claudine?

CLAUDINE. Yes, m'sieur?

GEORGES. Will you pack my bag as usual?

CLAUDINE. Yes, m'sieur.

GEORGES. Then put it in my car.

CLAUDINE. Yes, m'sieur.

GEORGES. And please hurry!

CLAUDINE. Yes, m'sieur. (Starts to leave, then stops.) Oh, I'm sorry, m'sieur, but I can't.

GEORGES. Can't?

CLAUDINE. It's time for a lesson. Today my guru is going to get me in the lotus position.

GEORGES. Claudine, you have a week's notice!

CLAUDINE. Oh! (Exits hall.)

YVONNE. You'd better call the agency again about that butler.

GEORGES. All right. I will. Later.

YVONNE. Aren't you coming swimming with me?

GEORGES. I'd love to, Yvonne . . . but how can I? I have to make this trip.

YVONNE. My poor darling! Must you work so hard, even in August?

GEORGES. Can't neglect our business! And I believe

Latouche is finally . . . you know who I mean . . . my good friend Latouche . . . ?

YVONNE. Yes, yes, I know. Latouche from Bayeux.

GEORGES. That's right. I believe he's going to help me expand the business. Wants to handle our products throughout Normandie. And with his new branches . . .

YVONNE. (*Pouting.*) Oh, bother his new branches . . .

GEORGES. Now, now, Yvonne.

YVONNE. What time shall I expect you back then tonight?

GEORGES. (*Trying to be off-handed.*) Oh . . . certainly after dinner . . . unless Latouche wants me to spend the night.

YVONNE. You don't sound very sorry about having to leave me for a whole night.

GEORGES. How can you say that? (*Placing his finger first on her nose then on her breasts.*) To have to leave this . . . and this . . . and this. Darling, isn't this bikini a trifle . . . a trifle too . . .

YVONNE. A trifle too . . . what?

GEORGES. Revealing.

YVONNE. Jealous?

GEORGES. Well, it's always dangerous to excite the appetite of hungry eyes.

YVONNE. If I make you peckish, darling, why don't you take a nibble before you go?

GEORGES. Oh, Yvonne, if only there were time! Good God! Do you realize what time it is?

YVONNE. (*Picks up beach bag and towel.*) All right, Georges. You win for now. But don't go rushing off until I've had my swim! I have a wonderful surprise for you!

GEORGES. Surprise? What is it, my sweet?

YVONNE. Promise you won't leave until I get back?

GEORGES. All right, I promise. Well, what's the surprise?

YVONNE. You'll see, darling! You'll see! (*Exits French windows laughing.*)

GEORGES. Damn! I'll never get away! (*Looks at watch and crosses to bar to phone.*)

CLAUDINE. (*She enters from hall.*) Ssst! Are you alone?

GEORGES. Not anymore.

CLAUDINE. (*Digging into bodice of her low cut uniform.*) I have something for you . . .

GEORGES. (*Alarmed.*) Claudine!

CLAUDINE. (*Taking out letter.*) This letter. It's marked "Strictly Personal."

GEORGES. (*Takes letter; looks at envelope.*) Why it's from an old friend.

CLAUDINE. (*Wisely.*) Of course, m'sieur. Who else?

GEORGES. From an old friend! Besides it's none of your business!

CLAUDINE. (*Going to him provocatively as she practises her "profession."*) Must you make this trip, m'sieur?

GEORGES. What do you mean?

CLAUDINE. Well . . . sometimes you can do quite as much . . . business . . . at home, if you know where to look.

GEORGES. Perhaps it's just that I enjoy doing business with certain people.

CLAUDINE. (*Thwarted.*) Business business? Is that what you're talking about?

GEORGES. Aren't you, Claudine?

CLAUDINE. Now you're laughing at me. You think you're very superior! But let me tell you . . .

GEORGES. You're a babe in the woods . . . a diamond in the rough . . .

CLAUDINE. (*Crossing to hall.*) Oh, am I? Well, the day will come when you'll regret not having polished . . . this diamond in the rough! (*Flounces out. GEORGES laughs, then sees the letter in his hand and it sobers him.*)

GEORGES. (*Opens letter.*) Well, I'll be damned! It's from Leonard . . . Leonard Jolijoli!

(LEONARD *flies in through the French windows. Peter Pan couldn't do better. LEONARD is charming, the aesthetic type.*)

LEONARD. That's right . . . and here I am!

GEORGES. Where did you come from?

LEONARD. The garden.

GEORGES. What were you doing out there?

LEONARD. Oh, Georges, I was hiding! In your rhododendrons! I didn't want to meet a living soul. I only wanted to speak to you. The most horrible thing has happened to me. I'm all aflutter! (*Snatches drink from GEORGES and takes quick gulp.*) Thank you.

GEORGES. First, tell me, where have you been all these years?

LEONARD. Traveling! Pago-Pago, Bora-Bora, Fiji-Wiji!

GEORGES. Fiji-Wiji. What were you doing in Fiji?

LEONARD. Chasing poetry!

GEORGES. Poetry! And you're back now on a visit?

LEONARD. No. I'm through with the Pearls of the Pacific . . . for good. I was disillusioned . . .

GEORGES. By a little native girl?

LEONARD. . . . disillusioned frightfully . . .

GEORGES. You didn't marry her, did you?

LEONARD. Oh, no! . . . My friend did. I'm single. I've discovered that women . . . all women . . . want to devour the male. They're materialistic, grasping, caustic, self-centered . . .

GEORGES. Yes, but so adorable!

LEONARD. They don't understand me.

GEORGES. You were never easy to understand, Leonard.

LEONARD. I know. I know. But there should be one woman interested in my *soul*, too. Friendship, Georges . . . what I feel for you . . . is the only thing you can depend on.

GEORGES. Well, since you hate women so . . . I'd better confess I'm married to one!

LEONARD. No need to apologize. Marriage is good for you. You're different. You're a business man. What's your wife like?

GEORGES. She's a beautiful person!

LEONARD. Oh, one of those.

GEORGES. (*Angrily.*) No, she's not one of those! She's luscious, toothsome, the most delicious, the most delectable . . .

LEONARD. Oh, are we having her for dinner, Georges?

GEORGES. (*Exasperatedly.*) What's this horrible thing that's happened to you?

LEONARD. Oh, yes. But first, I must tell you, I've written a tragedy . . . in verse . . . something in the manner of Shakespeare . . . and I have a letter of introduction to the Director of the Comedie-Francaise!

GEORGES. Well?

LEONARD. Don't you see? Once he discovers I can write like Shakespeare . . . only Shakespeare's dead and I'm alive . . . they'll produce it . . . and I'll be made . . . made! . . . in the only other way I dream of being made!

GEORGES. All right, so you're a success. But let's get back to the rhododendrons.

LEONARD. (*Taking stage.*) Oh yes. Something dreadful's happened to me! Last night after finishing my new poem . . . "Cornucopia" . . .

GEORGES. "Cornucopia?"

LEONARD. The horn of plenty. I was dying to share it with someone and at my very first bar, I met a young man. His name was Zizi. A swimming instructor. He was amazingly well versed in the Arts.

GEORGES. And you shared your "Cornucopia" with him?

LEONARD. Yes! And he was so taken with it, he wanted to share everything else I had! Written. It was only after he'd gone that I discovered he had also taken my wallet. (*Sits chair Right Center.*)

GEORGES. Zizi come . . . Zizi go.

LEONARD. But he took everything . . . my money, my passport, my poems, my Identity Card! I can't even prove who I am!

GEORGES. Have you told the police about it?

LEONARD. Oh, for heaven's sake, no! Who knows what kind of story that Zizi might tell them? Then farewell Comedie-Francaise!

GEORGES. Why?

LEONARD. Don't you see? They'd never touch me if I was tinged with scandal. No, nobody must know what happened. Georges, my life, my future, are in your hands!

GEORGES. What can I do for you?

LEONARD. Lend me a few hundred francs.

GEORGES. Gladly . . .

LEONARD. And let me stay here for a few days!

GEORGES. That I can't do.

LEONARD. No? Why?

GEORGES. Well, since you've confided in me . . .

LEONARD. Yes?

GEORGES. Are you discreet?

LEONARD. As an orchid in the moonlight!

GEORGES. Well . . . er . . . the fact is . . . I have a little bit of business to attend to in Bayeux.

LEONARD. I thought you adored your wife?

GEORGES. I do . . . but not exclusively.

LEONARD. Your poor wife.

GEORGES. Look, Leonard, I'm only doing this so I don't appear ridiculous.

LEONARD. Ridiculous? How's that?

GEORGES. Well, if a husband cheats on his wife first, he doesn't look like a fool if she cheats on him later.

LEONARD. Oh, yes. I see. That's very good. Do I know this bitch? . . . er . . . *bit* of business in Bayeux? I sort of pushed them together.

GEORGES. No. I only met her six weeks ago, (*Rhapsodically.*) Babette Latouche . . . !

LEONARD. Babette Latouche?

GEORGES. Such a beautiful creature! So lush, so desirable! Why, she's got . . . (*Cups his hands in front of his chest as if he were holding huge melons.*)

LEONARD. Arthritis?

GEORGES. And she's promised me that tonight is going to be our night.

LEONARD. Your wife lets you sleep out?

GEORGES. Of course. I tell her I'm going to see my old friend Latouche . . . an invaluable business associate.

LEONARD. (*Surprised.*) Then your Babette is *his* wife?

GEORGES. No. She has no husband. Latouche doesn't exist. He's someone I invented.

LEONARD. Invented? Ooh! What if your wife finds out?

GEORGES. My God! Don't even think of it! I know Yvonne. Before leaving me, she'd have her revenge.

LEONARD. Revenge?

GEORGES. She'd take a lover!

LEONARD. Why should that bother you if you're deceiving her first?

GEORGES. That's just it. I haven't deceived her yet.

LEONARD. But what if this Babette of yours should turn up here?

GEORGES. That would be a calamity! Babette doesn't know I'm married. (*Sigh of relief.*) But she won't show up. How can she? I never told her I had a villa in Deauville!

LEONARD. Then you're not going to ask me to stay? (*Plucks flower from bunch in vase.*)

GEORGES. How can I! I don't even have a butler to leave you with. (*Going to phone.*) That reminds me . . . I've got to call the agency.

LEONARD. (*Stopping him.*) Georges, you can't leave me in this fix! I'll dash over to the hotel, get my bag and . . .

GEORGES. No!

LEONARD. It will only take a minute!

GEORGES. No, Leonard! It's impossible. But I'll tell you what I will do.

LEONARD. What?

GEORGES. I'll call Inspector Legrand. He's a personal friend of mine. I'll tell him about Zizi beating it with your wallet.

LEONARD. You'll tell him no such thing! (*Rushes to French windows.*) I'll be back before you know it, Georges.

GEORGES. No, Leonard! You can't! You're taking advantage of my friendship!

LEONARD. Oh, don't say that, Georges! Remember . . . friendship is sweeter even than love . . . and a damn sight less chancey! (*Gives plucked flower to GEORGES.*) Bye! Bye! (*Exits quickly.*)

GEORGES. (*Running after him.*) Leonard! Listen . . . (*Seeing him disappear.*) Damn! This would have to happen today! (*Going to phone.*) The hell with Zizi, Shakespeare and the Comedie-Francaise! (*Into receiver.*) Hello? Hello? Deauville 567. (YVONNE, *laughing and carrying beach towel, enters through French windows. Without covering the receiver.*) Oh! Be careful! You're wetting the floor! . . . No, no, not you, operator! (YVONNE *laughs.*) . . . Is this the Superior Domestic Agency? This is Monsieur Chauvinet, Villa Clair de Lune. Have you found me an experienced butler yet? . . . Well, if one should turn up, you have the address. Claire de Lune . . . Chauvinet . . . Thank you! (*Hangs up.*) You see, I'm still trying to get you a butler. (YVONNE *holds out towel for him. Starting to dry her.*) All I ever think of is you and our home! How to keep you happy!

YVONNE. You make me feel so . . . so guilty.

GEORGES. You feel guilty?

YVONNE. Yes. I'm sure you only rush around like this . . . go on all these business trips . . . just so you can come back and spoil me.

GEORGES. But it makes me happy, darling, to spoil you! (*Looking at watch.*) Good God! Look at the time! I must be going! (*Behind her, with towel around her.*) Of course, if I could do as I wanted . . .

YVONNE. You'd stay with me?

GEORGES. Need you ask? But I have no right to indulge my fancies!

YVONNE. You know these trips of yours to Bayeux are very embarrassing for me . . .

GEORGES. (*A bit worried.*) They are? Why?

YVONNE. Because the Latouches are always inviting you to their house and you never ask them here. Why?

GEORGES. (*Thinking fast.*) Why? Why because . . . they hate travelling! Nothing can persuade them to leave their home . . . their cat . . . their canary. Bye, dear! (*Kisses her and starts to leave.*)

YVONNE. I promised you a surprise . . .

GEORGES. (*Stops.*) Oh, yes. So you did.

YVONNE. You're not very curious, are you?

GEORGES. But I am, angel. Very curious. Only tell me quickly or I shall be late!

YVONNE. (*Sits sofa.*) Relax, darling! And be happy! Unpack your bag! You don't have to take this trip!

GEORGES. What? But I do! A business appointment is sacred! Latouche is expecting me . . . I must see him!

YVONNE. Of course, darling. And you shall see him!

GEORGES. Latouche?

YVONNE. Yes.

GEORGES. Where?

YVONNE. Here!

GEORGES. *Here?*

YVONNE. Yes, darling. I didn't want your friends to think we were rude . . . so I got this wonderful idea!

GEORGES. (*Nervously.*) What wonderful idea?

YVONNE. I found the Latouches' address in your little black book. 22 New Development Road. Right?

GEORGES. (*With a wry smile.*) Yes . . . near the race track.

YVONNE. So I said to myself: "What do I have to lose? I'll send them a telegram . . ."

GEORGES. You sent a telegram to the Latouches? What did you say?

YVONNE. "Can you come to my villa in Deauville on Friday? To have you at Clair de Lune would be an unforgettable delight. Fondest regards."

GEORGES. How did you sign it?

YVONNE. Well, since I don't know them personally, I signed your name.

GEORGES. You signed *my* name? You invited . . . them . . . here?

YVONNE. Shouldn't I have?

GEORGES. Oh, you can do anything your little heart desires. (*Patting her.*) And you do. However, *you* may invite them, but *I* know them. They won't come. Nothing can get them to leave their happy home. Goodbye, dear! (*Starts to leave again.*)

YVONNE. Well, here's their answer: "Your kind invitation new link in our friendship. 'Til Friday then. Fondest regards. Latouche."

GEORGES. New link in our friendship!

YVONNE. (*Rises.*) Now wasn't that a wonderful idea?

GEORGES. Wonderful . . . most unexpected!

YVONNE. I knew you'd be pleased.

GEORGES. To think of the Latouches here . . . in my house . . . under our roof! And they'll be arriving any minute!

YVONNE. And I can keep you quietly at home. (*Puts arms around him.*) I've planned a lovely dinner for just the four of us. It will be so cozy . . .

GEORGES. (*Dying but trying.*) Very cozy!

YVONNE. And even if you must talk business, I'll make sure you're not bored.

GEORGES. I'm sure you will.

YVONNE. Now who's going to kiss his little sweetie for having such a wonderful idea?

GEORGES. (*With a sickly grin.*) Her little sweetie. (*Kisses her.*)

YVONNE. You're tickling me!

GEORGES. (*Grimly.*) But that's nothing to what I'd like to do to you!

YVONNE. (*Misunderstanding.*) Darling! (*Cuddles up to him.* INSPECTOR LEGRAND enters.)

INSPECTOR. Charming! A charming picture! Deauville's a pool of virtue! Married couples adore each other! The gigolos and cocottes aren't stealing a thing . . . not even each other's clients! There's nothing . . . nothing! Not the smallest scandal! . . . It's very discouraging.

YVONNE. Will you excuse me? We're expecting guests and I have to hurry and change. (*To GEORGES.*) Happy, darling?

GEORGES. Happy? I'm out of my mind!

YVONNE. I knew you would be! (*Exits hall.*)

INSPECTOR. What a delightful wife you have! Such buoyancy! Such bounce! She must be full of surprises!

GEORGES. Loaded with them! . . . God, what a spot I'm in! (*Sits chair Downstage Left and lights cigarette.*)

INSPECTOR. (*Eagerly.*) Something serious, I hope? A bad check . . . threatening letters . . . a little seduction on the backstairs?

GEORGES. No, no, nothing that could interest the police. Unless . . .

INSPECTOR. Unless what?

GEORGES. (*Looking in direction where YVONNE has exited.*) Unless someone decides to shoot me . . .

INSPECTOR. Who? Why? When? Where?

GEORGES. I was only joking.

INSPECTOR. Please don't raise false hopes! You see, I'm making a round of the villas to announce my coming retirement.

GEORGES. Congratulations!

INSPECTOR. What for? Peace and quiet in Deauville? You know, it would be just my luck, if I retired today, for a crime of passion to break out tomorrow, even here, in this happy household!

GEORGES. Then don't leave us, Inspector, don't leave us!

INSPECTOR. I want to go out in a blaze of glory, so please, if you have a complaint to make against anyone, don't wait until after I've gone.

GEORGES. I'll come straight to you. (*Puts out his cigarette.*)

INSPECTOR. (*Taking report from pocket and waving it for emphasis.*) Any little thing . . . doesn't matter what. I'll turn it into the biggest scandal of the year. I'll get the whole country talking about it. The Paris newspapers will give it the front page! Radio will spread it to Kingdom Come! Television will blast it to . . .

GEORGES. Believe me, Inspector . . .

(*The lush and desirable BABETTE LATOUCHE enters from the hall.*)

BABETTE. Hello, Georges!

GEORGES. (*Crying out.*) Oh! It's you!

BABETTE. Yes. Of course, it's me. (*About to rush to him, stops at the sight of the INSPECTOR.*) How are you, Monsieur Chauvinet?

GEORGES. (*Gasping.*) Oh . . . er . . . very well, thank you!

BABETTE. The door was open. Nobody answered when I rang.

GEORGES. The maid is out of order. I mean, I want you to meet Inspector Legrand of the Deauville Police.

BABETTE. (*Drawing back.*) Oh! Pleased to meet you.

GEORGES. Madame Babette Latouche of Bayeux . . .

INSPECTOR. The pleasure's mine, madame. I'm dazzled! Sunshine has entered the house!

BABETTE. (*Crosses to bar.*) How very flattering, Inspector!

INSPECTOR. Ah, if only I were twenty years younger!

GEORGES. She'd still be a baby!

INSPECTOR. Yes, isn't it a pity? But that's my fate. Too little, too soon or too late! Well, I must continue on my rounds.

GEORGES. Good luck!

INSPECTOR. Thanks! (*To BABETTE.*) I hope to have the pleasure of meeting you again, Madame . . . ? (*Questioningly.*) Madame . . . ?

GEORGES. Latouche!

INSPECTOR. (*Thoughtfully, again waving report.*) Latouche. Madame Latouche. Oh, no! No! It can't be. Still, you never can tell. (*Exits hall. Throughout this Scene GEORGES is worried his wife may appear at any moment.*)

BABETTE. (*Arms wide open to embrace him.*) Georges, darling!

GEORGES. Dear Madame Latouche . . . !

BABETTE. Madame Latouche? (*Wags head, goes into his arms.*) Don't ever call me anything but . . . Babette!

GEORGES. (*Backing away.*) Thank you, Babette. So . . . er . . . here you are!

BABETTE. (*Again in his arms.*) Your telegram was such a wonderful surprise!

GEORGES. Yes. Wasn't it? (*Escapes again.*)

BABETTE. I'm afraid I misjudged you terribly.

GEORGES. Oh. Why?

BABETTE. Because I was certain you were like all men . . . eager to have an affair as long as there are no strings attached.

GEORGES. How could you think such a thing!

BABETTE. When you came to see me, you were always in such a hurry to be off again.

GEORGES. Business, Babette, my business. It keeps me constantly on the move.

BABETTE. (*Exploring room; suspiciously.*) You never even told me where you lived. I had such horrible misgivings! Perhaps you had some serious tie! (*Crosses aggressively to him.*)

GEORGES. (*Shrugging.*) Serious tie?

BABETTE. Suppose . . . suppose you were married!

GEORGES. Married! (*Sickly laugh.*)

BABETTE. Just thinking of it would make me furious!

GEORGES. As bad as that!

BABETTE. But wasn't I being stupid! For how could any man be such a cad, such a hypocrite, as to make love to me, while he had a wife!

GEORGES. Oh, any man who would do that!

BABETTE. (*Taking both his hands.*) Forgive me. Please forgive me, darling Georges, for ever having doubted you.

GEORGES. It wasn't very nice.

BABETTE. From now on, I shall put all my trust in your strong, capable, understanding hands. (*She puts his arms around her, his hands on her bottom.*)

GEORGES. (*Breaking away.*) And as soon as you are settled . . . emotionally, that is . . . I shall join you.

BABETTE. Join me? Where?

GEORGES. At the hotel.

BABETTE. What hotel?

GEORGES. We're going to jump in my car and look for something suitable in the neighborhood. Come on. Let's go! (*Takes her hand and starts for hall.*)

BABETTE. No, Georges. Your tender consideration makes me surer than ever. I'm staying here! (*Sits sofa.*)

GEORGES. But I can't let you! I mean . . . what will people think?

BABETTE. By refusing to take advantage of this situation, you have proved to me beyond the shadow of a doubt that you are worthy of every sacrifice . . . (*Pulls him on sofa.*) Every sacrifice!

GEORGES. Now, now, Babette! It's unfair to tempt me. I'll lose my head!

BABETTE. And so shall I! Let's throw caution to the wind!

GEORGES. No, no! (*Pushing her away.*) Let me savor my happiness! I've waited so long for this moment!

BABETTE. No longer than I have!

GEORGES. (*Wailing.*) Oh, Babette!

BABETTE. And with *my* passion . . .

GEORGES. You must control your passion!

BABETTE. Not any more! (*Her arms around him.*) Thank God there's a limit to everything! Oh, Georges! (*He is on his back; she on top of him.*)

GEORGES. (*Trying to extricate himself from under.*) No, no! Let's prolong this ecstasy!

BABETTE. I'm only flesh and blood.

GEORGES. Come with me in my car . . . (*Falls on floor.*)

BABETTE. I haven't the strength to resist you . . . (*Falls on top of him.*)

GEORGES. Please! Let's go to the garage!

BABETTE. The garage? I haven't done that since High School. (*Rises, points to door Downstage Left.*) What's in there?

GEORGES. My study.

BABETTE. (*Pulling a reluctant GEORGES by the hand towards study.*) I'm following you, Georges! I'm following you with my eyes closed . . . wherever you may lead me! (*Hand on handle of study door.*)

GEORGES. (*As she is about to open door.*) Wait! Wait! Something may happen! Any second! Keep calm, Babette! Don't get excited! Remember, you're the only one I love . . . the only one I want! But I'm not alone here.

BABETTE. Oh?

GEORGES. A relative lives with me.

BABETTE. Your mother?

GEORGES. No . . .

BABETTE. Your sister?

GEORGES. Yes . . . no . . .

BABETTE. Yes or no?

GEORGES. No! But it's almost the same. She's nothing more than a little sister to me! But I can't hurt her feelings . . .

BABETTE. What difference can it make to her?

GEORGES. No difference. But . . . er . . . it's a matter of principle! This person, who's nothing to me now . . .

BABETTE. Now? Then she meant something to you once?

GEORGES. Just a little . . . in the beginning . . . when I married . . . (*Hand goes up to his mouth.*)

BABETTE. (*With a cry.*) Married! You're married!

GEORGES. No . . .

BABETTE. No?

GEORGES. Well, yes . . .

BABETTE. Yes or no?

GEORGES. Yes.

BABETTE. Oh!

GEORGES. But just a little bit! . . . Everything is over between us . . . she's just like a little sister to me!

BABETTE. You cheat! And you asked me to come here!

GEORGES. Not me! My wife sent you that telegram!

BABETTE. (*Amazed.*) Your wife?

GEORGES. But you don't understand. She doesn't suspect . . . that is, I often tell her about my friends, the Latouches of Bayeux.

BABETTE. (*Out front.*) And these friends are . . . me?

GEORGES. Yes.

BABETTE. (*Beating his chest.*) You're as despicable as the rest!

GEORGES. Yes.

BABETTE. (*Pursuing him.*) Why didn't you tell me the truth before?

GEORGES. (*Backing away.*) I was afraid of losing you . . .

BABETTE. (*Pursuing.*) You have lost me . . . forever!

GEORGES. But you said you loved me.

BABETTE. I hate you!

GEORGES. But you loved me when you thought I was a bachelor!

BABETTE. I hate you! (*Pointing to hall.*) Get out of here!

GEORGES. (*He starts to leave; stops; returns.*) Look, you must go back to Bayeux!

BABETTE. Never! I shall never go back to Bayeux!

GEORGES. Why?

BABETTE. I have my reasons!

GEORGES. What reasons?

BABETTE. Why should I tell you?

GEORGES. You can't stay here!

BABETTE. Where shall I go?

GEORGES. I don't know!

BABETTE. Neither do I!

GEORGES. My wife will be coming in any second!

BABETTE. You'll introduce me . . .

GEORGES. How can I?

BABETTE. She invited me . . . she'll expect to see me.

GEORGES. You're alone! (*Beats hands on knees.*) You have no husband!

BABETTE. (*Mimics him.*) Sorry, but I forgot to bring one with me! (*LEONARD rushes in through French windows.*)

LEONARD. Here I am! (*Not noticing BABETTE.*) I've checked out of the hotel . . . everything's fixed . . . and here I am!

GEORGES. My God! I forgot about you!

LEONARD. (*Reproachfully.*) So soon? (*Seeing BABETTE.*) Oh, I beg your pardon! . . . Madame!

BABETTE. Monsieur . . .

LEONARD. I'm delighted to meet you. And I must rush to congratulate you on having found in my dear friend, Georges, that rarity among men . . . the husband who adores his wife! (*Starts to kiss her hand.*)

BABETTE. (*Pulls hand away and glares at GEORGES.*) Really?

LEONARD. The first words out of his mouth.

BABETTE. (*Crossing to GEORGES.*) He told you he adored his wife?

GEORGES. No, no, no . . .

LEONARD. Worship would be a better word! There was no stopping him once he got started: a beautiful person . . . the most delicious . . . the most delectable . . . so tasty!

BABETTE. (*To GEORGES.*) Oh-h-h!

GEORGES. Pay no attention to him! He's making it up! He's a poet!

LEONARD. I'm not making anything up! My heart is still racing! He made marriage sound like a fairy tale!

BABETTE. And I've come here to hear that!

GEORGES. (*Furiously.*) You idiot! *She's* not my wife!

LEONARD. (*Rolling under the blow.*) Oooh . . . yes . . . very nice, too. Somebody goofed.

GEORGES. Somebody certainly has.

LEONARD. Then . . . it's time you introduced us.

GEORGES. (*To BABETTE.*) This is an old school friend who, fortunately, I haven't seen for a good many years.

LEONARD. How nicely you put it!

GEORGES. Monsieur Leonard Jolijoli.

LEONARD. Jolijoli, written in one word, exactly as it's pronounced.

GEORGES. And this is Madame Babette Latouche of Bayeux.

LEONARD. (*Crossing to her and missing her extended hand.*) Oh, so you're the bitch . . .

BABETTE. What?

LEONARD. Er . . . I mean the bit of . . . er . . . the *lady from Bayeux*! And I must rush to congratulate you on having found in my dear friend, Georges, such an ardent lover!

BABETTE. (*Crossing to GEORGES.*) Because I'm the most delicious . . . the most delectable?

GEORGES. But this time it's true!

BABETTE. Really, Georges! (*Sits sofa.*)

LEONARD. I never lie . . . as a rule . . . but I must confess when I was speaking of Georges' wife . . .

GEORGES. That'll do, Leonard! That'll do! (*LEONARD shrugs.*) And since you have such a talent for goofing, I'd better tell you that Yvonne . . .

LEONARD. (*Crossing to BABETTE.*) Yvonne! What a sweet name!

GEORGES. Yvonne's my wife! And she's invited Madame Latouche and her husband here!

LEONARD. (*To BABETTE.*) But I thought you weren't married?

GEORGES. She isn't . . . that's the problem!

LEONARD. Oh, Georges! When your wife finds out, you're going to get into trouble!

GEORGES. She won't! I've got an idea! (*To LEONARD.*) You want to stay here, don't you?

LEONARD. Yes, please.

GEORGES. (*Crosses to BABETTE.*) And you, Babette, for some reason or other, insist you can't go back to Bayeux.

BABETTE. It's impossible!

GEORGES. All right, Leonard, you can stay here . . .

LEONARD. Oh, good!

GEORGES. But on one condition.

LEONARD. Yes?

GEORGES. For a few hours you're going to be Monsieur Latouche.

LEONARD. Me?

GEORGES. Yes, my good friend Latouche from Bayeux. (*To BABETTE.*) All right with you?

BABETTE. No!

GEORGES. It means as much to you as it does to me!

BABETTE. Oh, do what you want! I don't care!

LEONARD. Me? With a wife? No, thank you, I'm not into bondage!

GEORGES. Then out you go to sink or swim with Zizi!

LEONARD. That's blackmail!

GEORGES. Make up your mind!

LEONARD. (*Crosses to BABETTE.*) Madame Latouche?

BABETTE. Yes?

LEONARD. And what, if he existed, would be your husband's Christian name?

BABETTE. How about . . . Jacques?

LEONARD. Jacques is such a common name!

GEORGES. Then Jacques it is! Thank you, Babette!

BABETTE. Don't thank me. I'm not doing this for you!

LEONARD. And what, if any, would be Monsieur Latouche's vocation?

GEORGES. The same as mine. We'd be in the same business . . . handling the same products.

LEONARD. Which are?

GEORGES. Rubber heels, rubber balls, rubber gloves, rubber bands, etcetera, etcetera.

LEONARD. It's the etcetera I find most alarming. Do you expect me, France's most promising poetic dramatist, to become a travelling salesman in rubber goodies?

GEORGES. I wouldn't turn up my nose at rubber goodies if I were you!

LEONARD. Can I help it if I don't respond to rubber goodies? (*To BABETTE.*) Balloons! He expects me to sell balloons!

GEORGES. Oh, stop being such a Moumou!

BABETTE. Moumou?

GEORGES. It's his nickname. It means soft as mush.

BABETTE. (*Rises and crosses to LEONARD.*) Lovely! From now on you're Moumou to me!

LEONARD. I am not soft as mush. I have a backbone. I'm trapped, that's all. Georges has trapped me!

GEORGES. Well?

LEONARD. Well, all right. I'll be her husband. But only for dinner, mind you.

GEORGES. Just make sure you don't give me away to my wife.

LEONARD. I'll try not to. But I've never been to Bayeux in my life! What am I supposed to know about the place?

BABETTE. (*Sits chair Left Center.*) It has streets . . .

LEONARD. Hmm.

GEORGES. A lot of houses . . .

LEONARD. Not really?

BABETTE. Several bakery shops . . .

LEONARD. Oh.

GEORGES. A famous tapestry . . .

LEONARD. Yes, the Bayeux tapestry.

BABETTE. A street lamp on every corner . . .

LEONARD. How illuminating.

GEORGES. With a lady leaning against each one.

BABETTE. How do *you* know?

GEORGES. I . . . I . . . saw it on a postcard.
(*To LEONARD.*) A race track . . . with horses . . .

LEONARD. How unusual.

GEORGES. My God! Here comes Yvonne!

LEONARD. Yvonne? Who's that?

BABETTE. His wife! (*Frightened, LEONARD rushes to window seat to escape the situation. YVONNE enters from hall. BABETTE is seated Left Center chair.*)

GEORGES. (*Going to YVONNE.*) Our guests have just arrived.

YVONNE. (*Crossing to BABETTE.*) So sorry I wasn't here to receive you. But we're without a butler and I have to attend to everything myself. (*Shaking hands with BABETTE.*) This is such a pleasure.

BABETTE. For us, too.

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