Is He Dead? (1st ed. revised - 06.02.08) – ishedeadAjr

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Persons Represented

In order of appearance:

AGAMEMNON BUCKNER, (known as “Chicago”), a young artist

HANS VON BISMARCK, (“Dutchy”), a pupil of Millet

MARIE LEROUX, Millet’s sweetheart

CECILE LEROUX, sister of Marie

PAPA LEROUX

JEAN-FRANÇOIS MILLET

WIDOW DAISY TILLOU, played by the same actor that plays Millet

BASTIEN ANDRÉ, picture dealer and usurer

MADAME BATHILDE

MADAME CARON

PHELIM O’SHAUGHNESSY, a pupil of Millet

BASIL THORPE, a rich English merchant

CLAUDE RIVIÈRE, a reporter from “Le Figaro”

CHARLIE, a gorgeous flunkey

THE KING OF FRANCE

THE SULTAN OF TURKEY

THE EMPEROR OF RUSSIA

Character Notes

The play can be performed, with doubling, using eleven actors. One actor plays Thorpe, the Reporter, the King of France, and Charlie / Monnet. Mesdames Bathilde and Caron play the (silent) Emperor of Russia and Sultan of Turkey.

“Millet” is pronounced in the French way, Mee-*yay*, as is “Tillou”: Tee-*you*.

Acknowledgments

Is He Dead? opened on Broadway at the Lyceum Theatre on December 9, 2007 with the following cast and staff:

AGAMEMNON BUCKNER
("Chicago") ..... Michael McGrath
HANS VON BISMARCK
("Dutchy").....Tom Alan Robbins
PAPA LEROUX ..... John McMartin
MARIE LEROUX.....Jenn Gambatese
CECILE LEROUX.....Bridget Regan
JEAN-FRANÇOIS MILLET ..... Norbert Leo Butz
BASTIEN ANDRÉ.....Byron Jennings
MADAME BATHILDE.....Patricia Conolly
MADAME CARON .....Marylouise Burke
PHELIM O'SHAUGHNESSY .....Jeremy Bobb
BASIL THORPE / CLAUDE RIVIÈRE /
CHARLIE / THE KING OF FRANCE .....David Pittu

Director ..... Michael Blakemore
Set Design ..... Peter J. Davison
Costume Design ..... Martin Pakledinaz
Lighting Design ..... Peter Kaczorowski
Music & Sound Design.....David Van Tieghem
Hair & Wig Design.....Paul Huntley
Dance Sequences ..... Pamela Remler

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Is He Dead?
A new comedy
By
Mark Twain
as adapted by David Ives

Said credit for Mark Twain shall be in not less than 50% of the size and prominence of the title. Further the credit for David Ives shall be in 75% of the size and prominence afforded Mark Twain.

Credit for Mark Twain and David Ives shall each appear on a separate line as set forth above.

3. Credit shall be given to the Broadway producers of the Play substantially as follows:

Original Broadway production produced by

Bob Boyett Roger Berlind Daryl Roth Jane Bergere
E. Morten / P. Robbins J. O'Boyle / R. Stevens Roy Miller
Sonia Friedman Productions / Ambassador Theatre Group Tim Levy

in association with
Shelley Fisher Fishkin

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Foreword:
Bringing Mark Twain's *Is He Dead?* to Life

Mark Twain wrote *Is He Dead?* in 1898 as he emerged from one of the darkest periods of his life. A crippling bankruptcy had forced Twain to give up his home in the U.S. and embark on a world-wide lecture tour to pay back his creditors, and while he was abroad, in 1896, his youngest daughter had died suddenly. It would not be surprising if Twain had wondered whether he'd ever manage to laugh again. But by 1898, Twain had come out of the gloom that had enveloped him and found himself ready to transform death and debt into the raw material for a hilarious, over-the-top comedy.

The London Times reported in 1898 that *Is He Dead?*, the high-spirited romp of a play that Twain composed while living in Vienna, would be produced simultaneously in London and New York. But a combination of bad timing, bad luck, and, perhaps, the irreverence of placing one of France's greatest painters at the center of a zany, cross-dressing farce conspired to foil Twain's plans. The play was never produced.

When I came across the manuscript in the Mark Twain Papers at UC Berkeley's Bancroft Library in 2002 and found myself laughing out loud in the archives, I decided that this delightfully ebullient play—from a period when Twain was known for much darker work—deserved to be rescued from the obscurity in which it had languished for over a century. University of California Press published the play as Twain wrote it in 2003. The extended afterword I wrote to *Is He Dead? A Comedy in Three Acts* by Mark Twain, provides background useful to anyone performing the play today. It suggests why Twain may have chosen to write a play about the painter Jean-François Millet, perhaps the most famous 19th-century European painter in America in Twain's day, and an artist who showed a respect for ordinary people in his art that resonated with Twain's own work. It also looks at what the play has in common with other writing by Twain, sets the play in the context of popular theatre of the day, and examines Twain's attitudes towards art and towards the French.

A mutual friend urged me to contact veteran producer Bob Boyett, with whom I worked to bring the play to Broadway. Twain had enormous fun writing *Is He Dead?* but he knew that staging it would be a challenge. Over a hundred years later, Twain found the ideal collaborator in David Ives. In Ives' brilliant adaptation, Twain's words are still there—as are his trademark satirical wit, his unforgettable characters, and his ingenious plot. But Ives put Twain's play on a much-needed diet, compressing three acts to two and whittling a play that would have required some 35 actors down to a play that can be produced with as few as 11. He staged scenes that Twain had left off-stage, and while eliminating several characters and plot elements, he also developed others. Ives did what Twain hoped someone would do: he tightened the play and adapted it for today's stage, while keeping it in the spirit of what Twain wrote. Twain's *Is He Dead?*, adapted by David Ives and directed by Michael Blakemore, had its world premiere at the Lyceum Theatre in New York on December 9, 2007 with a stunningly talented cast. Its Broadway debut met with great critical acclaim.

Twain believed in his play—but, discouraged by his failure to get it produced in London or New York, he filed it away with his papers and for the most part forgot about it. Nearly a hundred years after Twain's death, *Is He Dead?* came to life—gloriously—on Broadway, leading the world to conclude that reports of its death had been, indeed, greatly exaggerated.

—*Shelley Fisher Fishkin*
Stanford University

IS HE DEAD?

by Mark Twain

adapted by David Ives

ACT I

Scene 1

(An afternoon in spring, 1846, at Barbizon, near Paris. The studio of Jean-François Millet. Lofty and spacious, but poor. A ragged sofa covered with an old sheet. Some crippled chairs. Canvases leaning against the walls and hanging everywhere. A large, covered painting on a tall easel facing away from us upstage near large windows. A crate with wooden arms and legs used for modeling. A door leading to the outside at left. A door to a bedroom at right.)

(At curtain, we hear CHICAGO *singing gaily, off left.)*

CHICAGO. *(Offstage:)*
"Buffalo gals, won't you come out tonight,
Come out tonight, come out tonight…"

DUTCHY. *(Offstage:)*
"Buffalo gals, won't you come out tonight…"

CHICAGO. *(Offstage:)*
"…and dance by the light of the moon!"

*(*CHICAGO *enters from left, followed by* DUTCHY. *Their clothes are neat, but cheap and rather the worse for wear.)*

CHICAGO. Millet!

(Goes to door at right and knocks, then looks in.)

Are you there? François? Are you painting? Hello? —Not here. "Buffalo gals, won't you come out tonight…and dance by the light of the moon!"

(He plays the song on an imaginary banjo.)

DUTCHY. Mein Gott, Shecaggo, I don't know how you can zing right now.

CHICAGO. Oh, cheer up, Dutchy, cheer up. The worst is yet to come.

DUTCHY. Ja, ja. You play your banjo, und Jean-François Millet could be ruint today!

CHICAGO. I've been ruined all my life, Dutchy. Never hurt me a bit. We just have to use the old pumpkin is all.

> *(*PAPA LEROUX *enters from left with his daughters* MARIE *and* CECILE. *Though not old,* LEROUX *walks with a cane, a man enfeebled by care.)*

LEROUX. Give me my shawl, please, Marie. I'm feeling chilly.

MARIE. It's right here, Papa.

CHICAGO. Monsieur Leroux.

MARIE. François isn't home, Mr. Buckner?

CHICAGO. He must be out trying to peddle some paintings. I hope he makes it back before André.

LEROUX. Well, I wish Monsieur André would just get here and let us know the worst. Cecile, my pills, please.

CECILE. Yes, Papa.

CHICAGO. When is André due?

MARIE. By the noon train from Paris.

CHICAGO. If it's to collect money, he'll be here before the train.

LEROUX. You know Bastien André?

CHICAGO. Well, I should think I do!

LEROUX. Don't tell me you're also in his grip?

CHICAGO. Like every other artist in Barbizon. Dutchy, too. But Millet got in up to the chin. If he hadn't, we pupils of his would've starved this year. We worshippers of Millet that swim in his light and warmth. We lesser planets that swing like satellites around his golden sun.

DUTCHY. Blanets ton't starve, dey ton't eat noding.

CHICAGO. Don't interrupt, Dutchy. Astronomical opinions based on sauerkraut are no good.

DUTCHY. Shecaggo—he alvays like dot. He ton't care for fact, only boetry.

CECILE. With women, he doesn't care for poetry either.

CHICAGO. *(Slipping an arm around her waist:)* Fair Cecile. Sweetest of the sweet, dearest of the dear—

CECILE. *(Pulling away:)* Not in front of everyone, Agamemnon.

CHICAGO. You always act like that when I kiss you in public.

CECILE. I *don't!* I mean *you* don't!

CHICAGO. Don't what?

CECILE. Kiss me in public.

CHICAGO. Well, is that any of my fault?

CECILE. I wasn't saying it was anybody's fault. It's a crime, that's what it is!

CHICAGO. Dutchy, if I was a woman I bet I'd understand that.

CECILE. If you were a man, you wouldn't have to.

LEROUX. *(About to sit down on the couch:)* My smelling salts, Marie.

CHICAGO. No, no, you don't want to sit there, sir. The chimney sweep fell asleep and left a calling card.

> *(Holds up the sheet, showing a detailed, life-size black imprint of a chimney sweep--top hat, brush and all.)*

You see that? A soot print.

DUTCHY. Dot's sphlendid work for a fellow dot ain't had no training in Art.

CHICAGO. The composition is excellent. And look at that modeling.

DUTCHY. Dot sveep certainly knows how to leave an impression.

CHICAGO. Of course. He's an Impressionist.

CECILE. I'm glad to see you cheerful in spite of circumstances, as usual.

CHICAGO. I absolutely promise to be somber. You know I studied for the ministry.

CECILE. Yes, so you've claimed many times before.

LEROUX. Oh Lord, oh Lord, it's a dismal day.

CHICAGO. And yet the sun is shining on us all. How much do you owe this scoundrel, anyway?

LEROUX. Enough to beggar me if he forecloses. Fifteen thousand francs.

*(*CHICAGO *and* DUTCHY *both whistle at that.)*

It was wrong, it was foolish, but I didn't know where else to go. And André was so soft-spoken and smooth. He promised he would never press me. Now he as good as threatens to take all my property. Well, maybe he'll show some heart this time.

CHICAGO. He doesn't have one. Carries a doughnut where it ought to be. A petrified one.

MARIE. That's the truth.

CHICAGO. Any picture dealer's hard-hearted enough, but to add usury! Might as well cross a grizzly bear with a shark. What's André being so sudden about, all at once?

LEROUX. Marie has refused him again.

MARIE. I don't love him, you see.

CHICAGO. Oh, is that all? It's probably why he particularly likes you.

DUTCHY. *(Grabs a wooden arm from the box and uses it as a sabre:)* I vill jallenge André to a dual. I vill job a sword troo him!

CHICAGO. You pretzel. They don't use swords in France. They fight with hairpins at thirty yards.

LEROUX. Oh, Lord. Fifteen thousand francs!

CHICAGO. Cheer up, the worst is yet to come!

CECILE. Oh, do be quiet, Agamemnon. Goodness knows there's nothing to be cheerful about.

CHICAGO. Come, come, nobody's going to starve.

MARIE. Cecile, do let Mr. Buckner be cheerful if he can. I'm sure it does *me* good.

DUTCHY. *(Glancing out the window:)* Und here's Jean-François Millet!

*(*MILLET *enters from right, carrying some canvases.)*

MILLET. I'm sorry, everyone.

MARIE. François, you've been so long.

MILLET. *(Kisses her.)* I'm glad it seemed long to you, sweetheart. I was trying to raise some money with these.
Monsieur Leroux, how are you, sir.

LEROUX. My boy.

MILLET. Hello, Cecile. How are you, lads. Well, you needn't tell me.

MARIE. You sold nothing?

MILLET. Nothing.

(Showing the canvases: "The Sower," "Man With Hoe," "Harvesters Resting.")

Not this. Not this. Not this. One man said they were too melancholy. Another said they were brutal and frightening. As if the lives of these people weren't brutal. I am only trying to say as best I can about the common man what I myself have seen with my own eyes. If my works aren't cheerful, it is never the cheerful side of things that appears to me. I don't know where to look for it. I have never seen it.

MARIE. I think they're glorious.

MILLET. Then here, you may have them. They'll feed your stove as well as mine. I would've tried to sell the new one but it's not quite finished. Wait a moment. Wait a moment…! I think I have it!

CHICAGO. Shh! Be quiet, everyone!

DUTCHY. Ze meister is at verk!

*(*MILLET *rushes to the canvas upstage, elaborately whips up some paints on a palette, considers deeply, and adds one small dab to the canvas.)*

MILLET. There. At last. It is finished.

DUTCHY. Halleluiah!

MILLET. It's probably just one more folly. What do you think?

(He turns the easel around. The painting is his renowned "Angelus.")

I call it "The Angelus."

CHICAGO. Jumpin' Jehovah! That's what you ought to call it! "Jumpin' Jehovah!"

MARIE. Oh, François, it's your greatest yet. It's a masterpiece.

MILLET. I hope not. It'll never sell.

(He kicks the couch in frustration.)

Drat this world of purblind buyers and beggared artists!

(Knock at door left.)

DUTCHY. Dot must be André.

CHICAGO. The wolf is at the door.

(Opens the door and ANDRÉ *enters.)*

CHICAGO & DUTCHY. *(Howl like wolves.)*

DUTCHY. Good morning!

LEROUX. Monsieur André.

ANDRÉ. I desired a private interview.

CECILE. It's not necessary. These are friends.

LEROUX. Please let them be no hindrance.

ANDRÉ. Mademoiselle Leroux, you dare to call this meeting at the house of my rival?

MARIE. Yes, monsieur, I do dare.

ANDRÉ. I suppose you know what I've come for.

MILLET. Monsieur André, I hope you've come with more than threats and unpleasantness.

ANDRÉ. Ah, Millet. My rival, did I say? My debtor is more exact. You owe me 2500 francs, sir.

MILLET. In what way?

ANDRÉ. Haven't you borrowed them of me?

MILLET. No, sir, I took them on account.

ANDRÉ. On what account?

MILLET. On account of the year's pictures. And I hold you to our contract. Our agreement says you may take any picture at the value of one hundred francs. Here are scores of pictures. Choose any twenty-five and call the account square.

ANDRÉ. *(Produces the contract.)* Our agreement leaves me free to take such pictures as I like. I like none and I take none.

MILLET. The new one has some merit. "The Angelus" alone is worth twenty-five hundred francs.

ANDRÉ. What, that incompetent hash? Pay me by six o'clock tomorrow or I will have you jailed.

MARIE. You wouldn't dare.

ANDRÉ. Yes, mademoiselle, I do dare.

(Aside to audience:)

Months ago this fellow stepped between me and Marie, and I shall make him sorry for it. I shall run him into an early grave. He's painted some good pictures. The new one's almost great. Well, to-

morrow I'll drop on him. There'll be an auction and I'll buy every one of these for a song—and burn them!

(To LEROUX*:)*

Leroux, your time is also up. Fifteen thousand francs, due tomorrow. Will you pay, or must I take action?

LEROUX. Monsieur André, I know you'll give me time, just as you promised—

ANDRÉ. Please do not complicate the matter with imaginary promises.

LEROUX. Imaginary!

MARIE. Oh!

CECILE. Why, you…ashcat!

CHICAGO. Brava, Cecile!

ANDRÉ. You know that there's another way, Leroux. The moment Marie marries me, your debt is paid.

CECILE. But man, her heart is with Millet!

ANDRÉ. Come, sir, be reasonable. On the one hand a lover with nothing; on the other a lover who is getting on in the world with sure strides. I love your daughter as well as Millet. I can give her a comfortable home. I can make her happy. Can he do that? A shiftless painter without talent or future who can't sell a picture to save his life? Who can't *give* one away?

DUTCHY. Why, dot is *your* fault.

ANDRÉ. Well, Leroux, what will it be? The money? Or Marie?

LEROUX. Answer him, child.

MARIE. No, father, no. You will spare me that.

LEROUX. There, dear. I know where your heart is.

MARIE. Oh, father, I can't bear it. How can I make a beggar of you?

LEROUX. My child, answer me this one question. Do you love this man?

MARIE. No.

LEROUX. One more, then. Do you love François Millet?

MARIE. Yes.

LEROUX. Well enough to endure poverty and hardship for his sake?

MARIE. Oh, hunger, thirst, cold, everything!

LEROUX. Then you have your answer, Monsieur André. Even though it ruin me.

DUTCHY. *(Pumping* LEROUX's *hand:)* Oh, dot's shplennid! Dot's *mighty* shplennid! Shake.

ANDRÉ. You shall have *my* answer, you old fool.

MILLET. You're forgetting yourself, monsieur. Take that back.

ANDRÉ. Yes, Millet, you have your sweetheart now and a dose of courage. Next, you'll have hunger and a raging good appetite. I'll ruin you, do you understand? Ruin you!

(To MARIE*:)*

Mademoiselle, I wish to make just one remark to you.

CECILE. Please let her alone. My father has answered you. Now go.

ANDRÉ. It doesn't become *you* to ride the high horse with me. Nor any of you. Paupers! Everything you've got is mine—bought with my money. The very clothes you wear. If you took off what belongs to me, there wouldn't be enough left to—

CHICAGO. You'd better go now, you're about to get excited.

*(*CHICAGO *leads him to the door.)*

DUTCHY. Ja, run along to mother.

CHICAGO. *(Opening door:)* Allow me.

ANDRÉ. Your time is up at six o'clock tomorrow. Get the money in the meantime—if you can!

*(*ANDRÉ *exits.)*

CECILE. I'm so sorry, Papa, I'm so sorry.

LEROUX. There, there. Forget all about it.

CHICAGO. *(Not as brightly as before:)* Well, cheer up, cheer up, the worst is…you know…

MILLET. I thought I might save you somehow. All of you dear people. The dearest people in the world to me. Well, it's no matter now.

(Kicks the couch.)

Drat the low-down thief!

MARIE. Don't give up, François. Don't give up.

MILLET. I have spoiled your life, dear. That's the hardest.

MARIE. No, you have blessed it. Oh, François, I wish I could help you. I would die for you.

MILLET. I believe it.

(Aside to audience:)

Maybe I should die for *her*. Maybe I should rid the world of Jean-François Millet and let some fellow with the gift of success love her and make her happy.

LEROUX. I am sorry for you, lad. If I could only help, but he's ruined me, too.

MILLET. Bless you for a good heart, sir.

(Enter MADAME BATHILDE *and* MADAME CARON.*)*

MADAME BATHILDE. François…

MADAME CARON. François…

MADAME BATHILDE. We just met that skinflint.

MADAME CARON. He told us all.

MADAME BATHILDE. We came straight to carry you off.

MADAME CARON. And to comfort you.

MADAME BATHILDE. *(Embracing her:)* Dear Marie!

MADAME CARON. *(Embracing her, too:)* Dear Marie!

MADAME BATHILDE. You poor child!

MADAME CARON. You poor, poor child!

MARIE. It is a very hard day for us. I don't see how anyone could be so unfair.

MADAME BATHILDE. Dear me, child.

MADAME CARON. When you come to know the world better…

MADAME BATHILDE. …it's the skinflints that run it.

MADAME CARON. They always have.

MILLET. Madame Bathilde, Madame Caron, you're being awfully kind. I owe you several months' rent.

MADAME BATHILDE. Oh, tush!

MADAME CARON. Tush!

MADAME BATHILDE. Tush!

MILLET. *(Handing them some small paintings:)* Here. Here's February—March—April—this one's not quite finished—half of May. I know they're worth nothing.

MADAME BATHILDE. We shall treasure them.

MADAME CARON. Along with all the others.

MADAME BATHILDE. Dear Monsieur Leroux, come along now.

MADAME CARON. We've a bite waiting.

MADAME BATHILDE. You'll feel the better for it.

MADAME CARON. Come while it's hot.

MADAME BATHILDE. Everybody!

MADAME CARON. Everybody!

DUTCHY. Don't you be drubbled, Marie. We all got to haff dese little ups und towns.

MARIE. It's good of you to say so, Hans. You are always good. Are you coming, François?

MILLET. I'll be there shortly, darling. I need to brood a while.

MARIE. Don't brood too long.

LEROUX. Marie, my hot water bottle, please.

(Exeunt all except MILLET, DUTCHY, *and* CHICAGO.*)*

MILLET. *(Standing before "The Angelus":)* Tell me, lads. How can I paint this, and still be starving?

CHICAGO. It's the Koh-i-Noor diamond of the whole collection. Look at the noble simplicity of it! No fuss, no feathers, no tricks of color, no theatricals. Just that solemn half-light and those brooding distances for the chimes to wander through, and those two humble figures, so poor outside, so rich with the peace of God in their hearts.

DUTCHY. Dot picture make me feel—right here. I look at dot picture and vay off yonder I hear de church bells so fine—so faint—so sweet. Und dot is home, und it break mine heart.

CHICAGO. You've hit it, Dutchy. That picture makes *everybody* feel like home.

MILLET. That's the grand test, isn't it. Great art—supreme art—has no nationality.

DUTCHY. *(Getting a little weepy:)* Dot picture lif' me righd up to heaven!

CHICAGO. It's going to make a strike today, too. You'll see. I put out the word to every foreigner on the Paris hotel registers and they'll be flocking down here presently. We'll sell this whole exhibition in an hour.

DUTCHY. Dey're shplendid good pictures, but you can't sell 'em. No more denn brickbats.

CHICAGO. Millet, I'll bet you a hundred francs you're a celebrated man inside of a year.

MILLET. I can't take your money.

CHICAGO. Dutchy?

DUTCHY. I don't vant to bet against dot. I vant it to happen.

CHICAGO. That's the way to make it happen.

DUTCHY. Shecaggo, you right. Alvays venn I pet against someding, she vin, efrytime. Only I don't got a hundred francs.

CHICAGO. I've only got ten centimes myself.

DUTCHY. The newspaper say even de Bank of England is down to 34 million pound.

CHICAGO. We're as good as the Bank of England. I'll bet you 34 million pounds.

DUTCHY. Dot's vhat I call a vager. Shake!

CHICAGO. And here comes O'Shaughnessy, to help us peddle some canvas.

> *(He plays a jig on an imaginary penny whistle as* PHELIM O'SHAUGHNESSY *enters, a lad of Ireland.)*

Well, begosh and begad if it ain't Phelim O'Shaughnessy!

O'SHAUGHNESSY. 'Tis I indeed, and the top o' the day to ye, lads. Chicago, I passed out them flyers all over Paree. We'll be havin' a couple thousand folks stampedin' in here any minute, and every one of 'em with coin in their trousers.

CHICAGO. Excellent. Now fasten onto them, boys. Don't let anybody get away without buying a picture.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. And if they're not buyin', I'll tell 'em to go to hell.

CHICAGO. That's the spirit. Hans von Bismarck?

DUTCHY. *(Saluting:)* Jawohl, mein Kapitayn!

CHICAGO. You control the crowds. Phelim O'Shaughnessy?

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Right here, sor!

CHICAGO. You beguile the ladies.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. It's me trade.

CHICAGO. When this show is over we're going to be flush and out of trouble.

(A knock at door left.)

There's our stampede. —Come right in!

(The door opens to admit a single man, BASIL THORPE, *an Englishman.)*

THORPE. Hello. I do beg your pardon. Is this the studio of John Franklin Millit?

MILLET. Jean-François Millet.

THORPE. John Franklin *Millet,* that's right.

CHICAGO. Step right in, sir, step right in.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. *(Aside to* CHICAGO*:)* He ain't exactly the largest stampede I ever seen.

CHICAGO. He's all the stampede we've got. Work him, lads.

(The lads attach themselves to THORPE *as he tours the room.)*

Everything's for sale here. Take your time.

THORPE. Mmm… Dear me, *that* looks good.

CHICAGO, DUTCHY, O'SHAUGHNESSY. *(Murmuring variously, ad lib:)* Very good. —Excellent good. —Sehr gut, sehr gut…

THORPE. I wish I knew something about pictures. That one there is interesting.

CHICAGO, DUTCHY, O'SHAUGHNESSY. Very interesting. —Excellent interesting. —Unglaublich interessant.

THORPE. And that one there…

CHICAGO, DUTCHY, O'SHAUGHNESSY. Very interesting. —Excellent interesting. —Unglaublich interressant.

CHICAGO. You like this one? It's yours, my friend, for only…

(--looks to MILLET, *who signals "two"--)*

…three hundred francs.

THORPE. Three hundred francs.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Indade, yer ladyship, it's worth the double of it, on me honor.

THORPE. It seems so to me, but I am no judge.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Why, look at the grace of it! The charm of it! The *size* of it! Ye'll not get anything like it for the money this side o' the grave.

THORPE. The thing is, I just don't *know*…

O'SHAUGHNESSY. *(Sudden ferocity:)* Well, then, ye can go to hell!

*(*CHICAGO *and* DUTCHY *nudge him to be quiet.)*

THORPE. *(Before "The Angelus":)* Oh, dear me, that looks good. That looks quite good. That is *very* good.

CHICAGO. It's only a masterpiece. It *ought* to be good.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. At the price I'm tinkin' of buyin' the dingus meself.

THORPE. What is the price?

CHICAGO. Twenty-five hundred francs.

MILLET, DUTCHY, O'SHAUGHNESSY. *(Gasp.)*

THORPE. Yes. Hm. That sounds quite reasonable. I've a mind to take it. It grows on me. It grows on me. And it is quite *large,* after all.

CHICAGO. Buy in bulk, I always say.

THORPE. You know I just might. Yes, I just might take a chance…

CHICAGO. *(Aside to the other three:)* Take a grip on yourself, lads. Twenty-five hundred francs!

(The boys bow their heads in silent prayer – and look just like "The Angelus.")

THORPE. But tell me. This Mr. Millit…

MILLET AND FRIENDS. Millet.

THORPE. This Mr. Millet. Is he dead?

MILLET. I beg your pardon?

THORPE. Is he dead? You see, a painter has so much more talent when he's dead. Indeed the deader he is, the better he is. Just look at this Rembrandt fellow. He must have been good in his day. Since he died he's incomparable! Worth millions!

MILLET. Excuse me, sir. I am Millet.

THORPE. Oh, I do beg your pardon. I'm sorry to meet you, in a sense. The problem is, you see, I couldn't possibly buy any work from a painter who hadn't passed on. A problem of value.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. The problem is that ye can go to hell! Ye can't deal with a man unless he's dead? What are ye, an undertaker?

CHICAGO. O'Shaughnessy…

MILLET. I'm sorry to inform you that I'm very much alive, but at the first sign of debility I'll certainly let you know.

THORPE. My regrets, Mr. Millit. Good day, gentlemen.

DUTCHY. Let us know vhen *you* are dead! Und in ze meantime you really *can* go to hell!

*(*THORPE *exits right.)*

MILLET. I seem to be worth more dead than alive.

CHICAGO. English ass.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. I would've beguiled the ladies, but there was no ladies to beguile.

CHICAGO. We've just got use the old pumpkin is all.

DUTCHY. Vhat a fool vorld it is. Ven it haff a great Master, it don't know it und let him shtarve. Und venn he is tead, zenn he is recognized! Zenn come ze riches! Und vhat can you do mit zese riches, being dead?

MILLET. At least you're relieved of the curse of being nobody. Of disguising your secret sorrow. Of having nothing to eat and dying by inches of hunger. I was so hopeful once. All these years I've done what a man might do. I've worked hard and faithfully—to no avail. I'm hardly a man anymore. *(--lifting and dropping a wooden leg from the box of modeling things--)* I'm just the bits and pieces of one. Well, lads, maybe it's better if I just…leave you.

CHICAGO. You don't mean…?

MILLET. *(Takes up a dagger.)* Yes. It's Kismet. It is written. Say goodbye to me one last time—and go. I know the road I have to take.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Well, Frank, ye're not takin' off alone for the Great Beyond. If ye're dyin', then I'm dyin', too.

DUTCHY. Und me, too!

O'SHAUGHNESSY. All for one and one for you know who.

MILLET. Good men.

(Pats his breast pockets.)

Who's got a cigar? One last cigar and we'll do it.

DUTCHY. Not me.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. I'm all out.

CHICAGO. Listen, maestro, you can't kill yourself. The minute you do, you'll be acclaimed a genius and make a million dollars and miss all the fun. You'll just… Wait a minute. That's it!

(Blows a "trumpet.")

We're saved, boys, we're saved!

(He marches about, a one-man band.)

DUTCHY. I alvays know Chicago is crazy. Now he *iss* crazy.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. I tink he's havin' an idea.

CHICAGO. An idea? There never was anything so good. Only it's not my idea, it's Dutchy's. Dutchy said venn ze world has a master it lets him shtarve, und venn he iss dead, zenn he iss recognized

und he makes all zese riches. All right, why not do it? Die and be recognized—but fake the dying part and go straight to the riches.

MILLET. What do you mean, die?

CHICAGO. One of us must *seem* to die—must change his name and disappear—to save the rest. He's proclaimed a genius and we all collect. And since he really is a genius, I nominate Jean-François Millet!

MILLET. No No No No…

DUTCHY. Shecaggo, dot is shplendid! Yoost shplendid! *Shake!*

MILLET. But Chicago…

CHICAGO. Do you want to pay off Papa Leroux's debts and see Marie happy?

MILLET. I can't marry Marie if I'm dead.

CHICAGO. You can't marry her if you're alive either. You've been feeding her pictures for the past year. If you get recognized, you've made her one of the richest women in France.

MILLET. Can I tell her, at least?

CHICAGO. She'll give away the whole blessed thing. But listen. Before you vanish you have to get sick—come down with something really exotic. You have to languish for a couple of months and drive up your prices. But what sort of a sickness should you contract? Let's see. It has to be something tragic. Something the papers'll gobble up. Something artistic.

DUTCHY. I haff ze perfect disease!

(He whispers in CHICAGO's *ear.)*

CHICAGO. Deutschland, it's brilliant! Listen to this.

(He now whispers in O'SHAUGHNESSY's *ear.)*

O'SHAUGHNESSY. It's a masterstroke!

(He whispers in MILLET's *ear.)*

MILLET. No!

CHICAGO, DUTCHY, O'SHAUGHNESSY. Yes!

CHICAGO. I'll ventilate your approaching demise to the newspapers, and by morning the buyers'll be breaking down the door. Meantime, you've got to squirrel yourself away in that bedroom and start painting some more masterpieces. Congratulations, old man! You're about to kick off the mortal coil and strike it rich!

CHICAGO.
FOR HE WAS A JOLLY GOOD FELLOW

CHICAGO, DUTCHY, O'SHAUGHNESSY.
HE WAS A JOLLY GOOD FELLOW—

MILLET. Wait, wait. You mean I have to spend the rest of my born life in that room?

CHICAGO. Oh, we'll give you an alter ego so you can come out and breathe from time to time.

DUTCHY. Ve gif you ein sehr goot disguise.

CHICAGO. A disguise so thick that no one could ever penetrate it.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. I know. A pastry cook!

CHICAGO. No, no. Pastry's not thick enough.

DUTCHY. A chimney sveep.

CHICAGO. It's thick, but it'll blacken the pictures. I've got it! A widow!

MILLET. A what?

CHICAGO. What's thicker than a widow? You can be your very own sister come in from out of town. A widow from Provence.

MILLET. I'm not the kind of man who's made to be a widow.

CHICAGO. Maybe being a widow will liven you up a bit.

MILLET. Couldn't I be a male cousin? A dentist from Toulouse?

CHICAGO. What's it matter who you are? What's it to you? That's it! You're the widow *Tillou*.

DUTCHY & O'SHAUGHNESSY. The widow *Tillou!*

CHICAGO, DUTCHY, O'SHAUGHNESSY.
FOR HE'S A JOLLY GOOD *WIDOW,*
FOR HE'S A JOLLY GOOD *WIDOW*--

*(*MILLET *kicks the couch.* DUTCHY *and* O'SHAUGHNESSY *hum a funeral march during* CHICAGO's *next speech.)*

CHICAGO. Friends, here's to the sacred memory of him who was always our stay, our comfort, and our refuge in times of distress. The best friend and teacher that ever man had in this world—the late Jean-François Millet, who sleeps in peace, God rest his soul!

CHICAGO. And to the widow Tillou!

CHICAGO, DUTCHY, O'SHAUGHNESSY. *The widow Tillou!*

MILLET. *(Screams in frustration while they dance around him.)*

CHICAGO, DUTCHY, O'SHAUGHNESSY.
FOR *SHE'S* A JOLLY GOOD FELLOW,
FOR *SHE'S* A JOLLY GOOD FELLOW,
FOR *SHE'S* A JOLLY GOOD FELLOW
WHICH NOBODY CAN DENY!

(Curtain.)

Scene 2

(The studio, the next afternoon. Half the pictures bear "SOLD" signs. "The Angelus" is gone and in its place is a good-sized picture covered with a sheet. At curtain, DUTCHY *and* O'SHAUGHNESSY *are hanging "SOLD" signs on paintings while* CHICAGO *directs them.* MILLET *is not present.)*

DUTCHY. Vell, Shecaggo, vhich ones else?

CHICAGO. Let's sell that one—and that one.

DUTCHY. All righd.

(Puts "SOLD" signs on them.)

Sold. Und sold.

CHICAGO. Yes, that's better. Seems to me we better sell that one there, too.

DUTCHY. *(Hanging a "SOLD" sign:)* Sold!

CHICAGO. After we sell the others, we'll sell these. There's nothing like a "Sold" sign to get a buyer's blood going.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. I was in Paree this mornin'. Payple are talkin' already.

CHICAGO. That's good. What do they say?

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Merely that Jean-François Millet, one day sick, is the greatest painter since Mickey Angelo. Several of 'em made out that they had regarded Millet as the rising great master for years. Asked if he was as ill as the papers said. And when I said he couldn't possibly live many weeks, they said his death is going to be an awful blow to France.

DUTCHY. Shplendid!

O'SHAUGHNESSY. And not one man would let on he was hearing Millet's name for the first time.

DUTCHY. Now dot's vhat I call human nature.

CHICAGO. No, that's what I call the power of the press.

(Shows newspaper.)

I got Millet worked into the Paris Correspondence of the London Times.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. The London Times! It'll wake up the whole world!

CHICAGO. Maybe it'll wake up the French, anyway. Headline. "Immortal Gallic Genius Dying Slow and Miserable Death."

DUTCHY. But if he iss immortal, how can he die any death?

CHICAGO. This is no time for German paradox, you sausage. Quote. "Jean-François Millet, the French nation's greatest gift to the world, has been struck down by a disease so unspeakable it can only be mentioned in whispers. He has left for the Barbary Coast."

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Where is the Barbary Coast?

CHICAGO. Hanged if I know.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. So what did you put it in, for?

CHICAGO. Well, he had to go *some*where, hadn't he? Muggins! And there'll be people down here to buy today. You'll see.

(Notices a large, yellow patch on the backside of O'SHAUGHNESSY's *pants.)*

Wait a minute. You can't face the public in trousers like that. You look like a lightning bug. I've got an idea. Bend over.

(Takes a palette and quickly paints the patch black.)

I knew all those lessons would come in handy. We can't have you distracting attention from the rest of the exhibition.

DUTCHY. Maybe a little grey in here.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Don't forget to sign it.

CHICAGO. There, that's first-rate. We'll call it "The Pantgelus."

(Knocking at door right.)

MILLET. *(Offstage:)* Can I come out of here, please? Chicago, are you there? Let me out!

DUTCHY. Ze vidow vants to come out.

CHICAGO. Well, he can't. He's got to stay in there and stay in character, and paint.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Has he been out o' there a-tall?

CHICAGO. No, he's pouting about his widow costume. But maybe it inspired him. He did some good work for us last night. Feast your eyes on this…

(Takes sheet off large painting and reveals "The Gleaners." Collective whistle.)

It's called "The Gleaners."

DUTCHY. I dink ve can sell dot.

CHICAGO. Yes, I dink so, too.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Ah, the power of art. I get a backache just lookin' at it.

DUTCHY. *(Taking a paper-wrapped packet out of his pocket:)* Does anybody vant some limperger cheese?

*(*CHICAGO *and* O'SHAUGHNESSY *are blown back by the stink of the cheese.)*

CHICAGO. Phew! Take that filth away from me!

O'SHAUGHNESSY. How can ye stomach such corruption?

DUTCHY. I been eating limperger cheese efry day since I vas born, und I eat limperger efry day till I die.

CHICAGO. Smells like it's been dead for weeks.

DUTCHY. Vell, cheer up.

(He takes out a large German sausage.)

Ze *vürst* is yet to come!

(More pounding at right.)

MILLET. *(Offstage:)* Chicago, I'm coming out if I have to break down this door myself!

CHICAGO. Quick! Jump for the door, boys! Don't let anybody in!

(The WIDOW*—young, handsome, cheaply but prettily dressed in a simple pink gown—comes out of the bedroom. She is, to put it mildly, well-developed.)*

WIDOW. I can't stand it in there a moment longer!

CHICAGO. Get back in there, Millet. It's dangerous out here.

WIDOW. Hang it, Chicago, have some pity. I've just got to have some air.

CHICAGO. I'm telling you, you'll ruin everything.

WIDOW. *(Throwing down a brush and palette:)* That bedroom's the worst place to paint pictures in. It's stuffy and there's isn't any light. Everything I turn out is a blur.

CHICAGO. Turn out all the blurs you please. Turn out more blurs like this one. We can sell them.

WIDOW. There's no room to move around in there. Especially in my inflated condition.

(To O'SHAUGHNESSY *and* DUTCHY, *who are staring:)*

Well, what are you two staring at?

DUTCHY. Py yiminy, it's a vooman! A real vooman!

WIDOW. Now I know what the Mona Lisa feels like.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Truth to tell, me lady, ye put me in mind of the hills of Ireland.

WIDOW. Well, go pull some taffy or something. You make me nervous.

(Stretches and paces, not walking terribly well in the high heels.)

Ah, this is better. This is much better.

CHICAGO. You're going to need more practice in those duds. You're walking like a busted mare.

WIDOW. It's no wonder. These awkward clothes have got me cantilevered all out of creation. And drat these skirts.

(Kicks the couch.)

I can't even kick. How long have I got to paint pictures in there?

CHICAGO. Three months ought to do the trick. Then we can announce your death.

WIDOW. I'll never live to see it.

CHICAGO. Yes, you will. We're all going to live and be happy.

WIDOW. You assassin!

CHICAGO. Millet, this thing's bigger than we ever dreamed.

WIDOW. *I'm* bigger than I ever dreamed. Do you know how much equipment I'm wearing under here? Enough steel to make a cannon

and more whalebone than the beach at Nantucket. Did you ever try painting in a thingamajig?

(Shifts his corset.)

It's tighter than Sunday in this thing. I keep feeling like there's two of me inside here, and I'm not used to company inside my clothes. And I'm a widow. Oughtn't I to be in black?

CHICAGO. That's the gloomiest thing I could rustle up on short notice.

WIDOW. *Pink?* I am not *made* for pink.

DUTCHY. Dot's true. You ain't a pink personality.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. I quite like the pink, me self.

WIDOW. You prance around in it.

(Seeing all the "SOLD" pictures:)

Oh, Christmas! I've sold out!

CHICAGO. Don't get excited. The signs are only there to drive up the prices. We'll dribble the pictures out a few at a time. Then when prices are peaking, we'll kill you off and send the prices through the roof.

WIDOW. Kill Millet off, you mean. And where does that leave *me?*

(Patting his breasts:)

Who's got a cigar?

CHICAGO. None of that, my girl.

WIDOW. I can't have a cigar?

CHICAGO. Who're you going to fool if somebody sees you puffing on a stogie?

(The WIDOW *throws herself onto the couch.)*

And don't just throw yourself onto a couch like a sack of laundry.

DUTCHY. De ladies, dey all do it like this when dey sit down. You see?

(He demonstrates.)

You gotta shroompf da ting underneath. You shroompf it.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. No, Dutchy, it's more like this.

(Demonstrates.)

Ye got to put more curves in it. Ye see that curve there?

DUTCHY. Und you can't fall, you gotta zink. You see how I zink? You shroompf und zenn you zink.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. You got to sink, but with a curve.

WIDOW. Why don't you two shroompf and sink on your own time. Oh Lord, I feel so miserable. Who's got a handkerchief?

(All three instantly produce handkerchiefs. WIDOW *waves them away.)*

Never mind. Save them for my funeral.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. You mark my words, Missus. Three months from now we'll give you a funeral ye can really enjoy.

WIDOW. Irish consolation. Thank you.

DUTCHY. *(Glancing out the window:)* Jump! Somebody's coming!

(The WIDOW *leaps up from the sofa and falls on her face, tripping on her hem.)*

CHICAGO. Give me an arm.

WIDOW. *(Slaps his face.)* Take your hands off me, sir!

*(*WIDOW *retreats with dignity into the bedroom, slamming the door.)*

ALL THREE. *Women!*

CHICAGO. Now look sad, boys. Remember—we're in deep affliction.

(A knock at door left.)

On tray!

*(*FRENCH REPORTER *enters.)*

REPORTER. *(French accent:)* Excusez-moi, messieurs.

CHICAGO. No, no, excusez-*moi.*

REPORTER. No, monsieur, I beg your pardon, but excusez-*MOI.*

CHICAGO. I'll see your moi and raise you toi.

REPORTER. I am Claude Rivière, journaliste from "Le Figaro." And you are?

CHICAGO. We are pupils of the great Jean-François Millet.

REPORTER. Could you give me a few details about this deplorable *affaire?* This *désastre,* this *tragédie,* this *catastrophe?* Ah, how it makes me smell my mortality!

DUTCHY. That's probably limperger cheese.

REPORTER. *(Writing in his notebook:)* Limperger cheese…

CHICAGO. I suppose you'd heard of the artist before, Mr. Rivière?

REPORTER. What? Have I heard of Mileau?

CHICAGO, O'SHAUGHNESSY, DUTCHY. Millet.

REPORTER. Millet? My dear sir! A correspondent of "Le Figaro" unfamiliar with the name Jean-Jacques Millet?

CHICAGO, O'SHAUGHNESSY, DUTCHY. Jean-François Millet.

REPORTER. Jean-François Millet? Why, I know him like the back of my glove.

CHICAGO. *(Takes out a piece of paper.)* Would you like a list of his works?

REPORTER. *(Snatching the paper:)* I should be infinitely grateful.

CHICAGO. *(Another paper.)* A portrait to run in your paper?

REPORTER. *(Taking it:)* You are too kind.

CHICAGO. *(Another paper.)* An obituary—I mean, a sketch of his life?

REPORTER. *(Taking it:)* I would be your slave, monsieur!

CHICAGO. It's but a little thing. The tribute of a breaking heart.

DUTCHY. *(Aside:)* Oh, dot Shecaggo! He alvays loaded!

CHICAGO. You note the tearspots here and here.

REPORTER. Le Figaro will show them to the world!

(Quickly scanning the last paper:)

Born in 18-hmhm, grew up in hmhm… Millet has no survivors but a twin sister?

CHICAGO. The Widow Tillou. She'll occupy his quarters here and attend to his affairs.

REPORTER. I suppose I could not see this widow?

CHICAGO. Yes, you could not. Poor thing. Utterly broken down. You never saw anything like her.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. I'll vouch for that.

REPORTER. The two are identical identical twins?

CHICAGO. They're like Cleveland and Cincinnati.

REPORTER. A *tragédie* indeed. And this fatal malady, monsieur, it is what?

CHICAGO. It's much more than what. It's *(Whispers in* REPORTER's *ear).*

REPORTER. Non, non!

CHICAGO. Oui, oui!

REPORTER. Mon Dieu! I can feel my circulation rising!

(Embraces CHICAGO *and kisses his cheeks.)*

Thank you, monsieur!

CHICAGO. Thank *you,* Monsieur Riviére.

REPORTER. Thank *you,* monsieur.

CHICAGO. Monsieur.

REPORTER. Messieurs.

CHICAGO. Au rivière!

REPORTER. Do not fear for Jean- François Millet. Le Figaro will figarize him!

*(*REPORTER *exits left.)*

DUTCHY. FEEEEEE-GARO!

CHICAGO, DUTCHY, O'SHAUGHNESSY. *(They sing the lusty moment from Rossini:)* Feegaro Feegaro Feegaro FEEEEEE-GARO—!

*(*WIDOW *enters from right.)*

WIDOW. What's all this noise about?

CHICAGO. You're on your way, Millet, that's what. They'll be breaking down the doors any second.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Ye know, Francis, I got inspired to do a new painting of me own last night.

MILLET. Display it, O'Shaughnessy. Anything for some air.

*(*O'SHAUGHNESSY *shows a very long painting of a very long dachshund.)*

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Well? What d'ye think? Is it gaynius?

CHICAGO. It must be modern genius. I can't make anything out of it.

MILLET. Is it a dog?

O'SHAUGHNESSY. You bet your life it's a dog!

CHICAGO. If it is, it's no Christian dog.

DUTCHY. I haff never seen a dog like ziss. Dot dog is not right.

MILLET. He's all out of drawing, O'Shaughnessy.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. What's the matter? The dog is too long, d'ye think?

DUTCHY. Vell, dot is a mighty long dog. It's the longest dog I—vhy, I never seen such a long dog.

MILLET. He's more like a bench.

DUTCHY. Dot dog vant foreshortening.

MILLET. It's enough dog for two dogs.

CHICAGO. What kind of a dog is it, anyway? Is it a real dog, or only a design for a new kind of dog?

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Why, it's a dachshund.

DUTCHY. He could never vag all that tail. Und it get in ze vay venn ze dog vants to turn around.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. All dachshunds are made that way, now.

CHICAGO. Maybe you could curve the tail around his body and tie it around his neck.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. What is this, art criticism, or dog criticism?

THE OTHERS. Both.

(A knock at left.)

DUTCHY. *(Glancing out the window:)* It's that English ass.

WIDOW. Good luck, boys.

(The WIDOW *makes to exit.* CHICAGO *stops him.)*

CHICAGO. Hold on, hold on. Come back. A little feminine charm never hurt a sale. Arrange your parts here and grieve. Or do you want to suffocate in there for the rest of your life?

DUTCHY. Ve sell him now, ain'd it, Chicago?

CHICAGO. Dutchy, we'll take him to the *gleaners.* Put the prices way high, but don't close without getting my assent as the Widow's agent. And save "The Angelus." We'll keep that for the big money.

(Another knock. CHICAGO *busies himself with an abacus. The* WIDOW, *on the sofa, tries to look at ease.)*

CHICAGO. Ten thousand…twenty thousand…

O'SHAUGHNESSY & DUTCHY. *(Passing pictures back and forth:)* Sold. Sold. Sold…

CHICAGO. On tray!

*(*THORPE *enters.)*

THORPE. Hello.

(Lifting hat to WIDOW*:)*

Madame.

WIDOW. *(Mouths the word "Hello" and waves prettily, batting his eyes.)*

THORPE. Terribly sorry to barge in. I came back for my picture, you see. I brought the money. I believe it was twenty-five hundred francs.

DUTCHY & O'SHAUGHNESSY. Picture? Picture…?

O'SHAUGHNESSY. To what picture is it you're referrin' again, sor?

THORPE. The picture I bought yesterday, you remember. The girl. The boy. A little basket…

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Oh, "The Angelus." I remember, now. "The Angelus" is sold.

THORPE. Sold?

O'SHAUGHNESSY. I think so. The agent will know.

(Goes to CHICAGO*.)*

Excuse me, Mr., Uh, Agent. The Angelus is sold, ain't it?

CHICAGO. You mean that affair this morning? The agent of the Emperor of Bavaria?

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Emperor of Bavaria. That's the one.

CHICAGO. Merely an offer. Fifty thousand francs. Declined.

*(*DUTCHY *does a dumb show expressive of "Dot Shecaggo!")*

THORPE. My word! Fifty thousand? Only yesterday these pictures were going for a veritable song.

DUTCHY. Vell, today the song is in a higher key.

CHICAGO. Because today the greatest painter of modern times is threatened with a grisly death.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. The prices go up by the grisliness.

THORPE. But my dear sir, that picture is in effect mine. I would have taken it on the spot, only…

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Only you didn't close, if ye remember. Our painter wasn't dead enough for ye.

CHICAGO. Now the artist's sister is managing his affairs.

(Indicates the WIDOW, *who affects weeping.)*

Completely prostrate. And her orders are positive. I can sell three paintings and no more. Including this little masterpiece. "The Gleaners."

THORPE. Oh, I say, that's very pretty. And what's the price of that?

CHICAGO. Thirty thousand francs.

WIDOW, DUTCHY, O'SHAUGHNESSY. *(Whistle.)*

DUTCHY. *(Aside:)* Dot Shecaggo got more cheek than a angel.

THORPE. Thirty thousand francs…!

CHICAGO. So I glean.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Only thirty thousand, is it? Well, I raise you. Thirty-two!

THORPE. Thirty-five!

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Forty!

THORPE. Forty-five!

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Fifty!

CHICAGO. Sold to this gentleman for fifty thousand francs!

THORPE. For the glory of England, I'll give you fifty-five.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. For the chastity of Ireland, I'll give you sixty.

THORPE. Sixty-five!

DUTCHY. Seventy!

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Seventy-five! Eighty!

CHICAGO. Gentlemen, calm yourselves. Butting our brains out is no way to do business.

THORPE. You know a better way?

CHICAGO. Yes. We'll throw dice.

(Takes out some dice.)

The winner gets the picture for eighty thousand francs.

THORPE. Gaming, eh. Well, that's very sporting, and it sounds fair.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. After you, sor.

MILLET. *(Aside to* CHICAGO*:)* Chicago, what do we do if O'Shaughnessy wins?

CHICAGO. We give him the picture and kill him.

THORPE. *(Throws.)* Aces! Oh, Hell-ifax!

O'SHAUGHNESSY. *(Throws.)* Aces! Amster-*dam!*

THORPE. *(Throws.)* Again, sir. Your toss.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Double fives. To you, sir.

THORPE. *(Winning:)* Double sixes! It's mine!

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Well, then, ye can go to hell!

CHICAGO. Sold to England for eighty thousand francs!

WIDOW. *(Lets out a shriek of disbelief, then covers quickly with weeping.)*

CHICAGO. Did you ever see anybody so stricken?

DUTCHY. Your picture, mein Herr.

THORPE. But wait a moment. What's this, what's this?

(He notices the dachshund picture.)

Don't tell me. Is *this* a Millet—?

MILLET. No, that's—

CHICAGO. —yes, that's a dachshund. Is that a Millet, you say? It's only the picture the maestro was painting as the fatal illness befelled him. You can see where he befell, right there.

DUTCHY. In the tail.

CHICAGO. And this dachshund is yours for only ten thousand francs.

THORPE. *(Noting the signature on the painting:)* It says "O'Shaughnessy" here.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. His middle name. Jean-François Michael Thomas Mary Bridget O'Shaughnessy Millet.

THORPE. And you've been hiding this all the while?

CHICAGO. I like to leave the best wine for last.

THORPE. I'm on to you, sir. Sold by Jove! For five thousand francs!

CHICAGO. Ten thousand francs.

THORPE. Ten thousand francs. But wait a moment… What about *this?*

*(*THORPE *holds up the sofa sheet with the chimney sweep picture.)*

Now I know a Millet when I see one.

CHICAGO. Yeah. It's a Millet all right.

DUTCHY. A charcoal drawing, from his realist period.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Will ye look at the detail on that?

DUTCHY. He called it "The Chimney Sweep."

CHICAGO. Ten thousand francs—if you hurry.

THORPE. I'll take it. Let me see. Eighty thousand plus ten plus ten… Is that ninety?

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Last I heard, it was still a hundred.

THORPE. *(Writing a check:)* There you are. One hundred thousand francs.

CHICAGO. That looks right. Madame Tillou, does that look right? Count the zeroes.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. It certainly looks all right to me.

DUTCHY. Same as dot last hundert tausend I seen.

THORPE. *(Picks up dachshund picture and sheet.)* These I'll take. That one you can send. My friends, I bid you good day!

O'SHAUGHNESSY. And a fine one to you, sor!

DUTCHY. Auf wiedersehen!

CHICAGO. Visit again any time.

THORPE. And you thought you could hide the dachshund. Haw haw haw!

ALL FOUR. Haw haw haw!

*(*THORPE *exits. General jubilation.* CHICAGO *marches to an imaginary drum,* O'SHAUGHNESSY *plays an imaginary flute,* DUTCHY *a trumpet.)*

MILLET. A hundred thousand francs!

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Would that me blind Uncle Shamus could see me now!

WIDOW. Have I gone mad? Now I do need a handkerchief.

(They all offer. WIDOW *picks one.)*

After all these hardships—these privations—these miseries—*a hundred thousand francs!*

(More jubilation.)

You thieves and liars, you ought to be taken out and drowned, every last one of you. Come to my arms, O noble scoundrel!

(Embraces CHICAGO.*)*

You lamb. Bless your heart, I'd forgive you if you'd made it *two* hundred thousand.

CHICAGO. I thought about it.

(Hands WIDOW *a pen.)*

Now you're going to need to endorse this, so here. Knock off a few sample-signatures.

WIDOW. It's wonderful. Seems impossible. I've never had to do with a bank in my whole life! Let me see. What is my name, my given name?

CHICAGO. Suggest something, boys.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Alice.

WIDOW. No. Don't like it.

CHICAGO. Lily.

WIDOW. It's what they call housemaids.

DUTCHY. Antoine.

WIDOW. It's a man's name, you ass.

CHICAGO. Daisy.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Daisy! That's the ticket.

WIDOW. I like it pretty well. Do I look a Daisy?

ALL. You bet!

WIDOW. Daisy it is.

(Starts writing.)

"D-a-y…" Do you spell it with a Z?

O'SHAUGHNESSY. No, nor with a Y neither. D-A-I-S-E-Y.

CHICAGO. Try leaving out the E.

WIDOW. *(Writes a few, with more and more panache.)* "Daisy Tillou…" *"Daisy Tillou…" "Daisy Tillou…!"*

CHICAGO. Now the check.

WIDOW. *(Signing the check; extravagantly:) "DAISY TILLOU!"*

CHICAGO. That ought to do. Arise, O'Shaughnessy, and go unto the bank and deposit this morsel.

WIDOW. And for goodness' sake bring back a cigar. I'm dying for a smoke.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. All right, just give me the money.

WIDOW. *(Patting his breast:)* Looks like I'm flat.

CHICAGO. Have you got a couple of sous, Dutchy?

DUTCHY. Not a zingle centime.

CHICAGO. Well, it's a good thing we're not starving. We've only got *a hundred thousand francs* to pay with!

(More jubilation.)

Run along now, Ireland.

WIDOW. And find some cigars!

*(*O'SHAUGHNESSY *starts out left, comes right back.)*

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Look out. The old ladies are coming down the road.

*(*O'SHAUGHNESSY *exits.)*

WIDOW. Stop them, Chicago. Put them off.

CHICAGO. I can't. They'll get suspicious.

WIDOW. I can't be on exhibition to them. They'll see right off that I'm not a woman.

DUTCHY. Dot's so, Shecaggo.

WIDOW. *(Starting to exit:)* Good luck, boys.

CHICAGO. No. No. No.

WIDOW. I'm femininely ignorant. I could make fatal mistakes in talking.

CHICAGO. Good! That's the idea! I'll tell them you're eccentric—very eccentric—maybe a little crazed by sorrow. The wilder you talk the better it'll be.

WIDOW. Let me just fix my hair.

CHICAGO. Never mind your hair.

(He opens the door. WIDOW *jumps behind it.)*

Enter, ladies. Enter.

*(*MADAME BATHILDE *and* MADAME CARON *enter.)*

MADAME BATHILDE. Mr. Buckner…

MADAME CARON. Mr. Buckner…

MADAME BATHILDE. We do so want to meet the poor dear…

MADAME CARON. …and be of some help if we can.

MADAME BATHILDE. How is the widow bearing up?

CHICAGO. Physically, she's robust. Mentally, it's been a heavy blow. Her mind seems to be a little touched.

MADAME BATHILDE. Not seriously.

MADAME CARON. Not seriously, I hope.

CHICAGO. No, no, sometimes her talk sounds a little, uh, extraordinary. A little *unusual.* And it makes her seem a little awkward in handling herself.

DUTCHY. She iss a most zingular creature.

MADAME BATHILDE & CARON. *(Spotting the* WIDOW *behind the door:)* Why, there she is!

WIDOW. *(Deep voice:)* Hello. *(Upper register:)* Hello!

(Crossing to them, her ankles give way once or twice along the way.)

CHICAGO. *(Privately to ladies:)* She's weak in the knees, from shock. —Madame Tillou, I have the pleasure to present some very dear friends of your brother's. Madame Bathilde.

WIDOW. *(Curtseying and nearly falling over:)* Madame Bathilde.

CHICAGO. *(Aside to* WIDOW*:)* Just a *little* more style. —And Madame Caron.

WIDOW. *(Curtseying quite gracefully:)* Madame Caron.

CHICAGO. *(Aside to* WIDOW*:)* Nobly done.

WIDOW. Madame Bathilde, Madame Caron. I am so grateful to you. I know that you were both so kind to dear François.

CHICAGO. Madame Tillou, we will leave you with these good friends…

*(*WIDOW *gives him a quiet elbow in the ribs.)*

…but shall be back almost at once.

*(*CHICAGO *and* DUTCHY *exit. The ladies seat themselves.)*

MADAME BATHILDE. Ah, dear Madam.

MADAME CARON. Dear Madam, that François should be gone so far from us.

MADAME BATHILDE. And gone away to die!

MADAME CARON. To die!

WIDOW. To die!

(Sitting:)

Shroompf und zink.

MADAME BATHILDE. We do love your poor dear brother so.

WIDOW. How it goes to my heart to hear you say these sweet words.

MOTHER BATHILDE. You have your poor brother's very voice!

WIDOW. I'll be damned. I mean—do I?

MADAME BATHILDE. Yes, and his face, too!

MADAME CARON. Why, you're almost the very image!

MADAME BATHILDE. Yours isn't quite so broad.

MADAME CARON. But wonderfully like!

MADAME BATHILDE. The hands, too, are almost exactly the same.

MADAME CARON. His were a trifle smaller.

MADAME BATHILDE. And he had that pink scar.

MADAME CARON. That pink scar just above his wrist. It was right here—

*(*WIDOW *snaps her hand away and pulls up her sleeve to hide the scar.)*

WIDOW. A scar? That's right, he did have a pink scar, didn't he. Doesn't he. Some tea, ladies?

*(*WIDOW *rises, almost trips, collects herself and goes to bring the tea tray.)*

MADAME BATHILDE & CARON. Thank you.

MADAME BATHILDE. Oh, you are *so* like your poor dear brother!

WIDOW. Well, we are twins, you know. *Are* twins? *Were* twins? We will have been twins for many years…

MADAME BATHILDE. That accounts for it.

MADAME CARON. Though you look considerably younger than he.

WIDOW. *(Flattered:)* Do? I? Well, yes, I am the youngest.

MADAME BATHILDE. The youngest?

MADAME CARON. Of *twins?*

WIDOW. Oh, the difference is nothing to speak of. He was born on a Monday morning and I think—yes—I was born the next Saturday night.

MADAME BATHILDE & CARON. Goodness!

WIDOW. I don't remember it myself. I used to, but I don't now. Sugar?

MADAME CARON. Yes, thank you.

WIDOW. Years and years ago I got hit, you see—just about here. *(Top of the head.)* It injured my memory. Sugar?

MADAME CARON. Yes, thank you.

WIDOW. Since then I can't remember being born at all, I only remember that I *used* to remember it.

MADAME BATHILDE. How very extraordinary.

MADAME CARON. Hit on the head…?

WIDOW. Yes, by an Irishman.

MADAME BATHILDE & CARON. The brute!

WIDOW. Oh, he didn't meant it. I was passing along the sidewalk, and he fell off the roof. Just feel that bump.

(The ladies feel the WIDOW's *head.)*

He bounced off me like that. Two somersaults and a half gainer.

MADAME CARON. A providential escape.

MADAME BATHILDE. The very hand of Providence.

WIDOW. Plain. Plain. If I hadn't been there that Irishman would have been killed

MADAME CARON. Ah, the *Irishman*…

MADAME BATHILDE. …would have been killed…

WIDOW. He took the pledge and reformed after that.

MADAME BATHILDE. Stopped drinking?

WIDOW. Stopped falling. So I married him. He was my first husband—no, not the first. Another one. Pierre. Well, it was one of the husbands. One of the early ones, anyway.

MADAME CARON. Dearie, how old are you?

WIDOW. *(Lying:)* Twenty-two.

MADAME BATHILDE. And you've had so much experience?

WIDOW. More than I ever wished for. Especially of late.

MADAME CARON. Have you had any children?

WIDOW. Oh—slathers.

MADAME BATHILDE & CARON. *"Slathers"…?*

MADAME BATHILDE. *(Aside to* CARON*:)* She talks just as a rabbit might.

WIDOW. Seven in two years.

MADAME BATHILDE. Seven?

MADAME CARON. Seven?

WIDOW. Seven. Milk?

MADAME BATHILDE. Yes, thank you.

WIDOW. Some in the spring, some in the fall, others here and there—according to the weather. Quite a litter.

MADAME CARON. By another Irishman?

WIDOW. By a whole colony of them.

MADAME BATHILDE. *(Aside to* CARON*:)* Poor thing, her mind *is* touched.

MADAME CARON. *(Aside to* BATHILDE*:)* I think she's been touched all along.

MADAME BATHILDE. Did all your children live?

WIDOW. Alas, none of them. All my nine darlings.

MADAME BATHILDE. Nine, dear?

MADAME CARON. You said seven.

WIDOW. I speak of another vintage.

MADAME BATHILDE. What a singular name for it.

MADAME CARON. Were they…?

WIDOW. Boys and girls? Some of them—yes.

MADAME BATHILDE. *Some* of them? Weren't they all?

WIDOW. Many thought so.

MADAME CARON. What did *you* think?

WIDOW. At this late date I couldn't be certain. Still, I believe there was considerable variety. I should ask my brother. Except he's gone away to die, hasn't he…

MADAME BATHILDE. You and your brother…

MADAME CARON. …are you close?

WIDOW. Closer than a Congressman and a barrel of pork. But dearly as we love each other there is a coolness between us. He never got over it that I didn't name all the children after him. I did name eleven of them for him. Then I quit. I said it was no use. François has an unappeasable appetite that way. O, he's impossible! Impossible!

(Aside:)

I'll drown that Chicago, yet.

MADAME BATHILDE. Her mind is wandering again.

MADAME CARON. Wandering? It's practically abroad!

MADAME BATHILDE. It's not safe for her to be alone.

MADAME CARON. Is it safe to be alone with *her?*

MADAME BATHILDE. Madame Tillou, would you like to sleep with us tonight?

WIDOW. Ha ha ha ha ha!

*(*CHICAGO *enters with* DUTCHY *and* O'SHAUGHNESSY.*)*

CHICAGO. How is our tête-a-tête, ladies?

WIDOW. Why, just too divine! The ladies were just asking if I'd like to sleep with them.

(Aside to CHICAGO*:)*

Get me out of this scrape and go hang yourself.

CHICAGO. The idea seems to disturb the widow. I wouldn't push it. As I told you, she's full of the strangest whims.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Here's them cigars you wanted, me lady.

WIDOW. O, thank you, Phelim.

(Seeing the two ladies' shocked looks. To them:)

Cigar?

MADAME BATHILDE. No, thank you.

MADAME CARON. No, thank you.

*(*MONSIEUR LEROUX *enters.)*

LEROUX. Excuse me. Madame Tillou?

WIDOW. You must be poor, dear Louis Leroux. Why, listen to that. We rhyme, don't we. Tillou and Leroux. Leroux, Tillou. How do you do, Monsieur Leroux.

LEROUX. Madam, my heart goes out to you for your brother.

WIDOW. Fear not, monsieur. He might still recover…

*(*CHICAGO *nudges sharply.)*

…but I doubt it.

*(*MARIE *and* CECILE *enter.)*

LEROUX. Marie, my hot water bottle, please.

WIDOW. Is this the child? Is this Marie? Come to me, my sister in heartache.

*(*WIDOW *embraces* MARIE *and the hot water bottle squeaks.)*

Was that me or you? Ha ha. The hot water bottle.

MARIE. *(Kneeling:)* Oh, Madame Tillou. I'm so sorry about François.

WIDOW. To your feet, mademoiselle. Rise and be strong as we women must. And not another word until you kiss me.

(Kiss.)

Lovely. And again.

(Kiss.)

Lovely. And again. Oh, I feel so much better already. And again. So much, *much* better…

CECILE. *(Aside to audience:)* So this is François's sister. A curious-looking creature—though I can't say how, exactly. A pushing sort. Look how she appropriates my sister.

WIDOW. One more kiss, dear.

CECILE. Hmpf!

WIDOW. And are you dear Cecile? Come kiss me, too, Cecile.

CHICAGO. That's enough, Daisy. Remember your health.

CECILE. *(Aside to audience:)* "Daisy," he calls her! Agamemnon certainly seems on familiar terms with this woman!

MARIE. Dear Madame Tillou, you must help us. You must.

WIDOW. Dry your tears, child, and spout it all.

MARIE. It's our father, you see.

LEROUX. I was improvident, Madame. I owe fifteen thousand francs to one Bastien André, a scoundrel who calls himself a picture dealer. He gave me until today at six o'clock.

WIDOW. Lordy! Well, a pox on the knave. The blackguard. The scamp. The scoundrel. The sneak.

LEROUX. I'm so heartsick I fear I will die

*(*LEROUX *sits on the hot water bottle and it squeaks.)*

MADAME BATHILDE. The hot water bottle.

MADAME CARON. The hot water bottle.

MARIE. It's true, Madame Tillou. Papa's been in a fever all day.

WIDOW. Now don't any of you worry. I promise I will help you any way I can.

(Grasping CHICAGO's *arm:)*

As will dear, dear Chicago, of course.

CECILE. *(Aside:)* Agamemnon is blushing!

WIDOW. Chicago has helped me through *so* much…in his inimitable fashion.

CHICAGO. Shucks.

CECILE. *(Aside:)* So they know each other. Yet he's never mentioned her!

WIDOW. Come, give me a kiss now yourself, dear boy.

*(*CHICAGO *ashamedly kisses the* WIDOW's *cheek.)*

There. That's your payment for all our friendship.

CECILE. *(Aside:)* It's more than he ever gave me!

LEROUX. Oh, Madam, if you could beg André for mercy—or somehow persuade him to extend the time. But it's after five o'clock. I fear there's no hope.

WIDOW. There is always hope, sir.

MARIE. *(Aside to* CECILE*:)* Cecile, isn't she wonderful? I would I had her spirit. And her figure.

CECILE. I would I had her neck.

WIDOW. Bucky…

CECILE. *(Aside:)* So it's "Bucky" now!

WIDOW. Take a pen and write me a letter to this Mr. Erastus Anderson.

LEROUX. Bastien André.

WIDOW. Pardon. To Bastien André, pig-dealer.

LEROUX. Picture-dealer.

WIDOW. Picture-dealer. Say that I wish to see him on a small matter.

CHICAGO. Dictate and it is done, dear lady.

WIDOW. What would I do without you, Aggy?

CECILE. *(Aside:)* So it's "Aggy" now! I am going to find out the truth about these two—and settle his hash.

(Knock at left.)

O'SHAUGHNESSY. It's Master Andry himself, yer Widowship.

WIDOW. Admit him, please, Phelim.

(Enter ANDRÉ.*)*

CHICAGO, DUTCHY, O'SHAUGHNESSY, WIDOW. *(They howl like wolves.)*

ANDRÉ. Madame. Good day.

WIDOW. And good day to you, sir—if you *mean* good.

ANDRÉ. *(Aside:)* This must be the widowed sister. Well, well! She's quite a stunner!

(To LEROUX*:)*

Leroux, I have come to serve personal notice to you that I allow you just— *(Checks pocket watch.)* —twenty-two minutes to produce the money you owe me. If not the money, then your daughter.

WIDOW. *(With aristocratic lassitude:)* Wait, please. You are speaking of the woman… *(--is about to say "I am in love with"--)* …I have just met. You are disturbing my nerves. And your manner toward this valued old friend of my brother is uncourteous to him and an affront to me. One should not get excited over a pecuniary trifle.

ANDRÉ. A trifle, Madam! When you come to know the amount…

WIDOW. Peace! I know all about this fifty thousand francs.

MARIE. No, no, no! *Fifteen* thousand!

WIDOW. Is that all? Fifteen thousand francs? So it's the custom for people in your line of business to go around in person collecting financial chicken-feed?

CHICAGO. *(Aside:)* By George, he is an artist!

WIDOW. The checkbook, Bucky. I'll give the man his filthy lucre, just to be rid of his snivelling, sneering face.

MARIE. Sweet heaven. A savior!

LEROUX. *(Kissing* WIDOW's *hand:)* I am speechless, Madame.

WIDOW. Tut, tut. The pen, please.

(Aside to CHICAGO*:)*

What's my name?

CHICAGO. *(Whispering:)* Daisy. Here's the sample.

*(*WIDOW *signs the check.)*

DUTCHY. Py yiminy, she got all the curves now.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. And all the angles, too. She's more feminyne than me cousin Dennis.

WIDOW. *(Signing:)* "Daisy Tillou!"

(Giving checks to ANDRÉ*:)*

Here are the fifteen thousand. I believe my brother also owed you twenty-five hundred francs. Here they are. I don't want a receipt. I want nothing that you have touched. I wish to say a word to you, then you may go. I ought to put it in strong language, but I am a lady and that privilege is denied me.

(Without thinking, the WIDOW *takes one of the cigars and expertly rolls it in his fingers, sniffs it, and cuts off the end during the following.)*

From these friends I know your history. You are a man without pity—a man whose lust for money has withered every kindly impulse you were born with. You found my brother and his poor artist-friends struggling honestly and manfully for their bread against hunger and misery and you have traded upon their poverty. You have bought their pictures for francs and sold them for Louis d'or, you have hidden their talents from the world, you have beguiled them into debt and robbed them in a hundred mean and pitiful ways. And yonder sits the blameless old man whom your deceptions, your inhumanities, your pitiless brutalities have brought to the edge of ruin.

(Sticks the cigar in CHICAGO's *mouth.)*

I am a lady, and I know the limitations that are upon me, but this I *will* say—that from head to heel, from heart to marrow, from pallet

to midriff you are a mean, cowardly, contemptible, base-begotten damned scoundrel! *Oh!*

(Kicks the couch, then sits demurely.)

You have what you want, now leave!

MADAME BATHILDE. *(Reverently:)* Beautiful as a prayer!

MADAME CARON. And a mind as sound as a nut!

ANDRÉ. Your words strike me to the heart, Madam. But business remains business, and I have a contract signed by your brother and sealed by two witnesses. It says that I may take twenty-five of his pictures at the value of one hundred francs apiece. And so I will.

WIDOW. *(*MILLET's *voice:)* You refused those same pictures yesterday!

(Reverting to the WIDOW*:)*

I mean—so I hear…

ANDRÉ. Yesterday the pictures were worthless. Today with your brother dying they are worth a great deal indeed.

WIDOW. *(Aside to* CHICAGO *and the lads:)* Well, boys, thank you for hiking my prices.

ANDRÉ. Jean-François Millet is a world master, of course. I knew it from the moment I met him and saw his work. I remember the day he signed this agreement. He was so grateful to me as his patron and long-time supporter, and even his friend.

WIDOW. *(Aside:)* The man is a moral abscess.

ANDRÉ. Thank you for the offer, but I demand my rights, under the contract. I will have the pictures. I refuse your check.

WIDOW. Monsieur André, you seem to have cornered me. Have I no alternative to simply handing over the equivalent of a small fortune?

ANDRÉ. Yes, madam, you have a very simple alternative.

WIDOW. And what is that?

ANDRÉ. *(Kneeling:) Marry me!*

(The WIDOW *faints into* DUTCHY *and* O'SHAUGHNESSY's *arms. General consternation.)*

(Curtain.)

End of Act I

ACT II

(The Widow's palatial drawing-room in Paris, three months later. Afternoon. A magnificent sofa. Some fashionable chairs. French doors up center give onto a terrace. Door to the house's front hall up left. Door up right to the Widow's bedroom. Doors down left and down right to sitting rooms.)

(At curtain, CHARLIE, *a gorgeous flunkey in a powdered wig, enters from up left with a vase containing a huge bouquet. He sets the vase on a table. The* WIDOW *sweeps in from up right, wearing a bright, sumptuous gown.)*

WIDOW. Charlie…? Don't tell me it's more flowers, Charlie.

CHARLIE. Yes, Madam, they're from Monsieur André, with a note.

WIDOW. Thank you, Charlie. That's all.

CHARLIE. Madam.

*(*CHARLIE *exits up left with a bow.)*

WIDOW. *(Reading the note:)* "Peerless goddess…" That's me, I guess. "Peerless goddess, I shall come to you this afternoon for the answer I have craved for three months. Must I go to the law to get those pictures, or will you meet me tomorrow at Notre Dame and make me the happiest man in Paris? The stars do not shine as brightly as the diamonds of your eyes, the gold of the Andes does not glitter as brightly as your hair…" Mm-hm, mm-hmm, mmm-hmmm… "Your eternal servant, Bastien André."

(Sniffs roses, then takes tobacco and packs a pipe during the following.)

Well, he sure knows how to woo a lady. Truth to tell, Monsieur André's wooing begins to tire me a little. It's been a mine of satisfaction to the boys, and a body can't refuse them anything. Chicago says I *ought* to marry him, says it'd serve him right. Well, I draw the line at the altar. Still, Notre Dame is just up the street. And ten yards of Belgian lace and a wedding dress never hurt a man. Suppose I promised to marry him on condition that he—Daisy, don't even *think* about it.

(Clock chimes.)

Oh, Christmas. He'll be here any time and I'm not even ready.

(Goes to mirror to powder his nose.)

Of course, I have to get out of that contract or he'll seize those pictures. And we can't afford that. We can't let him get rich out of us, oh no! And with all this moonshine and spooning I haven't had a single minute to paint…

*(*CHARLIE *enters from up left.)*

CHARLIE. Excuse me, Madam.

WIDOW. Yes, Charlie. Is it Monsieur André?

CHARLIE. No, Madam. It's Monsieur Leroux.

WIDOW. At this hour? All right, Charlie, send him in.

*(*CHARLIE *exits.* WIDOW *lights the pipe.)*

A funny time for Louis to come calling. I wonder what he wants. Of course I've made him and the family rich as Croesus, what with all those pictures. Now they have a house in Paris and a house in the country.

(Studies the pipe.)

I've got to remember to get some more of this tobacco…

*(*CHARLIE *enters.)*

CHARLIE. Monsieur Leroux!

WIDOW. *Whoops!*

*(*WIDOW *runs about looking for a place to put the pipe.* LEROUX *enters, looking spritely and handsomely tricked out, minus cane but with a black crepe band on his arm. He carries an enormous bouquet of red roses and looks every inch the suitor.* CHARLIE *exits.)*

LEROUX. Dearest Madame Tillou!

WIDOW. *(Whipping the pipe behind back, snapping open a fan to blow the smoke away:)* Hello, Louis! How are you?

LEROUX. At the sight of Daisy Tillou? I'm rejuvenated. I'm invigorated.

WIDOW. Strong words for little old me.

LEROUX. No words are strong enough for a woman as beautiful and charming as you.

WIDOW. Lordy!

LEROUX. Will you grant an intimate chat to a lonely bachelor? A bachelor with something very, very important to ask you?

WIDOW. *(To audience:)* Uh-oh.

(To LEROUX*:)*

A "lonely bachelor," you say? Surely you mean "contented widower," sir.

LEROUX. *(Moving in closer all the time:)* Alas, that you and I should know the meaning of widowhood while still so vital. Loneliness is something we have in common, fair lady. It's something that binds us two…very, very tightly…

WIDOW. *(Pointing upwards:)* What's that?

LEROUX. Where?

(While LEROUX *is distracted,* WIDOW *lifts roses from vase, dumps the pipe into the vase, reinserts the flowers.)*

WIDOW. Flowers for me? How sweet. *Charlie!*

*(*CHARLIE *enters.)*

CHARLIE. Yes, Madam.

WIDOW. Charlie, put these in water.

CHARLIE. Yes, Madam.

WIDOW. And bring my headache pills, please.

CHARLIE. Yes, Madam.

WIDOW. The big bottle.

CHARLIE. Yes, Madam.

WIDOW. And Charlie—poke your head in from time to time.

CHARLIE. Yes, Madam.

*(*CHARLIE *exits with flowers.)*

LEROUX. May I express my sympathy on this, the saddest of all days?

WIDOW. I'm sorry. The saddest of all days…?

LEROUX. Your brother's funeral.

WIDOW. Ah, yes, yes. My brother's funeral. I knew I should've checked my book. I've been so busy lately. Oh, poor François, would that he were here today…

LEROUX. François was as a son to me. Now he's gone and my poor Marie has no comfort any more.

WIDOW. Yes, we must do something to comfort poor Marie.

LEROUX. François had a genius for art. *(Drawing closer:)* But you, Daisy, you have a genius for life.

WIDOW. *(Drawing away:)* Oh, I just make it all up as I go along…

LEROUX. *(Moving closer:)* He captured beauty. He created beauty. But you—you *are* beauty!

WIDOW. *(Pulling away:)* It's all a facade, you know. The right dress and a touch of powder…

LEROUX. *(Falling to his knees:)* Daisy…

WIDOW. Really, sir!

LEROUX. *(Following her about on his knees:)* Daisy, Daisy…

WIDOW. Have I given you permission to be so familiar with my name?

LEROUX. *(Still following on his knees:)* Daisy, Daisy, Daisy, Daisy…

WIDOW. It's Madame Tillou, to you.

LEROUX. You not only saved a man's property, you made young his old heart.

(Produces a box with a ring inside it.)

Marry me!

WIDOW. Ha ha ha ha ha!

(Taking a second look:)

That is a very nice ring.

LEROUX. "Tillou and Leroux" has very nice ring to it, too. We rhyme, Daisy, remember? We rhyme!

WIDOW. Well, is that so important?

LEROUX. We're poetry! We're an ode! We're an epic! I ask nothing of you. Merely your companionship.

WIDOW. Yes, that's what they all say…

LEROUX. Let me live in your light. I beg you! Marry me!

WIDOW. *(Aside:)* Well, if I married him, at least I wouldn't have to marry André…

LEROUX. Is there someone else? Do I have a rival? I'll kill him!

WIDOW. Now, now, Louis…

LEROUX. Is it Bastien André? I *will* kill him!

(Takes out a pistol.)

I'll shoot the cur in the street!

WIDOW. No, Louis. Don't. It would be wrong. *Wrong.* Not *very* wrong, but still wrong.

*(*CHARLIE *enters with a bottle and more red roses.)*

CHARLIE. Your headache pills, Madam. And flowers from the Swedish Ambassador.

WIDOW. Put them in water, Charlie.

CHARLIE. There's a gentleman outside.

WIDOW. Is it Monsieur…You-Know-Who-Hey?

CHARLIE. No, Madam. He's from the police.

WIDOW. The police?

LEROUX. Really, Daisy, I must have an answer.

WIDOW. Let him in, Charlie! Let the man in!

LEROUX. *(Kissing her hand:)* Daisy, please. Have pity…

CHARLIE. The gentleman in question, Madame.

*(*CECILE *enters, in a fake moustache and dressed like a man.* LEROUX *continues kissing while* WIDOW *tries to get it away.)*

CECILE / LEFAUX. *(French accent:)* Madame Tillou, I am Inspector Gerard LeFaux of the Paris Police.

LEROUX. Daisy!

WIDOW. *(Wrenching hand away from* LEROUX*:)* Louis, that's enough!

CECILE / LEFAUX. *(Aside to audience:)* Actually, it is I, Cecile Leroux, in disguise. I come here to discover the truth about this hussy and Agamemnon—and I find my father on his knees kissing her hand!

CECILE / LEFAUX. I have some questions for you, Madame.

LEROUX. How dare you, sir! This lady and I are in the midst of a private conversation.

WIDOW. No, no, thank you for coming, Inspector. —Charlie, keep on poking.

CHARLIE. Very good, Madame.

*(*CHARLIE *exits up left.)*

CECILE / LEFAUX. Madame Tillou, your brother Jean-François Millet, the painter. I understand that after he took ill he went to the Barbary Coast?

WIDOW. Three months ago today, where he remained until his death last week—or was it the week before…

CECILE / LEFAUX. My investigations show no sign that your brother was ever in the Barbary Coast.

WIDOW. My brother? Jean-François? Never in the Barbary Coast?

CECILE / LEFAUX. No.

WIDOW. Where *is* the Barbary Coast?

CECILE / LEFAUX. I do not know. But if he did not go to the Barbary Coast, where did he go? He seems to have disappeared!

WIDOW. He didn't disappear. His body lies in state in the Pantheon this very minute.

CECILE / LEFAUX. Does it really? The casket, madame, is closed. And who has all Jean-François Millet's money since he disappeared? You do!

WIDOW. Well, of course, I have it. I'm his sister…

CECILE / LEFAUX. So you say! I think you also know a man named Agamemnon Buckner.

WIDOW. Dear Chicago. Ah, yes. You may say I owe everything to dear Mr. Buckner.

LEROUX. Daisy, will you marry me or not?

WIDOW. Louis, *please.* This is important.

CECILE / LEFAUX. Madame Tillou! I must ask you! What is your relationship to this Monsieur Buckner? Is he your lover?

WIDOW. My lover? Chicago? Ha ha ha ha ha!

LEROUX. Daisy, please…

WIDOW. All right! Yes! He *is* my lover!

LEROUX. *(Aside:)* I'm crushed!

CECILE / LEFAUX. *(Aside:)* I'm crushed!

*(*CHARLIE *enters.)*

CHARLIE. Monsieur André.

WIDOW. Put him in water, Charlie!

CHARLIE. Very good, Madame.

*(*CHARLIE *exits.)*

WIDOW. Gentlemen, you see how besieged I am today.

LEROUX. I won't leave you, Daisy, until we settle this.

CECILE / LEFAUX. And I still have many questions to ask you.

WIDOW. Very well. You'll both have to wait.

LEROUX. I'll wait in here.

*(*LEROUX *heads toward room up right.)*

WIDOW. Not in there, it's my bedroom. In here.

(Takes LEROUX *down left. On the way, he attempts to embrace the* WIDOW.*)*

LEROUX. I'm frisky, Daisy. Frisky.

WIDOW. Stop that. Here.

(Thrusts a book in his hand.)

Read something sedative. Ponder your mortality. Consider your age.

*(*WIDOW *shuts* LEROUX *in the room down left.)*

You may wait in here, Inspector.

(Takes CECILE's *arm and leads her down right.)*

I'm so happy you came. Aren't you a handsome fellow. Have a Havana. Toodle-oo!

*(*CECILE *exits into room right.)*

So—I have the police on my hands now…

*(*MESDAMES BATHILDE *and* MADAME CARON *sweep in from up left, with* MARIE. *They are all richly dressed now, and in deep mourning.)*

MADAME BATHILDE. Madame Tillou!

MADAME CARON. Dearest Daisy!

MADAME BATHILDE. Our deepest sympathies.

MADAME CARON. Deepest sympathies of the day.

WIDOW. Sympathies…? Oh, yes, the funeral. I really must remember that.

MADAME BATHILDE. And we've brought you dear Marie.

MADAME CARON. Dear Marie.

WIDOW. Marie—dear heart—come rest your head upon my shoulder.

MARIE. O, Daisy!

*(*MARIE *embraces* WIDOW.*)*

WIDOW. *(Aside:)* It breaks my heart to see her suffer so. —Bear up, dear heart. François is better off now than when he was alive.

MARIE. Do you think so, Daisy?

WIDOW. Oh, I know it.

MARIE. It's almost time for the burial, you know.

MADAME BATHILDE. And you're not wearing mourning, dear.

WIDOW. Damned if I'm not. I mean—no, well, I've never had a funeral before.

MADAME CARON. Except your husband and eleven children.

WIDOW. Amazing how soon one forgets.

MADAME BATHILDE. We just saw your brother's casket.

MADAME CARON. It was so awful!

WIDOW. I thought it was rather nice. I paid enough for it.

MADAME BATHILDE. The casket is beautiful.

MADAME CARON. We mean your brother's death.

MADAME BATHILDE. O, Daisy!

MADAME CARON. O, Daisy!

MARIE. O, Daisy!

*(*MARIE, BATHILDE, *and* CARON *weep on* WIDOW's *shoulder, howling.)*

WIDOW. Ladies. Ladies, I would like to speak to Marie, if you wouldn't mind waiting.

(Leads BATHILDE *and* CARON *to the room down left.)*

Why don't you keep Monsieur Leroux company in here.

MADAME BATHILDE. If there's anything we can do…

MADAME CARON. Anything at all.

WIDOW. You just let me know.

*(*WIDOW *opens door and* LEROUX *starts out.)*

LEROUX. Daisy?

WIDOW. Thank you!

MADAME BATHILDE. *(Exiting:)* Monsieur Leroux!

MADAME CARON. *(Exiting:)* Dear Monsieur Leroux!

WIDOW. Come kiss me for his sake, dear.

*(*WIDOW *and* MARIE *embrace and kiss, sitting on the couch.)*

MARIE. François couldn't be better off than he is now, could he?

WIDOW. Not imaginable.

MARIE. I love to have you kiss me, Daisy.

WIDOW. Do you, dear?

MARIE. It's just the way François used to do it his own self.

WIDOW. Is it?

MARIE. Exactly. And he hugged me the same way. Just exactly. Isn't it strange?

WIDOW. I guess it must run in the blood.

MARIE. You remind me of him in oh so many ways. You look like him, you act like him, you have his dear voice, you almost walk like him.

WIDOW. Do I?

MARIE. François was more graceful.

WIDOW. Hmp!

MARIE. But in woman's clothes I think he wouldn't have been. I don't think he would have kicked his skirts around the way you do sometimes. Still—he might because he was an impetuous creature. These three months it's almost as if I was *with* him.

WIDOW. I am glad that I remind you of him.

*(*WIDOW *gives* MARIE *a long kiss.* MARIE *pulls back in shock.)*

MARIE. *Daisy!* I do wish you wouldn't smoke!

WIDOW. Just a little corncob once in a while, in memory of *him.*

MARIE. He used to forget himself and swear. You do that, Daisy, and it's very naughty. Promise me you won't.

WIDOW. I'll be da—hanged if I will. But I promise for you.

MARIE. And he wasn't as—as queer as you, Daisy. He wouldn't be dressed the way you are if it was his funeral.

WIDOW. He certainly wouldn't. He'd be in a suit. I know, I know. I'm made all wrong.

MARIE. Of course you've made all of dear François's friends rich. How sweet that was of you! And they all worship you, just as they did him.

WIDOW. It's no merit in me, child. I did it for his sake.

MARIE. It's more merit in you than it would have been in him, a hundred times over. For they were his friends, not yours. But you don't treat poor Monsieur André right.

WIDOW. Monsieur André is a bad man and he tried to ruin your father.

MARIE. He is bad, but there is good in everybody somewhere. He's never had the right influences around him. It hurts me so to see him hopeful a week, and then miserable a week and then hopeful again. You know it's cruel. And he loves you, Daisy.

WIDOW. You poor innocent, he's only after my money.

MARIE. It's no such thing.

WIDOW. How do you know?

MARIE. Because he told me so.

WIDOW. That settles it.

MARIE. Marry him, Daisy.

WIDOW. You really think I should, dear heart?

MARIE. It would uplift him, and save him. Do it, Daisy, for my sake.

(Raised voices, CHARLIE's *and* ANDRÉ's, *off left.)*

ANDRÉ. *(Offstage:)* I won't wait a moment longer.

CHARLIE. *(Offstage:)* Please be patient, sir…

ANDRÉ. *(Offstage:)* I will not be patient! I will see her now!

MARIE. I hear voices now. I don't wish to meet anyone. It's too sad.

WIDOW. Rest in my bedroom, darling. And do try to bear up.

*(*WIDOW *leads* MARIE *off up right.* CHARLIE *enters up left.)*

CHARLIE. Monsieur André says he'll wait no longer, Madam.

WIDOW. All right, send him in, please. And Charlie, this time—no poking.

CHARLIE. Very good Madame.

*(*ANDRÉ *enters,* CHARLIE *exits.)*

ANDRÉ. My precious!

WIDOW. My sweetest!

ANDRÉ. Those eyes! That hair! That face! Those lips!

(He makes to kiss the WIDOW. *The* WIDOW *breathes right in his face and he turns away fast.)*

Phew! She's been smoking!

WIDOW. You naughty boy! I ought to scold you. But dear Bastien, you have conquered me.

ANDRÉ. At last!

*(*ANDRÉ *kisses* WIDOW's *neck passionately several times.)*

WIDOW. *(Pushing him off:)* Lordy! O, you frighten me! But…

ANDRÉ. But what, sweetest?

WIDOW. *(Pulling him back on her neck:)* I like it.

ANDRÉ. You darling! I could eat you!

WIDOW. Do you love me, Bastien? Really and truly?

ANDRÉ. Love you? O, Daisy!

WIDOW. Yes, I know you love me but do you love me well enough to…

ANDRÉ. To what, dear?

WIDOW. To make me forget that you ever said those cruel words?

ANDRÉ. Cruel words?

WIDOW. That if I don't marry you tomorrow you'll take me to court?

ANDRÉ. I never meant that, darling. It was a wild outburst of despair. Forgive me, precious. You do forgive me, don't you?

WIDOW. Forgive you! The moment you have made me forget it—gladly. But as long as that nasty old contract exists to remind me of that cruel hour…

ANDRÉ. *(Producing the contract:)* This shall cease to exist the moment you promise to be mine.

(Aside:)

She's just in the humor. A touch of the heroics will fetch her.

(To WIDOW*:)*

Only say the word, darling, and I shall rip this to pieces.

WIDOW. Only one word?

ANDRÉ. One little word.

WIDOW. And it's pieces?

ANDRÉ. Just say *oui!*

WIDOW. Just oui?

ANDRÉ. Oui!

WIDOW. Wuh… Wuh…

ANDRÉ. We'd be so happy together. Give me the promise, sweetheart, and make me entirely happy beyond all doubt or question. Come now. Promise me. Promise.

WIDOW. I do puh…puh…puh…

(Aside:)

I must gain time.

(The WIDOW *begins to cry.)*

ANDRÉ. Dearest! What is it?

WIDOW. O, think of the day! I'm so wicked to forget it.

ANDRÉ. The day?

WIDOW. François's funeral, of course! Betroth myself today—with my dear brother still cooling off in his coffin? No. It's impossible.

ANDRÉ. But Daisy, I must have my answer.

(Noises offstage left.)

WIDOW. Run, dear. I hear someone in the house.

ANDRÉ. Do you think I care if someone finds me here?

WIDOW. You wouldn't want to compromise…*your future wife?*

ANDRÉ. Future wife? You mean—oui? Oui-oui?

WIDOW. I mean…oui'll see.

ANDRÉ. Very well. *(Heading down left:)* I'll wait in here—

WIDOW. No, not in there.

ANDRÉ. *(Heading down right:)* In here, then.

WIDOW. No, not in there.

ANDRÉ. *(*ANDRÉ *heads up right.)* Then in here.

WIDOW. No, not there, either. Go out the French doors, across the terrace, down the stairs, take a left at the corner, then a right, keep going straight, then a left, a right, a left, you'll find a bench beneath a chestnut tree, sit there and gaze at the river and think of me.

ANDRÉ. I will.

(Starts out, but comes right back.)

But wait! Bastien André should escape out the window like a common thief?

WIDOW. Even a common thief guards the honor of…*his future wife.*

ANDRÉ. I'm the happiest man alive!

WIDOW. I haven't promised. I've only weakened.

ANDRÉ. Weaken, Madam, weaken! I shall expect your full *oui-oui* by six o'clock.

*(*ANDRÉ *exits upstage through the French doors.)*

WIDOW. I'd better get back into trousers fast. I'm turning into Cleopatra.

*(*CHARLIE *enters.)*

CHARLIE. Madam.

WIDOW. Yes, Charlie?

CHARLIE. Monsieur Chicago!

(Enter CHICAGO, *nobbily dressed in a plug hat, with a crepe band on arm.)*

CHICAGO. Thanks, Percival.

WIDOW. That will be all, Charlie.

CHICAGO. Oh, and have my horses polished. They're looking a little dingy.

*(*CHARLIE *exits.)*

Princess, it's the grandest day! Everything is booming! Lemme hug you.

(He hugs WIDOW. CECILE *steps out, sees them.)*

CECILE / LEFAUX. *(Aside:)* Look at them! So Chicago *is* her lover, just as she said!

*(*CECILE / LEFAUX *retreats.* CHICAGO *and* WIDOW *part. Crowd noise and funeral bells, offstage.)*

WIDOW. What's all the ruckus out there?

CHICAGO. That ruckus is you, old boy. Your casket being carried through the streets! The nobbiest funeral Paris has seen in 50 years, bar Napoleon. What a spectacle! The whole Champs Elysées swathed in black from eaves to pavement and packed with people clear to the Arch. Infantry, cavalry, artillery, the whole French army. Say, what are you doing in this jolly rig? Aren't you going to attend?

WIDOW. No, I'm not. The idea of man attending his own funeral. I never heard of such a thing.

CHICAGO. All right, but you're going to miss some fun. It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!

WIDOW. Chicago, a policeman is here.

CHICAGO. To protect you from the swarms?

WIDOW. No. To arrest me for murdering myself.

CHICAGO. Mm. We're going to have to use the old pumpkin for that one.

*(*CHARLIE *enters.)*

CHARLIE. Monsieur Dutchy and Monsieur O'Shaughnessy are here, Madam—with the coffin.

CHICAGO. Great! Send 'em in, Curlicue.

*(*CHARLIE *exits.* DUTCHY *and* O'SHAUGHNESSY *enter, also richly rigged out, carrying a coffin.)*

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Thanks, Humphrey. Top o' the mornin', me lady.

DUTCHY. Vould you like to pay yourself some final respects?

WIDOW. So this is my coffin.

CHICAGO. Not too bad for a final sardine tin, huh. Roomy enough for two, plus you got all the modern conveniences.

WIDOW. I wish I'd gotten the blue.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Where shall we put it?

WIDOW. Oh. Just anywhere. Prop it against the wall.

CHICAGO. Give a hand, man. Give a hand.

DUTCHY. You're heavier than you tink.

WIDOW. *(Taking an end:)* What have you got in here? Bricks?

DUTCHY. Ein hundert fifty *pounds* of bricks.

(They set the coffin down on two chairs.)

CHICAGO. And in an hour these bricks go to their eternal resting place.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Y'know they're buryin' you between Louie the Fourteen and the Hunchback of Notre Dame.

(Funeral bell rings, offstage.)

WIDOW. I wish they'd stop tolling that darn bell. It gives me the jimjams.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Lord, Francis, if you could hear the payple talk. Only three days dead and yer bigger than Raf-ay-ell.

CHICAGO. "The Gleaners" just went for five hundred thousand potatoes.

DUTCHY. Und O'Shaughnessy's dachshund for *six* hundred thousand!

CHICAGO. We could sell your old yellow-pine easel for five grand, easy.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. And boys, listen to this—the King o' France himself is goin' to the cemetery!

*(*CHICAGO *marches, playing trombone. The other three dance a jig.)*

O'SHAUGHNESSY. *And* the Emperor of Russia. *And* the Sultan of Turkey! As for popes and archbishops and such, we're suffocated with 'em! You're the toast of the court!

(More dancing. The WIDOW *dances with* CHICAGO *as* CECILE / LEFAUX *looks out of her room.)*

CECILE / LEFAUX. She's dancing now! On the day of her brother's funeral!

*(*CECILE / LEFAUX *retreats back into her room.)*

CHICAGO. Tomorrow Daisy Tillou can get on a train and vanish forever. In a week you return with a moustache and set back up right here. We've got a whole new disguise for you.

WIDOW. What now? A milkmaid from Marseilles?

CHICAGO. Placide Duval. A rich amateur painter, and marvelously successful imitator of the late lamented.

WIDOW. Imitator of who?

CHICAGO. Of you, who else? Of Millet!

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Ye can paint a million-worth a year painting like Millet.

WIDOW. *Like* Millet? I *am* Millet!

CHICAGO. Duval's already getting famous. You know that copy of "The Angelus" you made? Our English nabob just bought it for twenty thousand francs.

WIDOW. That wasn't the copy, that was the original. The other was the copy.

CHICAGO. Well, it's good enough for the money it brought.

WIDOW. Ah, boys, you've killed me for good. Live another fifty years as a successful imitator of myself? Suffer the daily torture of that bastard fame?

CHICAGO. The bastard fame has netted you three million francs.

DUTCHY. It's a rich life.

WIDOW. It's a poor excuse for a real one.

CHICAGO. You could even win Marie back as Duval.

WIDOW. I want to win Marie as myself. If I can remember who that is.

CHICAGO. Cheer up, my dear, the worst is yet to come! Oh, come on!

*(*CHICAGO *starts up a tune on an imaginary accordion. The boys join in.)*

WIDOW. Well, I may as well dance as anything else. It's my funeral!

(They all dance the can-can. The WIDOW *hops up onto the coffin and does the can-can there as* MARIE *enters from up right.)*

MARIE. This is shameful! Shameful!

(They stop dancing.)

WIDOW. Marie! Dear Marie…

MARIE. Don't you speak to me. Don't ever speak to me again!

WIDOW. *(Aside to the boys:)* Confound you harum-scarum rascals. You *would* have to have an Irish wake.

(Aloud:)

Leave me, gentlemen. I wish to speak with this young lady.

*(*CHICAGO, DUTCHY, *and* O'SHAUGHNESSY *exit up left.)*

MARIE. O Daisy, how could you act so?

WIDOW. You poor dear, it wasn't my natural self who was dancing. When I'm grieved I get so emotional, you know.

MARIE. Oh. Then it was only…womanly hysterics?

WIDOW. Womanly hysterics. That was it.

MARIE. And the others? They were having womanly hysterics, too?

WIDOW. Every blessed one of them. They're all so full of youth and high spirits, you know.

(Cannons boom in the distance. WIDOW *jumps into* MARIE's *arms.)*

You see how jumpy I am? With all these cannons and bells I'm a regular jack-in-the-box today.

MARIE. Well, François wouldn't be dancing and carrying on. He'd be weeping bitter tears.

WIDOW. Yes, François did have a gift for gloom. I lack that talent.

MARIE. You can be so whimsical, Daisy. And at the oddest times.

WIDOW. Ah, well. Life hath made me whimsical.

MARIE. Poor, dear Daisy! It must be so hard for you. *(Indicating the coffin:)* Is that—is that him?

WIDOW. It better be. I don't keep coffins lying around my parlor every day.

(That makes MARIE *weep.)*

Forgive me. Forgive me. It's those whimsies again.

MARIE. I can't believe it's François in there.

WIDOW. It isn't François. It's only mortal clay. Fired in the kiln of life. Glazed by death. Squared off and waiting for the mortar of eternity.

MARIE. Oh, he was a brick, wasn't he?

WIDOW. He still is. More than ever.

MARIE. *(Lifting the coffin lid:)* Maybe one last look—

WIDOW. *(Slamming it shut again:)* No, no, no. You don't want to do that.

MARIE. You think I wouldn't recognize him?

WIDOW. He's changed, changed.

MARIE. And to think that this is his funeral, and we shall never have him again.

WIDOW. But we shall have each other.

MARIE. You darling sister. *(Solemnly:)* I worship the very ground you walk on, Daisy Tillou.

WIDOW. Ha ha ha ha ha!

MARIE. Why do you laugh?

WIDOW. I always laugh when I'm touched.

MARIE. Have you spoken with Monsieur André? May I send word you're going to marry him? Do let me, Daisy. Please.

WIDOW. If you asked me for my head I'd give it to you. I'd screw it off my neck and hand it to you in a box.

(Aside:)

Wait a moment. That's a capital idea! I think I see my way out of widowhood! Without the help of Placide Duval!

MARIE. How I shall miss you.

WIDOW. I'm sorry?

MARIE. If you marry.

WIDOW. Will you really?

MARIE. *I* shall have no husband now. I don't know what shall become of me.

WIDOW. Ah, dear heart, how beautiful it would be if this were all a delusion. A dream. If it were only a fictitious François Millet in here.

MARIE. O, what a sweet thought!

WIDOW. It *is* a pretty thought.

MARIE. Let's imagine it. Go on, darling.

WIDOW. Imagine François appearing before you, disguised somehow.

MARIE. Oh, how lovely!

WIDOW. In some extravagant disguise. Without any sign by which to know him. And his voice disguised, too. So that even if he told you it was he, you mightn't believe him.

MARIE. Why would he be disguised?

WIDOW. Oh, I don't know…

MARIE. Perhaps…wracked by debt and deep in despair he decided to disappear for a while.

WIDOW. Oh, that's good. You're good at this.

MARIE. Go on, sister.

WIDOW. Then he would ask you to marry him.

MARIE. I'd do it right away. Oh, but even in disguise I'd recognize him instantly!

WIDOW. Really? How?

MARIE. Why, by the pink scar on his wrist! But Daisy, I'm sorry you had that beautiful vision. I shan't get it out of my mind now, and it will break my heart. Oh, he's gone, he's gone, and we shall never see him anymore! There's no hope left on earth! O fate, O cruel fate!

*(*MARIE *weeps.)*

WIDOW. Marie…?

MARIE. Yes, Daisy?

*(*WIDOW *pulls up her sleeve and shows the scar.)*

WIDOW. Guess who.

MARIE. François!?

*(*MARIE *throws herself into* WIDOW's *arms, then immediately breaks away.)*

How dare you?!

(Slaps WIDOW's *face.)*

Oh, my love!

(Re-embraces WIDOW, *who bends her over for a passionate kiss.)*

(While they're locked in their kiss, all the doors open and CHARLIE, LEROUX, CECILE, *and* MESDAMES BATHILDE *and* CARON *step out.)*

CHARLIE, LEROUX, CECILE / LEFAUX, BATHILDE, CARON. *(Variously, as appropriate:)* Madame! —Daisy, you must listen. —Madame Tillou! —Dear Daisy. —My dear girl, I—

(They all see the kiss, and exit immediately back into their rooms.)

MARIE. So—you're not dead?

WIDOW. Not to my knowledge.

MARIE. How in the world will we ever explain to father?

WIDOW. That I'm alive?

MARIE. About the dress!

WIDOW. Never mind that. There's much to do, and I must get out of this disguise today. Marie, go tell Bastien André to come slip into my rooms at six o'clock, unannounced.

MARIE. You won't marry him?

WIDOW. Not unless they change the laws of France.

MARIE. Oh, sweetheart! One more kiss?

WIDOW. Take two. One for each of me. Now go—go!

MARIE. Yes!

(Starts out, turns back.)

But where *is* Monsieur André?

WIDOW. Go across the terrace, down the stairs, take a left at the corner, then a right, keep going straight, then a left, a right, a left, you'll find a bench beneath a chestnut tree, he'll be sitting there gazing at the river and thinking of me.

MARIE. As he should be.

(Rushes to kiss again.)

O, you wonderful—

WIDOW. Not now! Goodbye!

MARIE. Goodbye!

*(*MARIE *exits as* O'SHAUGHNESSY *runs in fast from left, followed by* DUTCHY *and* CHICAGO.*)*

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Francis—Francis—you'd better pack up and get out o' town right now.

WIDOW. What's the matter?

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Chicago will nivver blather us out o' this one.

WIDOW. What is it? What's wrong?

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Ye know who's outside? The King of France, the Emperor of Russia, and the Sultan of Turkey. And ye know what they're here for? *To view the remains.*

CHICAGO & WIDOW. *(Together:)* O, Lordy!

WIDOW. *My* remains?

O'SHAUGHNESSY. I don't know whose else ain't in that box. When they see that yer a load of bricks, I think your prices are bound to fall—and yer head along with it.

WIDOW. What do I do?

CHICAGO. Get in the box.

*(*CHICAGO *and* O'SHAUGHNESSY *grab the* WIDOW *and start her toward the coffin.)*

WIDOW. No, no, no! Not that!

CHICAGO. François, you have to—

WIDOW. You got me into a dress. You're not getting me into a box. And do I look like the remains of Jean-François Millet? Did I die and grow all *this?*

CHICAGO. All right. Turn them down, man. Say they can't come in.

WIDOW. *May* I turn them down?

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Ye can't now. Dutchy invited 'em in.

CHICAGO. But why, you unspeakable idiot?

DUTCHY. It's okay, poys. Bring on da kinks!

CHICAGO. What are you talking about?

DUTCHY. Shecaggo, ve haff nodding to worry about.

(Fanfare.)

MILLET, CHICAGO, O'SHAUGHNESSY. There they are.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. There's no stoppin' 'em now. It's a royal flush!

WIDOW. How's my hair?

CHICAGO. To hell with your hair!

(Doors open.)

DUTCHY. Ze Kink of France, ze Emperor von Russia, und ze Sultan von Turkey!

(Second fanfare. KING, EMPEROR, *and* SULTAN *enter, all thickly bearded and in voluminous robes.)*

WIDOW. *(Drops a deep curtsey:)* Your Majesties, I am Daisy Tillou. Welcome to my humble home.

KING OF FRANCE. Our condolences, Madame.

(The Royals bow. CHICAGO, DUTCHY, *and* O'SHAUGHNESSY *all drop in a curtsey. Funeral bells outside.)*

Do you hear those bells, Madame? That is the moan of a desolate world.

CHICAGO. Excuse me, your Majesty—if you don't mind me calling your Majesty "your Majesty"…

(To the EMPEROR *and* SULTAN, *respectively:)*

…your Majesty, your Majesty. The Widow's been moaning a bit herself today. Maybe you could all come back another day, when there's not a funeral on.

KING OF FRANCE. Monsieur, we have come to view the remains of a true *génie de la France!* And we will!

WIDOW. Yes, but you see, François was always so shy. He never liked to be stared at.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Ye know what the poor fella died of. *(Shudders.)*

*(*CHICAGO *and* WIDOW *shudder, too.)*

CHICAGO. Remains don't keep the way they used to, especially for us commoners. This being the middle of August, all you'd see is the *remains* of the remains, if you know what I mean.

WIDOW. Your Majesties, if a poor woman—well, not so poor—if a woman could prevail on you to spare her feelings…

CHICAGO. And it's getting pretty late now. Say, what time *is* it?

*(*WIDOW, CHICAGO *and* O'SHAUGHNESSY *check their watches.)*

WIDOW. Mine says five-forty-five.

CHICAGO. Mine says almost six.

O'SHAUGHNESSY. Mine must be slow, it says five twenty-five…

KING OF FRANCE. Madame, messieurs, step aside! We have come to see the corpus and we are kings. We do what we will!

DUTCHY. Dot's all right, your Mayesties, shtep right up und see the corpus.

CHICAGO. *(Pulling* DUTCHY *away:)* "Shtep right up"? What are you doing?

KING OF FRANCE. Open the coffin!

DUTCHY. *(Aside to* CHICAGO*:)* Let dem look, Shecaggo! I put my lunch inside!

CHICAGO. Your lunch?

KING OF FRANCE. Open the coffin, I say!

DUTCHY. *(Aside to* CHICAGO*:)* Two pounds—*limperger cheese!*

KING OF FRANCE. *Open the coffin!*

WIDOW, O'SHAUGHNESSY, DUTCHY, CHICAGO. *Open the coffin!*

(They throw up the lid and with a cry of disgust all are blown back from "the remains" by the stink of Dutchy's lunch. Everyone looks out from the various rooms and are blown back as well, returning to their rooms.)

KING OF FRANCE. *Close the coffin!*

WIDOW, O'SHAUGHNESSY, DUTCHY, CHICAGO. *Close the coffin!*

KING OF FRANCE. Madame! Vous auriez dû enterrer votre frère l'été dernier! Au revoir!

(A fanfare as the Royals exit.)

CHICAGO. What did he say?

WIDOW. He said we should have buried him *last* summer.

(To DUTCHY*:)*

O you darling, let me hug you!

CHICAGO, O'SHAUGHNESSY. Me, too!

DUTCHY. I put dot cheese in dere yoost in case somepody get curious.

CHICAGO. That's no slouch of a cabbage you carry on those shoulders, Dutchy.

DUTCHY. Oh, Shecaggo, you alvays flatter somepody.

WIDOW. You splendid old thing, you shall be feasted like a prince.

DUTCHY. Vell, Gott zy dank, it come out all righd, und ve are *safe,* poys. Ve are safe!

*(*CECILE / LEFAUX *has entered.)*

CECILE / LEFAUX. Not entirely safe! I am Inspector Edouard LeFaux of the Paris Police and I have a few questions for you gentlemen.

WIDOW. I thought you said Gerard LeFaux.

CECILE / LEFAUX. Gerard-Edouard LeFaux. Gentlemen, I believe this woman Daisy Tillou to be a fraud!

(General protest. "No! no!" "A fraud?" "Impossible!" etc. They stop for:)

WIDOW. *(Aside to* CHICAGO*:)* Chicago, André will be here any second, and I'm going to need privacy for that.

(Resume general protest. "No! no!" "A fraud?" "Impossible!" etc.)

CECILE / LEFAUX. Yes! A fraud! I charge that this woman is an imposter who has come here to capitalize on Millet's death. She may even have murdered him! What is this—

(Opens coffin—without looking inside, herself—and they all flinch.)

—if not a dead body?

(Closes coffin.)

CHICAGO. Why would she murder him?

CECILE / LEFAUX. For his money.

CHICAGO. He didn't have any money.

CECILE / LEFAUX. Not until he died.

CHICAGO. If he had no money, why kill him?

CECILE / LEFAUX. To make *sure* he had money. For when this world has a great master it lets him starve. But when he is dead,

then he is recognized! *Then* come the riches! And being dead, what can he do with the money but be murdered for it?

CHICAGO. That's the craziest idea I ever heard.

CECILE / LEFAUX. Indeed? And what was your role in this scheme, monsieur? You—who are her lover?

CHICAGO. I, sir?

CECILE / LEFAUX. You, sir!

CHICAGO. Her lover?

CECILE / LEFAUX. She has admitted it herself.

*(*CHICAGO *looks to* WIDOW, *who shrugs.)*

You have certainly been familiar with her in public.

CHICAGO. Is it my fault if a woman is affectionate?

CECILE / LEFAUX. *(Forgetting her disguise for a moment:)* I'm not saying it was anybody's fault. It's a crime, Agamemnon, that's what it is! And I'm glad to see you cheerful in spite of circumstances, as usual!

CHICAGO. *(Aside to audience:)* Holy Toledo, it's Cecile!

(To CECILE / LEFAUX*:)*

Well, sir, I reject your insinuations, for as it happens I am in love with one Cecile Leroux!

CECILE / LEFAUX. You, sir?

CHICAGO. I, sir. The finest, sweetest, dearest, most precious woman in all Paris.

CECILE / LEFAUX. You mean…she is? Is she really? The finest, sweetest…

CHICAGO. …dearest, most precious woman in all Paris. No woman, not even Daisy Tillou, could ever come between me and Cecile Leroux!

CECILE / LEFAUX. Oh, you wonderful darling!

*(*CECILE / LEFAUX *throws herself into his arms and kisses him.)*

WIDOW. Monsieur, control yourself! Even for a Frenchman this is excessive!

CHICAGO. We're a little pressed for time, Inspector. I can tell you all about it right in this room.

WIDOW. *(Aside:)* Charm him, Chicago. Keep him out of here.

CHICAGO. Oh, trust me.

(To CECILE, *leading her down right:)*

Did you know I studied for the ministry, Inspector?

CECILE. Did you really…?

*(*CHICAGO *and* CECILE *exit down right.)*

WIDOW. *Charlie!*

(To the others:)

Boys, I'm going to need your help.

(Glances out French windows.)

Here he comes.

*(*CHARLIE *enters.)*

Charlie, when I ring for you, bring in that old crate of modelling equipment.

CHARLIE. Yes, Madam.

*(*CHARLIE *exits.)*

DUTCHY. Vot's da plan, Daisy?

WIDOW. I'll tell you in here. Come on.

*(*WIDOW *exits up right with* DUTCHY *and* O'SHAUGHNESSY *as* ANDRÉ *enters from the terrace and stealthily slips into the room.)*

ANDRÉ. Daisy? Darling, are you there? Daisy…? —By George, she is just rancid with money. If it wasn't for those pictures I wouldn't

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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