

LA VIE PARISIENNE

OFFENBACH

English Version by Donald Pippin

CAST OF CHARACTERS

RAOUL GARDEFER and BOBINET, young men about town.
METELLA, a glamorous actress who gets around.
SWEDISH BARON and BARONESS, first-time visitors to Paris.
MADAME DUBLIN-PLEASANTON, an imperious lady.
JULIE, her niece, friend of the Baroness.
BRAZILIAN, a flamboyant traveler.
FRICK, the bootmaker, and GABRIELLE, the glover.
PAULINE, URBAIN, servants of Madame.
Other servants, waiters, various Parisians.

Scene: a train station in Paris.

TUTTI:

QuickTime™ and a
decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

**But travelers, a word first of all from the crew:
Visitors, folk that come daily and nightly,
Go easy, have fun, above all travel lightly.
Things heavy and weighted are rated here taboo.
Celebrate the spirit of eighteen sixty two!**

TENOR:

For your trip we have newspapers, coffee and snacks.

BASS:

Tasty snacks!

TENOR:

And a tip we refuse just for calling the tracks.

BASS:

We refuse!

TUTTI:

**For Paris and points west here's the station for you,
So let us get acquainted for we are the crew.**

**Only one item you'll need on this trip --
Just a spirit for sport, fun and good-fellowship.
Things heavy and weighted are rated here taboo.
Celebrate the spirit of eighteen sixty two!**

NARRATOR: The colorful and varied crowd of travelers arriving daily in Paris is milling about the station, where . . .

BOBINET: (*with bouquet of flowers in hand, rushing in, interrupting*) When is the next train from Trouville?

NARRATOR: In five minutes, Monsieur.

BOBINET: (*aside*) Here's hoping Metella hasn't missed it.

NARRATOR: (*resuming*) The colorful and varied crowd of travelers arriving daily

GARDEFEU: (*rushing in from the opposite side. Also bearing flowers*) When is the next train from Trouville?

NARRATOR: Four and a half minutes, Monsieur.

GARDEFEU:(*aside*) So Metella will soon be back!

BOBINET: Ha! Raoul Gardefeu! The rat! I don't speak to him anymore. Not since that dirty trick he played on me.

GARDEFEU: Ha! Bobinet! The leech! We're not on speaking terms, on account of that . . . little incident.

BOBINET: I had a beautiful thing going with Blanche Topier. Everybody in Paris knew about it.

GARDEFEU: Blanche Topier was madly in love with me. It was common knowledge.

BOBINET: One morning -- it was when Blanche and I were living together at Ville d'Avray -- Blanche says to me, "Dearest Bobby, why don't we invite your friend Raoul for dinner?"

GARDEFEU: Blanche was putting up at Ville d'Avray. She writes to me: "Come tomorrow at one o'clock. He'll be away. Before coming, order your servant to say that you will be back any minute."

BOBINET: I reply, "Of course. Let's invite Raoul." She tells me, "Go and get him. On no account return without him."

GARDEFEU: I arrive at Ville d'Avray. I find Blanche; I do not find Bobinet. I ask her, "How did you manage to get rid of him?"

BOBINET: I get to Gardefeu's place. His servant tells me he will be back any minute. It's one o'clock. I wait. Two o'clock, three o'clock . . . I'm still waiting.

GARDEFEU: "Simple," replies Blanche. "Little Bobby's instructions are to go find you and not to come back without you."

BOBINET: Finally at four o'clock I give up. I return to Ville d'Avray, and there I find the two together!

GARDEFEU: About five o'clock he returns. I try to be nonchalant. Ha, ha! While you were at my place, I was taking your place! The joke's on you!

BOBINET: It was no joke!

TOGETHER: That's why we're not speaking.

BOBINET: I broke off with Blanche Taupier on the spot.

GARDEFEU: But I got bored with Blanche Taupier . . .

BOBINET: Luckily, I soon fell in love with Metella, who took to me as soon as our eyes met . . .

GARDEFEU: . . . and became interested in Metella. The interest was mutual.

BOBINET: Yesterday Metella says to me, "I have to go to Trouville to visit my bedridden aunt . . . I'll be back tomorrow."

GARDEFEU: Yesterday Metella says to me, "I must go to Trouville for my godmother's birthday . . . I'll be gone just twenty-four hours."

TOGETHER: So here I am at the station to meet Metella.

NARRATOR: Mesdames, messieurs, the train from Trouville!

CHORUS OF ARRIVING TOURISTS:

**The sky is black,
No sign of sun;
We'd better run.
Come on, be quick!**

**Delay and gab,
And we shall find no hansom cab.
Come on, be quick!**

(Metella enters on the arm of a gentleman.)

**GARDEFEU:
Metella!**

**BOBINET:
Metella!**

**METELLA:
Drat it! Merde! Caught on my own hook.**

**GENTLEMAN:
Your fluster one can hardly overlook.
Madame, perhaps you're ill --
You turn both cold and hot.**

**GARDEFEU:
She's clearly overcome by the joy unexpected.**

**GENTLEMAN:
With these young men it seems that you're connected.**

**METELLA:
Friends of mine?**

**GENTLEMAN:
Friends of yours?**

**METELLA:
Friends of mine? Certainly not!**

**Though I rack my brain to the limit,
I cannot place the two as yet.
But kindly wait another minute
Until I focus my lorgnette.**

**Ah, but now, gazing at my leisure,
I must report with deep regret:
Gentlemen, I've not had the pleasure.
Never met before, never met, never met.**

GARD. & BOB.

Never met?

METELLA:

**No, no, no, no, no, no!
Not I! Never met!**

GARD. & BOB.

Never met!

METELLA:

**There will be perhaps many others
Who will make that outrageous claim.
They'll swear that we are friends or lovers
Because, perchance, they know my name.**

**Who knows? Upon a crowded floor
I let them light my cigarette.
You may be sure 'twas nothing more.
Never met before, never met, never met, etc.**

(She sweeps out with the gentleman. Gardefeu and Bobinet look at each other for a moment in stunned silence, then fall into each other's arms.)

BOBINET: Gardefeu! My old friend!

GARDEFEU: Bobinet! Mon cher ami!

BOBINET: The treachery of Blanche Taupier tore us apart.

GARDEFEU: The treachery of Metella brings us together. She deceived both of us!

BOBINET: She was making fools of us! But that does it! My mind is made up! No more playing around for me. I've learned my lesson. I'm through with girls like that! Besides, just between you and me, they're too expensive. I'm going to where I'm appreciated -- back to decent, respectable people, ladies of high society. Who knows? This could start the revolutionary movement of the sixties: flaming youth hits the salon!

**The grand madames are broken hearted
Because we go the other route.
The smart salons we've long departed
To favor girls of ill repute.**

**Alas, poor darlings, how they suffer
Because we come no more to call!**

**They cry, are not the charms we offer
By far more intellectual?**

**So come along, ex-libertine,
To liven up the ladies of the social scene!
As for the rest, give them the axe --
Upon the other kind we simply turn our backs.
Come along!**

**GARDEFEU:
I'm with you!**

**BOBINET:
To raise a little hell among the well-to-do.**

**GARDEFEU:
Let's return.**

**BOBINET:
I agree.**

**BOTH:
Back into the bosom of society.**

**BOBINET:
A chap like me has never dreamt he
Would mend his wild and wicked ways.
But now my purse reads down to empty,
So why not see if virtue pays?**

**For do you not agree, old fellow,
That when you're broke, without a sou,
You'd best forsake the bad bordello
And take up social work anew?**

So come along, ex-libertine, etc.

BOBINET: Upward and onward! I don't suppose you could start me out with a few hundred francs? A sound investment, I'd call it.

GARDEFEU: Anything to help an old friend.

BOBINET: A box of bon bons for the Countess Diane! (*exit*)

GARDEFEU: Back to high society . . . not a bad idea . . . a rich socialite. But where to find one? There's the rub. Too much in demand. There's always Francine . . . but is she quite high enough?

NARRATOR: No, sir, she most certainly is not.

GARDEFEU: Pierre! Good old Pierre!

NARRATOR: Reliable as ever. Though no longer in your service, I'm happy to be on hand to provide the information that a gentleman needs.

GARDEFEU: Don't tell me you came here just for that!

NARRATOR: Not entirely. I'm here because I've graduated from being a valet. I am a guide!

GARDEFEU: A guide!

NARRATOR: Employed by Le Grand Hotel! It's my job to greet visitors from abroad, take them to the hotel, then show them the wonders of the city.

GARDEFEU: So you're here to meet a client?

NARRATOR: A very important client . . . a Swedish baron due on the next train . . . a Swedish baron with his wife . . .

GARDEFEU: Aha! A Swedish baroness.

NARRATOR: Well deduced!

GARDEFEU: A Swedish baroness must be rather high on the social scale.

NARRATOR: So I would presume, sir.

GARDEFEU: The hand of fate! Pierre . . .

NARRATOR: Monsieur?

GARDEFEU: This baron and baroness . . . have they ever seen you before?

NARRATOR: Not very likely.

GARDEFEU: In that case, there would be no problem if I simply stepped into your shoes and took over?

NARRATOR: No problem at all, provided that I were willing to go barefoot.

GARDEFEU: Dear old Pierre! And you would be willing, wouldn't you, to make a small sacrifice to help out your old employer? Assuming, of course, an honest compensation.

NARRATOR: Sir! Are you proposing to compromise my professional integrity by purchasing my baron and baroness?

GARDEFEU: I'll let you keep the baron. I could concentrate on the baroness.

NARRATOR: Out of the question! . . . It's a package. All or nothing.

GARDEFEU: Very well. The package, then. I'll take the lot. But how shall I recognize them?

NARRATOR: Leave that to me. I'll point them out as they step off the train, and they're all yours. By the way, I have a letter here for the baroness, by way of Le Grand Hotel. It would perhaps be more convincing if you delivered it. *(Exit)*

GARDEFEU: How strange it is! A premonition . . . A Swedish lady whom I've never even met, and already my heart is in a flutter!

**Some things in life are past explaining.
For Metella I'd pine and sigh.
The hussy left me high and dry --
Some things in life are past explaining.**

**The love I thought would never die
In half an hour's already waning.
Some things in life are past explaining.
For Metella I'd pine and sigh.**

**A Swedish lady's here expected.
As guide, I'll take her hand in tow,
And on the town we two shall go --
That Swedish lady here expected.**

**And if she prove simpatico,
She'll not go lonely and neglected --
That Swedish lady soon expected --
For as guide, I'll take her hand in tow.**

**If she be light of heart and pretty,
I'll take her out upon the town
And show the places of renown,
If she be light of heart and pretty.**

**To hidden haunts I'll lead her down
The secret byways of the city;
If she be light of heart and pretty,
I'll take her out upon the town.**

GARDEFEU: *(to the Swedish baron and baroness as they enter)* Greetings from Le Grand Hotel!

GARDEFEU:
**Not a fake and not a phony,
I'm a bargain for the money.
Never has this town before
Entertained a tourist better tended,
Furthermore:**

**I'll bet none better led,
Well fed and banqueted,
With better board and bed
Than what I have in store,
And for the lot you but pay,
Monsieur, monsieur,
No more than you choose.**

BARON:
**Fair terms, I would say.
What can we lose?**

GARDEFEU:
**Petty matters we'll rise above.
I do it simply out of love.
Do we agree?**

BARON:
It's a deal.

BARONESS:
You shall be paid a suitable fee.

GARDEFEU:
**Your word is good enough for me.
But I'm eager to know
Right away, right away,
Where you wish first to go.**

BARON:

The stage for me -- I'd pay a visit --
No, not Moliere nor Beaumarchais!
I seek that pleasure more exquisite
Of naked bosoms on display.

GARDEFEU:

Oui, Monsieur, if that's your dish,
We'll do exactly as you wish.

BARON:

Along the lines that I prefer?

GARDEFEU:

Rest assured of that, Monsieur.

BARONESS:

I must confess, I scorn such folly.
The opera, that's my own idea:
Fra Diavolo and Don Pasquale,
And I am told, tonight Lucia.

GARDEFEU:

Of course, *mais oui!* I gladly am
The humble servant of Madame.

BARONESS:

Then I'm to choose the things to do?

GARDEFEU:

All entirely up to you.

TRIO:

We (they) are both satisfied;
You're (I'm) an excellent guide,
And so we're off, set to go!

THE THREE IN TURN: (*with pronouns adjusted*)

In your hands we surrender
To a town full of splendor;
We shall swoon at each sight
In the city of light.

BARON: (*drawing Gardefeu aside*)

Though strictly confidential,

**There's more I would do -- keep it low!
I might add, it's hardly essential
For my dear little wife to know.**

**GARDEFEU:
Ah, Monsieur is a sly old thing!**

**BARON:
It's only a short, harmless fling.**

**BARONESS:
Tomorrow I've oodles of shopping --
We'd better whisper -- keep it low.
On this point of course I'm hoping
That my husband need not know.**

**GARDEFEU:
Yours to command, it shall be done.**

**BARONESS:
No harm intended, all in fun.**

**GARDEFEU:
Leave it to me; you'll not go wrong.
So come along, and you shall see
Far more than you have counted on.**

**THE THREE (as before).
In your hands we surrender, etc.**

GARDEFEU: Shall we be off?

BARON: Aren't you forgetting our luggage?

GARDEFEU: Ah, yes! The luggage! I'll wait right here . . .

BARON: You suppose that I????

GARDEFEU: (*sudden enlightenment*) Oh, I see! You want me

BARON: We are both traveling light. The baroness has twelve suitcases and three trunks.

GARDEFEU: *Mon dieu!* I hope she didn't forget anything. Wait here, don't go away.

BARONESS: We wouldn't get very far. After all, you're our guide.

GARDEFEU: Of course! After all, I'm your guide. Apropos, Madame . . . Here's a letter for you sent by way of Le Grand Hotel. I'll go look for the luggage. Back in a jiffy. (*Exit*)

BARONESS: Why, it's from my dear young friend Julie, who lives here in Paris. "Out of town for a few days . . . terribly sorry . . . but as soon as I return let's get together at the house of my aunt, Madame Dublin-Pleasanton (*pronounced a la francaise*) . . ."

GARDEFEU: (*returning*) All taken care of! No problem for a professional! So let us be off for Le Grand Hotel, and from there we plunge into the big wicked city!

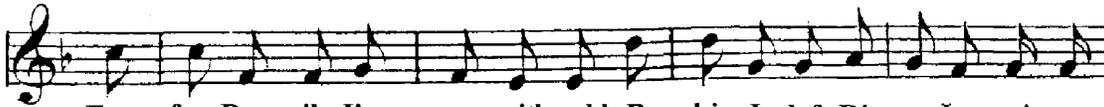
ACT ONE FINALE

CHORUS:

Ah, Paree! Prepare to meet the masses.
Ah, Paree! We answer to the call.
Ah, Paree! We come to your embraces.
Ah, Paree! We're ready for a fall.

Enter the BRAZILIAN!

BRAZILIAN:



From far Bra- zil I've come with gold. By ship I left Ri- o Ja- nei-ro
And shot to Paris like an arrow,
Far richer than in days of old,

For I came before in seasons past
With stacks of gold in my valise 'n
Two hidden diamonds if you please 'n
How long did all that money last?

I added up my dividends:
Two hundred friends & five affairs 'n
Six months of madness free of cares 'n
Then no more gold and no more friends.

Six months and you had bled me dry,
So home again and melancholy,
I dream of days of fun and folly --
Alas, Paree! A sad goodbye.

But hungry to return was I,
So there beneath that southern sun
I swore I wasn't yet undone --
Another fortune or I die!

I didn't die; instead I got
A tidy sum by hook or crook 'n
So here I come and like as not
You'll take from me the lot I took.
So here I am and like as not
You'll take again all I have got. Ah!

From far Brazil I've come with gold.
By ship I left Rio Janeiro
And shot to Paris like an arrow,
Far richer than in days of old.

Once landed, I was on the train
With just one minute left to spare.
Oh, Paree, Paree, Paree, Paree!
So here I am again.

But what I want of you, Paree,
Is women -- not your middle class,
And not grande dame nor country lass,
But another kind -- you follow me!

The girls that grace the cabaret
Or theatre where they are seen
With all the trappings of a queen,
A gorgeous pink and white bouquet,

That with a cold but smiling face
Can look around a crowded room
And in a flash determine whom
To choose as lover to replace

The dude with dash but short of cash
And slinks behind the farthest row
And says while twisting his mustache,
"Oh, drat it! How can I raise the dough?
Raise the dough? Raise the dough?"

Cash I've got! So come
To me, to me, to me, to me!

**Come, my little chicks! We can squander half a million.
Come, my little chicks and never mind the sum.
We'll simply charge it to your friendly Brazilian.
Put out your hands and pluck a plum.
You girls that feel adventuresome,
Put out your hands and pluck a plum!**

**From far Brazil I've come with gold.
By ship I left Rio Janeiro
And shot to Paris like an arrow,
Far richer than in days of old.**

**Who knows how long I shall remain
A carefree multi-millionaire?
Oh, Paree, Paree, Paree, Paree!
To you I come again!**

**Ole, ole, ole! For I'm just off the train,
And ripe and ready for a ducking.
Ole, ole, ole! This pigeon's prime for plucking.
Uncork the bottle, pour champagne!**

**The gull arrives, so take your cue,
And take my dollars, take my francs,
My watch, my coat, my grateful thanks.
But in return, say I love you!**

**For me, the laughter and light
And the spills without forewarning,
The balls that flavor the night
And the balls that last till morning.**

**So come, you girls, and acquire
Furs and diamonds, new presents,
Your secret heart's desire:
All for pleasure, that's the essence!**

**But to come back down to earth:
Though I may wind up poor,
I'll get my money's worth,
You can be sure!**

TUTTI:

**Paree! Paree! Paree!
We come to see the wondrous show.**

**On with the show!
The long awaited time draws near.
Heaven is near!
For the starry-eyed and debonair
Paree is just the place to go.
Let yourself go!**

CUSTOMS:

Do you have you anything to declare?

MEN:

Oh, no!

TUTTI:

**Overland, oversea,
We arrive from every nation.
On a trip, on a spree,
We are set for celebration.**

**Italians, Algerians,
Japanese, Viennese,
Florentines, Argentines,
Russians and Prussians.**

**From Singapore and Tokyo,
Baltimore, Buffalo,
Ottawa, Panama,
Boston and Budapest.**

**On a train, on a ship,
We obey the travel urge.
Out on a spree, on a trip,
We intend an all out splurge.**

**On the steam locomotive we arrive set to see
The supreme queen of cities and the scene of delights.
All atwirl, all atwitter,
We shall sample, O Paree,
All the glee and the glitter
Of your days and your nights.**

**We strangers all here at large and free
Descend upon you, Paree, Paree!**

Merry and carefree, happy and hearty,

**Ready for love and ready for laughter --
Only the moment, nevermind after.
Join the Peace and Pleasure party!
Here in short we'll all go mad
And have the best time ever had.**

ACT TWO

Scene: Gardefeu's town house, small but elegant . . .

NARRATOR: The music has allowed barely enough time for our hansom cab to get us from the train station to the small but elegant town house of Raoul Gardefeu, where . . .

FRICK: *(from offstage)* Alphonse!

NARRATOR: Drat! It's Frick, the bootmaker. The man's obsessed. Boots, boots - it's all he ever talks about. Put him together with the glover and you'll never hear the end of it. Don't quote me, but I sometimes think he's not even French.

FRICK: *(entering)* Mein Freund! Wie geht es ihnen? My lucky day! As I was coming up the stairway, Mademoiselle Gabrielle, the glover, stepped in. Do me a favor, Alphonse. Leave me alone with her.

NARRATOR: With pleasure. *(exit)*

FRICK: Gabrielle, the glover . . . Die Schoene Gloverin . . .

**Come in, come in, my adorable girl!
Here lies the fop that gives the female heart a whirl,
The ever amorous Gardefeu.
I'm his man with the boots;
You're his girl with the gloves.**

**GABRIELLE:
I'm his girl with the gloves.**

**FRICK:
Boots aplenty I offer Monsieur.**

GABRIELLE & FRICK:



GABRIELLE:
The hand I embellish.

FRICK:
I favor the foot.

GABRIELLE:
I grace my profession.

FRICK:
I serve the elite.

GABRIELLE:
My glove is the fashion.

FRICK:
My boot you can't beat.

BOTH:
We flower, we blossom, we're both in demand.
Our fortune we owe to the foot and the hand.
You'll never go wrong if your money is put
Upon those two trusties, the hand and the foot.

FRICK:
No dispute, nothing but the boot
Sets apart the man from the rest.
Nothing but the boot.

GABRIELLE:
Sir, I find myself inclined
To consider men barely dressed
If their gloves are less than the best.

FRICK:
But a boot's the foundation.

GABRIELLE:
But a glove's worn above it.

FRICK:

'Tis a boot that I root for.

GABRIELLE:

But a glove is the test.
Where the men of fashion of move
Not a boot, sir, but a glove.

FRICK:

Where the men of fashion of move
'Tis a boot and not a glove. Tis a boot!

GABRIELLE:

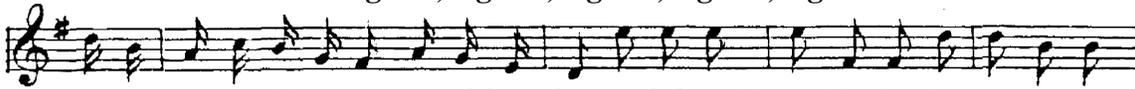
'Tis a glove!

FRICK:

'Tis a boot, a boot, a boot, a boot, a boot!

GABRIELLE:

'Tis a glove, a glove, a glove, a glove, a glove!



In the days of old to prove a gal-lant love, a lad would steal his la- dy's ti- ny glove,
Then would cover it with kisses burning hot
In some remote, secluded, secret spot.

And his hidden prize he treasured more than gold
And would caress it time and again, I'm told.
Should his lady slip away or disappear,
Her glove would stay a constant souvenir.

Then upon some later day,
When the despair of pain and loss had mellowed,
He would find it tucked away
Beside a stack of letters faded and yellowed.

In those days it was a glove
That for a lady's hand would substitute,
But if a passion you would prove,
No reason not to do so with a boot.

Later on our lover, wrinkled now and old,
Can guard a closet filled with loves grown cold,
And in dreamy contemplation one fine day
Perhaps he'll peer inside and fondly say:

**“Who was that? Oh, bless my soul!
Pamela from Sandeval!
That mad, captivating stroll
On the night of carnival . . .**

**“Who was that? Of course, Denise!
Oh, the minx with golden hair!
Ah, the countess, and the Marquise!
I remember when and where.”**

**And the cold heart glows again!
The boot revives the ruddy swain.
So does not that prove to you
The sorcery that time and sentiment can do
To an old glove and shoe?**

**In the days of old to prove a gallant love
A lad would steal his lady’s tiny glove,
Then would cover it with kisses burning hot
In some remote and secret spot.
With kisses burning hot!**

NARRATOR: Now that we’ve got these two out of the way, perhaps I can continue. We have arrived at the small but elegant town house of Raoul . . .

GARDEFEU: (*entering*) Alphonse!

NARRATOR: Monsieur!

GARDEFEU: Guests are arriving. Go down and help with the suitcases.

NARRATOR: Carry suitcases!!! (I can’t get in a word edgewise.)

GARDEFEU: Hurry up! The suitcases! (*exit Alphonse*) I’ve told them they were staying at Le Grand Hotel, and I’ve brought them here to my house. What a prize, that Swedish lady, and I’ve got her! The trick is to keep her. I wonder, just how do things stand between the two of them, the baron and the baroness? There’s one way to find out!

(*The baron and baroness, escorted by Alphonse, enter and look around.*)

BARON: Not a bad place . . . not a bad place at all. Cozier than I expected.

GARDEFEU: Alphonse!

NARRATOR: Monsieur?

GARDEFEU: Have them put the gentleman's luggage in there . . . that will be your room, baron. (*indicating a door on the right*)

BARON: Splendid!

GARDEFEU: (*indicating door on the left*) And madame's suitcases in there.-- that will be your room, madame. The baron in here, madame in there.

BARONESS: That will be perfect. (*aside*) That young man knows what he's doing. (*She goes into her assigned room.*)

GARDEFEU: (*aside*) *Voila!* So that's how things stand! Now I know how to proceed. (*to Baron*) You're not going in, Baron?

BARON: Presently . . . in a moment . . . tell me, though . . .

GARDEFEU: Yes, monsieur?

BARON: You said that we were at Le Grand Hotel . . . but this looks to me like a very small hotel.

GARDEFEU: Of course . . . you are at one of the small hotels of the Grand Hotel.

BARON: That's a bit over my head.

GARDEFEU: Very simple. Le Grand Hotel so frequently fills up that the Management has had to purchase a number of smaller places to accommodate the overflow. We thought you might prefer one of these. The service is more personal, more hospitable, one might say more homelike. We try.

BARON: Ah! Most obliging. Speaking of personal matters, there's a certain young lady . . .

GARDEFEU: But of course! *Mais oui!*

BARON: One that I've not yet had the pleasure of meeting. A friend of mine back in Sweden, the Baron of Frascata . . .

GARDEFEU: (*somewhat perturbed*) Frascata! Why does that name sound familiar?

BARON: . . . knew a charming lady here in Paris, an actress, named Metella . . .

GARDEFEU: (*aside*) So I was right! I suspected all along. Him as well!

BARON: I beg your pardon?

GARDEFEU: I said that . . . the name rings a bell.

BARON: And he has given me a letter of . . . introduction. But how am I to find her? I have no address.

GARDEFEU: Quite simple. The Grand Hotel personal delivery service is at your disposal.

BARON: Amazing! You mean, you know where she lives?

GARDEFEU: We guides get around.

BARON: I want the letter delivered today!



NARRATOR: Passing off ones own house as Le Grand Hotel can get a bit complicated. For example, dinner *tete-a-tete* with his wife is not the baron's idea of going wild in Paris. He envisions a guest table, where he will be seated among the other distinguished occupants of the hotel. Unfortunately, this particular hotel is uniquely short of occupants, distinguished or otherwise. Ah, but Gardefeu hits on a solution: invite the bootmaker and the glover for dinner and have them bring over friends. Call it a costume party. And just for a laugh, let's pretend it's an international hotel! Of course, no guest table is complete without a retired Major. And for authenticity, you'll certainly need a Colonel's widow . . .

BOBINET: (*rushing in, interrupting*) It's the end! I'm ruined! I'll have to leave town!

GARDEFEU: Good Lord! What have you done this time?

BOBINET: I decide to take up again with smart society because I'm broke, remember? So I ring the bell, Rue de Varennes . . .

GARDEFEU: The Countess Diane! I take it she wasn't at home, and you carry on as if . . .

BOBINET: She was at home all right.

GARDEFEU: And gave you the cold shoulder. Is that the end of the world?

BOBINET: She practically threw herself at me.

GARDEFEU: Than what's so catastrophic?

BOBINET: I return to the social set because the other kind is too expensive . . . so what happens? How do you suppose the Countess greets me? She throws her arms around me and cries, "You're just in time! I need five hundred thousand francs by eight o'clock!"

GARDEFEU: Five hundred thousand!

BOBINET: "You alone can save me," she says. "Bring me the money tonight and I'll repay you in three days." I square the shoulders and reply, "Countess, you will have the money in three hours." Exit Bobinet!

GARDEFEU: *Mon dieu!* How will you ever dig up a sum like that?

BOBINET: You're asking me! I've just spent my last sou on a box of bon bons! But I've made the Countess happy for the next three hours. You should have seen her pretty little face light up!

GARDEFEU: Too bad you have so much on your mind. Otherwise you could do me a favor.

BOBINET: You've caught me at a bad time. But for a friend . . .

GARDEFEU: The situation is this: I've captured a beautiful baroness . . .

BOBINET: Bravo!

GARDEFEU: . . . and her not so beautiful husband. To keep them here, I'm rounding up a guest table for this evening. But the problem is tomorrow. I can wait no longer! I've got to make sure that the wife is here alone, and that the Baron stays out late, very late. And in order to accomplish that, I'll need . . .

BOBINET: You will need? . . .

GARDEFEU: That's where I draw a blank. Any bright ideas!

BOBINET: I always have a bright idea. So you're having a guest table for this evening?

GARDEFEU: A little party to give them a taste of Paris.

BOBINET: I'll go you one better. Tomorrow, the same idea, enlarged! Introduce the Baron to the cream of Parisian society -- a select soiree at the magnificent mansion of Madame Dublin-Pleasanton!

GARDEFEU: Stupendous! But how could we manage that? I've never even met the woman.

BOBINET: There are ways. The old battle-axe is my aunt. True, we're not exactly on the best of terms. But she happens to be out of town. I've the run of the house!

GARDEFEU: And what about the cream of Parisian society?

BOBINET: Easily handled. Besides me, there's the butler and the foot-man -- real characters, anything for a laugh. Then there's the chambermaid, and the gardener's three nieces. Give them each a title, and voila! How's that for a distinguished guest list? You supply the baron.

GARDEFEU: And you'll keep him entertained very late?

BOBINET: Leave that to the ladies! I'll get to work on it this minute. It may take my mind off some other problems. My God! Five hundred thousand francs!

GARDEFEU: What a friend! One in a million! *(Exit Bobinet)*

BARONESS: *(entering)* Monsieur!

GARDEFEU: Madame . . .

BARONESS: I found these left on my dresser. Five rings, quite lovely ones . . .
Who could have been so careless?

GARDEFEU: Ah! True . . . they belong to . . . to the previous occupant.

NARRATOR: *(very excited)* Monsieur, monsieur! Mademoiselle Metella!

GARDEFEU: Metella! The nerve! After what happened at the station!

BARONESS: But what is the matter?

GARDEFEU: Nothing at all, Madame! In fact, we're most fortunate. It's
the very person we were speaking of, the previous occupant.

(Metella enters)

METELLA: *(aside)* Well, I see that no time was wasted in languishing . . .

BARONESS: Madame . . .

METELLA: *(coldly)* Madame . . .

BARONESS: *(a bit put off)* I found these rings of yours, Madame. And I've just
ordered Monsieur to return them to you at once.

METELLA: *(aside)* Talk about coming in and taking over!

BARONESS: *(aside)* She doesn't seem terribly grateful. *(aloud)* Well, I was just
going back to my room.

METELLA: *(aside)* So it's already her room!

BARONESS: I presume you have left an address, in case I find any other odds
and ends that you've overlooked.

METELLA: *(witheringly)* You are too kind.

BARONESS: Madame . . .

METELLA: Madame . . . *(Exit Baroness)*

NARRATOR: It might seem that Metella has some explaining to do. But in the giddy whirl of Parisian life, bygones quickly become bygones. And explanations are such a bore. Gardefeu dutifully delivers the letter given him by the Baron, which she opens.

METELLA: (*vaguely recalling*) The Baron of Frascata . . . where have I heard the name? (*She opens the letter and reads.*)

**My dear, do you remember
A stranger to your city,
Jean Stanislaus? The name you may recall.
'Twas early last November,
I begged a friend take pity
And introduce me at a crowded ball.**

**I fell in love, but that goes without saying.
Did you love me? Or just a passing mood?
You told me yes, a smile the while denying.
Not love, perhaps, but maybe something just as good.**

**Six weeks this fever lasted,
And in that time I tasted
Sensations, pastimes never known before:
The champagne glasses lifted,
The clouds whereon we drifted,
The reckless words that from our lips would pour!**

**Ah! What a time! Six weeks of rapid swirl!
The songs and suppers, nights that cast a spell!
And you yourself, of paramours the pearl!
You most of all . . . on that I mustn't dwell.**

**Shall I confess, my dear,
How dull it is back here
In my ancestral home, forlorn and far?
Or that my only joy
That time cannot destroy
Is dreaming of an azure blue boudoir?**

**If you but knew how rare is warmth, alas,
Or pleasure in this frozen land of night!
Above all, if you knew . . . but let it pass.
Let's not forget the reason why I write.**

A friend that I can swear on,

**A decent sort, the Baron
Of Gondremarck, tomorrow sails from here.
He's heard time and again
Of the city by the Seine
And now would also breathe its atmosphere.**

**He just this moment asked me as a friend,
Where shall I go for life and revelry?
Though I smiled, you are the last one I'd offend!
Go visit Metella, was my reply.**

**So grant a small request:
Receive an honored guest
And be as good as once you were to me.
To him let now be granted
That smile so enchanted;
He can be trusted, this I guarantee.**

**I send him to you so that later on
When he returns, because return he will,
O Metella, he too can dream upon
The fragrant memories that haunt me still.**

**'Twas early last November,
I begged a friend take pity
And introduce me at a crowded ball.
My sweet, you may remember
A stranger to your city,
Jean Stanislaus -- do you recall?**

METELLA: And who is this Baron of Gondremarck?

GARDEFEU: Devoted follower and paying guest of Le Gardefeu Grand Hotel.

METELLA: I see! Then he's the husband of ? . . . (indicating the door)

GARDEFEU: Exactly.

METELLA: And so while I'm entertaining the Baron, you and she . . . very clever, my dear. One of your finer inspirations. She's quite lovely. My compliments.

GARDEFEU: That's more than I deserve . . . so far! But I've a plan underway. Tomorrow night the pretty bird will flutter into my silken net.

METELLA: (*aside*) We shall see about that!

BARON: (*entering*) Well, here I am, dressed and ready!

GARDEFEU: Monsieur, she's here!

BARON: (*enthusiastically*) Ah! She is! (*coldly*) Who is?

GARDEFEU: Mademoiselle Metella!

BARON: Ah, Mademoiselle!

METELLA: So you are the Baron of Gondremarck?

BARON: Such an unexpected pleasure!

METELLA: (*with dignity*) The Baron of Frascata I was indeed fond of, and I am charmed to meet such a good friend of his.

BARON: You've read the letter?

METELLA: I have . . .

BARON: And do I get an answer?

METELLA: Indeed, but not here, not now. You may come to my apartment . . .
(The Baron eagerly starts to take her arm.) . . . perhaps next week.
(She sweeps out.)

BARON: Next week! When I've so little time! . . . Ah, well. I suppose I'll have to be patient. Ten to seven . . . almost time for the guest table.

GARDEFEU: My God, the guest table! (*aside*) And no food!

NARRATOR: (*announcing*) Major Edward!

GARDEFEU: And the guests arriving already! Alphonse, round up food immediately. I'm expecting twenty for supper. (Alphonse leaves in despair)

(Frick enters, as Major Edward)

FRICK:

**Handy to carve a roast of pork,
Deft with the pepper freshly ground,
Ready to pop the champagne cork
And then to pass the pickles round.**

**Prompt with an epigram or pun,
Quick with a quip or jeu d'esprit,
I'm in the lead, oh I'm the one --
There's none that dares compete with me.**

**Meet your genial Major General --
Clever at combining
Double talk and dining,
Ever set to go, I am at your call.**

**Meet your genial Major General --
Anytime you're aiming
For a bit of gaming,
Count on me to come to the call.**

**Bet upon it if you dare
Make a little wager:
When you need another player,
There you'll find the Major.
The Major will come to the call.**

**After the dinner, you say which:
How would you like a hand of bridge?
Pinochle, poker, what the heck?
Get out the cards and cut the deck.**

**Here is the place I show my skill,
Turn up an ace or a king at will,
For when it comes to knavery
There's none that dares compete with me.**

Meet your genial Major General, etc.

GARDEFEU: And here they come, like a pack of starving wolves!

(The guests pour in)

GUESTS:

**We are all set, ready for supper,
For we expect a tasty treat.
And I trust we'll do it justice.
All for nothing -- a price hard to beat.**

**No need for coaxing or persuasion
With such a welcome invitation.
You can be sure we're in the mood,**

For we're expecting lots of food.

FRICK:

(presenting Gabrielle, as Colonel's widow)

**Allow me, sir, to do the honors:
Madame de Sainte Amaranthe.**

BARON:

**Unto her beauty I bow.
Oh, but why is she so sad?
Why such a (heavy) cloud on her brow?**

OTHERS:

But why? But why? Why?

GABRIELLE:

**He was slain in the war, alas!
I'm widow of a colonel.
His uniform I keep under glass
And guard with tears eternal.**

**And my weary days that remain
I waste away in sighing.
Nor will my tears be shed in vain
If in the field where he's lying - -**

**My little colonel can't complain,
For at least, for at least
He can see how hard I'm trying.
Can you complain, can you complain
When you can see how I hard I try?
Rata plan plan plan.**

**Some suitors say I've wept enough
And beg me grieve no longer.
But when they dare speak words of love,
My scorn I try to conquer.**

**I turn away in high disdain
As long as they keep sighing,
That from above, his last domain,
If perchance he should be spying,**

My little colonel can't complain, etc.

FRICK:

Mesdames et Messieurs, supper is served!

GUESTS:

Wir wollen Essen, Esssen, Essen!

GARDEFEU:

(I would not call them overnice.)

BARON:

Atrocious French and that's the truth!
Your clientele, if you'll excuse me,
I find a bit uncouth.

GARDEFEU:

But sir, you can't expect refinement
At such a modest price.

GUESTS:

He's bloody right and that's no joke;
We're what they call *La Belle Epoque*.

FRICK:

Now to the point!
On our way over here tonight
We have worked up an appetite.

GUESTS:

Now to the point!
Let us not stop to gab and gabble
When there is food waiting on the table.
We want to eat!

GABRIELLE: (*taking on another role*)

On the Berliner bridge,
Dulie, dulie, dulie,
There I have found my niche.

While look at my leisure
Comes a young man my way.
I said, sir, my pleasure,
Provided you pay.
Dulie, dui dulie.

BARON:

To supper!

GUESTS:

**That summons need not be repeated;
We hardly can wait to be seated.
Lead on, lead on! Put out the plates!
Lead on, lead on! The food awaits!**

End of Act Two

ACT THREE

NARRATOR: From Gardefeu's bachelor quarters, we have graduated to the awesomely magnificent home of Madame Dublin-Pleasanton where a most exclusive soiree is about to take place. Madame and her niece Julie, both out of town, will not be present to receive. Instead, their servants are being primed for the occasion, where they are to impersonate the upper echelons of the social world for the benefit of a certain Swedish baron newly come to town and eager to climb his way to the very top of Parisian society.

SERVANTS:

**Hurry up, no time to waste,
And no time to rest.
See that all's prepared and placed
For the noble guest.
To the job, get to work!
Now is not the time to shirk.
Hurry up!**

BOBINET:

Then everybody understands?

PROSPER:

Leave it entirely in our hands.

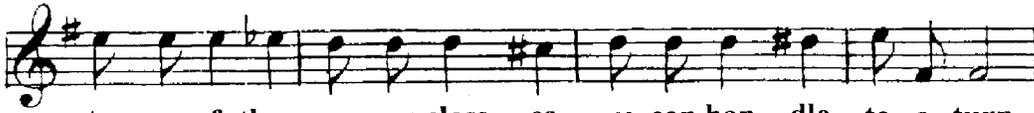
BOBINET:

The roles you may find quite exacting.

PAULINE:

Au contraire! We are used to acting.

PROSPER:



Ass- es of the up- per class- es we can han- dle to a turn.
Pomp and splendor we can render --
Servants need but look and learn.

As we serve them, we observe them
Ever present on display,
For the idle man of title
Never takes a holiday.

Addle-pated, feather weighted,
All important number one!
Every quirk and silly smirk
We can portray, but all in fun.

BOBINET:

Do it simply for a laugh?

PROSPER:

You'll find no better actors.

OTHERS:

Just leave it up to your staff.

PROSPER:

If you require V. I. P.'S
We're more than eager to please.
So put your mind at rest, never fear,
As we ourselves can supply
Enough to satisfy.

OTHERS:

For you we can supply
Enough to satisfy,
Enough, enough, enough bound to satisfy.

Count on us, ever stout and steady;
Though hoi polloi,
Simple for us to pass already
For real McCoy.
We can pass for the real McCoy.

BOBINET:

Very good, all very good.
On my true friends I can rely.
Quick as a flash you've understood.

URBAIN:

So come along. Our job is set
To stage a party none will forget.
A little show that's for the road.

PAULINE:

Chic and smart, we'll play the part
Of ladies of the upper crust.
Appetizing, tantalizing,
Clever maids can readjust.

Of the gutter, we can flutter
And outdo the best of them,
For it's owing to our sewing
That Madame's *creme de la creme*.

So for you we remaneuver
And perform a turnabout.
Strictly pseudo, we'll denude -- oh, ho!
We'll take their stitches out!

BOBINET:

You'll expose them for a laugh?

PAULINE:

We'll show them raw and naked.

OTHERS:

Just leave it up to your staff.

PAULINE:

If you require V. I. P.'S, etc.

NARRATOR: The guest of honor is first to arrive. Our somewhat nervous debutant, the Baron, is greeted by his hostess, whom no one but a chambermaid would suspect of being a chambermaid. In remarkably short time, their conversation has made rapid strides.

PAULINE: Dear Baron, you strike me as a man who may not yet know what love is all about. But I'm sure you could learn . . .

I've heard say that love is a long, winding stair
From earth below up to paradise.
For me, 'tis a cloud ever drifting who knows where,
Toward an azure island of bliss.

PAULINE & BARON:

Dear crystal cloud of air and fire,
Could we but float on you, on you, on you
To find our heart's desire!

ALTERNATELY:

It may be close . . .
. . . or far away,
an azure island
where I would stay
forevermore.
Oh, take me there,
To that land of together,
gentle zephyr.

That sweet hori-
-zon we'll explore,
that azure is-
-land who knows where.
Away, away!
On wings of love upward soar.

BOTH:

Dear crystal cloud of air and fire,
Could we but float on you, on you, on you
To find our heart's desire!

ALTERNATELY:

O crys-
-tal cloud,
a dream
come true,
could we
but float
on you,
on you
ON YOU!

NARRATOR: As one might expect of such an exclusive guest list, the party is not large. Just a few intimate friends -- a countess, a marquise, a prince, a general, a duchess, and the alluring but somewhat mysterious Madame de Sainte

Amaranthe, who bears an extraordinary resemblance to the glover we met not long ago. Despite this august society, the conversation is soon steered onto a topic within the baron's intellectual capacity.

GABRIELLE: Baron, you have a sharp eye. I, too, have traveled across vast continents -- all nine of them -- and I once circled the globe in seventy nine days, which led me to the conclusion that the Parisienne is the only girl in the world who knows the proper way to take an afternoon walk in the park .



Take no-tice when the Pa-ri-sienne goes on pa-rade in crin-o- line.

**She does not stint
A passing hint
Of charms too often left unseen.
Her sail full set,
The bright soubrette
Is armed to meet the grand occasion.
No effort spared,
She goes prepared
To meet the manhood of the nation.**

**The men that flock the avenue
Then feel their pulses start to knock,
Start to knock, start to knock.
She sashays by, frou frou frou frou,
Her pointed toe goes toc toc toc.**

**Quite unconcerned,
With nose upturned,
She looks to neither left nor right,
And 'twould appear
She does not hear
The sound of praise her hips invite.**

**So unswerving, she
Can hardly see
The trail of devotees behind.
'Twould be unchic
To take a peek,
Presuming she were so inclined.**

**The men that flock the avenue
Then feel their pulses start to knock,
Start to knock, start to knock.
She sashays by, frou frou frou frou,
Her pointed toe goes toc toc toc.**

NARRATOR: We approach a critical moment, the arrival of our host, Admiral Walter, who we have to admit is showing some of the broadening effect of La Cuisine Parisienne . . .

BOBINET: Welcome, everyone. After a struggle, I finally managed to get into my old uniform, and to my surprise it fits perfectly! *(As he turns to greet guests, it is revealed that his coat is split down the back.)*

BARON, then PAULINE:
You have ripped your jacket down the back.

OTHERS:
Down the back.

BOBINET:
I have ripped my jacket down the back.

OTHERS:
Down the back. Alas, alack!
He's ripped it, ripped it down the back.

BARON:
The gap is shocking to behold.

PAULINE:
A patch becomes the hero best.

BARON:
The man could catch his death of cold.

GABRIELLE:
Dear Baron, what do you suggest?

BARON:
His back is open to the breeze.

GABRIELLE:
Ignore such informalities.

BARON, BOB., URB.
His jacket's ripped and that's a fact.

PAULINE, CLARA:
A jacket otherwise intact.

BARON, BOB., URB.
Not up the front but down the back.

GAB., LEO., LOUISE:
His back is absolutely bare.

BARON, BOB., URB.
Not up the front . . .

GAB., LEO., LOUISE:
. . . But you know where.

TUTTI:
Alas, alack! He's ripped his jacket down the back.

GABRIELLE:
Dear Baron, set your mind at rest.

PAULINE:
. . . Though East is sundered from the West.

GABRIELLE:
Life will go on.

URBAIN:
You have ripped your jacket down the back, etc.
The man's attire he has torn.

GABRIELLE:
A jacket long, long outgrown.

TUTTI:
Alack, now ripped down the back.

GABRIELLE:
Alack, he's ripped it down the back.

NARRATOR: The party has all the earmarks of a huge success, but there is one little problem. If you throw a party where your servants are the guests -- hm . . . Happily, no problem is beyond solution . . .

BOBINET: General, why don't you ring for supper?

URBAIN: What! Ring?

PROSPER: Why ring?

PAULINE: If we ring, dozens of servants will come swarming in.

LOUISE: And then we can't have any fun!

GABRIELLE: You're absolutely right. When the servants are around we have to behave ourselves.

PAULINE: I much prefer it when they are not around.

PROSPER: Get rid of the servants!

ALL: Do let's! Send them off! Get rid of them! Dismiss them! Who needs them?

BOBINET: (at the door) Servants, away! Take the night off! Free evening!

PAULINE: Thank God, they're gone! (quietly to the ladies) Ladies, you know the orders. The baron is not to leave the house till late.

LOUISE: And how are we to keep him?

GABRIELLE: We might begin by getting him tipsy . . . it may not help, but it never hurts . . .

ACT III FINALE

ALL:

**Come on! Come on! Now comes the best!
Food and drink to attack with zest.**

**Let's begin grave and dignified.
If you want the full flavor,
Sip and savor.
Let the wise motto serve as guide:
Qui va piano va sano.**

BARON:

Charming Madame, allow me.

PAULINE:

Oh, sir, you're far too kind.

PROSPER:

My dear, may I take the liberty?

CLARA:
For you I wouldn't mind.

BOBINET:
Dazzling Countess, why so distant?

LEO:
Admiral, now hold your tongue.

URBAIN:
Marquise, would you be willing?

GABRIELLE:
What took you so long?

TUTTI:
Let's begin grave and dignified, *etc.*

BOBINET:
As we mount the merry-go-round,
Tell me the horse you ride tonight.

URBAIN:
I'm on vodka!

OTHERS:
He's on vodka!

BOBINET:
And you, and you?

PROSPER:
I'm champagne.

OTHERS:
He's champagne.

BOBINET:
And you, and you?

PAULINE & CLARA:
Rum for us!

OTHERS:
Rum for them!

BOBINET:

And you, old man?

BARON:

The lot! And I'm ready for more.

PROSPER:

Said like a man who knows the score.

OTHERS:

No need at all to ask him twice.

BARON:

Who will be first to break the ice?
Elegant ladies of this fair town,
As we get high we'll let our hair down.

BOBINET:



At my back I strong-ly sus-pect-ed some-thing wrong, to be rath-er blunt.

Nevermind, I calmly reflected,
A hero's only seen in front.

PROSPER:

Host and hostess both, I am thinking,
We should toast and praise to the sky.
He provides the wine we are drinking,
But she's the one that fills the eye.

OTHERS:

Ah! Here we go!

PROSPER:



All's turn-ing, turn-ing, turn- ing! And danc-ing, danc-ing, danc- ing!
Before I teeter totter like a top run down,

OTHERS:

A run down top.

PROSPER:

**A top run down,
Before I teeter totter like a top
I'll have just one more tiny drop.**

URBAIN:

**Here's some information gratis:
When to me you offer the cup,
Like a drooping rose on a lattice,
I lift my head and soak it up.**

GABRIELLE:

**In both lower and upper classes,
I have found the same old rule:
The bad wine comes in big tall glasses,
The good stuff comes in miniscule.**

OTHERS:

Ah! Here we go!

GABRIELLE:

All's turning, turning, turning! etc.

PAULINE:

Baron, to you!

CLARA:

Baron, to you!

LEO.:

Here's to our friend.

LOUISE:

Here's to our friend.

BARON:

Dear Madames, I reply in kind.

VARIOUSLY:

**To the Marquise! Drink to the Duchess!
One for our hostess! One for the Countess!
One for the Countess and to the Duchess,
And to our hostess and to the Countess!**

BOBINET:

My friend, to you we drink a health:

Everlasting youth and a long, long life.

BARON:

Sir, but speaking the truth,
I'd rather have that of your wife.

OTHERS:

Baron, to you! Baron, to you!

BARON: (*beginning to slur words*)

And one for you and him and her,
And you I'm not forgetting, shir.

PROSPER:

On the way! On the way!

OTHERS:

He is halfway round the bend.

URBAIN:

On the way! On the way!

BARON:

Feeling fine. Hold the room.
Feeling fine, but how are you?

OTHERS:

And another for our friend.
On the way! On the way!
There's no doubt that he's progressed.

BARON:

Sober still, not like you.

OTHERS:

He is drunk like all the rest.

GABRIELLE, then TUTTI:

There's a matter I've often noted,
And I observe again tonight;
It is only when I am loaded
That my head becomes so light.

PROSPER:

On the way!

BARONESS:



I can-not yet be-lieve my eyes to re-al-ize that all I'd hoped for has been sur- passed.

**A magic thrill beyond compare,
I can declare
That I have seen Paree at last!**

**The ladies jeweled and attired
As in a land of fairy tales,
And each attended and admired
By an entourage of handsome males.**

**I'd barely found my way inside,
Self-satisfied,
For here and there some turned to see,
When at my left two ladies sat
So gorgeous that
They drew the eyes away from me.**

**Both of rare beauty almost eerie,
A sparkle not to be believed,
"Oh, who are they?" was my inquiry,
And here's the answer I received:**

**We label one a *fille de joie*
And her boudoir
Has been compared to an army tent.
The other's everything refined,
Of noble mind,
A lady born of high descent.**

**Examine both, observe and study;
From the facade search out the heart.
And then select the noble lady,
And tell us which one is the tart.**

**In each I found the same exquisite features,
Nor did their costume offer clues.
They were in fact so alike, these lovely creatures,
I'd not a notion which to choose.**

**For a stab, not entirely ready,
Although I'd pondered hard and long,**

**I cried, “Yes, there’s the noble lady!”
Wouldn’t you know, I guessed it wrong!**

**And all the while, Rosina’s
Pert cavatina
Poured out and ended on a trill.
The house rose and cheered, captivated,
Intoxicated
By The Barber of Seville.**

**I had my own little taste of glory,
For as I left the crowded hall,
With rapture still ablaze and starry,
I heard someone say, “By Jove!
She’s loveliest of all!”**

**I cannot yet believe my eyes
To realize
All I’d hoped for has been surpassed.
A magic thrill beyond compare,
I can declare
That I have seen Paree at last!
I’ve seen Paree at last!**

NARRATOR: Gardefeu, hovering lasciviously in the background, is congratulating himself on the success of his scheme, which he anticipates bringing to a glorious conclusion, when . . .

(Julie bursts in, followed by her aunt, Madame Dublin-Pleasanton, and Gardefeu.)

JULIE: There, auntie! Just as I said!

BARONESS: My dear Julie!

JULIE: Christine, darling! Come, auntie, come!

MADAME: Coming, dear . . . so why was that young man downstairs talking such nonsense? Well, introduce me, child.

JULIE: Christine, this is my aunt, Madame Dublin-Pleasanton . . . the Baroness of Gondremarck.

MADAME: Charmed, I’m sure.

BARONESS: Delighted.

MADAME: Now tell the truth. You are surprised as the very devil to have visitors at an hour like this.

GARDEFEU: (*aside*) You can say that again!

MADAME: What's that? This rude fellow, I presume, is one of your servants?

BARONESS: Our guide . . . He directed us to this hotel.

MADAME: Very well, young man. Have two rooms prepared for us at once. My niece and I are spending the night.

GARDEFEU: You don't mean here!

MADAME: Of course I mean here!

JULIE: Don't look so surprised, dear . . . we'll explain everything.

GARDEFEU: (*to Madame*) But Madame . . .

MADAME: But what? Is this a hotel or is it not?

GARDEFEU: But Madame, the hotel is full . . . full from top to bottom . . . *tout occupe!* However, if you wish, perhaps I can find room for you in another hotel.

MADAME: Very well, if that is the case. Get to work on it, young man, and be quick about it. It's been a long day, and my nerves are completely frazzled.

GARDEFEU: Don't worry, I won't lose any time. (*aside*) Well, not as bad as I thought. I get them accommodations in a real hotel and off they go. (*exit*)

BARONESS: Until he returns, do sit down and let me hear . . .

JULIE: And what a lot we have to tell! It was my aunt's idea to come back from the country a few days earlier than we had announced. "Let's see," she said to me this morning, "how our servants are behaving themselves while we are away."

MADAME: And very successful has our little experiment been, let me tell you .., shockingly successful!

JULIE: We arrive at the townhouse . . .

MADAME: Every light in the place burning . . .

JULIE: We peek in through the front window, and what do you suppose we see? The whole lot of them, including some we didn't even recognize, all in the most extraordinary get-up, drinking, dancing, carousing . . .

MADAME: Appalling! I took my niece by the arm, I turned her around, we left, and went straight to the police. As you can imagine, I ordered them to get these drunken revelers out of my house, and have every last one of them arrested for indecency.

JULIE: But what to do in the meantime? I had your letter. I said, let's go to the hotel where my dearest Christine is staying.

TOGETHER: So here we are!

JULIE: I almost want to thank the servants. It's on account of them that I'm seeing my dear, dear friend a whole day earlier than I expected. But we've done all the talking! It's your turn. I want to know, what do you think of our Parisian men?

BARONESS: They strike me as extremely . . . presumptuous.

JULIE: Darling! How did you find out so soon?

MADAME: Yes, my dear, you've not been wasting time.

JULIE: Do tell us, what have they done that's so . . . presumptuous?

MADAME: Oh, yes, do tell! These are the little stories that I adore! How presumptuous?

BARONESS: Oh, it's nothing worth mentioning . . .

MADAME: But yes! I'm sure it is!

BARONESS: No, no, you wouldn't care to hear.

MADAME: But we would, we would!

BARONESS: I assure you that you would not! . . . Very well, just a few minutes ago, as I was coming in, a young man approaches my carriage, slips a note into my hand and says, read it! Then he's off and away!

MADAME: Not bad! But I hope that's just the beginning. What did the letter say? You have it, of course?

BARONESS: I've not even looked at it.

MADAME: Read it, then, I beg you! Read it immediately!

BARONESS: Ah! Good heavens! If it would give you such pleasure . . .

MADAME: Don't keep us in suspense.

BARONESS: (*opening the letter and reading*) Oh, my goodness! It's outrageous! I can't believe it! . . .

MADAME: What is it? What does it say?

BARONESS: Oh, no, no, no!

JULIE: Dear, I'm a bit curious myself.

MADAME: She wants to torture me . . . it's obvious . . . your friend wants me to die of suspense.

BARONESS: But this letter is not written by a man at all . . . It is signed Metella.

MADAME: I know the name! An actress!

BARONESS: This Metella tells me that the man whom we met at the station and whom we took for a guide is none other than the notorious playboy Raoul Gardefeu!

MADAME: Pray continue, pray continue . . .

BARONESS: This is not a hotel at all . . . it's Gardefeu's house . . . he has lured away my husband, he has lured away the servants, and having succeeded in getting me here alone, at his mercy, he intends . . .

MADAME: Go on, go on! What does he intend?

JULIE: Auntie! For shame!

MADAME: Yes, yes, but that's my favorite part!

BARONESS: We must go, leave the house this instant.

JULIE: But what will you do?

BARONESS: First of all, get out . . . then go find my husband.

JULIE: Without revenge? Without punishing that unscrupulous man?

BARONESS: Revenge?

JULIE: Revenge!

**If villains stain a woman's honor
And take advantage of the weak,
Must we endure without a struggle
And simply turn the other cheek?**

**With due respect for Christian virtue,
There has to be another way.
Tit for tat, tit for tat,
We must make them pay.**

**I tremble yet, my dear, to imagine
What could have happened had we not come,
For rest assured, there's nothing past him
If you are once beneath his thumb.**

**Should such a scoundrel go unpunished?
No, there must be another way.
Tit for tat, tit for tat,
We must make him pay.**

GARDEFEU: (*returning*) Madame . . .

MADAME: He's back!

GARDEFEU: I've reserved two rooms for you at Le Grand Hotel.

BARONESS: (*witheringly*) I was under the impression, sir, that the hotel was filled to capacity . . . *tout occupe*.

GARDEFEU: Happily, with a little persuasion on my part, they managed to round up a couple of last minute vacancies, cancellations. If the ladies would care to . . .

MADAME: Have you a carriage for us?

GARDEFEU: One is waiting at the door.

MADAME: Very good! Have them put our luggage inside it. (*to Baroness*) Dear madame, such a pleasure, but I'm sure you're exhausted. We really must say goodnight!

GARDEFEU: (*aside*) Thank God! I've got rid of the old vulture! (exit)

BARONESS: What! You're not leaving me?

MADAME: Rest assured, my dear . . . quick, slip this on. (takes off her cape)
And don't let him see your face. Which is your room?

BARONESS: In there.

MADAME: Very good . . . walk a bit on tiptoe . . . make yourself taller . . . like so
. . . He doesn't suspect, so he's not likely to notice . . . it will be dark.

JULIE: But what about you, Auntie?

MADAME: I'm not budging!!!

JULIE: Tit for tat, tit for tat, etc.

(Julie and the Baroness slip out.)

NARRATOR: And so Gardefeu returns, confident that no further obstacles stand
in his way, his passion inflamed even further by the lengthy delay. Eagerly, on
tiptoe, he approaches the reclining figure whose back is turned, takes the hand
that Madame Dublin-Pleasanton has carelessly let fall . . .

GARDEFEU: Don't be afraid . . . Since I first saw you at the station, I have
worshipped you, adored you! My dear . . . so lovely . . . so radiant . . . so
irresistible!

MADAME: *(turning around)* Sir! What does this mean? How dare you!

GARDEFEU: *(horrificed)* Aaaaaah!

MADAME: The idea! Is no woman safe? Monster! Predator! (not entirely
displeased) Irresistible, indeed?

GARDEFEU: You!!! What are you doing here?

MADAME: Spending the night.

GARDEFEU: But the Baroness . . .

MADAME: . . . has left for Le Grand Hotel. I am taking her room here. Such a
charming little place. I feel quite at home. Tomorrow perhaps you can show me
around the town. (pointedly) I'm told that you are an excellent guide.

GARDEFEU: Oh, the devil!

MADAME: Tell me, young man, is there a dresser in that room?

GARDEFEU: (*sulking*) Of course there is.

MADAME: And might I find a pair of scissors on the dresser?

GARDEFEU I daresay . . . Why do you need scissors?

MADAME: I have my reasons . . . Good night, sir. I shall retire. It's rather past my bedtime. I shall leave the door unlocked. You see how completely I trust you. (*aside*) If he dares so much as opens that door, I'll pounce on him with the scissors. Ha, ha, ha! (*She leaves with a maniacal laugh.*)

GARDEFEU: Damnation! There's one thing for sure . . . this is the last time I shall ever be a guide! (*music begins*) What's going on out there?

(*The Baron is heard outside, with Urbain and Bobinet.*)

All's turning, turning, turning, etc.

(*they enter*)

GARDEFEU:

Good evening, sir.

BARON:

**I've brought along my two good friends.
I'm sober as a judge,
But they are at loose ends.**

URBAIN & BOBINET:

Without us he refused to budge.

GARDEFEU:

(The joke will be on you know whom.)

(to Baron)

**Sir, your wife would speak to you in private.
She is waiting in her room.**

BARON:

For me

GARDEFEU:

For you.

BARON:

**How very odd.
It's the Baroness to speak with me.**

You'll excuse me while I go see.

URBAIN & BOBINET:
Lucky husband, hurry, attend!
We're here also if she should send.

BARON:
Now what is with my better half?

OTHERS:
We'll have a laugh,
We're going to have a laugh!

(The Baron enters the room, then immediately rushes out, maniacally pursued by Madame Dublin-Pleasanton, brandishing an enormous pair of scissors.)

ACT FIVE

Scene: a restaurant on the Left Bank.

NARRATOR: The scene changes again. It is our third night in the glamorous city. By now we have adjusted ourselves to the rhythm of life in Paris, so of course we are ready for another party. Nor do we have far to look. A Brazilian, recently off the boat and apparently eager to get rid of a fortune as fast as possible, is throwing a masquerade for a few hundred friends in a fashionable restaurant on the Left Bank. Here we meet again two unlikely young men who have been driven by the pressure of events to seek gainful employment, and are eager to pick up a few tips from the headwaiter on how to rise in the profession.

GARD. & BOB.
Buttoned and bowed,
Natty and neat,
Men of the mode,
Coming *tout de suite*.

We are waiters,
Hoity toity,
Tres discreet.

Candles are lit
As midnight hovers.
Tables are set:
Reserve for lovers!

**As the hour of midnight looms,
Lights are low in the private rooms.**

**URBAIN:
Here for a fancy price
We entice would-be swingers to swagger and swank.
Listen to good advice
Before patrons pour in to explore the Left Bank.**

**GARD. & BOB.
Let us hear your advice
Before patrons pour in to explore the Left Bank
And depart disencumbered of many a franc.**

URBAIN:

QuickTime™ and a
decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

**He has to know when not to know
The gentleman that's on a spree.**

**The judge that all poor devils fear
With a floozy may perchance appear.
You close your eyes, you close your eyes.
It's not the time to fraternize.**

**And should the door at times resist,
Be wise and turn the other way.
The foolish waiter will insist
And risk the wrath of our gourmet.**

**It's yours to cater, not to cavil,
And when you have to come back later,
You close your eyes, you close your eyes.
It's not the time to fraternize.
You close your eyes!**

NARRATOR: This is obviously the place to go, and so it is no surprise to find the Baron here for his eagerly awaited *tete-a-tete* with Metella. Again, things do not go quite as planned . . .

(As the Baron escorts Metella into the restaurant, she catches a brief glimpse of Gardefeu and is evidently startled.)

METELLA: Wait! Let me sit for a moment and brood.

BARON: Is something the matter?

METELLA: A young man I saw as we were coming in.

BARON: An acquaintance?

METELLA: Quite a bit more than that. It's been on again, off again for over a year. But this time I thought it was the end. I was furious with him, but now the mist is clearing and I'm beginning to wonder if my anger is not just one of the many faces of love. And do you know what is the strangest thing of all?

BARON: (somewhat angry and impatient) No, I do not know.

METELLA: For the life of me, I can't remember his name!

BARON: Well, of all the . . .

METELLA: Have I upset you?

BARON: No, but why . . . How can you?

METELLA: Surprised you?

BARON: Here I've gone to all this trouble and expense! I offer you my heart, my soul, a private room, a first-class supper . . . and you start out by dashing cold water in my face!

METELLA: My dear, consider it part of your education.

BARON: Is that what you call it?

METELLA: We are in the fashionable restaurant in Paris, and midnight has just struck . . .

**Look around!
The place that mothers cry in vain
Is the ruin of their sons, a place of dread,
Where father's hard-earned cash
Goes shooting down the drain,
Where daughter's daily bread
Is squandered in a flash.**

**The midnight hour is near;
Attend, and you shall hear.**

**As carriages empty, the passageway fills.
Young dandies and ladies, both equally smart,
Come seeking adventure, excitement and thrills.**

**The flower of youth, a varied bouquet
Of blonde and brunette, with splashes of red,
The plush and the plain, naive and blase,
They flock here to savor the banquet outspread.**

**Some are bold and brassy,
Others pretend -- oh,
Who's the shy lassie
That hides in the hall?**

**Adagio at first, then rapid crescendo,
The overture builds to a wild bacchanale.
Laughter and dance!
Champagne poured in quantities!
Couples crowd on the floor with space getting scarce.
A few gather round the piano that accompanies;
A grim game of chance
Is unfolding upstairs.**

**And the noise ascends,
The tempest mounts higher
As youth in full frenzy rides over the top.
Is it pleasure or pain, this fury and fire,
This fever that burns as if never to stop?**

**But all things must end;
It's long after four.
The sparkle and sport have turned bleary-eyed.
Some stand half-asleep, others sprawl on the floor;
With yawns and long faces the revels subside.**

**Pale morning arrives, and welcome the dawn!
The stragglers remain, but gone is the glee.
The gallant full of swagger looks ashen and drawn;
The pert little number is gasping for tea.**

**The candle burnt out, they leave Mt. Parnasse,
Hung over alike by love and champagne.**

**The street sweeper stops and stares as they pass,
And he cries, “Oh, joy! To be young again!
“Oh, joy! Oh, joy! To be young again!”**

NARRATOR: The Baron may not seem a likely Don Giovanni, that suave master of seduction, but as he puts an arm around Metella and tries to draw her closer, three masked figures suddenly appear from behind a screen. Mysteriously, menacingly, mockingly, they bear down upon the Baron, accompanied by what I consider one of Offenbach’s most memorable melodies . . .

PANTOMIME, to the Minuet from Don Giovanni.

BARON: Good God! Where do they come from? Who are they?

METELLA: You may not know them, but they seem to know you.

BARON: Know me?

BARONESS:

**Unto this city you came eager
For entertainment and romance,
But your reward has been but meager,
For Lady Luck had other plans.
I’m on to you!**

BARON:

You’re on to me?

BARONESS:

I’m on to you!

JULIE:

**Though out to woo the world of fashion,
It would appear you lost your head,
For you bestowed your burning passion
Upon the chambermaid instead.
I’m on to you!**

MADAME:

**For Metella you’d play the lover,
And though it’s no affair of mine,
To your discomfort you’ll discover
That you may have to wait in line.
I’m on to you!**

BARON: My God! The old dragon with the scissors! (*The ladies exit laughing.*)
Another trick of that blasted Raoul Gardefeu!

METELLA: That's the name! Raoul Gardefeu! I must, must go find him.
Sorry, mon cher, bon soir . . . (*She runs off.*)

BARON: This is the last straw! Wait till I get my hands on that Raoul Gardefeu!

Masked people come swarming in.

CHORUS:

**Ladies, lovers, friends of leisure!
Come, gourmets, and bon vivants!
Enter, all that seek for pleasure,
Step inside these hallowed haunts.**

**Lovers all akin,
Step within, step within.
Stay and go out as good as new,
Tipsy, too, tipsy, too.**

**Come on, the time is ripe for love's delight;
Till dawn we'll burn the candle bright.**

BRAZILIAN:

**(Hand in hand with the glover)
May I present to you, my friends,
A glover known for twenty years of innocence.
Who gives it up
Entirely on account of me.**

OTHERS:

Fiddle-di-dee! Fiddle-di-dee!

GLOVER:

**Yesterday noon a dainty glover
Greets a newcomer from Brazil.**

BRAZILIAN:

**Sell me a glove, O dainty glover,
Then says that bumpkin from Brazil.**

GLOVER:

**That is my trade, replies the glover.
What shade, O bumpkin from Brazil?**

BRAZILIAN:

Coffee brown, charming, dainty glover,

Answers the bumpkin from Brazil.

GLOVER:
Give me your hand, demands the glover.

BRAZILIAN:
Yours, says that bumpkin from Brazil.

GLOVER:
Give me your hand, demands the glover.

BRAZILIAN:
Yours for the asking, says Brazil.

BOTH:
Thus in the fingers of the glover
Trembles the hand from Brazil.

GLOVER:
“Gloves are not all I want, O glover,”
Cries out our hero from Brazil.

BRAZILIAN:
“More than the glove, it is the glover
That stirs this latin from Brazil.”

GLOVER:
“Leave, do not tempt me,” cries the glover.
“Go, handsome stranger from Brazil!”

BRAZILIAN:
“Is it your will, O cruel glover,
To kill your lover from Brazil?”

GLOVER:
One smile enchanting from the glover . . .

BRAZILIAN:
. . . cures this poor devil from Brazil.

BOTH:
So that is how the dainty glover
Saved her new client from Brazil.

TUTTI:
So that is how the dainty glover

Saves clients from Brazil.

NARRATOR: For every single one of the mishaps, ordeals and indignities inflicted on the Baron since his arrival in Paris, it is clear that one person is to blame ...

BARON: Which of you is Raoul Gardefeu?

GARDEFEU: (*unmasking*) Here, sir. Always ready to serve. Handy, on the spot.

BARON: To hell with you and your service! I've had enough of your tricks and your insults. You'll not make an ass of me again. Now it's a question of honor! I demand satisfaction.

GARDEFEU: Baron! I'm ready when you are. Name the time and place.

ALL: A duel! A duel! He's serious! They're going to fight.

BRAZILIAN: Aha! Let me handle this. In Brazil, we settle it quick. Here's what we do: we turn off all the lights in one of the little private rooms. We leave the two gentlemen by themselves, each with a little knife, like this! (He pulls out two enormous scimitars.) We lock door, go away, place bets, have fabulous supper, come back a few hours later to see who's left.

BARON: Foo! Not for me!

BOBINET: Now listen, friend. What's the big complaint? Why are you on such a high horse? What's my friend done to you that's so terrible?

BARON: I'll tell you what he's done. This so-called gentleman has played a series of nasty tricks on me.

BOBINET: We'll play this out in front of a jury. Let's hear the charge.

BARON: All right, I'll tell you exactly what he did.

BOBINET: Start at the beginning.

BARON: I arrive in Paris and find this imposter waiting at the station to meet me. He claims to be a guide, but instead of taking me to Le Grand Hotel, he takes me to his own house.

BOBINET: Ah, this is serious business, worse than I expected. Took you to his own house, did he? And there I suppose he mistreated you.

BARON: No, I can't say that. In fact, he treated me quite well.

BOBINET: Ha! So the scoundrel overcharged you? How much did you have to pay?

BARON: Well, the fact is, he didn't charge me at all.

BOBINET: You mean he gave you free accommodations and you're complaining?

ALL: You're complaining?

BARON: That's not what I'm complaining about!

BOBINET: Then let's get to the point. What are you complaining about?

BRAZILIAN: Forget the private room. I have even better idea. We put the two gentlemen into a cab, with two little knives (whips out the scimitars again). We close the windows, pull down the shades, send them on their way, pif pif pif . . .

BOBINET: No, no, no, that won't work.

BRAZILIAN: Won't work? What's wrong with it? It works every time.

BOBINET: Cab drivers in Paris are touchy about their upholstery. Besides, I want to hear what the man is complaining about.

VARIOUSLY: Yes, yes, let's hear. What's he complaining about? Go on with the story. What happened?

BOBINET: Baron, continue with your complaining.

BARON: He had me believe that I was invited to a fashionable social affair, and he sent me to your house . . . as you know for yourself.

BOBINET: Aha! This becomes personal. Out with it! So you spent a dull, miserable evening at my house?

BARON: Oh, no, no! Far from it.

BOBINET: Then you were not bored at my house?

BARON: Quite the contrary.

BOBINET: Perhaps you even had a marvelous time?

BARON: Well, I must admit . . .

BOBINET: So what's the complaint?

ALL: Yes, what's the complaint? What's he complaining about?

BRAZILIAN: (*seizing the Baron by the throat*) Listen, buster, what is this big complaint?

BARON: I'm coming to it . . .

BOBINET: (*bursting out*) You hear, everybody? This is too much! Huh! My friend goes out of his way to meet this man at the station . . . He says to himself, here's an innocent stranger who's likely to get taken, cheated, robbed . . . so he takes him to his own house, puts him up, feeds him, entertains him, introduces him to me . . . and he's complaining?

ALL: Complaining? What about? Why complain? What's wrong with this man?

BOBINET: Perhaps my champagne was no good?

BARON: No, no, now don't take offense. It was superb.

BOBINET: And the ladies?

BARON: Equally superb.

BOBINET: And so?

BARON: You know, you've got a point. On looking at things more closely, I don't have a leg to stand on.

BOBINET: Then it's all settled!

BRAZILIAN: Yes! We blindfold them, put them together with two little knives, and then . . .

BARON: To blazes with you and your two little knives! I'm starving!

BARONESS: (*stepping forward and also unmasking*) Then why don't you stay a while, my dear, and join us for supper?

BARON: Christine! My dear!

BARONESS: Yes, love. (*indicating Metella, who also unmasks*) I came on the advice of a mutual friend.

METELLA: Baron, it was my understanding that you wanted to learn the wicked ways of Paris. But I confess, I also had motives of my own (indicating Gardefeu) and he promises never to be wicked again.

BARON: Forgive me, my dearest. I've been a fool.

BARONESS: No, darling, just . . . yourself. And a little intoxicated, perhaps, by the big city.

MADAME: (*also unmasking*) And I, too, forgive you, sir. But you must learn to be more careful before you barge into a lady's bedroom.

BOBINET: Auntie!

MADAME: You rascal! How dare you throw a party and not invite me!

BRAZILIAN: No, no, no! Everybody friends again! Tonight we celebrate. Music, food, champagne . . . *La Vie Parisienne!*

GABRIELLE & TUTTI:
For love of life,
For joie de vivre,
We salute Patee!

BRAZILIAN:
In the nooks and the corners
Of the town you can poke;
You will find hidden crannies
Full of fine, honest folk.

They are hard-working, steady
In their same tired ruts,
And they say we are crazy
When it's they who are nuts.

VARIOUSLY:
So piff and paff and piff and pouf,
And piff paff piff pouf, piff paff pouf.

BRAZILIAN: (*then tutti*)
Ha ha hee!
Not for nothing people call it Gay Patee,
Where the pace is quick and giddy,
Light and free.
You're the place, oh you're the city

Where I want to be.

GABRIELLE:

You can question a hundred
And perhaps five or six
Will prefer life and leisure
Back at home in the sticks

Where at last, sick of travel,
They can look down the nose
And exclaim, "Oh, my darling!
It's where everyone goes!"

BARONESS:

Home again, reminiscent,
You can brood, you can mull . . .
Call it crazy, call it wicked,
But you can't call it dull.

METELLA:

We are flip, we are flighty,
Oh but why fume and fuss?
For at heart -- now be honest --
Are you not one of us?

TUTTI:

One more time!
Life is great!
Celebrate!
Like you, I'm

Feeling merry,
Light and airy.

All join in!
You and you,
Others, too.
Love and laughter
Make us all akin.

Come back soon!
Though a play,
We can say
Here we've been
Part of life Parisienne,

**So friends, bon soir,
Not adieu, not adieu,
We prefer, we prefer
Au revoir!
Not adieu, au revoir!**

The End