

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Adapted from stories by George Washington Cable BY F. J. MORLOCK

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OLD CREOLE DAYS

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<http://www.cadytech.com/dumas/personnage.asp?key=130>

CHARACTERS

Poquelin
D'Hemencourt
Jules St Ange
Jean
Mossy
Pere Jerome
Shaughnessy
Manuel Mazaro
Governor
Indian Charlie
Colonel de Charleu
Baptiste
Bystanders
Madame Delicieuse
Parson Jones
Colosus
Pauline
Madame Zalli
Tite Poulette
Vignevielle (Captain Ursin le Maitre)

OLD CREOLE DAYS

General Hercule Mossy de Villivicencio
M. de la Rue
Mexican
Officer
A Man

OLD CREOLE DAYS

ACT I. New Orleans in 1821.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Scene I.

The Cafe des Exiles, shortly before noon. Various characters enter and pass before the Cafe. D'Hemencourt, the proprietor, greets them in a friendly way. It is early, the Cafe is not yet open, but D'Hemencourt is busy getting ready for business. He is assisted by his daughter, Pauline. Madame Delicieuse passes towards her house. She greets D'Hemencourt, and calls Pauline aside; they exchange a few words. Indian Charlie lounges in the doorway of his house. He is preparing to get pleasantly drunk. He greets passersby with the affectionate tolerance of a happy alcoholic. Jules St Ange enters, elegantly dressed, a cane in his hand. This perfect boulevardier pauses near the Cafe and salutes D'Hemencourt and several other passersby. He has the habit of leaning on his cane with both arms and pivoting in all directions. St Ange is the best dressed man in the entire city of New Orleans. His manners are equally ingratiating. When he meets a woman, especially if she is pretty, he bows in greeting, the depth of the bow being regulated by the elegance of the lady. In sharp contrast to St Ange is the rough character of Jean Poquelin, an aging ruffian with a leonine countenance. Poquelin is burly, strong, and indifferent to his appearance, although his attire bears no sign of poverty. He walks across the square with evident disregard of his surroundings. Children sometimes follow him, shouting "Jean Ah Poquelin," repeating his name in a chant. Occasionally, he turns and threatens them with his stick. They run off, for there is no doubt he would use it and with effect. Poquelin then resumes his way, indifferently passing across the square. On an impulse he stops and turns back to the Cafe des Exiles.

Poquelin

Good afternoon, Monsieur D'Hemencourt.

D'Hemencourt

Bonjour, Monsieur Poquelin. It is not often you stop here.

Poquelin

Nor do I stop today. But I wish some information. Is it true that Monsieur le Gouverneur comes here sometimes?

D'Hemencourt

Yes, it is true. The Governor does so honor us. In fact, he usually comes on Saturdays. I expect he will show up about two o'clock as is his custom.

Poquelin

Thank you, Monsieur D'Hemencourt. I shall not forget this kindness.

D'Hemencourt

But it was nothing.

(Poquelin passes on and exits.)

(Jean, Mossy, and Pere Jerome enter and approach the cafe.)

Mossy

How can you be sure it was him?

Pere Jerome

How? It has to be him.

Jean

And so, our childhood friend is a pirate?

Pere Jerome

There's no other explanation of the stories coming out of Cuba.

Mossy

They say he is a marvel of gentility and courtesy.

Jean

And his name is Lafitte.

Pere Jerome

And who, nevertheless, is not Lafitte.

Mossy

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It's true. We all know it is.

(They have reached the Cafe; they enter and greet D'Hemencourt.)

Pere Jerome

You have heard of the ship which came to port here last Monday?

Jean

The "Spanish Lady?" An incredible story.

Pere Jerome

Boarded by pirates.

Jean

And the pirates left without harming anyone or taking any booty. . . . Why?

Pere Jerome

The story is that a young girl was on the ship. She went up to the pirate Captain and pointed to her Bible. He read the passage she pointed out, bowed, tipped his hat gallantly, and left. . . .

Jean

By he speaks English, they say.

Pere Jerome

He has, no doubt, learned it since he left us.

Jean

They say he is called Lafitte.

Pere Jerome

Lafitte? No, it is your wife's brother. Not Lafitte, but Le Maitre— Captain Ursin le Maitre.

Mossy

You just keep that cock and bull story for your next sermon.

Pere Jerome

I intend to. Today—

Mossy

I tell you—if that story about the girl is true—I tell you what is certain: Ursin le Maitre cares nothing for the Bible. He's fallen in love.

Jean

If he is a pirate, he has a heavy burden to bear if he is caught.

Pere Jerome

How can we speak of him as a lawbreaker, we, who might have saved him from that name? Had he been raised differently . . .

Jean

He received a good education—and he had a happy childhood. A plea like that won't save him in court, Pere Jerome.

Pere Jerome

But in God's eyes—. Only God alone knows how much sin is chargeable to us. I tell you, the whole community ought to be recognized as partners in his crime.

Jean

Bosh.

Mossy

Try anyway, in your sermon, to impress the parishioners that he cares for the Bible. That might be of some help to him if he is caught. Well, gentlemen, I must see my patients.

(Mossy rises and exits. He passes Madame Delicieuse on his way, and bows with deep respect towards that lady, who smiles from her window. Meanwhile, St Ange has turned his attention to D'Hemencourt.)

D'Hemencourt

What a pity about Dr. Mossy, when he might be rich.

St Ange

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Yes, his father has plenty.

D'Hemencourt

Certainly, and gives it freely. But General Villivicencio intends his son shall see none of it.

St Ange

His son? You dare not so much as mention him.

D'Hemencourt

They cannot agree—.

St Ange

Not even upon their name. Is that not droll?

D'Hemencourt

A man named General Villivicencio and his son, Dr. Mossy! But, it is only that the doctor drops de Villivicencio.

St Ange

Drops the de Villivicencio? But, I think the de Villivicencio drops him—ho, ho, ho. Diable!

(Jules St Ange exits, well pleased with his repartee. Shaughnessy enters with Manuel Mazaro; they greet Pere Jerome and Jean.)

Shaughnessy

Manuel, you just take a seat while I have a word with attorney Jean.

(Mazaro bows and finds himself a table.)

Shaughnessy

Good day, Father Jerome, Jean.

Pere Jerome

Good day, Major Shaughnessy. Are you still planning to invade Cuba?

Shaughnessy (uncomfortable, looking around)

Oh, you know, that's just a lot of silly talk. I'm into land development these days. Monsieur Jean, may I just have a word with you?

Jean

Certainly.

Shaughnessy

Our committee, as you know, is planning to buy some land at the end of Rue Royale—near the swamp. If you would approach Monsieur Poquelin with an offer on our behalf . . .

Jean

I will be glad to—but only on a fee basis—because I know he won't want to sell.

Shaughnessy

Well, you just make an offer of ten thousand and see what he says.

Jean

I'll make a special effort.

Shaughnessy

Thank you. Now, I'm going to pay my respects to our host.

(Shaughnessy rises and goes to D'Hemencourt.)

D'Hemencourt

Ah, Major—your usual, I suppose?

Shaughnessy

Yes, indeed. Can't get that stuff anywhere else.

D'Hemencourt

Ah, Major Shaughnessy—in this Cafe, if any poor exile wants a draught that will make him remember his homeland—behold the Cafe des Exiles takes him up and gives him the breast.

Shaughnessy

D'Hemencourt, you are a true man of feeling.

Scene I.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

D'Hemencourt

I am, I am. That is why I tried, for years, to keep up my position without descending into trade. But it was not possible. I had to think of Pauline.

(At these words, Manuel Mazaro, who has been listening indifferently, rises and tries to loiter within earshot. D'Hemencourt pauses, and after an awkward moment, the frustrated Mazaro moves off. Shaughnessy is not aware of these maneuvers.)

Shaughnessy

She is an excellent and beautiful girl, deserving of all respect.

D'Hemencourt

Respect, yes. But, they never pay their respects. After all, a cafe is a cafe.

Shaughnessy

It's different from the Cafe des Refugees.

D'Hemencourt

Different as possible. If a man has no money, it matters not. Here is a rocking chair, here a cigarette, here a light. He will pay for them when he can.

Shaughnessy

And more than that—no other cafe has Pauline.

D'Hemencourt

Ah!

(Shaughnessy goes to Mazaro's table and talks to him in a conspiratorial whisper. The Governor now enters with Jules St Ange. **D'Hemencourt** greets him.)

D'Hemencourt

You honor us again, Monsieur le Gouverneur, I have saved your favorite table.

Governor

You know, D'Hemencourt, I think it's important to socialize with the public.

(The Governor is seated with his interpreter, Jules St Ange.)

(Poquelin enters, goes to the Governor and bows stiffly.)

Poquelin

You the Governor, Monsieur?

(The Governor rises and bows.)

Poquelin

Parlez vous Francais?

Governor

I would rather talk English, if you can do so. If not, M'sieur St Ange acts as my interpreter.

Poquelin

My name, Jean Poquelin.

Governor

How can I serve you, Mr. Poquelin?

Poquelin

My house is by the swamp at the end of the Rue Royale.

Governor

Go on.

Poquelin

That swamp belong to me.

Governor

Yes, sir.

Scene I.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Poquelin

To me, Jean Poquelin. I own him meself.

Governor

Well, sir?

Poquelin

He don't belong to you; I get him from me father.

Governor

I am sure that's perfectly true.

Poquelin

You want to make strit pass there?

Governor

I'm not sure. Perhaps.

Poquelin

Strit cannot pass there.

Governor

You will be compensated—get paid, you understand. But, it's up to the city fathers.

Poquelin

Pardon, Monsieur, you is not le Gouverneur?

Governor

I am the Governor. Appointed by the President.

Poquelin

Mais, yes. You are le Gouverneur—yes. Veh—well. I come to you. I tell you, strit cannot pass at me house.

Governor

But—

Poquelin

I come to you. You is le Gouverneur—I know not the new laws. I am French man. French a—man have something aller au contraire— He come at his Gouverneur, I come at you. If Napoleon had not sold us like vassals, the King of France would show Monsieur le Gouverneur to take care his men to make strit in right place. Mais, I know we belong to Monsieur le President. Things have change. I want you to do something for me, eh?

Governor

What?

Poquelin

Tell Monsieur le President, strit cannot pass at my house.

Governor

You are certainly an odd chap, Mr. Poquelin. (pause) Monsieur **Poquelin**, is it your house that they tell such odd stories about?

Poquelin

You don't see me trade some niggah?

Governor

Oh, no.

Poquelin

You don't see me make some smugglin'?

Governor

No, sir. Not at all.

Poquelin

I am Jean-Marie Poquelin. I mine me own bizness. Dat all right?

Governor

Yes, sir.

Poquelin

I give you fair warning, you muz not make that strit pass at my house.

Governor

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Why not? Why do you object?

Poquelin

The marsh is too unhealth for people to live.

Governor

But the marsh will be drained.

Poquelin

The canal is a private.

Governor

Filling up the marsh will make your property worth ten dollars to one.

Poquelin

Je comprends, je comprends. You comprenez: I don't allow. Tell Monsieur le President.

(Poquelin bows and stalks off.)

Governor

What a character, eh Jules?

St Ange

You know what makes Jean Poquelin make like that?

Governor

I'd like to know.

St Ange

He is a witch.

Governor

Ho, ho, ho.

St Ange

You don't believe it? What you want to bet? What you want to bet?

Governor

How do you know?

St Ange

Dass what I goin' to tell you. You know, one evening, I was out hunting. It was getting dark, so I start to come home. Then I got to pass at Jean Poquelin's house.

Governor

And you saw a ghost, eh?

St Ange

I come slow—slow. Not making some noises; still, still.

Governor (chuckling)

And scared.

St Ange

Mais, wait. I get all pass the house. Then I see two things before. You think it was nothing? There I see, so plain as can be, Jean-Marie **Poquelin**—and beside him, something like a man, but not a man—white like paint. I drop on the grass from scared—they pass.

Governor (uneasy)

What was it?

St Ange

So sure as I live, the ghost of Jacques Poquelin, his brother.

Governor

Pooh.

St Ange

I'll put my hand in the fire.

Governor

Maybe it was Jack Poquelin—alive and well—and hid away for some cause.

St Ange

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But there was no cause. Jacques Poquelin been dead these twenty years.

(The Governor shudders involuntarily)

Shaughnessy (To Mazaro)

I'll bet that's old Poquelin got his brother there in his house, not dead at all. Maybe we can use that information.

(Pere Jerome and Jean are about to leave. Shaughnessy motions Jean aside, and they talk. Colonel de Charleu and Indian Charlie enter together.)

Charlie

It's very thoughtful of you to invite me for a drink, cousin. Really nice.

(The Colonel and Charlie sit at a table. D'Hemencourt comes to them, and takes their order.)

Colonel

Eh, well, Charlie. How is those times with my friend Charlie?

Charlie

Eh— every day he make me more poorer.

Colonel (getting down to business)

What do you ask for it?

Charlie

Ask for what?

Colonel

De house! What do you ask for it?

Charlie

I don't believe—

Colonel

What would you take for it?

Charlie

I don't want to sell him.

Colonel

I'll give you ten thousand dollar for it.

Charlie

Ten thousand dollar for dat house? Oh, no. Dat is no price. He is blame good old house. Forty years dat old house didn't had to be paint. I can get fifty thousand dollar for that old house.

Colonel

Fifty thousand picayunes, yes.

Charlie

She's a good house. Can make plenty money.

Colonel

That's what makes so you rich, eh Charlie?

Charlie

No, I don't make nothing. Too blame clever me, dat de troub. She's a good house, make money fast, like a steam boat, make a barrellful in a week. Me, I lose money all de days. Too blame clever. (he drinks)

Governor (paying and leaving)

If I need you to translate, Jules, I'll send for you. enjoy the weekend.

(The Governor leaves.)

Colonel

Charlie.

Charlie

Eh?

Scene I.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Colonel

Tell me what you'll take.

Charlie

You want to buy her?

Colonel

Maybe, if you sell it cheap.

Charlie

Old injun Charlie is a low down dog. He's got injun blood in him. But he's got some blame good blood, too, ain't it?

Colonel

Bien.

Charlie

Old Charlie's injun blood says, "Sell de house, Charlie, you blame old fool." Mais, old Charlie's good blood says "Charlie, if you sell dat old house, what de Comte de Charleu make for your great gran' mother, de devil can eat you."

Colonel

But, you'll sell it anyhow, won't you old man?

Charlie (decisively)

No.

(Baptiste, St Ange's servant enters and goes to St Ange.)

Baptiste

Bull fight this afternoon!

St Ange

There is to be a bull fight? Where?

Baptiste

In the Place Congo.

St Ange

I think I prefer to see Madame Zalli do the Dance du Shawl at the Conde.

Baptiste

Not an ordinary bull fight, but a bull and a tiger. I for one don't want to miss it. . . .

(Jules and Baptiste exit.)

Charlie

I'll trade with you.

Colonel (interested)

How will you trade?

Charlie

My house for yours.

Colonel

Trade Belles Demoiselles Plantation to you? (he scoffs)

Charlie

For what do you want him, eh?

Colonel

That's none of your business.

(Two or three men run by in the street, in opposite directions. Voices of Bystanders: "What's the matter? Is it a fight? Somebody hurt?")

Madame Delicieuse (appearing on her balcony)

Personne. A man lost his hat and Jules St Ange picked it up. The man is a giant.

Scene I.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

(The crowd flows back. A man of gigantic stature, Parson Jones enters, holding his hat, talking to Jules.)

Jones

You're a plum gentleman.

Jules (pointing to the banknotes in the hat)

Ah?

Jones

Why, that money belongs to the Smyrny Church.

Jules

You are very dangerous to make your money expose like that Posson Jone.

Jones

I've done been to Mobile on business for Smyrny Church. It's the on'yest time I have ever been from home: now you wouldn't of believed that, would you?

Jules (fascinated by the banknotes)

Non—mais . . .

Jones

You've got to come and eat with me. Me and my boy ain't been fed yet. What might one call yo' name?

Jules

Jules.

Jones

Jools? Come on, Jools. Come on, Colossus. That's my niggah. Is that yo' yella boy, Jools? (pointing to Baptiste)

Jules

Oui.

Jones

Fetch him along, Colossus. It seems like a special providence. Jools, do you believe in a special providence?

Jules (still hypnotized by the banknotes)

Now, more than ever. I think you is juz right. I believe me strong— strong in the improvidence, yes. You know my Papa, he own a shugah plantation. "Jules, my son," he say one time to me, "I goin' to make you one baril of shugah fedge de mozt high price in New Orleans." "Well," he says, "Jules, go at Father Pierre, an ged this lil pitcher fill with holy water, and tell him send his tin bucket, and I will make it fill with brandy." So, I get the holy water; my Papa sprinkle it over the baril, and make on cross on the head of the baril.

Jones

Why, Jools, that didn't do no good.

Jules

Did no good. It brought the so great value. You can strike me dead if it didn't fedge the more high cost than any other in the city. Parceque, the man what buy that baril shugah, he make a mistake of one hundred pounds. Mais certainlee.

Jones

And you think that was growin' out of the holy water?

Jules

Mais, what else can it be? It could not be the brandy, because my Papa keep the bucket and forget to send the brandy to Father Pierre.

Jones

Well now, Jools, you know I don't think that was right. You must be a plum Catholic.

Jules

I am a Catholique, mais, (brightening) not a good one.

(They go into the Cafe and take seats.)

Jones

Colossus and this boy can go to the kitchen. Now, Colossus, what is you a beckonin' for?

OLD CREOLE DAYS

(Parson Jones lets Colossus draw him aside and whisper in his ear.)

Jones

Oh, go 'way. Who's goin' to throw me? What? Speak louder. 'Pon my soul, you're the mightiest fool I ever taken up with. Just you go to the kitchen with that yellah boy and don't you show yo' face until yo' called.

(Colossus doesn't move.)

Jones

Colossus, will you do ez I tell you, or shall I have to strike you?

Colossus I goin', but don't you on no account drink nothin'.

Jones

Yo' plum crazy. To tell me that, when I never taken a drop except for chills in my life. Which you knows as well as me.

(Colossus and Baptiste go out.)

Jones

No, I wouldn't sell him though there's people say he's a rascal. He's a powerful smart fool. Why, that boy's got money, Jools. More money than religion, I reckon: I'm shoe he's fallen into mighty bad company.

(They sit down and order; D'Hemencourt comes over to take the order.)

Colonel

I'll give you forty thousand dollars.

(Charlie shakes his head.)

Colonel

Forty-five

Charlie

What a lie.

Colonel

Fifty.

(Charlie shakes his head.)

Colonel (wildly)

Seventy-five.

Charlie

Can't you leave an old man alone?

(The Colonel shows no sign of leaving.)

Charlie

Tell you what, I'll make wid you . . .

Colonel

Don't start that again.

Charlie

How much Belles Demoiselles worth? Too much. I don't want Belles Demoiselles.

Colonel (laughs)

Charlie

But me—me—I'm got le Comte de Charleu's blood in me—anyhow, a lil bit, anyhow—ain't it?

Colonel

Oui.

Charlie

Scene I.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Bien! If I go out of dis place, and don't go to Belles Demoiselles, de people will say—dey will say, Old Charlie, he been, all doze years, tell a blame lie. He ain't no kin to de Charleu. Not one drop to save his blame, low down old injun soul. (pause) No, sare! What I wan' wid money, den? No sare! My place for yours.

End Scene I.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Scene II.

The same, much later that afternoon. Pauline and Madame Delicieuse are conferring on the steps of Madame Delicieuse' house.

Madame Delicieuse

Vous savez, it is now long that Dr. Mossy and his father have been in disaccord.

Pauline

Indeed, when have they not differed?

Madame Delicieuse

When Mossy was a little boy, the General, his father, thought it was hard he was not rowdy. He switched him because he would not play with his toy gun.

Pauline

My father says he was not so high (gesturing) when the General wished to send him to Paris to enter the French Army; but Mossy would not go.

Madame Delicieuse

I am determined they shall make it up.

Pauline

Clarisse, even you will not succeed.

Madame Delicieuse

That old fool is in love with me. If he expects to get anywhere with me, he must do what I say.

Pauline

But Clarisse, General Villivencio is so stubborn . . .

Madame Delicieuse

And me? Am I not stubborn? What is the use of being loved, if you can't make the man who loves you obey you? I shall make him greet his son tonight.

Pauline

How?

Madame Delicieuse

Just wait.

(In the Cafe, Jules St Ange and Parson Jones are seated at a table.)

Jules

This coffee is execrable. I cannot touch it. We can go to the French market and get some good coffee.

Jones

Not me, Jools.

Jules

But, why?

Jones

Every man has his conscience to guide him.

Jules

Oh, yes! Conscience. That is the bezt Posson Jone. Certainlee! I am a CATHOLIQUE, you is a SCHISMATIQUE; you think it is wrong to drink some coffee—then it is wrong; you think it is wrong to make the shugah get so large price—then it is wrong. I think it is right—then it is right. It is all habit. C'est tout. What a man thinks is right, is right. A man muzt not go again his conscience. My faith! Do you think I would go againzt my conscience?

Jones

Of course not, Jools.

Jules

Well, let us go and get some coffee.

Jones (patiently)

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Jools.

Jules

What?

Jones

Jools, it ain't the drinkin' of coffee, but the buyin' of it on a Sabbath.

Jules

Ah, c'est very true. For you, it would be a sin, but for me, it is only a habit. Religion is a very strange thing. I know a man, one time he think it is wrong to go to a cock fight on Sunday. Bah. Only a habit. (pause) Still, if it cause you a problem, we can go to my friend Miguel's and get some coffee.

Jones (shamefaced)

Why Jools, m'dear friend, you know I never visit on Sundays.

Jules

Never, what?

Jones

No.

Jules

Never visit?

Jones

Exceptin' sometimes amongst church members.

Jules

Mais, Miguel is a church member.— Certainlee! He love to talk religion. I am nearly expire for my coffee.

Jones (rising)

Jools, I ought to be in Church right now.

Jules

Mais, the Church is right yonder at Miguel, yes. I think every man muzt have the religion he like bezt. Every man will sure go to heaven if he like his religion the bezt.

Jones (troubled)

Jools, do yo' think yo' have any sure hopes of heaven?

Jules

Yes, I am sure—sure. I think everybody will go to heaven. I think you will go, and Miguel will go, and I—of course, not if they have not been christened—even I think some niggers will go.

Jones

Jools—wait. I don't want to lose my niggah.

Jules

You will not lose him. With Baptiste he cannot get lost.

Jones

Still, had I of gone to church . . .

Jules

Posson Jone.

Jones

What?

Jules

I tell you, we goin' to church.

Jones

Will you?

Jules

Allons—come along.

(They pay and go out.)

(Zalli and Tite Poulette enter and cross the Square.)

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Zalli

Tite Poulette, you are seventeen.

Poulette

True, maman.

Zalli

Ah, my child, I do not see how you are to meet the future.

Poulette

Why not, maman?

Zalli

You are not like the others. No fortune, no pleasures, no FRIENDS.

Poulette

Maman!

Zalli

No, no. I thank God for it! I am glad you are not, but you will be lonely, lonely, all your poor life long. There is no place in this world for us poor women. I wish that we were either white or black.

Poulette

God made us, maman.

Zalli

Sin made me, yes.

Poulette

No. God made us. He made us just as we are; not white, not black.

Zalli

He made you. You are so beautiful, my sweet white daughter.

Poulette

And could I be whiter than I am?

Zalli

Oh, no, no. But, if only we were real white, so some gentleman might call and say, "Madame Zalli—I want your pretty little chick to be my wife." To see that, I would give my life.

Poulette

Don't worry about me, maman.

(Enter Pere Jerome)

Zalli

Good afternoon, Pere Jerome. We thank God for that wonder sermon.

Jerome Then, so do I.

Poulette

Pere Jerome, what was the name of that man . . . ?

Jerome What man?

Poulette

The pirate—it was such a beautiful story—.

Jerome His name—(evasively)—some say one name, and some say another. Some think it was Jean Lafitte.

Zalli

Tite Poulette, can you go home by yourself? I want to talk to Pere Jerome—alone.

Poulette

Of course, maman.

(Tite Poulette goes to her home and enters the house.)

Zalli

I probably should have said this in confessional.

Pere Jerome

No matter. Perhaps you want a friend, not an oracle.

Scene II.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Zalli

I have done a bad thing.—I fell in love.

Jerome Love is the right of every soul. If your love was pure, I am sure your angel guardian smiled upon you.

Zalli

It was not pure. And the man I loved was white. He was good.— I believe he would have married me if the law allowed it—but it did not. He managed to leave me property—(pointing)—that house—. He sent our daughter to live in Boston, with relatives, but recently, they died, and—

Jerome And, at last your mother's heart conquered.

Zalli

She did not escape reproach, even there. So, I brought her here. She came on the "Spanish Lady" two weeks ago.

Jerome I suppose she is a sweet, good daughter—

Zalli

The very best.

Jerome Which gives us a dilemma in its fullest force. She has no more place here, than if she had dropped upon a strange planet.

Zalli

If I should die—

Jerome Well, Madame Zalli, one thing is sure: we must find a way out of this trouble.

Zalli

But, how?

Jerome God knows.

Zalli

If god tells anybody, he will tell you.

Jerome Do you think so? Well, leave me to think about it. I will pray and ask him.

Zalli

I am just going to say Hail Marys all the time, till you find that out for me.

Jerome Well, I hope that will be soon.

Zalli

Good bye, Pere Jerome. (she follows her daughter's path to her house)

(Vignevielle enters the Square and sees Jerome. He stops.)

Jerome Well, a—day, old playmate, after so many years.

Vignevielle

Ursin le Maitre is dead, Jerome. He left a will. I am his executor.

Jerome Ah, le roi est mort, vive le roi. What will you do?

Vignevielle

I've a lot to atone for—that is Captain le Maitre has a lot to atone for. He also left a lot of money.— I think I will open a bank.

Jerome A bank?

Vignevielle

I can do a lot of good that way. Loan money to people who really need it—the devil with interest. (pause) Do you know, if Ursin le Maitre had been able to get a loan of four hundred dollars, he wouldn't have turned pirate?

Jerome Where did you hear that story?

Vignevielle

His dying words. Can I see you all tonight? I want to see Mossy and **Jean**.

Jerome Of course.

Vignevielle

Expect me around eight.

(Vignevielle leaves, leaving Pere Jerome, if anything, more puzzled than he was before. Madame Zalli returns.)

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Zalli

I wanted to say one more thing.

Jerome Madame Zalli, you saw that man?

Zalli

Yes—?

Jerome You wouldn't believe me if I told you what that man proposes to do.

Zalli

Is that so, Pere Jerome?

Jerome He is going to open a bank.

Zalli

Ah, but is that so strange?

Jerome He is God's own banker, Madame Zalli.

Zalli

Pere Jerome . . . you know how I earn a living?

Jerome No,—not exactly. I suppose you live off the property your, er—the property you were left.

Zalli

No. It is not enough for that. I dance the Dance du Shawl at the Salle de Conde.

Jerome Well, well, Madame Zalli, that is unusual, but not immoral.

Zalli (deeply moved)

Thank you, Pere Jerome.

(They part, Zalli following her daughter, Pere Jerome in the other direction. Both exit. Shaughnessy enters from the direction of Madame **Zalli's** house.)

Shaughnessy

Fact is, it would take us at least twelve months to make Mr. Poquelin understand the rather original features of our plan, and he wouldn't subscribe even then. Besides, the only way to see him, is to stop him in the streets.

Mazaro

I'd rather meet a bear robbed of her whelps.

Shaughnessy

You're mistaken as to that. I did meet him, stopped him, and found him quite polite. But, I could get no satisfaction from him. The fellow wouldn't speak English, and when I spoke in French, he gave the same answer to everything I said. That it was not worthwhile.

Mazaro

He always says that.

Shaughnessy

Old Poquelin does everything he can to prevent anyone coming near his house. Now, I have heard a ghost story. Course, I don't believe in ghosts, savin' the little people, you understand—. He's got somebody locked up out there— Most likely, his brother.

Mazaro

How do you propose to handle the subject?

Shaughnessy

It would be inadvisable for us to formally authorize any action involving trespass. But if one of us were to informally look into it—

Mazaro

It's an action we owe to the community.

(They wander into the Cafe.)

End Scene II.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Scene III.

Later that evening. Madame Delicieuse's balcony. Madame Delicieuse and the General are alone.

Madame Delicieuse

General, had I not some beautiful ladies on my balcony this morning? A veritable bouquet?

General Villivicencio (gallantly)

It was as magnificent as could be expected with the central rose wanting.

Madame Delicieuse

But, ah, General, if you had heard what some of those rosebuds said of you!

General Villivicencio (preening)

I am sure I don't deserve any praise from the ladies.

Madame Delicieuse

You have been spoken against.

General Villivicencio

It is some time since the ladies have had cause to complain of me.

Madame Delicieuse

A lady said today—but, you will be angry with me.

General Villivicencio

With you, Madame, it is not possible.

Madame Delicieuse

I don't like to bear tales, but . . .

General Villivicencio

You are an angel. But what said she?

Madame Delicieuse

Well—this woman said "All the world knows General Villivicencio treats his son badly. Don't marry a man like that."

General Villivicencio (muttering)

It is not true.

Madame Delicieuse

"But what did his son do?" I asked. "Nothing," she said. Me, I would be angry too, if my son had done nothing for fifteen years.

General Villivicencio (vexed)

It is nothing to joke about.

Madame Delicieuse

Exactly what I thought,—but (sweetly) what could I do? I had no idea what your son had done. Nor did I wish to know, or hear, anything against one who has the honor to call you his father.

General Villivicencio

Madame is too kind.

Madame Delicieuse

So, I said, "No one has a right to be angry with so noble, kind, and brave a young man."

General Villivicencio (ironically)

Brave!

Madame Delicieuse

Of course, braver than any soldier. Does he not tend the small pox, the cholera, and other infectious diseases without flinching from his duty?

General Villivicencio (reluctantly)

Dr. Mossy practices his profession with honor, still—.

Madame Delicieuse

And, do you know what that catty woman said?

General Villivicencio

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Eh?

Madame Delicieuse

She said, "I have seen his father once run from a snake."

General Villivicencio

An execrable lie. That woman is a viper. I should run from her.

Madame Delicieuse

I could hardly deny that your son was a noble gentleman—

General Villivicencio

Certainly, my son is a gentleman.

Madame Delicieuse

Another lady said, "Do you know why his father is angry so long? It is because he refused to become a soldier."

General Villivicencio

All the Villivicencios have been soldiers. For six hundred years.

Madame Delicieuse

A great tradition. But, no reason there cannot be a doctor in the family.

General Villivicencio

At least he could have been a military surgeon.

Madame Delicieuse

I am sure you love him no less for healing than for killing.

General Villivicencio

Perhaps, Clarisse, it would be better if—

Madame Delicieuse

That other lady, the viper, said "No ladies, I am going to tell you why Monsieur le General is angry with his son. It is just because—he is—a little man."

(General Villivicencio stands straight up.)

Madame Delicieuse

Ah, cherie, I have wounded you. They are wretched girls, and I am a wretched tattler.

General Villivicencio

Ah, no, Madame. You are my dearest friend, yes.

Madame Delicieuse (brightly)

But, for all that they admire you. They said you look glorious— grand—at the head of a parade. And, I think so, too.

General Villivicencio

You are too good, Clarisse.

Madame Delicieuse (returning to the attack)

Anyhow, I told them they were fools. I said you had a very good reason for your attitude. But, when they asked me to disclose it, I had to say it was a secret, for I didn't want to say you've never told me.

General Villivicencio

Of course, I have an excellent reason. (hesitates) It's difficult to explain. Besides, it is a sort of secret.

Madame Delicieuse (feigning pain)

A secret from me?

General Villivicencio

Someday, I shall tell you. I have more than one burden here. (pressing his heart)

Madame Delicieuse (with insincere sympathy)

Pauvre General. (she is annoyed that he has eluded her)

General Villivicencio

You could ease one of my burdens, Clarisse.

Madame Delicieuse (innocently)

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Ah, how?

General Villivicencio

Be my wife.

Madame Delicieuse (coldly)

Hercule, I shall always be your dear friend, but isn't this a bit premature?

General Villivicencio

Premature? I've been trying to say this for months.

Madame Delicieuse (mischievously)

Did you lack courage?

General Villivicencio (honestly)

Well—yes. I'd rather brave a cannon or a dentist than propose.

Madame Delicieuse

What I mean, Hercule, is—don't you think you ought to do something to please me?

General Villivicencio

But, for a year now, I've been doing everything I can think of to please you. (he is puzzled)

Madame Delicieuse

How can you say that! Isn't it obvious that I've been trying to reconcile you and Dr. Mossy for some time now—?

General Villivicencio (icily)

Very.

Madame Delicieuse (haughtily)

And you spurn my efforts?

General Villivicencio (confused)

I don't spurn them. I just—

Madame Delicieuse

And you think to ingratiate yourself with me in this bumptious way?

General Villivicencio

My dear Clarisse— It is a personal matter.

Madame Delicieuse

You propose to me, and tell me that my stepson is "a personal matter" in which I am not allowed to interfere. As if I have no interest or right?

General Villivicencio (retreating)

Of course you have a right.

Madame Delicieuse

You must know, I like to get my way about everything. Especially family matters. I think you must be one of those gallants who believe that irritating a woman is the way to her heart. Well, it won't work with me. The answer is "No, I will not be your wife, Monsieur le General."

(And turning her back on the helpless General, she stalks off.)

End of Scene III.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Scene IV.

The Cafe des Exiles, later the same evening. Manuel Mazaro is talking to D'Hemencourt.

Mazaro

You should have seen him laugh. "She thinks I want to marry her," he said.

D'Hemencourt

Manuel Mazaro, if what you say is not true . . .

Mazaro

If it is not true, you will kill Manuel Mazaro? All right—

D'Hemencourt

Not I. But, I am positive Major Shaughnessy will shoot you.

Mazaro

Says to me, "Manuel, you go tell Senor D'Hemencourt I find you some night and cut your heart out." But if Senor D'Hemencourt finds out from Pauline . . .

D'Hemencourt

Silence, Sieur Mazaro. Neither you nor anyone else shall use the name of my daughter. It is not possible. I shall not permit that.

Mazaro (nodding approval)

Correct, correct, Senor. You are right. Excuse me, Senor, excuse me. The Major uses her name when he talks to me—all the time.

D'Hemencourt

But, Manuel Mazaro, if what you say is not true—I will request you never to return to the Cafe des Exiles.

Mazaro (leaving) You shall find it is true.

(Mazaro exits to the street, Pauline enters from the kitchen.)

Pauline

Papa, Papa, it is not true.

D'Hemencourt

You heard? No, my child, I am sure it is not true. But, why do I find you out of bed so late, little bird?

Pauline

Ah, Papa, I thought Manuel would tell you something of the kind, and I listened.

D'Hemencourt (suspicious and grieved)

Ah, my child—if Manuel's story is all false, in the name of Heaven, how could you know he was going to tell it?

(Pauline is silent.)

D'Hemencourt

Speak my child. Speak!

Pauline

Oh, Papa,—I do not know.— Something told me.

D'Hemencourt

Your conscience told you.

Pauline

No, no, no, Papa. I was afraid of Manuel Mazaro. He hates the Major and will hurt him any way he can. He will even try to kill him.

D'Hemencourt

You know something else. You know the Major loves you, or you think so: is it not true?

Pauline

I would give worlds to think so.

D'Hemencourt

Oh, my child, my child. Your Papa is not angry. What will I do without you? (pause) You were right. The Cafe

OLD CREOLE DAYS

des Exiles never should have been opened. It is no place for you. No place at all!

Pauline

Let us leave it.

D'Hemencourt

It is too late.

Pauline

Why?

D'Hemencourt (gravely)

Daughter, I cannot tell you. You must go to bed. Good night. God keep you.

Pauline

The Blessed Virgin will care for us.

(She goes into the house, D'Hemencourt, in a troubled way, looks after her as the curtain falls.)

End of Scene IV.

CURTAIN

OLD CREOLE DAYS

ACT II.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Scene I.

The next day, early afternoon. Major Shaughnessy is approaching the Cafe when Mazaro gestures to him furtively. After a slight hesitation, the Major allows Manuel to draw him aside. Meanwhile, in the Cafe, Mossy is seated, reading a manuscript.

Shaughnessy

D'ye want to see me, Manuel?

Mazaro

You must avoid the Cafe. There are to men hanging about, evidently watching for you.

Shaughnessy

What do they want?

Mazaro

You ought to know.

Shaughnessy

Why don't they look for me in the Cafe Anglais. I'm there most of the time.

Mazaro

They are probably afraid to do anything in that crowd.

Shaughnessy

That's so. Very well, I'll not go. We've no business tonight, eh Manuel?

Mazaro

None at all.

(Shaughnessy turns on his heel and leaves as he came. Mazaro continues to hang about. General Villivicencio enters. Seeing Mossy, he pauses. He looks at Madame Delicieuse's balcony. He twirls his moustaches furiously. Finally, he makes up his mind, crossing himself, he enters the Cafe.)

General Villivicencio

Good afternoon, Doctor—

Mossy

Be seated, Papa.

(The General sits stiffly and clears his throat.)

Mossy

Is all going well, Papa?

General Villivicencio

Yes. (pause of painful silence)

Mossy

Beautiful day.

General Villivicencio

Exceptionally.

Mossy

I thought it would rain, but it cleared off.

General Villivicencio (drumming the table with his fingers)

So it did.

Mossy

It appears to be turning cool.

General Villivicencio

No, it is not turning cool at all.

Mossy

H'mmm.

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General Villivicencio

Hem!

Mossy (stealing a glance at his manuscript)

Ummm.

General Villivicencio (with frigid politeness)

I am interrupting you.

Mossy

No, no! Pardon me; be seated. It gives me great pleasure to have you here.

General Villivicencio (drumming again)

The city—it is healthy?

Mossy

Huh?

General Villivicencio

The city has not much sickness at the moment?

Mossy

No—er, yes— Not much. (stealing another glance at his manuscript)

General Villivicencio (on his feet immediately)

I must go.

Mossy (also rising)

Ah, no, Papa.

General Villivicencio

But yes, I must.

Mossy

But wait, Papa. I had just now something to speak of—

General Villivicencio (sitting)

Of course—

Mossy

It's gone out of my head—

General Villivicencio (rising immediately)

Perhaps, it will come another time.

Mossy

Ah, now I remember. I congratulate you on your nomination to be Governor. I can't imagine why I momentarily forgot.

General Villivicencio (preening)

My friends compelled me to run.

Mossy

They really think you will be elected?

General Villivicencio

They do not doubt it. But what think you, my son?

Mossy (sincerely)

They could not elect a better man.

General Villivicencio (bowing)

Perhaps the people will think so; my friends believe they will. (he is flattered by the compliment, and shows it, despite himself)

Mossy

Still—all these Yankees. You won't be too disappointed if you are not elected, I hope?

General Villivicencio

Me? I should hope a Villivicencio knows how to bear defeat as well as victory.

Mossy

Scene I.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Still. These campaigns get rather vitriolic.

General Villivencio

I shall not engage in mudslinging.

Mossy

I hope your opponents won't.

General Villivencio

If they do, they shall answer for it.

Mossy

Your friends should help you as much as they can Papa. Myself, I should like to assist you.

General Villivencio (emotionally)

Really, Victorien, you please me more than I can say.— This is like a son.

Mossy

But, I don't see what I can do.

General Villivencio (disappointed)

Ahhh!

Mossy

Not being a public man. Unless, perhaps, I could write editorials for you. That's it!

General Villivencio

Certainly—certainlee! Ah, Mossy, you are right. The pen they say is mightier than the sword. Well, my son—au revoire. I really cannot stay. But I will see you again soon. I hasten to tell my friends that the pen of Dr. Mossy is on our side.

(The General rises, and salutes his son with great cordiality. He goes out and enters Madame Delicieuse's house. As he leaves, he passes Jules St Ange leading in Parson Jones who is the picture of a big man with an even bigger hangover. The Parson's exuberant personality is crestfallen. Though he is a giant, he feels himself a pygmy, especially morally. They sit down, D'Hemencourt greets them. They order. Jules is jubilant.)

Jones

How'd you get me out of jail, Jules?

Jules

I tell the judge you are innocent.

(Jones groans.)

Jules

Mr. Posson Jone—

Jones (despairing)

Oh, Jools.

Jules

Mais, what de matter, Posson Jone?

Jones (groaning)

My sins, Jools, my sins.

Jules

Ah, Mr. Posson Jone, you make a so droll sermon at the bull ring. Ha, ha, I swear I think you can make the money to preach. How you do it? How you carry the tiger?

(Jones lets out a deep groan. He feels his sin upon him.)

Jules

Hah, you is the mozt brave man dat I never see, mais at the same time, the mozt religious man.

Jones (with unbearable guilt)

I was to have left for home tomorrow sun—up on the Schooner Isabella. Poor Smyrny.

Jules

Mais, why can't you cheer up an be happy. Me, if I should be miserable like that, I would kill myself.

Scene I.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

(There is a pause. Jones is crying.)

Jules

Ah, Posson Jone, is that something to cry, because a man get sometime a litt bit intoxicated? Mais, if a man keep all the time intoxicate, I think that is again the conscience.

Jones

What exactly did I do?

Jules

You carry the tiger above your head, (gesturing) like so, and you say —you roar—"The tiger and the buffalo shall lay down together."

Jones

Oh, my God.

Jules

Where I going to find one priest like that?

Jones

What happened to the money?

Jules (coolly)

Oh, that. You lost most of that gambling.

Jones

Gambling—

Jules

Don't you remember? At Miguel's—

Jones

But Jools, the money's none o' mine. It belonged to Smyrny Church.

Jules

Anyway, Lazt evening, when they lock you up, I go to Monsieur le Blanc, he is the judge, to get you out of the calabooze. So soon I was entering, he say, "Ah, Jules, me boy, juzt the man to make complete the game of poker." Posson Jone, it was a specious providence. In tree hours I win more than six hundred dollah. Look. (showing money) And, I didn't have to cheat.

Jones

Jools, my friend, your kindness is in vain.

Jules (amazed)

Mais, why?

Jones

Because I can't accept the money. It don't become a Christian (which I hope I can still say I am one) to do evil that good may come.

Jules

Mr. Posson Jone, hold on. You see dis money—what I win last night— Well, I win it by a specious providence, ain't it?

Jones

There's no tellin. God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform.

Jules

Ah, c'est very true. I get dis money in the myzterieuze way. Mais, if I keep dis money, you know where it goin to be tonight?

Jones

I really can't say.

Jules (sweetly)

Goin to the devil.

Jones

Oh, Jools.

Jules

Scene I.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Well, den, what I shall do wid it?

Jones

Anything! Better donate it to some poor man.

Jules

Ah, Misty Posson Jone, dat is what I want. You lose five hundred dollar—was my fault.

Jones

No, it wasn't, Jools.

Jules

Mais, it was.

Jones

No.

Jules

It was me fault! I swear, it was me fault. Mais, here is five hundred dollar. I wish you shall take it.

(Jones begins to weep.)

Jones

Oh, Jools, Jools, Jools. My noble friend.

Jules

Oh, my faith. Posson Jone, you muzt not begin to cry some more.

Jones

My dear, misguided friend; ef you hed of hed a Christian raisin! May the Lord show you your errors better'n I kin. And God bless you for your good intentions. (starting suddenly) Jools, Jools, where's my pore old niggah?

Jules

Posson Jones, never mind; he is wid Baptiste.

Jones

Where?

Jules

I don't know where—mais, he is wid Baptiste. Baptiste is a beautiful to take care of somebody.

Jones

I never will believe he taken the money.

Jules

Posson Jone. You take this money.

Jones

Can't, it's agin my conscience.

Jules (defeated)

Posson Jone! Make me anyhow this promise; you never, never will come back to New Orleans.

Jones

Lord willin, I never will leave home again.

Jules

You got to go soon.

Jones

But, I got to find Colossus first.

Jules

Mais, Posson Jone. De judge's order—you cannot read it, it is in French, compel you to leave New Orleans by nightfall. I made him put it there myself.

Jones

Oh, Jools, supposin Colossus don't get home? Oh, Jools, if you'll look him out for me—I'll never forget you nohow Jools.

Jules

I will, I will. Adieu, Posson Jones. My faith, you are the so fighting an mozt religious man as I never saw. Adieu. Adieu.

Scene I.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

(They pay and go out.)

End Scene I.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Scene II.

Later that day. The Square before the Cafe. Tite Poulette and Madame Zalli enter from their house. As is their custom, they stop by the fountain.

Zalli

Cherie, why do you dream so much?

Poulette

I was thinking of Pere Jerome's sermon. (pause, worried) Do you think, maman, that Pere Jerome knows that I was the girl on the "Spanish Lady"—who—?

Zalli

No, I am sure he does not.

Poulette

Do you think Pere Jerome knows him?

Zalli

Yes, I do. He said so in his sermon.

Poulette

I wish I was Pere— I wish I was as good as Pere Jerome.

Zalli

My child, my child—don't give your heart to a pirate.

Poulette

I will not—I will not!

Zalli

It would be useless anyhow.

Poulette

I know, I know.

(There is a pause.)

Zalli

Tite Poulette, I want you to promise me one thing.

Poulette

Well, maman?

Zalli

If any gentleman should ever love you and ask you to marry—promise me you will not tell him you are not white.

Poulette

It will never happen.

Zalli

But, if it should?

Poulette

But, to marry like that is against the law.

Zalli

The law is unjust

Poulette

I would surely tell him.

(Zalli looks off; she is upset. In the distance she spies Monsieur de la Rue, manager of the Conde, her boss.)

Zalli

Oh dear, oh dear. Monsieur de la Rue is coming.

Poulette

Your employer at the Salle de Conde?

Zalli

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Yes. I cannot avoid speaking to him. Go home quickly, Tite Poulette. The man is a roue, not fit for your company.
(Tite Poulette starts off, obeying her mother. Monsieur de la Rue enters.)

M. de la Rue

Madame Zalli.

(Zalli curtsies politely.)

M. de la Rue

Madame Zalli, that young lady—is she your daughter?

Zalli

She—she is my daughter.

M. de la Rue

I think not, Madame Zalli.

Zalli

Yes, monsieur, she is my daughter.

M. de la Rue

Only make believe, I think.

Zalli

I swear she is, Monsieur de la Rue.

M. de la Rue

Is that possible? But, how? Why does she not come to our ballroom with you?

Zalli (uneasily)

Each of his own tastes, Sieur de la Rue. It does not please her.

M. de la Rue

I shall come to see you, Madame Zalli.

Zalli

Monsieur must not give himself the trouble.

M. de la Rue

It will be my pleasure. (he bows and leaves)

(Zalli is perturbed. A new and totally unexpected threat has presented itself. Sieur de la Rue means to have Tite Poulette, and Zalli has no idea how to stop him. She is lost in thought when Monsieur de **Vignevielle** approaches from the Cafe. He bows to Zalli, who curtsies in return.)

Vignevielle

Good afternoon, Madame Zalli.

Zalli

Ah, Miche Vignevielle, I thank God to meet you.

Vignevielle

Is that so, Madame Zalli? Why is that?

Zalli

I've been talking to Pere Jerome—he suggested that if—

Vignevielle

If—?

Zalli

If it arrive to me to die—

Vignevielle

Yes?

Zalli

I want you to take care of my little girl.

Vignevielle

OLD CREOLE DAYS

I will do that—like my own—

Zalli

You are so kind— Oh, if she weren't so unhappy—

Vignevielle

Why is she unhappy?

Zalli

She won't tell me, Miche.

Vignevielle

What do you think?

Zalli

Miche, I think she is lonesome.

Vignevielle

In that case, Madame Zalli, I don't think it right for me to be her guardian. It would be a miztake.

Zalli

Ah,—non—Miche.

Vignevielle

There is only one that can be.

Zalli

Who, Miche?

Vignevielle

God.

Zalli

Ah, Miche.

Vignevielle

I'm not going to desert you, Madame Zalli.

(Zalli is puzzled.)

Vignevielle

You don't know what I mean.

Zalli

Not exactly.

Vignevielle

I mean your daughter's guardian must find her a husband, and only God can do that. But, Madame, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll find a husband for your daughter—a white man. You can trust me—

Zalli

You will come to my house yourself?

Vignevielle

If you like.

Zalli

Miche, I think Pere Jerome might be able to tell you somebody.

(They go out towards her house.)

End of Scene II.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Scene III.

The same day. The General is seated with Jean and the Colonel, drinking his favorite drink.

Jean

General, you must read this. You are called "antiquated." We who nominated you are called "fossils." Our whole caucus is "irresponsible!"

General The devil! Let me see. (reading) I cannot read this trash. Colonel, you read it.

Colonel (reading)

"The Crayfish Eater's Ticket. It is not long since the fossils who represent the old ways nominated the antiquated General Hercule Mossy de Villivicencio for Governor. It is true that the old soldier performed good service in the last war (and while we are not prone to attack his record, which is honorable, we are not prohibited from saying that his victories proceeded more from luck and pluck than from any strategic grasp of the situation). Despite his service, which the old gentleman never ceases to preen himself on, we feel justified in criticizing his attachment to the most reactionary elements in our community—elements which we believe regret that the Louisiana Purchase was ever made. This irresponsible group of crayfish eaters undoubtedly think that the election of General Villivicencio is the first step leading to secession and reunion with France. However,——"

General Villivicencio (savagely)

Stop. That is enough.

Colonel

The author must answer for it.

General Villivicencio (savagely twirling his mustaches)

I forbid you to fight him. You shall not fight him.

Colonel

But, one of us must fight. You cannot. If you fight, the cause is lost. The candidate must not fight.

Jean

He is right.

General Villivicencio

You are right. Thank God, I have a son. My son shall call the villain out and make him pay for his impudence with his blood.

(The General rises.)

General Villivicencio

Decidedly, Victorien must do it.

(The two friends nod in agreement.)

End of Scene III.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Scene IV.

At the door of Zalli's home, later that day. It is small, but well kept up. Tite Poulette greets Zalli at the door, Zalli is hugging Tite Poulette.

Zalli

Ah, my little fatherless one—kiss—kiss—kiss.

Poulette

Is it good news you have, or bad?

Zalli

God knows my darling, I cannot tell.

Poulette

Why do you cry?

Zalli

For nothing at all, my darling—for nothing— I am such a fool.— It's just that Miche Vignevielle is the best man on the good Lord's earth—

Poulette

There is something else, and you shall tell me.

Zalli

Yes.— We must go in and clean the parlor, even though no one is coming to see us, eh?

Poulette

Who is coming here this evening?

Zalli

Oh, nobody—nobody at all. It's just time for a little overdue spring cleaning.

Poulette

Tell me who is coming.

Zalli

Our blessed friend, Miche Vignevielle.

Poulette

To see me?

Zalli

Yes.

Poulette (unnerved)

What have you done?

Zalli

Why, child, do you forget that it is Miche Vignevielle who has promised to protect you when I die?

Poulette

How is it possible? First of all, you are young, and in good health, and not going to die. Secondly, this Miche Vignevielle has only recently come to New Orleans, and you have only known him for one day.

Zalli

Ah, cherie, it is there that he shows himself the best man alive. He is so kind.

Poulette

Besides, how can he protect me? He is a white man, and I am a poor—

Zalli (happily)

He proposes to meet that difficulty. He says he will find you a husband.

Poulette (sobbing violently)

I shall never marry. Who would want me?

Zalli

Oh, my sweet daughter, you must not cry! I did not want to tell you. Don't cry— Miche says you shall have the one you wish, or none at all.

Poulette (hysterically)

OLD CREOLE DAYS

None at all! None at all! None at all!
(Enter Monsieur Vignevielle, he bows.)

Vignevielle

Hem!

Zalli (thunderstruck)

Miche— (she curtsies)

Poulette (faint)

Maman?

Zalli

I am here, my daughter. (overwhelmed) It is Miche Vignevielle, my daughter.

Poulette

No, maman. It is Capitaine le Maitre.

(Vignevielle bows again. Poulette regards him as if in a trance.)

End of Scene IV.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Scene V.

The Square before the Cafe des Exiles. Later that night. The **Colonel** crosses the Square and goes to Indian Charlie's house.

Colonel

Charlie—open up.

Charlie (opening the door)

Ello. From what you come dis time of tonight?

Colonel

Never mind that. Charlie, what you say, Charlie?— My house for yours, eh Charlie? What you say?

Charlie (astonished)

You come to trade?

Colonel

Yes. (pause) Well, old man Charlie, what you say: my house for yours— like you said—eh Charlie?

Charlie

I dunno. Why don't you stay dere yourself?

Colonel

Because, I don't want! Is dat reason enough for you? You better take me in de notion—old man—I tell you, yes.

Charlie

I don't care, I take him.

Colonel

Not the whole plantation—only the house.

Charlie

I don't care. We easy fix dat. Mais, what for you don't want to keep him? I don't want him. You better keep him.

Colonel (irritated)

Don't you try to make a fool of me, old man.

Charlie

Oh, no. Oh, no! But, you make a fool of yourself, ain't it? Belles Demoiselles is more wort than three blocks like dis one. (gesturing) Yes, the Comte de Charleu have two family. One was lowdown Choctaw, one was high up noblesse. He gave the lowdown Choctaw this rat-hole. (pause) What I'll do wid Belles Demoiselles? She'll break me in two years, yes. And, what you'll do wid old Charlie's house. Tear her down and make yourself a blame old fool. I rather wouldn't trade.

Colonel

Charlie.

Charlie

I rather wouldn't, mais, I will do it for you. Just the same like Monsieur le Comte would say, Charlie, you old fool, I want to change house wid you.

Colonel

Come. Come at my house tonight. Tomorrow we'll take a look at the place before breakfast and finish the trade.

Charlie

Well, anyhow— I don't care— I'll go.

(They continue to talk, as the Curtain falls.)

End of Scene V.

CURTAIN

OLD CREOLE DAYS

ACT III.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Scene I.

Midday, a few days later, in the Cafe des Exiles. Vignevielle is seated in the Cafe, watching Madame Zalli's residence. He sits with Mossy, who is occupying himself with writing. D'Hemencourt and Pauline are talking.

Pauline

We do not know that he refuses to come. We only know that Manuel says so.

D'Hemencourt

When has he ever stayed away so long? No, my child, it is intentional. Manuel urges him to come, but he only sends excuses.

Pauline

But, why have you not sent word to him, by some other person?

D'Hemencourt

It is not fitting that I should send to him—

(Zalli and Tite Poulette enter from their house and pause near the fountain.)

Poulette

Did you go to Sieur de la Rue's office, maman?

Zalli

I could not.

Poulette

Maman, he has seen me at the window.

Zalli

While I was gone?

Poulette

He passed on the other side of the street. He looked up purposely and saw me.

Zalli (wringing her hands)

How shall we escape him?

Poulette

It is nothing, mother, do not go near him.

Zalli

But the pay—my child.

Poulette

The pay matters not.

Zalli

But, he will bring it to the house; he wants the excuse. Lord, he's coming, now—hurry.

(They rush back to their house and go in as Sieur de la Rue enters. He knocks, but there is no answer. Vignevielle has observed this and comes up.)

Vignevielle

They are not at home.

M. de la Rue (continuing to rap)

I saw them.

Vignevielle

Perhaps, they are not at home to you.

M. de la Rue

Are you staring at me, sir?

Vignevielle (icily)

Are you not making a mistake, sir?

M. de la Rue

Kindly mind your own business.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Vignevielle

You had better leave.

M. de la Rue

And if I choose not?

Vignevielle (smoothly)

I shall make you.

M. de la Rue

You dare?

(Vignevielle knocks him down. M. de la Rue rises slowly and adjusts his hat. Mossy has come up.)

M. de la Rue

There shall be a time, sir. (he exits)

Mossy

That wasn't such a good idea. He is Madame Zalli's boss. Undoubtedly, he will discharge her.

Vignevielle (shrugging)

I don't care for her to work there anyway. (he knocks and is admitted)

(Mossy returns to his seat in the Cafe. Lawyer Jean enters and goes to **Mossy**.)

Jean

The druggist says the boys are going to shivaree Old Poquelin. I'm going to try to stop it.

Mossy

You'd better not. You might get hurt.

Jean

I'm going to sit here until they come by.

Mossy

You're welcome.

Jean

On second thought, there's something I must do first. (he exits)

(Mossy returns to his writing. The General enters.)

General Villivencio

Well, my son, have you seen yesterday's newspaper? No, I see you have not, since your cheeks are not red with shame and anger.

Mossy

What has happened, Papa?

General Villivencio

My faith, Mossy, is it possible you have not heard of the attack on me which has surprised and exasperated the city?

Mossy

I guess not.

General Villivencio

My soul. But Mossy, my son, there it is—there! There! There! Read it! Calls me not responsible. Practically suggests I am a traitor—.

Mossy (after reading)

But Papa, I have read this. If this is it, I am already preparing to respond to it.

(The General embraces his son and kisses him on both cheeks.)

General Villivencio

OLD CREOLE DAYS

I knew I had a son. Read me what you have written, my son.

Mossy (reading)

"Messers Editors, in your journal of yesterday, there was published an editorial reflecting on General Hercule Mossy de Villivicencio, a national hero, in the most scurrilous manner. Numerous errors of fact were made and preposterous opinions ventured. We request you to retract the editorial and apologize—"

General Villivicencio

Apologize? I will not accept an apology. Do not accept an apology, Victorien. You must demand the name of the scoundrel and chastise the wretch on the field of honor—

Mossy

You want me to fight?

General Villivicencio

What else is there to do? Exchange love notes in the newspapers? I believe you do not want to fight.

Mossy

Not over this.

General Villivicencio (heartbroken)

If not over this, what? My God.

Mossy

This sort of thing goes on all the time. I warned you, Papa, that you would be exposed to this sort of thing. I'm afraid—

General Villivicencio (dejected but ironic)

I see that.

Mossy (hotly)

That's not what I mean. But you know how I feel about dueling.

General Villivicencio (majestic)

It is well. I was wrong. It is my quarrel. I shall settle it myself.

Mossy (blocking him)

No, Papa!

General Villivicencio

What else is there to do?

Mossy

Papa, I cannot permit you to expose yourself in this way. For years we have been estranged. You must not leave me so. (decisively) I will settle this quarrel for you.

General Villivicencio (brightening, for he knows but one way to settle a quarrel)

I would myself do it. But a candidate cannot. Silly custom. My friends forbid it.

Mossy

So do I.

General Villivicencio

My son— I do not wish to compel you.

Mossy

It is a small service. You must wait here for my return.

General Villivicencio

But, I have an appointment at Maspero's.

Mossy

I will call and make an excuse for you. Now, I must go and find which member of their talented editorial staff wrote this trash.

General Villivicencio

What if your patients are looking for you?

Mossy

Send them to Dr. Prevost, if it's an emergency. Otherwise, tell them to call me at my office tomorrow.

General V. Bien. (he seats himself and reads a paper)

OLD CREOLE DAYS

(Mossy goes out, decisively.)

(Enter Major Shaughnessy. He goes directly to D'Hemencourt.)

Shaughnessy

Good evening, Monsieur D'Hemencourt. I want to have a private word with you.

D'Hemencourt

Mazaro told you?

Shaughnessy

Yes.

D'Hemencourt

Major, if Mazaro told you, why didn't you come sooner?

Shaughnessy

Didn't Manuel tell you why I didn't come?

D'Hemencourt

Yes, but one brave gentleman should not be afraid of—

Shaughnessy

Monsieur D'Hemencourt, I'm not afraid of any two men living, and certainly not the two that've been watching me, if they're the two I think they are.

D'Hemencourt

But, sir . . .

Shaughnessy

What's the use of confronting two cutthroats when—?

D'Hemencourt

Major Shaughnessy, I am not a cutthroat, and I have a right to watch you.

Shaughnessy

What do you mean? One of us is crazy.

D'Hemencourt

No, sir. I am not crazy. I have a right to watch the man who made a remark about my daughter.

Shaughnessy (hotly)

I did not such thing!

D'Hemencourt (with equal fire)

You did!

Shaughnessy

Never.

D'Hemencourt

But, you have just acknowledged—

Shaughnessy

The man that told you is a liar!

D'Hemencourt (triumphant)

Ah, you call Manuel Mazaro a liar?

Shaughnessy

Well, I should say so. Why, Monsieur D'Hemencourt, Mazaro's been keeping me away from here with a yarn about a couple of Spaniards from Cuba watching for me. That's what I came to ask you about. Do you suppose I would talk about your daughter to the likes of Mazaro?

End of Scene I.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Scene II.

The Cafe des Exiles, early evening. Major Shaughnessy and D'Hemencourt are awaiting the return of Manuel Mazaro. Jean is still waiting for the shivaree. Charlie and the Colonel are seated, still discussing the proposed trade.

Colonel

Old Charlie, you and me is both old, eh?

Charlie

Yes.

Colonel

And, we has both been had enough in our time, eh Charlie?

Charlie (sipping his drink)

Yass.

Colonel

You and me is pretty close.

Charlie

Blame close, yes.

Colonel

But, you never know me to cheat, old man?

Charlie

No.

Colonel

And, do you think I would cheat you now?

Charlie

I dunno. I don't believe.

Colonel

Well, old man—I shan't cheat you now. My God,—you better not make the trade.

Charlie

Because for what?

Colonel

Because the levee's burst.

(Charlie makes signs of disbelief.)

Colonel

It's true, it's true, Charlie. When you first wanted to trade—I kind of laughed. But when I went back home last night, I saw the levee was bursting and decided I'd better make that trade after all. I've got no insurance, Charlie.

(The mob enters, and prominent among its leaders is Jules St Ange. **Jean** rises quickly and signals to St Ange. The mob more or less quiets down to see what's going on.)

Jean

Stop those fellows, Jules. Stop them just a minute.

(St Ange gives a signal and the mob quiets.)

Jean

Don't shivaree old Poquelin tonight.

Jules (drunk)

Who tell you I'm going to shivaree somebody, eh? You think because I make a little playful wiz this tin pan zat I am drunk?

Jean

Oh, no. I was just afraid you might not know old Poquelin is sick.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Jules

I am very sorry to tell you, you are drunk as the devil. I am ze servan of ze publique. Zese citoyens goin to request Jean Poquelin give two hundred fifty dollars to charity. If he refuse, we make some little musique, ta, ra, ta.

Jean

But, gentlemen, the old man is very sick.

Jules

Old Poquelin got no bizniz drink so much whiskey.

Jean

It is not right to do it to a sick man.

Jules

My faith, we did not make him to be sick. When we have say we going to make le shivaree, do you want we have tell a lie?

Jean

Oh, no. You can shivaree someone else.

Jules

Mais, certainlee. We can shivaree Jean ah Poquelin tomorrow.

Voice in the crowd Let us go to Madame Schneider's Bordello. The old witch. Cent pesetas pour le charite. Hurrah!

(The crowd goes noisily off. Jean resumes his seat. Zalli enters with **Pere Jerome**.)

Zalli

I just had to find you, Pere Jerome. I had to talk to you. (pause) **Pere Jerome**.

Jerome Why, Madame Zalli?

Zalli

Oh, Pere Jerome, I wan see you so bad, so bad!

Jerome Perhaps we had better sit apart.

Zalli

I was glad to catch you. (pause) (fanning herself) F'e chaud.

Jerome Well, Madame Zalli?

Zalli

Pere Jerome.

Jerome Well?

Zalli

Oh, Pere Jerome, the law is broken. I broke it. Me! Me!

Jerome I suppose that must have been by accident, Madame Zalli? That's the way it is, isn't it?

Zalli

No, no. I betrothed my little girl to a white man.

Jerome Is that possible, Madame Zalli?

Zalli

Yes, yes, it's true.

Jerome Is he a good man—without doubt?

Zalli

The best man in the world.

Jerome My poor, dear friend, I am afraid you are being deceived by somebody.

Zalli

Ah, not Miche. Not by Captain le Maitre.

Jerome (after a long pause)

He is a good man, surely, though he has much to atone for— Still, are you sure he is prepared—

Zalli

Has he not braved other rules—?

Jerome A priest is not a judge or a lawyer. How can I help you?

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Zalli

Why did they make that law?— What right had they—?

Jerome To keep the races separate—if that be a right—.

Zalli

Then, they made a lie, Pere Jerome. Separate, no.— We are not separate. But they do want to keep us despised. No, I will tell you what the law is made for. It is made to punish my child— My God, what a law! I came to tell you they shall not punish my daughter. She shall marry who she wants!

Jerome Madame, Zalli, I want you to go home. Don't make yourself upset. I will go to see Captain le Maitre, who is, by the way, an old friend of mine. We will fix that law for you.

Zalli

You can fix it?

Jerome We can try, Madame Zalli.

Zalli (kissing him)

You are the best man God ever made!

Jerome (embarrassed)

Well, well, Madame Zalli, I will only do my best. I must go now—

(Pere Jerome is about to leave. Zalli looks about nervously.)

Zalli

I think Sieur de la Rue has followed me—

Jerome I see no one.

Zalli

I am over excited.

Jerome I really must go.

(Pere Jerome exits. Zalli hesitates, looks about, then starts towards her house. Vignevielle enters and bows to her.)

Zalli

Miche Vignevielle! Ah, Monsieur, you will be killed if you stay here. I am sure Sieur de la Rue is following me.

Vignevielle

Madame Zalli, I wish you not to dance.

Zalli

I have danced already. I am going home. Come, be quick, we will go together.— Ah—it is he, Sieur de la Rue.

Vignevielle

I am not afraid.

(Sieur de la Rue appears from the shadows accompanied by two ruffians.)

Zalli

Are you armed? Here take this. (she withdraws a dagger and gives it to him, he brushes her aside)

M. de la Rue (raising his cane to strike)

That for yesterday.

(Vignevielle easily wards off the blow and knocks him down.)

Ruffian (striking Vignevielle with a club)

That for Tite Poulette.

(La Rue and his ruffians surround Vignevielle and are doing pretty well kicking and clubbing until Vignevielle gets angry and pulls the sword from his sword cane, which he wields expertly, too expertly for a gentleman.)

Vignevielle (uttering a pirate's oath)

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Sblood! I shall cut your ears off and make you eat them—

M. de la Rue

It's Captain le Maitre. He will kill us. Call the watch.

Vignevielle

Run—you had best. But, unless you want your throat cut, sir, and that of all your family—you had best say nothing—.

M. de la Rue

Run! I shall be silent. My God, what an escape. A pirate—

(La Rue and his ruffians run off, terrified.)

Vignevielle

Sometimes, it's a good idea to have the heart of a pirate.

Zalli

You are wounded, sir.

Vignevielle

Merely a scratch.

Zalli

Come to my house. I will fetch Dr. Mossy.

(They exit into her house. The excitement dies down in the Cafe. **Shaughnessy** had come to interfere, but Vignevielle had settled matters for himself. D'Hemencourt and Shaughnessy resume their watch for **Mazaro**.)

D'Hemencourt

He is coming— Don't let him catch you.

Shaughnessy

The little yellow wretch. I'm going to catch him.

D'Hemencourt

No, no. Not in the Cafe des Exiles. Not now, Major. Go in that door if you please. You can listen to what he has to say.

Shaughnessy

I can't go in that door. That's your daughter's room.

D'Hemencourt

Oui, oui, mais.

Shaughnessy

I'll just slip in here.

(The Major goes in another door. Mazaro enters.)

Mazaro

You've got a heap of trouble, senor. (silence) There was a big crowd in the Cafe Anglais. . . .

D'Hemencourt

But where is Major Shaughnessy?

Mazaro

Major Shaughnessy? Yes, he was there; but he wouldn't come to see you senor.

D'Hemencourt

No?

Mazaro

Oh, no, senor. It's very bad for your daughter, eh?

D'Hemencourt

What?

Mazaro

They're talking about her. This coffee house is not a good place for her, eh? (pause) But, you cannot help, eh? I know about her getting married.

Scene II.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

(D'Hemencourt rises with a gesture of dismissing a distasteful subject.)

Mazaro

Senor, if I was a man who loved your daughter, all is possible to love, eh? You should let me marry her and take her away from this place, senor.

D'Hemencourt

Manuel Mazaro, you have said enough.

Mazaro

No, no, senor; no, no. I want to tell you there is one man who loves your daughter, and I know him.

D'Hemencourt

Major Shaughnessy.

Mazaro

The Major. Oh, no, not the Major. The Major never loved your daughter. Ah, senor, if it was possible that your daughter loved him, it would be the worst kind in the world, but senor, I—

D'Hemencourt

Manuel Mazaro, you have—

Mazaro

Senor, I am about to reveal to you—

D'Hemencourt

Manuel Mazaro!

Mazaro

Senor, excuse me.

D'Hemencourt

Silence! You have deceived me. You have mocked me. You—

Mazaro

Senor, I swear to you that all that I say—

(Pauline and the Major step from behind the door.)

Major and Pauline A LIE!

(Mazaro is speechless.)

Shaughnessy

Just finish your speech.

Mazaro (confused)

Was nothing—

Shaughnessy

You're a liar.

Mazaro

No, I was only telling D'Hemencourt something true.

Shaughnessy

And, I tell you, you're a liar. Be so kind as to get yourself to the street as I am desirous of kicking you before everyone.

D'Hemencourt

Major—no scandal.

Shaughnessy (imperiously)

Go!

(Mazaro runs off.)

Shaughnessy

Be so kind as to say "Here's a good wife for you" and I'll let the little serpent go.

End of Scene II.

Scene II.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Scene III.

Before the Cafe, later that night.

(The crowd returns, obviously in flight.)

Voice

Ghosts

Voice

I ain't never been so scared in my life.

Jules

Posson Jone, where are you when I need you? I scared, me.

(Jules runs off. Parson Jones enters from the direction in which the crowd has entered.)

Jones

Hats off, gentlemen. Here come the last remains of Jean Marie Poquelin. I say it was a special Providence that I went by this poor sinner's house on my way back to Smyrny. Thus did I discover this heroic man on his death bed; a man who for twenty years had exposed himself to contagion and leprosy (a shudder passes through the crowd) to shelter his brother.— He died a repentant sinner in my arms. An old slaver; a misanthrope, yet he believed in a Holy Saviour.

(A casket passes on the shoulders of four men; behind the casket—the eerie figure of the leper, Jacques Poquelin.)

Voice

They are going to the Terre aux Lepreux—

Voice

His brother, Jacques, a leper all these years.

(The crowd and Parson Jones go out.)

(General Villivicencio has watched these proceedings from his post in the Cafe. He, though struck by the scene, is preoccupied with his own worries. He drums the table. Finally, he rises and paces. Madame Delicieuse enters.)

General Villivicencio

What is the matter, Clarisse?

Madame Delicieuse

I am looking for my physician—your son.

General Villivicencio (uneasily)

He is not here. (he looks at his watch with growing impatience)

Madame Delicieuse

Will he be back soon?

General Villivicencio

He should have been back some time ago. I've been all over looking for him.

Madame Delicieuse

Where did he go?

General Villivicencio

A small matter— (wincing)

Madame Delicieuse

Your son took your quarrel on his hands, eh?

OLD CREOLE DAYS

General Villivicencio

Like a good son. (edgy)

Madame Delicieuse

I left him an hour ago in search of your slanderer.

General Villivicencio

He must find him.

Madame Delicieuse

Perhaps, he has.

General Villivicencio

Clarisse, this is not like you. Where is my son? What has happened? If you know something, speak!

Madame Delicieuse

You can do nothing now. Suppose you should rush out and find your son had not fought with this scribbler?

General Villivicencio (very excited)

My son is no coward!

Madame Delicieuse

I want to ask you something. Please answer candidly.

General Villivicencio

Very well.

Madame Delicieuse

Did you not force this quarrel on your son to test his courage—?

General Villivicencio

Not his courage—his love.

Madame Delicieuse

And, if he ahs proved it?

General Villivicencio

Then, he is my son.

Madame Delicieuse

And your heir?

General Villivicencio

Certainly.

Madame Delicieuse (savagely)

It will make him a magnificent funeral.

(The General is overwhelmed.)

(The Colonel and Charlie enter the Cafe and take seats.)

Madame Delicieuse

Your son has met the writer of that article.

General Villivicencio

Where?

Madame Delicieuse

Suddenly, unexpectedly—in a passageway.

General Villivicencio

My God, and the villain—?

Madame Delicieuse

—lives!

General Villivicencio

Let me go, Clarisse.

Madame Delicieuse

I wrote the article. Your son is hunting for me now.

Scene III.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

General Villivicencio

You!

Madame Delicieuse

Me!

General Villivicencio

But, why? How could you say such things? You know they are not true!

Madame Delicieuse

That made saying it all the more piquant, Hercule.

General Villivicencio

I still don't understand why.

Madame Delicieuse

Well, I had to pay you back for pestering me so,—not making up with Victorien.

General Villivicencio (amused)

What a mischief maker.

Madame Delicieuse

I had it all worked out (pointing to her head) up here. No one, absolutely no one, and particularly not you, dear Hercule, can arrange matters better than I can. Remember that—after we're married.

General Villivicencio (delighted)

I will, my dear, I will.

Madame Delicieuse

Now, you may escort me home, Hercule. I have to prepare a retraction and apology for tomorrow's newspaper. Altogether, I think your cause will benefit from this scurrilous and unprovoked attack. Even Yankees hate to see a national hero treated so unfairly. I foresaw that, too.

General Villivicencio (involuntarily impressed)

Indeed.

Madame Delicieuse

I plan on being married in the Governor's mansion.

(The General bows magnificently to her, as only he can, and offers her his arm. Exit the future Governor and First Lady of Louisiana.)

(A messenger enters and goes up to Colonel Charleu.)

Messenger **Colonel** Charleu?

Colonel

Yes?

Messenger Sir,—ah— (hesitating)

Colonel

Speak out, man. What's wrong with you? You look like somebody just died.

Messenger **Colonel**—Belles Demoiselles Plantation, sir—

Colonel

Flooding. I expected it.

Messenger The house, sir, it fell into the river.

Colonel

Ahh! My daughters escaped injury?

Messenger They sank with the house into the mud. There is no question, they are dead.

Colonel

My daughters. My Belles Demoiselles—all gone?

Messenger All.

Charlie (reaching out to embrace him)

Come, stay with me. It shall be your house now. Come, my old friend.

Scene III.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

(Charlie leads off the Colonel. Injin Charlie seems to have sobered up. This call of the blood has brought out the best in him—whether this be Indian or French blood, who can say? As Charlie and the Colonel exit, Manuel Mazaro enters. There are several rough looking characters seated at a table with the Major. Mazaro looks inquisitively at one of them, a Mexican. The Mexican looks to the Major who indicates Mazaro can stay.)

Mexican

You may take your place without fear, Manuel.

(Mazaro nervously sits down.)

Shaughnessy

Gentlemen, this may be the last time we meet together in unbroken body. Who knows but that Senor Benito, though hale and strong, may be taken ill tomorrow? Who knows but that Pedro there may be struck with a fever? Who knows but that they may soon need the services of the good Dr. Mossy, and of our burial society, and that Fernandez, and Beningo, and Dominguez may not be chosen to see on that very schooner lying at Picayune pier just now, their beloved remains delivered safely into the hands of their relatives in Cuba? Who knows but it may be so? If such is to be their fate, amigos, I will say to them, Creoles, country men, lovers— Bon voyage and good luck to ye.

(All at the table say "Bueno" and drink a toast.)

Shaughnessy

And now, gentlemen, fellow exiles, Monsieur D'Hemencourt, it was your practice until lately to reward a good talker with a glass from the hands of your daughter.

(All at the table cry "Si, si.")

Shaughnessy

However, I'll ask you, not knowing but it may be the last time we all meet together if you will not let the goddess of the Cafe des Exiles grace our company for one last minute. (Pauline comes forward) You see, friends, her position has been growing more and more embarrassing daily. Therefore, I have taken steps to relieve the old gentleman's distress. (he gestures towards Pauline) Friends and fellow patriots. Mistress Shaughnessy. Lads, fill your glasses. Here's to my wife and the Cafe des Exiles.

(An Army Officer enters.)

Officer

Major, I am sorry to disturb you, but I have information you plan to invade Cuba and have weapons stored in this Cafe. I am sorry but I must search the premises.

Shaughnessy

You are mistaken.

Officer

The Cafe is surrounded.

Shaughnessy

This is a simple business meeting. We are a burial society and we also speculate in real estate.

Officer

I hope that is the case. Monsieur D'Hemencourt, you will show me over the premises.

D'Hemencourt

Of course, we have only some coffins for the burial society.

(D'Hemencourt and the Officer go inside.)

Mexican

Someone has denounced us.

Mazaro

Who would do that?

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Mexican (looking at him coldly)

Who, indeed?

(The Officer returns with D'Hemencourt.)

Officer (amused)

I've heard of some strange heathen burial customs, but I never yet heard of storing rifles in coffins.

(The Mexican quietly plunges his dagger into Manuel Mazaro's ribs. So deft is he, that Mazaro only utters a little grunt. The Officer is totally unaware of what has happened.)

Officer

I have to confiscate the rifles. However, no other action will be taken against you—.

(The Officer leaves. Mazaro slumps in his chair.)

Shaughnessy

You fool, Pedro. You shouldn't have done that here. Get him out of her, quick—

(The Mexican and another man carry Manuel out as if he were drunk. Pauline shudders and draws near to Shaughnessy, who holds her protectively. Officers enter and begin to remove the rifles.)

End of Scene III.

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Scene IV.

Morning, before the Cafe. Zalli enters, pursued by Tite Poulette.

Poulette

Maman, please—stop this. Say you are my mother.

Zalli (tearful)

No, child. I am not your mother. I have deceived you all these years. Your mother was white. You are white and I am black. You are free to marry whom you choose.

Poulette

It's not true.

Zalli

I have sworn it before Monsieur Jean, the lawyer, and Pere Jerome.

Poulette

Maman, how can you do this?

Zalli

I love you, child, but you must stop referring to me as your mother.

Poulette

You're only doing this so I can marry him.

(Vignevielle and Pere Jerome enter together.)

Zalli

Ah, Pere Jerome, finally you have come—

Poulette

Make her stop, Pere Jerome.

Pere Jerome (uneasily)

Your mother—er, Madame Zalli, has sworn the most solemn oath that you are not her daughter.

Poulette

Only so I can marry Miche Vignevielle.

Jerome I should not wish to accuse Madame Zalli of taking a false oath, if I were in your position. If you are her daughter, it is most undaughterly, if not, it isn't very nice.

Poulette

I will not marry if I have to give up my mother.

Vignevielle

May I have the papers. (Jerome gives them to him, and he looks at them) Undoubtedly, they would be accepted in a court of law. (he tears them up)

Zalli

Miche Vignevielle, what have you done?

Vignevielle

Madame Zalli, I need no such papers. For some men, perhaps, they would be essential. For me, they are unnecessary. I am Captain Ursin le Maitre. For fifteen years, I have defied all man's laws, laws which I admit in theory to be just. Am I now to be thwarted in my will by a law which I do not conceive even for one moment to be just? Judge for yourself. My wife need not renounce her family for me. . . .

Poulette

Ursin, you are magnificent.

Vignevielle (modestly)

Just an old pirate, my dear. But, I see it pleases you.

Poulette

More than anything you have ever done for me, and you have done much.

Vignevielle

OLD CREOLE DAYS

Then, let us all—and you too, ma mere—celebrate. And where better than at the Cafe des Exiles?

Zalli

You go ahead. I must speak to Pere Jerome privately.

(Vignevielle and Tite Poulette enter the Cafe and are greeted by Major Shaughnessy and D'Hemencourt.)

Zalli

I have sinned, Pere Jerome. I lied.

Jerome Go— I absolve you. God can forgive almost anything to a mother's love.

(Zalli goes into the Cafe and joins the others.)

Jerome God—lay not this sin to her charge. I know you will not.

(Pere Jerome is about to go into the Cafe when Parson Jones enters, looking for Colossus.)

Jones (yelling)

Colossus! I say, Colossus, where are you, sar? (he turns around and meets Pere Jerome) Oh, excuse me, sar. I see you are a member of the clergy, of ah— (he really can't be rude) Hmmm—a Catholic. I can't say I have ever met a Catholic priest before. (he is rather surprised Pere Jerome doesn't bite)

Pere Jerome

Of course. Good day.

Jones

Parson Jones.

Jerome Parson Jones. I am called Pere Jerome.

Jones

Very pleased to meet you, sar.

(They boy and Jones walks off; Pere Jerome hesitates before entering the Cafe.)

Jerome I could preach a sermon about the things I have seen here these last few days. But, would anyone understand it the way I intend it?

(Pere Jerome enters the Cafe.)

(A slight pause, and Jules and Baptiste saunter in.)

Baptiste

You know what happen to Parson Jonez money, Miche?

Jules

He lost it, or Miguel stole it.

Baptiste

No, no. Colossus took it. He give it back to him already.

Jules

And, I feel so guilty. You know what I gon do wid dis money? (showing the roll of bills)

Baptiste

No, monsieur.

Jules

Well, you can strike me dead if I don't goin to pay half my bills. Allons!

(Baptiste and Jules saunter out.)

End of Scene IV.

CURTAIN