

# **A ROUGH DIAMOND (LES PAVES DE L'OURS)**

A Comedy in One Act By Georges Feydeau



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# **A ROUGH DIAMOND (LES PAVES DE L'OURS)**

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**A Comedy in One Act By Georges Feydeau**

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1896

Translated and Adapted by  
Frank J. Morlock  
C 1996

Etext by Dagny

CHARACTERS:

Bretel  
Lucien Fesset  
Dora  
Madame Prevallon

SCENE:

A dining room in a young man's apartment. Elegant furniture. In the rear, an entry door. To the left, a door and chimney. To the right, a chest used as a buffet. Not far from the door on the right, a work table with an Anubis to the table's left, facing the door. On the walls, pictures, including a "Leda with her Swan." On the chimney, a statue of Diana something, some photographs of women in frames.

**Lucien** (at the table, writing)

"Alas, my dear Dora, there are times in life when you have to sacrifice your happiness to your duty—to your duty!—Your happiness to your duty." These letters are tiresome to write.

**Dora** (coming from the right, holding a hood of an administrative sergeant under her arm)

I am ready.

**Lucien** (quickly hiding his letter)

She!

**Dora**

Why are you hiding what you were writing?

**Lucien**

Hum! I'm not hiding it—I—I put it in my pocket, that's all.

**Dora**

Oh, then it's something I cannot see?

**Lucien**

That's it.

**Dora**

Because?

**Lucien**

Because? Because, it's for you, so—

**Dora**

Ah! The reason is excellent.

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**Lucien**

Right, you understand.

**Dora**

My word, I don't.

**Lucien**

There are things one cannot say—verbally—and one can only dare to write them.

**Dora**

Then give it to me. I'll read it.

**Lucien**

Oh, no thanks, like this, in front of me, and then, it's not finished. My letter is the expression of a spontaneous impulse. So, you see, I have to reflect. I need to take my time.

**Dora**

As you like. I smell a surprise and I don't want to know it. Waking on a holiday surprise is required.

**Lucien**

On a holiday?

**Dora**

Well! Tomorrow, I'm twenty—two.

**Lucien**

Ah, like last year.

**Dora**

You think so? It's possible. You know, we women, unlike the military our campaign years are counted by halves. By the way, here's your uniform. I fixed the buttons.

**Lucien**

By yourself?

**Dora**

Myself. Oh, you must be handsome with—What are you?

**Lucien**

Sergeant, in the Medical Corps. Reserves.

**Dora**

I thought you were an officer?

**Lucien**

Huh? No, that is to say—I'm a police officer and a sergeant in the reserves. That's all. You know, it's not elegant! But things are not going bad for me on active duty. Well, today, I don't know. I am getting fat. Anyway, you will have time to see me, tomorrow and the day after—like this for a month.

**Dora**

That will amuse me, to see you as a soldier.

**Lucien**

As a soldier, yes, perhaps, too grand a word to describe my function— but still.

**Dora**

Anyway, I'm going out.

**Lucien**

What, now? But, we're going to have lunch in a quarter of an hour.

**Dora**

Right, I'm going to buy dessert for the banquet. You've ordered the food.

**Lucien**

Yes, from Churt. Ah, really, you are an excellent housewife.

**Dora**

You notice it? Perhaps that will give you the idea of marrying me.

**Lucien**

No.

**Dora**

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Thanks

**Lucien**

But I admire you. I almost don't want to take on a servant.

**Dora**

Oh, no. You are too good. If you think it would amuse me to do housework? When will you get someone?

**Lucien**

Why, I expect today. Oh, it's that I don't want any more Parisian servants—like Etienne—he had an eye, yes, but he is indiscreet, a liar, a thief, a drunkard. Oh, no—enough of that! I want a fresh soul, right from the country, a rough diamond, but pure. Well, my word, I'll train him. I will be very badly, but very honestly, served. That will suit me.

**Dora**

Anyway, we shall see this diamond. I'm off.

(She kisses him on his face.)

**Lucien**

Eh! Well, say, on your way out, put this uniform in my room. Till later.

(Dora leaves. Lucien sits at table and writes. After a while, there is a ring.)

**Lucien**

Who's coming to bother me? It must be the new servant. (going to the back) That's all I need! I have to open the door for my servant.

(Lucien goes out and returns.)

**Lucien**

Come in

**Bretel** (strong Belgian accent)

Hello, sir. It's nice—

**Lucien**

Huh?

**Bretel** (with admiration)

Oh, God, God, God, yeah, yeah, yeah. This is very old fashioned, here! You know?

**Lucien** (laughing)

Ah, simple, primitive type, behold. (aloud) You like it, huh!

**Bretel**

For sure, quite fancy, you know.

**Lucien** (half laughing)

Yes, my friend. Only you should wipe your feet before coming in.

**Bretel**

Me? Eh! What you say, I took a bath in the river, day before yesterday, luckily.

**Lucien**

Not your boots. You should have dried them before entering. The rug is made for that.

**Bretel**

In that case, there is no time to lose. (he shakes his feet on the rug)

**Lucien**

Eh, no. Eh. Not there.

**Bretel**

Eh, well, why were you saying the rug is made for that?

**Lucien** (aside)

This is a very rough diamond.

(Lucien puts his cigarette on an ashtray on the chimney.)

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**Bretel**

Heavens, what are you doing, sir? You put cigarette ashes in the dishes?

**Lucien**

It's not a dish, it's an ashtray. It's made for cigarette butts, and all the things that shouldn't be thrown on the floor.

**Bretel**

All the same. This is what is generally called refinement?

**Lucien**

No, not generally, surely. Relax a bit, I have an important letter to finish, and I'll be with you.

**Bretel**

G'wan, g'wan.

**Lucien** (writing, his back turned to Bretel who is inspecting the apartment)

"Alas, my dear Dora, there are certain circumstances in life when one must sacrifice one's joy to one's duty."

**Bretel** (with conviction)

Very true!

**Lucien** (turning)

Huh?

**Bretel**

Yes, that's fine. You speak like a minister, do you know? That's great.

**Lucien**

Oh, no. What's he getting involved for?

**Bretel** (repeating)

"There must in life be sacrifices for your happiness and duty." Very good! That's what they call a dance—a dance of the Evangelist.

**Lucien**

Huh?

**Bretel**

A dance of the Evangelist. It means it rolls off the tongue nicely, and when you have nothing to say—

**Lucien**

He's a character! Come! Let me write. (writing) ". . . his happiness and his duty." Yes, I know how to twist it around. "I have often given you proofs of my love—"

**Bretel**

Of his love. It's a love letter. (looking at Leda and the swan) Yeah, yeah. What's all this? Young girl, pictured like this, dressed with a veil on her knees. (aloud) Say, sir, is she in your family, this lady?

**Lucien**

What? What lady?

**Bretel**

This lady, plucking a goose and who is afraid of getting her clothes dirty.

**Lucien**

Huh? The Leda? You are crazy. Let me write.

**Bretel**

G'wan, g'wan.

**Lucien** (writing)

". . . proofs of my love. You have nothing to suspect—also—there are reasons—"

**Bretel** (at the chimney, seeing a statuette of Diana something)

That's a nice pose, all the same. (aloud) Sir!

**Lucien**

What, again?

**Bretel**

She's from your family, this lady?

**Lucien**



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Oh, why, he, he annoys me.

**Bretel**

Why do you let her run around like that, naked? Why don't you dress her? With some small clothes, like we do scarecrows?

**Lucien**

Oh, look—you aren't going to interrupt me like this all the time? Do what you want, but don't say anything, or I'll never get finished with this letter.

**Bretel**

Sure.

**Lucien** (turning)

It's true. I have enough trouble twisting this diplomatic chick already. Let's see— (writing) “There must be some reasons!” No. (erasing) “Alas!—I—“ No. “I swear to heaven—“ No. “God is my witness, I never wanted to leave you.”

(Bretel sits on the left, pulls out his pipe and lights up.)

**Lucien** (writing)

“But I see myself in the necessity—“ (correcting) ” . . . in the hard necessity of breaking our honeymoon.”

**Bretel** (goes to spit, stops, looks at the rug, then takes the ashtray and spits in it)

This isn't very convenient.

**Lucien** (repeating)

” . . . to break our honeymoon.” (speaking) Only what would force me to break our honeymoon? Oh, I've got it. (writing) “I put my entire fortune in the Caledonian stocks—it is a debacle—everything is lost.”

**Bretel** (spitting in the ashtray)

Not convenient.

**Lucien** (writing)

“I am absolutely ruined.”

**Bretel** (holding his pipe)

You are ruined? You?

**Lucien**

Huh? Why, why no. If you would not concern yourself with what I write—

**Bretel**

I am not concerned—only you said it.

**Lucien**

Well, what's that prove? I am writing a business letter.

**Bretel**

Ah, very fine. It's bullshit, then? I was saying: “He's a poor, ruined young man. I can't stay in his service.”

**Lucien**

Ah, I thank you for your concern. (goes back to writing while Bretel resumes smoking his pipe) “I have not the right to make you share my misery. You will want to, but I have to object.” (aside) It's good to foresee everything.

(writing) “You are young, beautiful, you have a bright future in front of you. Go! Forget me! Be happy!”

(speaking) There, three nice bank notes for a thousand francs with it. Ah, but no, since I've lost everything—it's not worth the trouble. A little lyricism. (writing) “Would that I could, in leaving you, offer you more than the tears I've shed.” (while writing he repeats the refrain of a waltz) ” . . . offer you more than the tears I've shed.”

**Bretel** (who has listened with excruciating emotion, puts down his pipe and weeps)

Ahh! Ahh! Ahh!

**Lucien** (rising)

Well, what's wrong with you?

**Bretel**

It's that bullshit letter. It's so sad.

**Lucien**

What, over that? What a diamond! But look, you should laugh.

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**Bretel** (weeping)

Eh! I know it. If it was true, I would shut up—but since it isn't, there's no need.

**Lucien** (shrugging his shoulders, then placing the letter in an envelope)

Mlle. Dora Brochet. There! (sniffing the air) What smells of burning like that?

**Bretel** (sniffing the air)

Burning?

**Bretel**

Yes, it smells like a pipe.

**Bretel**

Oh, I know. It's Gudule.

**Lucien**

Gudule?

**Bretel** (pointing to his pipe)

There—Gudule. It's an old friend.

**Lucien**

Eh, well, look, you can't smoke here.

**Bretel**

Here? G'wan, g'wan. What are you saying? You just were smoking here yourself, you know.

**Lucien**

Me? (aside) Ah, no—he's perfect (seeing Bretel spitting in the ashtray) Why, what are you doing?

**Bretel** (astonished)

Well, I'm spitting in the ashtray, sir, in the cup, like you said.

**Lucien**

I said that? Me?

**Bretel**

You said it was for putting in it—what you didn't want put on the rug.

**Lucien**

First of all, one doesn't spit in a room.

**Bretel**

Really? Well, where do you want me to do it?

**Lucien**

Eh, that's your business. You don't spit, that's all.

**Bretel**

Sir, I'm not a beast, you know.

**Lucien**

All right! That's enough. What's your name?

**Bretel**

**Bretel.**

**Lucien** (writing)

Can you spell it?

**Bretel**

If you wish.

**Lucien**

That's what I'm asking you. Is it tel or telle?

**Bretel**

No, Bretel, short form.

**Lucien**

What an idiot. Still, it's written the way it's pronounced.

**Bretel**

For sure, like hotel or botel or chapel. Haven't you been to school to learn how to spell?

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### **Lucien**

First of all, my friend, I beg you to get rid of the habit of asking me questions. It's not for you to question me. A servant must never speak first, he must wait for his master. (seeing Bretel laugh) What are you laughing about?

### **Bretel** (laughing)

Nothing! I was laughing 'cause it's funny, 'cause you have an accent, you know.

### **Lucien** (bewildered)

Huh? Ah, fine, no! He is stupefying.

### **Bretel**

It's true, you said (imitating him) "A servant must never speak first." Why can't you simply say—like anyone else (with a strong Belgian accent) A servant mustn't speak first.

### **Lucien**

Ah!

### **Bretel**

Yes! That way you wouldn't notice you know— (imitating him a second time) "A servant must never speak first." (to Lucien) Don't you think it's funny?

### **Lucien** (laughing)

He is priceless.

### **Bretel**

Ah, you are laughing, you too. Gott—you are a nice man, you know.

(Bretel taps Lucien on the stomach.)

### **Lucien**

Huh? Eh! Well, look—no more familiarities. (aside) Oh, oh, too rough, this diamond, too rough. (aloud) You should learn, you don't tap your master on the stomach—and don't be so familiar.

### **Bretel**

You want me to speak in the plural? No!

### **Lucien**

Hein?

### **Bretel**

No, sir, you know it's not possible. I am not proud, for one, you can be familiar with me.

### **Lucien**

You are very good. Eh! Well, you will act as if I am more than one. You understand, right?

### **Bretel**

I understand you.

### **Lucien**

I really intend to take you into my service—if you promise me to be a willing worker.

### **Bretel**

Oh, sure. (spits and raises his hand to take an oath) You can rely on me at once, you know.

### **Lucien**

And, then, you will be economical. I don't want any one who's a spendthrift. (Bretel offers his hand and intends to spit again, Lucien stops him) No, it's not worth the trouble. Still, you will have an outfit. We are not in the country, here. First of all, you'll find a uniform for you in there, in my room.

### **Bretel**

An outfit?

### **Lucien**

Yes, an outfit, a costume, even! Blue with gold buttons.

### **Bretel**

A masquerade.

### **Lucien**

You'll go put it on right away. When someone rings, you'll go open the door. You won't ask indiscreet questions of visitors—only their name. If they don't wish to tell you, you won't insist.

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**Bretel**

Got it.

**Lucien**

If a letter or package comes for me, you won't give it to me by hand. You'll place it on a plate. There's a plate for that.

**Bretel** (listening attentively, he puts his finger in his nose)

Got it.

**Lucien**

Moreover, when I speak to you, you will avoid putting your finger in your nose.

**Bretel**

Oh, God! God! There he goes again. There he goes again.

**Lucien**

That's what I have to say for the moment. I will give you fifty francs a month.

**Bretel**

That's fine.

**Lucien**

The washing—

**Bretel** (with a little grimace)

Pooh!

**Lucien**

No wine.

**Bretel**

No, no wine. You know, sir, just plain beer.

**Lucien**

Well, that's your business.

**Bretel**

And the coffee milk.

**Lucien**

The cafe milk?

**Bretel**

Ah, that's right. You don't speak Parisian slang. You don't speak Belgian French. Well—the cafe au lait.

**Lucien**

Ah, the cafe. Go for the cafe. Now, get to work. The table's already laid. You have only to bring it here.

**Bretel**

Here it is. (brings the table downstage) And lunch, sir, where is it? (pointing to the salad) Is there only a salad?

**Lucien**

Don't worry about it. They will bring it here very soon. (seeing

**Bretel** staring at Dora's photograph on the chimney) What are you looking at like that?

**Bretel** (taking the photograph)

Is that your girl friend? She's quite a piece, you know.

**Lucien**

You think so?

**Bretel**

She's your close friend, huh? (leering wink)

**Lucien**

Hey, look, is that your business? What expressions.

**Bretel**

G'wan, g'wan. She's a looker! She's about your age.

**Lucien**

You should know, M. Bretel, that I only receive young and pretty girls here.

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**Bretel**

You're absolutely right. Only the glass is dirty. (spits on it and dries it with Lucien's napkin)

**Lucien**

Well—delightful manners, filthy clown.

(Lucien tears the photograph from Bretel and replaces it on the chimney.)

**Lucien**

There. They're serving, go open. I am going to change my coat. You will bring me my boots?

**Bretel**

Yes, sir.

(Bretel goes toward the back, while Lucien goes toward the left.)

**Lucien**

Oh, oh. I'm going to have trouble training him.

(Exit Lucien. Enter Madame Prevallon, followed by Bretel with Lucien's boots in his hand.)

**Mme. Prevallon**

Meester Lucien Fe'set.

**Bretel** (laughing)

Oh, oh. She's a howler, too. (aloud) What's ya name?

**Mme. Prevallon** (shocked)

What do you say?

**Bretel**

What's ya name?

**Mme. Prevallon**

Im-im-per-ti-nence! I—I forbid you to sp'pek to me.

**Bretel**

Sp'pek t'me?

**Mme. Prevallon**

Announce Madame Pre-vallon.

**Bretel**

Madame Prepreiallon.

**Mme. Prevallon**

No—Prevallon—ass!

**Bretel**

Madame Prevallonass! Well, it's all the same. It's no use, you know, Madame. You aren't going to be his dear friend.

**Mme. Prevallon**

Huh?

**Bretel**

Eh! Well, M. Fesset never receives but only young and pretty women. You may as well go.

**Mme. Prevallon**

Huh! W'wh—what?

**Bretel**

Yes, what, go right away, right away! (he gives her a sign to leave)

**Mme. Prevallon**

Tell—Lu—Lu—Lucien that I am fright—frightfully—

**Bretel**

Frightful, my exact words, Madame.

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**Mme. Prevallon**

Frightfully upset. Everything is over between us. (she goes out)

**Bretel**

She's the funniest of all, the little old lady. Let's take the boots.

(Bretel remembers Lucien's order and puts the boots on a platter.)

**Bretel**

That's better.

**Lucien** (coming from the left)

Well, my boots?

**Bretel**

Here they are, sir.

**Lucien**

Huh? You are crazy—on a platter!

(Lucien opens the door on the left and puts them in the next room.)

**Bretel**

Well, what—don't you remember what you said, sir?

**Lucien**

You are idiotic? Who rang?

**Bretel**

Oh, no one, an old lady—who talked funny—who's entitled Madame Prepavallonass.

**Lucien**

My in-law! Already! Where is she?

**Bretel**

Oh, don't worry, for once. I chased her out the door, you know.

**Lucien**

Madame Prevallon—out the door?

**Bretel**

Yes, out the door, right away.

**Lucien**

Idiot, cretin, dumbbell—my future mother-in-law.

**Bretel**

Well, you know, you were the one who told me you only receive young and pretty women, and she ain't.

**Lucien**

You are nothing but a jack-ass. Shut up.

**Bretel**

What's wrong?

**Lucien**

Madame Prevallon—out the door! She must be furious. Still, what did she say?

**Bretel**

She said everything was over. Still—there's nothing bad.

**Lucien**

No, on the contrary! What a beautiful job this imbecile will lose for me. Did you come here to ruin me? Didn't you hear?

**Bretel**

Yes.

(Bretel, bewildered, runs to the rear and exits.)

**Lucien**

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Well, here I am, up shit's creek because of that bonehead.

**Bretel** (in the wings)

Yes, go, thief, murderer, robber.

**Lucien**

Gad—what's he done this time? (calling) Bretel, Bretel!

**Bretel** (appearing)

Sir?

**Lucien** (icily)

What happened this time?

**Bretel**

Eh! It was a dog of a delivery boy from the restaurant who brought the food.

**Lucien**

Well?

**Bretel**

Well, you don't know, sir—he charged six francs for an old chicken which died of starvation for sure, and five francs for a piece of fruit cake—which he called patee.

**Lucien**

Well?

**Bretel**

Well, you told me to economize. That's simply theft, plain and simple. It's ridiculous, a chicken costs twenty-five sous. So I made no mistake this time. I ran him out the door.

**Lucien**

Again? Why, you have a mania for kicking people out the door. What are we going to eat, then?

**Bretel**

It doesn't matter. If necessary, you won't eat, but so long as Bretel is here, they won't steal from you, you know.

**Lucien**

Oh, this is beginning to irritate me. Well, why are you just standing there? At least, run buy something—a cold chicken—at the— Why aren't you in uniform? I told you to put it on.

**Bretel**

The masquerade—a cold chicken. Yes, sir. Yeah, yeah, so much to do in this house.

(Doorbell rings.)

**Lucien**

Go open, first.

**Bretel**

Yes—done! (running to open)

**Lucien**

What a brute!

**Bretel** (returning and announcing)

Madame, your good friend.

**Lucien**

Huh?

**Dora** (entering)

What's he say?

**Lucien**

That's his way of announcing.

**Dora** (considering Bretel)

Oh, he's the one, the diamond! He doesn't appear to be of the first water.

**Lucien**

Oh, don't speak to me about it. He's committed one idiocy after another. (to Bretel) Well, go, go! We've no need

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for you.

**Bretel**

I'm going to put on the costume. (leaves)

**Dora** (putting different packages on the table)

Here, my dearest.

**Lucien** (aside)

Thank God! At least my mother-in-law didn't stumble in on this.

**Dora**

What are you thinking about?

**Lucien**

Ah, serious matters.

**Dora**

You've been doing that for several days.

**Lucien** (aside)

She's handing me the opportunity. Let's broach the subject. (aloud) You see, ah, you see, I'm in the midst of a crisis. There are situations in life . . .

**Dora** (suddenly)

Oh!

**Lucien**

What?

**Dora**

It stinks of a pipe here!

**Lucien**

Oh! The—pipe—here?

**Dora**

There's a horrible—what a stench!

**Lucien** (aside)

Cursed pipe! I'd made such a nice beginning. (aloud) It's that imbecile who allowed himself to smoke in the room.

**Dora**

Why, he's horrible! And you allowed it? Where is the vaporizer?

**Lucien**

The vaporizer? In my bathroom. Wait.

(Lucien rings.)

**Dora**

I've never seen a servant like this.

**Bretel** (in pantaloons and shirt sleeves)

Someone rang. Was it you, sir?

**Lucien**

Fine! Very fine! Now you come in your underwear!

**Bretel**

I was getting undressed. Then, so as not to make you wait—

**Lucien**

All right! Go to my bathroom. You'll find a vaporizer. Bring it here.

**Bretel**

A what?

**Lucien**

A vaporizer. It's a kind of bottle with a receptacle. You will see what I mean—it's got a nozzle in rubber, like a baby-bottle.

**Bretel**

Yeah, I'll find it, I'll find it. (goes out to the right, running)



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**Dora**

Why does your servant talk like that?

**Lucien**

I spoke to him about it, but what can you expect, he's Belgian.

**Dora** (finding the vaporizer on a table)

Eh, why, here it is, the vaporizer. (she sprays right and left) Ah, I like that better.

**Lucien**

Me, too. (aside) How to get back to the big question. There's no way. I must get it over with this very day. (aloud)

Ahem! You know, Dora, the letter I was writing you, this morning—

**Dora** (putting the vaporizer down)

Yes—and then?

**Lucien** (with pretended emotion)

But, first of all, let me embrace you tenderly.

**Dora**

Yes. What?

(Lucien holds Dora to his breast. Bretel enters, holding an object that the audience cannot see.)

**Dora** (pulling away)

Oh, the servant.

**Bretel**

Ah, you know, Madame, don't distress yourself over me. I know about making out. (smirking) I grew up with cattle.

**Lucien**

Who asked you anything? Well, you didn't find it?

**Bretel**

Yes. (pointing to an enema) Is it this big baby-bottle, sir?

**Lucien**

Huh! No. Please put that out of sight!

**Dora**

Horrors!

**Bretel**

Huh! What's the matter with them?

**Lucien** (showing him the vaporizer)

There! That's a vaporizer. It's a bottle with vinegar in it.

**Bretel**

That's vinegar, ah!

**Lucien**

And now, go.

(Bretel goes out to the rear.)

**Lucien** (laughing)

That man is horrible!

**Dora**

Horrible! But, what were you telling me, when he interrupted us? Ah, yes, you were telling me about that letter.

**Lucien** (aside)

She's the one who returned to it. (aloud) Yes, I was telling you about my letter. My letter. Oh! I had to write to you because I am reduced to the cruel extremity—

**Dora**

Ah, my God! I see where you're at! It's a break up.

**Lucien**

## A ROUGH DIAMOND (LES PAVES DE L'OURS)

Huh? Ah, oh, now, how far you are going—a break up? No, a separation, nothing more.

**Dora** (shouting)

Come on, tell me, tell me. Oh, I've felt you didn't love me any more for some time. Go on, you can't trick a woman who loves! I see you clearly now.

**Lucien** (aside)

Oh, no, this is what I was afraid of.

**Dora**

And it was I who said—this letter is a surprise—a respect for my twenty-two or three years. Ah, yes, right. The gentleman, listening only to his boredom, trampling underfoot the most sacred feelings of love, is a little uneasy about breaking a heart naïve enough to love him.

**Lucien** (aside)

Yi! Yi! Yi! Yi!

**Dora**

Oh! Stupid! Stupid! Three times stupid, the woman who lets herself be seduced by a con-man like you! They told me, man loves before, the woman after—and there it is!

(Dora falls, sitting, into an armchair.)

**Lucien** (aside)

What a nuisance she is. (aloud) Look, Dora. (on his knees) Dora, calm down.

**Dora**

Leave me, sir!

(Bretel enters hastily from the back. He's dressed in Lucien's military uniform. Seeing the scene, he says "Oh" and quickly leaves. After awhile, he knocks on the door.)

**Bretel** (popping his head in, in a way that Lucien cannot see the uniform)

You really want a chicken?

**Lucien** (drily)

Yes.

**Bretel**

Say, boss, it's raining outside. Can't I take the umbrella?

**Lucien**

Eh! Yes, go!

(Bretel leaves.)

**Lucien**

Look, Dora, listen to me. You are a child. I tell you, nothing has changed in my heart for you. It's that my situation is not the same. Look, what do you want me to tell you? I am ruined.

**Dora**

Ruined?

**Lucien**

Absolutely. That's what I was writing you this morning. Look, you can read my letter.

**Dora**

Then, it's because you were ruined that— Oh, what joy!

**Lucien**

I thank you for the interest you take in my disaster.

**Dora**

No, I mean—it's not because you don't love me any more?

**Lucien**

Oh! Could you think such a thing?

**Dora**

And, how did this happen to you, my poor Lucien?

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**Lucien**

Well! You know, the lure of gain. I put my entire fortune into speculations which should reap me great benefits. An insider who is very clever told me: "There's a big deal to be made in ——." It's on the Stock Market, you wouldn't understand.

**Dora**

Oh, yes, I would. I understand quite well. Me, too. I've made my small economies, so I could invest. Well, in what? Let's see.

**Lucien**

Well, in The Caledonian.

**Dora** (jumping up)

In The Caledonian? Ah, my God. Why, I too, I'm almost completely in The Caledonian. Then, I am ruined.

**Lucien**

Huh, you? (aside) Well, I am lucky. (aloud) Why, no, no—you are not ruined.

**Dora** (very agitated)

What do you mean, no? If you are ruined, so am I. And they deceived me. They told me they were going up every day.

**Lucien**

But, really! I, I bet on them going down.

**Dora**

Huh?

**Lucien**

Then, the more it went up, you understand? The more I lost. That's all.

**Dora**

Yes. Oh, thank heaven!

**Lucien**

There isn't any more.

**Dora**

If you knew how frightened I was—to lose you and lose my investments at the same time. That would have been too much to endure, at the same time.

**Lucien**

Oh, yes. I am sufficient—

**Dora**

My poor Lucien! How are you going to get along, all by yourself? For you are right, I have no right to remain at your expense. Oh, don't worry about me. I will find a way to provide for myself.

**Lucien**

Yes.

**Dora**

I will always be a friend to you, you know.

**Lucien**

Ah, thanks, brave Dora. (aside) Isn't that the way with women? They don't permit you to let go of them when you have enough of them—only when you haven't enough for them.

**Dora**

But you, tell me, what are you going to do?

**Lucien**

The only thing that remains for me. I am going to marry.

**Dora**

You? With whom? A woman that you love?

**Lucien**

Why, no, no. Ah, a woman that I love! No, that's a very nice role, that's all. Since I am ruined, I must—

**Dora**

Oh, but, promise me, you will marry an ugly woman.

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**Lucien**

Ugly? A monster. Could I marry her without that?

**Dora**

Ah, thanks.

**Lucien** (aside)

Well, this is working out very well.

(Bretel arrives. He is overwhelmed. He is in Lucien's uniform and has a chicken in one hand and a woman's umbrella in the other. The umbrella, of red satin, is dragging.)

**Bretel**

Ouf!

**Lucien**

You? In my uniform?

**Dora**

With my umbrella! In such condition!

**Lucien**

What's this mean?

**Bretel**

Yeah, yeah, God, sir. If you knew what's been happening to me. Just now, I went into the street. Suddenly, as I turned, I knocked against a gentleman in masquerade like me. He called to me and said: "Eh, Sergeant, what kind of way is this for a soldier to walk about in drag with a ridiculous umbrella?"

**Lucien**

And, you said?

**Bretel**

I said to him: "What's it to you, sir?" Then, my good old boy got red, like my pants, and he said to me a pack of lies. That he was adjutant of the something or other, that I was out of uniform, and he tore my cap off to see my I.D. number. Then he said: "What's all this about, sir? What's it all about?"

**Lucien**

Why, you wretch! You have sworn my ruin. Ah, you've put me up shit's creek.

**Bretel**

Me? Come on, what have I done?

**Lucien**

A fight in the street—with my I.D. number. All this will fall on me. And then, prison and all that for— Ah, wait, I'm kicking you out. I've had enough of you!

**Bretel**

Me? Oh!

**Dora**

A quite new umbrella. Look at the way it looks. (opens it)

**Bretel**

Didn't I ask your permission to take it?

**Lucien**

Shut up! Here I am, in a pretty fix. What? I must run to the regiment today. So as to explain to them. Bungler! Go!

**Bretel**

God! Service is rough in Paris!

**Lucien**

Look, go get out of that uniform and finally serve us our lunch.

**Bretel**

Yes. Here's the chicken.

(Bretel puts his package down and leaves.)

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**Lucien**

Oh! I am furious. It's impossible to imagine such imbecility. What a cretin! Oh, I had a bright idea to find this rough diamond.

**Dora**

Poor boy, he's stupid, but not bad. If he sins, it's from excessive zeal.

**Lucien**

Yes, we bear with his inexperience. But this crosses one, all the same.

**Dora**

Anyway, calm down, patience. When one is getting married, my dear, you need to fortify yourself with it.

**Lucien**

Oh, don't frighten me in advance.

**Dora**

All the same! I want to see her, your fiancée. How old is she?

**Lucien**

Oh, fifty, fifty-five years old. She's an old medal. If you had been here before, you would have seen her.

**Dora**

Then, it's a platonic marriage?

**Lucien**

My God—a woman of fifty-five! Do you think I would allow myself to lack respect for her? A sinecure, I tell you. I am marrying a sinecure.

**Dora**

Gigolo! (they laugh) Oh, goodness. Isn't he going to serve us? I am dying of hunger.

**Lucien**

Yes, wait. (calling) Bretel, Bretel!

**Bretel** (finishing buttoning his livery)

Here, sir.

**Lucien**

Eh! Well—the lunch, my boy.

**Bretel**

G'wan, g'wan. Sir, Madame, sit at the table. (they sit down) There is a beautiful chicken all the same. (brandishing it in his hand)

**Lucien**

If you wouldn't take it in hand like that, eh? Here, prepare the salad, while I carve.  
(Lucien carves the chicken.)

**Bretel**

Yes, sir. (preparing the salad) Let's see, there's some oil, eh? (pouring all the oil in the salad) Huh? A mistake. (aloud) Sir, do you like snails?

**Lucien**

When they are good. What a question!

**Bretel** (to audience)

Good. There I leave him. The vinegar now, where is the vinegar? Ah, yes. (takes the vaporizer and sprays the salad) There, some salt, pepper, fine.

**Lucien**

Now, pass the chicken to Madame.

**Bretel** (after having placed the salad bowl on the table)

Here! Some chicken, Madame?

**Dora**

Thanks. (she serves herself)

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**Bretel** (presenting the plate to Lucien)

And y'all?

**Lucien** (as he serves)

And y'all? He's amazing with his y'all.

(Bretel puts the plate on the chest and takes a drumstick which he goes to eat downstage.)

**Lucien** (to Dora)

A little salad?

**Dora**

Yes.

(Lucien serves salad to Dora, then himself.)

**Lucien**

Eckkk! What the hell is this?

**Dora**

Horrors, it stinks of perfume. What did you put in it?

**Bretel**

I put some oil, Madame, and then some vinegar from that baby-bottle there, Madame.

**Dora**

Vinegar—why it's horrible!

**Lucien**

You really are a cretin! (seeing Bretel with his mouth full) And, what are you doing? Are you eating chicken?

**Bretel**

Sir, it's some—

(Bretel is choking and swallowing, coughing all the while. He rushes to grab Dora's glass which he empties.)

**Lucien**

Eh—well, don't trouble yourself! What a servant, my God! You know what I told you. You an pack your bags.

**Bretel**

Why, no! It's because, y'all are used to Parisian service. I am used to Belgian service.

**Lucien**

Beautiful, this Belgian service. And, what are we having with this?

**Bretel**

Why, nothing.

**Lucien**

Charming lunch!

**Dora**

For a lunch which may be our last—

**Lucien**

Ah, don't say that. You break my heart. You see, indeed, I am doing violence to myself.

**Dora**

Yes? But, swear to me, you are not deceiving me? She's very old, right?

**Lucien**

Who?

**Dora**

Your sinecure. You are not going to marry a young girl, right?

**Lucien**

Me? Why no. Look— They proposed several young girls of forty. I didn't want any.

**Dora**

Ah, yes, that would be frightful.

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**Bretel**

Have no fear, Madame. He couldn't have 'em.

**Lucien**

Who asked you the time of day? (a ringing is heard) Wait—someone's ringing. Go see who it is. (Bretel exits)  
He's very dense.

**Bretel** (returning)

Sir, it's the old lady from before.

**Lucien** (aside)

My mother-in-law. Hang it! (to Dora) Fine, it's the fiancée in question. Go into the bathroom, so she can't see you. You can watch her through the keyhole. She's a hundred and ten.

**Dora**

A hundred and ten!

**Lucien**

Still, for a wife— (puts Dora in the room at the right) (to Bretel) Have her in.

**Bretel** (calling)

Come in, Madame. (aside) A hundred and ten—she doesn't look it.

**Mme. Prevallon**

Ah, h—here you are, s'sir. I am ex-ex—

**Lucien** (finishing for her)

Exasperated.

**Mme. Prevallon**

Yes—at you.

**Lucien**

Excuse me, mother-in-law.

**Bretel**

What's he calling her?

**Lucien**

I learned what happened just now, and I am desolate. The fault is that imbecile's. (Madame Prevallon looks at Bretel who nods at her) He received you badly, it seems.

**Mme. Prevallon**

Him! He did, w-w-wer-wer—

**Bretel**

Me?

**Mme. Prevallon**

Worst than that. He ran me off like a common ha—ha—

**Bretel** (whistling)

Harlot.

**Mme. Prevallon**

Yuch! Haberdasher.

**Bretel**

God! She must take a long while saying her prayers.

**Mme. Prevallon**

Then, what do you expect? I have ne-ne—

**Bretel**

It's not possible.

**Mme. Prevallon**

Nerves. I—I left.

**Lucien**

But, you've returned, dear mother, and you did well. All that was the result of a mistake by this ninny. (Bretel nods) He misunderstood an order I gave him, because, I, you know, am always, above all, a serious young man, orderly, not flighty, a real settled type, you see! Then, my instructions—“Don't receive any young and pretty

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women.”

**Mme. Prevallon**

Huh! And that's why— Ah, why, then, he's very soft in the head.

**Lucien**

Hem! Yes!

**Mme. Prevallon**

Very gallant.

**Lucien** (very pleasant)

No—that is to say, he took it for the opposite,—“not to receive any but young women—“ so naturally he put you out the door.

**Mme. Prevallon**

Hem!

**Lucien**

No! Damn! That's not what I mean to say. Ah, I'm very happy to see you, and you are getting on well, my dear.

**Bretel** (repeating)

“My dear”— (to Lucien) Say, why is it you call her your dear?

**Lucien**

Huh? Why?

**Mme. Prevallon**

I've come to see you—to t—tal—

**Bretel**

What? She's got it again.

**Mme. Prevallon**

Talk about your marriage with my daughter.

**Lucien** (uneasy)

Not so loud.

**Bretel**

The marriage with her daughter?

**Lucien**

Wait, my dear mamma, to talk of that. Let's go over here. It's not good in front of my servant. Come.

(Lucien makes Madame Prevallon go into the room on the left.)

**Lucien** (to Bretel)

You, go quickly to Madame. Tell her she can profit, while we are in there, to slip out. Go!

**Bretel**

Yes.

**Lucien**

Ah, you will add that I had tears in my voice as I spoke of her and that you've seen me weep at the prospect of leaving her.

**Bretel** (astonished)

Weep?

Voice of Mme. Prevallon Eh? Well, Lucien?

**Lucien**

Here I am, my dear. (singing a tune)

Gay and happy,

We march triumphant.

(Lucien leaves.)

**Bretel**

All the same, that's a funny way of weeping. (opening the door at the right) Madame!



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**Dora**

What?

**Bretel**

The boss told me to tell you, you know, that if you want to slip out, you can now.

**Dora**

Thanks! I will. And is that all he said?

**Bretel**

Ah! Yes! You will tell her, he said, "that I have tears in my voice and I am busy weeping."

**Dora**

Really? Poor boy!

**Bretel**

Yes. And he sang, you know, Madame, he sang— (imitating him)

Gay and happy,  
We march triumphant.

That's very sad, you know.

**Dora**

Yes! It's to divert him.

**Bretel**

That's it. But, why are you leaving us? Don't you like it here?

**Dora**

My friend, you have to listen to his reason.

**Bretel**

His reason?

**Dora**

Your master has lost his fortune.

**Bretel**

Huh? What you say, Madame, his fortune? What, you believe that, too? It's because of the letter he just wrote. Ah, that's good, ah! That's comic!

**Dora**

Huh?

**Bretel**

What, you don't know? Why, it's bullshit, you know. I can tell you about it, you're part of the household. Mr. Lucien tells you everything. It's bullshit. Ah, it's great, ah, it's great. (bursting out laughing)

**Dora**

What are you saying? You don't know what you're talking about. He's reduced to marrying that old lady.

**Bretel**

Why no, no! Don't you know anything? It's the old lady who wants him to marry her daughter. Yes, Madame, it's her daughter!

**Dora**

Her daughter?

**Bretel**

Oh, but nothing to fear, Madame, you know. M. Lucien, he told you he wouldn't marry the young girl. He won't marry—and you thought, Madame,—ah, it's good luck I was here. You would have left. Huh! And then, you see— But, Bretel is here and he will arrange everything. Heavens, go back in there, Madame. Here, a moment, Madame. (makes her go back into the room at the right) Ah, he's going to be pleased. (opening the door on the left) Sir?

**Lucien**

What? (low) Well, has she gone?

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**Bretel**

Yes, yes. (aside) I want him to have a surprise.

**Lucien**

That's fine. (to Madame Prevallon) Come, my dear.

**Mme. Prevallon**

Here I am. Then, this is new for marriage. I want to take a b-b-b-aa—

**Lucien** (trying to help her)

Bath?

**Mme. Prevallon**

A—serious boy— You are a son—son—

**Bretel**

What's a son—son?

**Mme. Prevallon**

A son—in—law of my dreams.

**Lucien**

You flatter me.

**Mme. Prevallon** (going to the chimney and looking at Dora's portrait)

Who is this p—pretty girl?

**Lucien** (aside)

Yi!—no one—it's a photograph—an old photograph of—Agnes Sorrel.

**Mme. Prevallon**

Really?

**Bretel**

Yes, she's his good friend, you see, Madame.

**Mme. Prevallon**

Huh! What did he say?

**Lucien** (aside)

The cretin. (aloud) Yes—she's—she's a good friend—a good old friend.

**Bretel**

What do you mean, an old friend? Her, old? Why, in that case, what could you call this lady?

**Mme. Prevallon**

Huh?

**Lucien**

Aren't you going to shut up? (to Madame Prevallon) Don't pay any attention to the tales of this imbecile. He doesn't know what he's saying.

**Mme. Prevallon**

Still—ah— Th—this good friend!

**Lucien**

If you must know, I was sorry to lose her!

**Bretel**

Yes, you think that! No, happily for you, Bretel was here! He has prevented you from being sorry to lose her. She's still here—your good friend. You are going to see her again, your good friend.

(Bretel goes toward the door.)

**Lucien**

What! Why, he's crazy!

**Mme. Prevallon**

Oh, sir, I with—withdraw my daughter.

**Bretel** (returning)

Why—do you think he wants your daughter? You can keep her, your daughter. He's already told his good friend so. There's no danger of him marrying your daughter. Only, because of his good nature, he doesn't dare tell you,

A ROUGH DIAMOND (LES PAVES DE L'OURS)

you know, Madame, but I tell you so.

**Mme. Prevallon**

This is frightful.

**Lucien**

You won't shut up, wretch!

**Bretel**

No. This is for your good. I am going to find your good friend.

**Lucien**

If you do that—!

**Bretel**

Leave it to me! (opening the door on the right) Come in, Madame.

**Lucien** (stupefied)

Dora!

**Dora**

Lucien!

**Mme. Prevallon** (scandalized)

Oh, sir, everything is finished between us!

(Madame Prevallon goes toward the door.)

**Lucien** (hurrying after her)

My dear, mama—

**Mme. Prevallon**

Don't touch me!

(Madame Prevallon leaves, furious.)

**Lucien**

Gone! (to Bretel) Oh! Triple dolt, go. Everything will start over now.

**Dora**

Ah! My dear Lucien—I knew very well it was a test.

**Lucien**

Ah, yes—to be sure.

**Dora**

Hug your little wife!

**Lucien** (gnashing his teeth)

You, little wife! (hugs her ill-humouredly)

**Bretel**

Well, you see how happy you are, sir?

**Lucien**

Happy! Goodness!

(Lucien gives Bretel a kick which sends him rolling flat on the ground.)

**Bretel**

Shit!

**Lucien** (with enthusiasm)

Oh, Parisian servants!

(Lucien goes to rejoin Dora, who pulls him sweetly onto the settee.)

**Dora**

My dear Lucien.

**Lucien** (with nausea)

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My dear Dora.

**Bretel** (rising)

G'wan, g'wan. Bretel, masters are always ungrateful, you know.

CURTAIN