

# Georg Büchner

## LEONCE AND LENA

*A Comedy*

Preface

*Alfieri: 'E la fama?'*

*Gozzi: 'E la fame?'*

Cast:

King Peter

Leonce, Prince of Bum

Lena, Princess of Piddle

The Tutor

Valerio

Rosetta

Lena's Governess

The Privy Council

The President

The Master of Ceremonies

Schoolmaster

Four Servants

Two Valets

Peasants

ACT I

*'Oh that I were a fool!*

*I am ambitious for a motley coat.'*

*As You Like It*

**Scene 1: A garden**

*LEONCE half lying on a bench. The TUTOR.*

LEONCE: Well, sir, what do you want of me? Prepare me for my job in life - is that it? I'm up to my eyes in work, I'm so busy I don't know which way to turn. First of all, d'you see, I have to spit on this stone here 365 times in a row. Haven't you ever tried it? Do try it, it's most extraordinarily diverting. And then - do you see this handful of sand? [*He picks sand up, throws it in the air, and catches it again on the back of his hand.*] - Up it goes! Let's have a bet, shall we? How many grains do I have on the back of my hand? Odds or evens? - What?! You don't want to bet? Do you believe in God? Or are you a heathen? I bet against myself as a rule, I can do it for days at a time. If you can drum up someone who'd fancy a bet with me, I'd be most profoundly obliged. And then of course I must ponder the problem of how I might contrive to see the top of my head. Oh what bliss if we could catch but a glimpse of the top of our head! It's one of my ideals. It would help me enormously. And then - and then an infinitude of tasks of a similar nature. - Am I an idler? Am I without occupation? - Ah yes, it is sad . . .

TUTOR: Very sad, your Highness.

LEONCE: . . . sad that the clouds have gone on drifting from west to east for three whole weeks. It fills me with melancholy.

TUTOR: Quite right, your Highness, such justified melancholy.

LEONCE: For God's sake, man, why don't you contradict me? You have urgent business to attend to, do you not? So sorry to have kept you. [*The TUTOR withdraws with a deep bow.*] Congratulations, dear sir, on performing such an exquisitely bow-legged bow!

LEONCE [*alone, stretches out on the bench*]: How lethargic the bees are, lolling on

their flowers, how sluggish the sunlight sprawled across the ground. A terrible idleness teems on every hand. - Idleness is the fount of all the vices. - The things people do out of sheer boredom! They study out of boredom; they pray out of boredom; they fall in love, get married and reproduce out of boredom; in the end they die out of boredom. What's more - and that's the joke of it all - they do it with the most earnest of faces, without realising why, and thinking God-knows-what in the process. All these fearless heroes, these idiots and geniuses, these saints and sinners, these fecund fathers - in the end they're nothing but well-disguised loafers. But why does it have to be *me* that knows it? Why can't I take myself seriously like everyone else and stuff this poor puppet of a body into a nice smart coat, stick an umbrella in its hand, and turn it into something thoroughly decent, thoroughly useful and thoroughly moral? That fellow that left me just now, I envied him so, I could have beaten him black and blue out of pure envy. What bliss to be someone else for once! If only for a single minute! - My God, how the fellow runs! If only I knew of a single thing in the world that could still make me run.

*Enter VALERIO, somewhat drunk.*

VALERIO [*places himself directly in front of the Prince, puts his finger on his nose, and stares at him fixedly*]: Yes!

LEONCE [*follows suit*]: Quite right!

VALERIO: You grasp my meaning?

LEONCE: Absolutely.

VALERIO: Right, then let's change the subject. [*He lies down in the grass.*] In the meantime I shall deposit myself in the grass and let my nose sprout forth amidst the blades of green and inhale romantic sensations whilst the bees and butterflies rock themselves on it as though on a rose.

LEONCE: Easy, old chap, you're snorting at the flowers like a giant taking snuff: the bees and butterflies will starve to death.

VALERIO: Ah sir, I have such a feeling for nature! The grass is such a splendid sight I'd like to be an ox to gobble it up, then a man once again to gobble the ox that gobbled the grass.

LEONCE: Poor wretch: you too, it seems, are afflicted by ideals.

VALERIO: It fair makes you weep. You can't jump of a church tower without breaking your neck. You can eat four pound of cherries, stones and all, without getting the runs. I tell you sir, I could squat in a corner from dusk till dawn singing 'Heigh ho there's a fly on the wall, a fly on the wall, a fly on the wall!' - just like that, over and over, till the day I die.

LEONCE: Enough, enough! That song of yours - it's enough to drive a man mad.

VALERIO: At least then you'd *be* something. A madman! A madman! Who'll trade me his madness for my sanity? Hey presto: I'm Alexander the Great! See how my uniform sparkles how a crown of sunlight glints in my hair! Generalissimo Grasshopper, sound the advance! Finance Minister Frog, need some cash! Dear Lady Dragonfly, how fares my beloved Queen Beanpole? Oh, Dr Cantharides, I'm desperate for an heir! And on top of these delectable delusions you get good soup, good meat, good bread, a good bed and your hair cut for nothing - in the madhouse, that is. But as for me with my impeccable sanity: I'd be lucky if it earned me a job in a cherry tree helping the fruit to get ripe by - by - well come on then: help me!

LEONCE: By making the cherries go red with embarrassment a the holes in your trousers! But tell me, most nobly noble sir: your work, your trade, your profession, your station, you craft?

VALERIO [*with dignity*]: Sir, my consuming occupation is to be thoroughly idle, I am

uncommonly skilled at doing nothing, have colossal endurance in the realm of laziness. Not a single callus defiles my hands, the earth has drunk not a drop from my brow, I'm an absolute virgin where work is concerned, and if it wasn't just too much trouble I should gladly take the trouble to explain these virtues at greater length.

LEONCE [*with comic enthusiasm*]: Come to my breast! Are you one of those spirits divine that glide without effort and unbesmirched through the dust and sweat of the teeming highway of life, then enter Olympus like blessed gods with shining feet and pristine bodies? Come to me! Come!

VALERIO [*singing*]: Heigh ho there 's a fly on the wall, a fly on the wall, a fly on the wall! [*Exit both, arm in arm*]

## Scene 2: A room

KING PETER *is being dressed by two VALETS.*

PETER [*while is being dressed*]: Man must think, and I must think for my subjects, for they never think at all, they never think at all. - The essence is the in-itself, and that is me. [*He runs around the room almost naked.*] Have you got that? The in itself is the in-itself do you understand? Now it's the turn of my attributes, accidents, properties and modifications: where is my shirt, where are my trousers? - Stop, how disgusting, free will is a wide-open issue down there. Where is morality: where are my shirt-cuffs? My categories are in the most scandalous confusion: two buttons too many have been done up, my snuffbox is sitting in the right-hand pocket. My entire system is ruined. - Aha! What does this knot in my handkerchief mean? Well, man, what is the meaning of this knot, of what did I desire to remind myself?

FIRST VALET: When it pleased your Royal Majesty to tie this knot in your royal handkerchief, your Royal Majesty desired to . . .

PETER Well?

FIRST VALET: To remind you of something.

PETER What a convoluted answer! - Well now, What do *you* think? '

SECOND VALET: Your Royal Majesty desired to remind yourself of something when it pleased your Royal Majesty to tie this knot in your royal handkerchief.

PETER [*running back and forth*]: What? What? These people are making me all muddled, I am in the most appalling confusion. I don't know which way to turn.

*Enter a SERVANT.*

SERVANT: Your Majesty, the Privy Council is assembled.

PETER [*joyfully*] Yes, that's it, that's it - I wanted to remind myself of my people. Come, gentlemen! Walk symmetrically. Isn't it very hot? You too, now: take your handkerchiefs and wipe your faces. I get so flustered when I have to speak in public. [*Exit all.*]

KING PETER, *the PRIVY COUNCIL.*

PETER: My dear and faithful subjects, I wanted herewith to declare and announce, to declare and announce ... - for my son shall either marry, or not marry, [*places his finger against his nose*] either, or - you understand me surely. There is no third alternative. Man must think. [*Stands for a while thinking.*] When, ever I speak out loud like that, I never know who it really is, me or someone else, it frightens me. [*After long reflection*] I am me. - President, what is your opinion on the matter?

PRESIDENT [*slowly and gravely*] Your Majesty, it may be the case, but then again it may not be the case.

THE ENTIRE PRIVY COUNCIL [*in chorus*] Yes, it may be tint case, but then again it may not be the case.

PETER [*with emotion*]: Oh how wise you are! - But what were we talking about? What was it I wanted to say? President, why do you have such a very short memory on such a solemn occasion? I hereby declare this session closed. [*He makes a solemn departure, followed by the entire Privy Council.*]

### **Scene 3: A richly appointed room. Candles burning**

LEONCE *with various* SERVANTS.

LEONCE: Are the shutters all shut? Light the candles! Do away with the day! I want night, deep ambrosian night. Set the lamps beneath crystal domes amongst the oleanders so they glint between the leaves like the flickering eyes of sleeping, dreaming girls. Move the roses closer, so the vine can bathe their blooms like drops of dew. Music! Where are the violins? Where is Rosetta? Away with you! All of you away!

*Exit the SERVANTS. LEONCE stretches out on a couch. Enter ROSETTA, delicately dressed. Distant music.*

ROSETTA [*approaches with tender flattery*]: Leonce!

LEONCE: Rosetta!

ROSETTA: Leonce!

LEONCE: Rosetta!

ROSETTA: Your lips are tired. From kissing?

LEONCE: From yawning!

ROSETTA: Oh!

LEONCE: Alas, Rosetta, I have the appalling task . . .

ROSETTA: Go on!

LEONCE: Of doing nothing. . .

ROSETTA: Except loving?

LEONCE: Hard labour, that is!

ROSETTA [*hurt*]: Leonce!

LEONCE: Or it's my kind of pastime?

ROSETTA: Or your kind of laziness?

LEONCE: You're right, as always. What a clever girl you are, I do so appreciate your penetrating insights.

ROSETTA: So you love me out of boredom?

LEONCE: No, I'm bored because I love you. But I love my boredom as much as you. You're one and the same. Oh *dolce far niente*, I look into your eyes and dream as though gazing into wondrous deep and secret streams, your lips caress me to sleep like murmuring waves. [*He puts his arms around her.*] Come, dear boredom, your kisses are a lascivious yawn, your every step a delicate emptiness.

ROSETTA: Do you love me, Leonce?

LEONCE: Why not, after all?

ROSETTA: And for ever?

LEONCE: It's a long word, 'for ever'! If I love you for another five thousand years and seven months, will that be long enough? It's admittedly much less than for ever, but it's quite a good while all the same, and we can take our time with our loving.

ROSETTA: Or time can take our love away.

LEONCE: Or love can take our time away. Dance, Rosetta, dance, so that time goes by to the rhythmic beat of your pretty little feet.

ROSETTA: My feet would sooner go out of time. [*She dances and sings*]

My poor, tired feet, you have to dance  
In shoes so gay,  
And yet you'd sooner rest deep, deep  
Beneath the clay.  
My poor, hot cheeks, you have to flare  
With passion's might  
For all the pallor you would sooner wear  
Of roses white.  
My poor, poor eyes, you have to sparkle  
In the candles' light,  
And yet to flee your pain you'd sooner sleep  
In darkest night.

LEONCE [*meanwhile talking dreaming to himself*]: Oh, a dying love I far more beautiful than one that's growing. A Roman, that's what I am: to bring the glorious banquet to a fitting close the golden fish disport themselves in all the colours off heir dying agony. See how the red of her cheeks dies away, how quietly the fire in her eye goes out, how gently the lilt of her limbs first quickens, then fades *Addio, addio*, my love, I'll cherish your corpse. [ROSETTA *approaches once more*.] Tears, Rosetta? What subtle Epicureans are they that can cry! Go stand in the sun to make these precious droplets turn to crystal, what fantastic diamonds it would yield. You can make a necklace out of them.

ROSETTA: Diamonds, yes: I can feel them cutting into my eye. Oh Leonce! [*Tries to embrace him*.]

LEONCE: Be careful! My head! I've buried the corpse of our love in there. Look through the windows of my eyes. Do you see how beautifully dead the poor thing is? See the two white roses on her cheeks, the red ones on her breast? Don't touch me, one of her tiny arms might break off - such a pity if it did. I shall have to carry my head quite straight on my shoulders, like a weeper bearing the coffin of a child.

ROSETTA [*playfully*]: You're mad!

LEONCE: Rosetta! [*Rosetta makes a face at him*.] : Thank God! [*Covers his eyes*.]

ROSETTA [*frightened*]: Leonce, look at me.

LEONCE: Not for anything!

ROSETTA: Just once!

LEONCE: Not even once! Are you crying? It wouldn't take much for my darling love to be reborn. I'm glad I've buried her. I'll cherish the memory.

ROSETTA [*moves away slowly and sadly, singing as she leaves*]:

. Such a poor waif am I  
So frightened on my own  
Oh dear grief I beg you -  
Won't you take me home?

LEONCE [*alone*]: What a strange thing love is. You lie abed for an entire year in a kind of dream, then one fine morning you wake up, drink a glass of water, put on your clothes, pass your hand across your forehead, and you come to your senses - you just come to your senses. - My God, how many women does a man need to sing his way right up and down the scale of love? Any one woman covers scarce but a single tone. Why is the haze above our earth a prism that splits the white-hot stream of love into all the different colours of the rainbow? - [He *drinks*.] So where's the wine I'm to get drunk on today? Or won't I manage even that? I sit as though in a vacuum-jar. The air's so sharp and thin I feel as cold as if I were skating in winter in cotton trousers. - Gentlemen, gentlemen, do you know what Nero and Caligula were? I know? - Come on, Leonce, give me a monologue, I'm willing to listen to every word. My life gapes at me like a great white

sheet of paper that I'm supposed to fill with writing, but I can't manage even a single letter. My head is an empty dance hall, on its floor a few wilted roses and crumpled ribbons, in a corner the remnants of broken violins, the last few dancers have removed their masks and gaze at one another with dead-tired eyes. I turn myself inside out twenty-four times a day, like a glove. Oh yes, I know myself. I know what I'll be dreaming and thinking in a quarter of an hour, a week, a year. God, what ever have I done that you make me recite my lesson so often, like a naughty schoolboy? -

Bravo, Leonce! Bravo! [*He claps.*] It gives me a real kick to call out to myself like that. Hey! Leonce! Leonce!

VALE RIO [*appears from under a table*] : Seems to me your Highness is well on the way to becoming a fully fledged lunatic.

LEONCE: Yes, all things considered, that's just how it seems to me as well.

VALERIO: Hold an, we'll discuss the matter at greater length in a moment. I've just got one more hunk of meat to scoff that I pinched from the kitchens, and a bit of wine I stole from your table. It won't take long.

LEONCE: How he smacks his chops! What idyllic sensations the fellow arouses in me; I could start again with the simplest of things: eat cheese, drink beer, smoke tobacco. Get on with it, but less of that grunting and snorting, and do stop gnashing those fangs of yours!

VALERIO: Most worthy Adonis, do you fear for your legs? Don't worry, I'm neither broom-maker nor schoolmaster: such thin little sticks are no use to me.

LEONCE: You certainly give as good as you get!

VALERIO : I wish I could say the same for my master.

LEONCE: You mean, so you never miss out on the beatings you need? Are you really so worried about your education?

VALE RIO: God knows, it's a damned sight easier to father a brat than further its education. It's terribly sad how a Happy Event can eventuate in unhappiness! What labours I've been through since my mother was in labour! No good that I can conceive of ever came from my conception.

LEONCE: Concerning your conceits I am quite unconcerned. Express yourself better, or I shall impress upon you my irrepressible displeasure.

VALE RIO: When my expectant mother finally made it round the Cape of Good Hope . .

LEONCE: And your father came to grief on Cape Horn . . .

VALERIO: Quite right, he was a night-watchman after all. Even so, he didn't put his horn to his lips as often as the fathers of princes get horns on their heads.

LEONCE: Your barefaced cheek, sir, is out of this world. I feel a decided need to get in contact with it. I have this passionate desire to beat you black and blue.

VALERIO : What pugnacious logic, what a striking reply.

LEONCE [*makes to attack him*]: You'll be struck for surer I'll give you a thrashing for answering me back.

VALERIO [*runs out of the way, Leonce stumbles anal falls*]: And you are an argument that remains to be proved, considering the tangle your legs are in; in fact your legs themselves will take some proving: your calves are incredible, your thighs problematical.

*Enter the PRIVY COUNCIL.* LEONCE *remains sitting on the floor.* VALERIO.

PRESIDENT: Your Highness, forgive me

LEONCE: I do, I do, just as I forgive myself for my extravagant generosity in

listening to you speak. Gentlemen, won't you take a seat? - What a terrible face these people make when they hear the word 'seat'! Just squat on the ground, and don't be embarrassed - after all, sooner or later it'll be the last position you ever fill, though there's nothing in it except for the gravedigger.

PRESIDENT [*snapping his fingers in embarrassment*] If it please your Highness -

LEONCE: Stop snapping your fingers like that, or you'll drive me to murder.

PRESIDENT [*snapping his fingers even harder*] If you would be so kind, so extremely kind, in view of the fact -

LEONCE: For God's sake stick your hands in your pocket, or sit on them! He's gone completely to pieces. Pull yourself together.

VALERIO: Never interrupt a child in the middle of a piss: it can never get going again.

LEONCE: Get a grip, man! Spare a thought for your family and the nation. Lose your power of speech and you could suffer a stroke.

PRESIDENT [*draws a paper from his pocket*] If your Highness will allow me -

LEONCE: Good heavens, you can read!? Right then, let's have it...

PRESIDENT: What his Royal Majesty is pleased to convey to your Highness is the news that the keenly awaited arrival of your Highness's bride, her Most Serene Highness Princess Lena of Piddle, may be expected tomorrow.

LEONCE: If my bride is awaiting me, then I shall do her the favour of letting her wait. I saw her last night in a dream, her eyes were so huge that Rosetta's dancing-shoes would have done her for eyebrows, and instead of dimples in her cheeks she had cesspits each side to devour her laughter. I have a lot of faith in dreams. How about you, President, do you dream sometimes? Do you have premonitions?

VALERIO: Of course he does. Like clockwork, the night before the royal roast gets burnt, a capon kicks the bucket, or his Royal Majesty gets gut-rot.

LEONCE: By the way, isn't there something else you wanted to say? Spit it all out.

PRESIDENT: It s the supreme royal will that on the day of your wedding all the instruments of the most supreme royal will shall pass into your Highness's hands.

LEONCE: Kindly inform his supreme willynillyness that I shall attend to everything save that which I shall ignore, which however will be decidedly less than if it were twice as much. - Gentlemen, you will excuse me iiii do not escort you to the door, but I have a passion at present for remaining seated.. Nevertheless, my graciousness is so great that even my legs are inadequate to measure it. [*He spreads his legs apart.*] President, I beg you, measure the distance, so you can remind me of it later. Valerio, show the gentlemen out.

VALERIO: Shoo them out? What, like a herd of cattle? Perhaps I should fasten a bell on the President? .

LEONCE: Good heavens, man, you're nothing but a walking pun, and a bad one to boot You're the fruit of libidinous vowels, not-ordinary mortals.

VALERIO: And you, dear Prince, are a book without letters, full of nothing but dashes. - Come now, gentlemen. There's something very sad about the word 'come': if it's income you want, you have to steal; to come up in the world you have to be hanged; the ultimate outcome is when you are buried; but when it comes down to it you can rely on your wits when you've run out of words, like me right now, or you even *before* you have opened your mouth. There, gentlemen, you've had your come-uppance, so seek - I beseech you - a comely departure. [*Exit PRIVYCOUNCIL and VALERIO.*]

LEONCE [*alone*]: How mean I am to lord it so over those poor devils! But there's no denying it, there's a certain pleasure to be had from a certain meanness. - Hm! Marriage!

You might as well try to drink a well dry. Oh Shandy, dear Shandy, if only someone would give me your clock!" - [VALERIO *returns.*] My God, Valerio, did you hear what he said?

VALERIO: So you're to be king: what a laugh that'll be! You'll be able to swan around the countryside all day in your carriage ruining folks' hats with the constant doffing; you'll be able to reduce proper people into proper little soldiers as if that was the most natural thing in the world; you'll be able to convert black frock-coats and white neckties into public servants; and then when you die all the mirror-bright buttons will go blue in the face and the bells will be tolled so much their ropes will part like rotten string. Won't that be fun?  
!

LEONCE: Valerio! Valerio! We need to do something completely different. What's your advice?!

VALERIO: There's the world of learning, how about that? Let's become philosophers! A priori? Or a posteriori?

LEONCE: A priori - that's something my venerable father could teach us. A posteriori - that's how everything begins, like an olden-day fairy-tale: Once upon a time . . .

VALERIO: Then let's become heroes. [*He marches up and down making drum and bugle noises.*] Brrr-oom! Pah-pah!

LEONCE: But heroism wears so terribly thin, gets stricken with the fever, and can't survive without new recruits and rash lieutenants. You and your Alexander-the-Great and Napoleon romanticism!

VALERIO: Then let's become literary geniuses.

LEONCE: The nightingale of poetry is around us all day with its beautiful song, but the best of it has gone to the devil by the time we've torn out the feathers and dipped them in paint or ink.

VALERIO: Then let's become useful members of human society.

LEONCE: I'd sooner resign from the human race.

VALERIO: Then let's go to the devil.

LEONCE: Alas The devil's only there for the sake of the contrast, to make us appreciate that there really is something in heaven after all. [*Jumps to his feet.*] Valerio, Valerio! I've got it! Can't you feel the wafting spirit of the South? Can't you feel the rhythmic pulsing of its ardent, azure air? The light glinting on the golden, sun-splashed earth, the sacred sea, the ancient marble columns and bodies? Pan the great god sleeps, and in the shade above the distant roar of waves the mighty figures dream of Virgil and his ancient magic, of tarantellas and tambourines, of torrid, teeming nights alive with masks, guitars and flickering torches. Lazzaroni, Valerio, let's be lazzaroni! It's Italy we'll go to!

#### **Scene 4: A garden**

PRINCESS LENA *In bridal array, the GOVERNESS.*

LENA: Yes, it's here. It's now. I never bothered my head at all. Time slipped slowly by. And all of a sudden the 'special day' is full upon me. A wreath of flowers adorns my hair - and the bells, the bells! [*She leans back and shuts her eyes.*] See, if only the grass would grow up all around me and the bees go humming above my head. See now, I'm fully robed, with sprigs of rosemary in my hair. Isn't there an old song:

In the churchyard bury me deep  
Let me like a baby sleep -

GOVERNESS: Poor child, how pale you are beneath your sparkling jewels.

LENA: Oh God, I could fall in love, of course I could. We're so alone, after all, and grope in the dark for a hand to clasp until we die and our hands are loosed and laid out each on our separate chests. But why drive a nail through hands that never sought each other? What has my poor hand done to deserve it? [*She takes a ring off her finger.*] This

ring is like a viper's sting.

GOVERNESS: Yes, but - they say his a real Don Carlos.

LENA : Yes, but - he's a man . . .

GOVERNESS: Go on -

LENA: . . . a man for whom I feel no love. [*She gets up*] O fie, what shame I feel! - Tomorrow all my bloom and fragrance will be gone. Am I like the poor, hapless stream that must needs mirror in its silent depths whatever images appear above it? Even the flowers open and shut as they wish to the morning sun and the evening breeze. Is the daughter of a king then less than a flower?

GOVERNESS [*weeping*]: Poor angel: you're such a little lamb, and they're taking you to slaughter.

LENA: Yes - and the priest has the knife already poised in his hand. - My God, my God, is it really true that redemption comes only through our own pain? Is it really true that the earth is a crucified Christ, the sun his crown of thorns, and the Stan the nails in his feet, the spears in his side?

GOVERNESS: My child, my child I can't bear to see you like this. It can't go on like this - it's killing you. Perhaps, who knows! I have an idea. We'll have to see. Come! [*She leads the Princess away.*]

## ACT II

A wondrous voice has sounded  
Deep within me,  
And silenced at a single stroke  
My strident memory!  
*Adalbert von Chamisso*

### Scene 1: Open country. An inn in the background

*Enter LEONCE and VALERIO, the latter carrying a bundle.*

VALERIO [*panting*]: Some mansion this world is, Prince, I'm telling you: space, space, then more space!

LEONCE: No, not at all. To me it's like a narrow hall of mirrors: I scarcely dare stretch out my hands, for fear of banging into it on every side and finding the beautiful pictures lying in pieces at my feet, and there before my eyes the bare, blank wall.

VALERIO: I I'm lost.

LEONCE: That's nobody's loss but his that finds you.

VALERIO: I'll take a rest quite soon in my shadow's shadow.

LEONCE: You're evaporating clean away in the sun! See that beautiful cloud up there? It contains at least a quarter of you. It's gazing down in perfect contentment upon your grosser material self.

VALERIO: It wouldn't harm your own head if they shaved it bare and made the cloud fall on it drip by drip in the best Chinese fashion. - What an appealing idea! We've already passed through a dozen principalities, half-a-dozen grand duchies and a couple of kingdoms, at breakneck speed in half a day, and why? Because you're to be king and marry a beautiful princess. What a *ghastly* prospect - and you carry on living?! Your resignation is quite beyond me. It's beyond me why you haven't swallowed arsenic, climbed onto the parapet of a high church tower, and put a bullet through your brain, just to make sure.

LEONCE: Ideals, Valerio, ideals! I have this ideal of a woman with in me and must go and seek it. She is infinitely beautiful and infinitely mindless. Her beauty is as helpless

and touching as a new-born child. Such an exquisite contrast: these eyes of heavenly stupidity, this mouth of godlike inanity, this profile of asinine sublimity, this deadness of mind in this spiritual body.

VALERIO: Can you beat it, we're back at the border! This country's like an onion: skin within skin within skin. Or like Chinese boxes: in the bigger boxes smaller boxes, in the smallest box - nothing. [*He throws his bundle on the ground.*] Is this bundle to be my gravestone? There you are, Prince, I am becoming philosophical: a perfect image of human life. I hump this bundle with bleeding feet through freezing snow and scorching sun, just because I like a clean shirt of an evening. And when at last the evening comes, I have sunken eyes, a furrowed brow and hollow cheeks, and just enough time to pull on my shirt to serve as my shroud. Wouldn't I have been wiser to take the bundle from its stick, flog it at the next best inn, get drunk on the proceeds, then sleep in the shade until evening came? That way I'd have avoided the pouring sweat and the painful corns. And now, Prince, it's time to apply our new theory in practice. Out of sheer modesty we shall now proceed to clothe the inner man in jacket and trousers. [*Both start towards the inn.*] Well, dear bundle, what about that! - Such delectable smells, such sweet aromas of roast and wine! And you, dear trousers, you're taking root, you're sprouting, you're bunting with fruit, great clusters of grapes are dangling in my mouth, the press is at work and the juice is bubbling. [*Exit both.*]

PRINCESS LENA, *the* GOVERNESS.

GOVERNESS: The day is bewitched, I'm sure: the sun's not going down, and it's such an eternity since we made our escape.

LENA: Not at all, dear heart, the good-bye flowers I picked as we left the garden have scarcely wilted.

GOVERNESS: And where shall we sleep? We've come across nothing at all so far. Wherever I look: no cloister, no hermit, not even a shepherd.

LENA: Our dreams were very different, I suppose, as we read our books behind the walls of our garden amidst myrtle and oleander.

GOVERNESS: Oh how disgusting the world is! And not the slightest chance of a wandering prince.

LENA: Oh how beautiful the world is, and oh so wide, so infinitely wide. I'd like to carry on like this for ever, night and day. Nothing stirs. The red of the cuckoo-flowers glows and dances over the meadow, and the distant mountains rest on the earth like slumbering clouds.

GOVERNESS: Oh dear Jesus, what *will* people say? And yet it's all so delicate and feminine! It's self-denial, that's what it is. It's like the sacred flight of St Ottilia. But we *must* find shelter - it's getting late.

LENA: Yes, the plants are closing their tiny leaves for sleep, the rays of sunlight nod on the slender blades of grass like tired dragonflies.

**Scene 2: Inn in elevated position by a river with views into the far distance. The garden of the inn**

VALERIO, LEONCE.

VALERIO : Well, Prince, don't your trousers make for a delicious drink? Don't your boots slip down your throat with the greatest of ease?

LEONCE: See the ancient trees, the hedges, the flowers? They all have their stories to tell, their own precious little secret stories. See the ancient friendly faces amongst the vines by the door? Look how they sit there clasping their hands, afraid because they're so old and the world so young. Oh Valerio, I'm so young and the world so old. I get frightened for myself at times and could sit in a corner and weep hot tears out of

sheer self-pity.

VALERIO: [*gives him a glass.*]: Take this bell, this diver's bell, and sink into a sea of wine so it froths and sparkles above your head. See, above the delicate bloom of the wine, the hovering elves with shoes of gold and tinkling cymbals.

LEONCE [*jumping up*]: Come on, Valerio, we must *do* something, we must *do* something! Let's busy ourselves with profound thoughts. Let's consider the serious question of why a chair stays standing on three legs but not on two, and why we wipe our noses with our fingers and not with our feet, like the flies. Come, let's anatomise ants and count the filaments of flowers - I shall yet contrive to embrace some princely pastime or other! I shall yet discover some infantile bauble that only drops from my fingers when I turn up my toes. I still have a sizeable dose of enthusiasm to use up - but once I've got it all nicely warmed, it takes me an eternity to find a suitable spoon, and in the meantime it's all gone cold again.

VALERIO: Ergo bibamus? This bottle is neither demanding lover nor mere idea, causes no birth-pains, never gets boring and never unfaithful, is consistently the same from first drop to last. Break its seal, and all the slumbering dreams within it burst forth to greet you.

LEONCE: O God! I'll give half my life to prayer if you grant me but a single straw to clutch at and ride like a mighty stallion until the day I'm laid on straw myself - What a strange, uncanny evening. Down below, a perfect stillness; up above, the fleeting, shifting clouds, the sun appearing, disappearing. See those strange figures up there all chasing one another, those long white shadows with terrifying match stick legs and batlike wings - and all such swirling turmoil, while down below nothing stirs, not a leaf, not a single blade of grass. The earth has curled into a ball of fear, like a stricken child, and above its cradle the ghosts go marching.

VALERIO: I don't know what you're on about, I'm in a lovely mood, perfectly lovely. The sun looks like an inn sign, the fiery clouds above it are its legend: 'The Golden Sun'. The earth and river down there are like a wine-splashed table, and we're lying upon it like playing-cards that God and the Devil are having a game with out of pure boredom. You're the King, I'm the Knave, all we need is a Queen, a beautiful Queen with a great big heart adorning her chest and a very long nose sentimentally buried in a mighty tulip [*enter the GOVERNESS and the PRINCESS*] and - by God, there she is! But it's not really a tulip, it's a pinch of snuff, and it's not really a nose, it's a giant proboscis. [*To the Governess*] Why, dear lady, do you stride so fast that we can see your once-comely calves all the way up to your supremely respectable garters?

GOVERNESS [*stops, extremely angry.*] Why, dear Sir, do you Open your trap so wide that you make a hole in the outlook?

VALERIO: So that you, dear lady, don't bloody your nose by colliding with the horizon. Thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looketh towards Damascus?

LENA [*to the Governess.*]: Dearest, tell me, is the way so long?

LEONCE [*dreaming to himself*]: Oh, every way is long! The ticking death-watch in our breast is slow, each drop of blood is measured in its pace, our entire life's a creeping fever. For tired feet, every way is lung . . .

LENA [*who has listened to him with anxious thoughtfulness*]: And for tired eyes every light's too harsh, for tired lips every breath too hard, [*smiling*] for tired ears every word too much. [*Enters the inn with the Governess.*]

LEONCE: Oh, dear Valerio, couldn't Hamlet's words be mine as well; 'Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers, with two Provençal roses on my razed shoes, get me a fellowship in a cry of players? I do think I said it, with perfect melancholy. Thank God I'm beginning to be delivered of my melancholy. The air is no longer so clear and cold, the

heavens descend and fold me in their hot embrace, and welcome droplets fall at last. - Oh, that voice: 'Is the way so long?' Many voices speak over the earth and you think they speak of other things, but this one I have understood. It rests upon me like the spirit that hung over the waters before the coming of the light. Such ferment in the deepest depths, such burgeoning of life within me - oh how the voice goes coursing through the very air - 'Is the way so long?' [*Exit.*]

VALERIO: No. The way to the madhouse is not so long, it's easy to find, I know every footpath, side-road and highway. Already I can see him heading that way along an avenue of trees on an ice-cold day in the middle of winter, holding his hat beneath his arm and stepping amongst the barren trees and their long drawn shadows, fanning his face with his pocket handkerchief. - He's mad, quite mad. [*Follows him off.*]

### **Scene 3: A room**

LENA, *the GOVERNESS.*

GOVERNESS: Don't think about the creature!

LENA: He was so old beneath his golden curls. Spring on his cheeks, and winter in his heart. How sad. A tired body can always find a pillow, but when the spirit is tired, where shall it rest? A terrible thought occurs to my mind: I believe there are people unhappy, incurably unhappy, simply because they *exist.* ' [*She gets up-*]

GOVERNESS: Where are you going, my child?

LENA: I Want to go down to the garden.

GOVERNESS: But listen -

LENA: But listen - you know what I'm like: I should really have been planted in a flowerpot. I need dew and night air as the flowers do. Do you hear the gentle chorus of the evening? The way the day is lulled to sleep by the song of crickets, the scent of gillyflowers! I can't stay cooped up here. The walls of the room are collapsing on top of me.

### **Scene 4: The garden. Night and moonshine**

LENA *sitting on the grass.* VALERIO *some way off.*

VALERIO: It's all very lovely, nature is - but it'd be a damned sight lovelier without gnats to sting you, bed-bugs to bite you, or death-watch beetles ticking in the walls. And what a din! In there, people snoring, out here, frogs croaking; house-crickets racketing inside, field-crickets racketing outside. Well, dear lawn, I'm all forlorn. [*He lies down on the grass.*]

LEONCE [*enters*]: Oh night, as balmy as the first that sank on Paradise. [*He notices the Princess and silently draws near to her.*]

LENA [*to herself*]: A songbird twittered in its dreams, the night slips deeper into sleep, her cheek grows paler, her breath more quiet. The moon is like a sleeping child, its golden curls have tumbled over its tender face. - Oh, its sleep is death. Look: a dead angel lying on his cushion of black, with stars for candles all around him. Poor child, are the bogeymen coming to get you? Where's your mother? Won't she give you one last kiss? Oh the sadness of it - dead, and so alone.

LEONCE: Arise in your dress so white and walk through the night behind the corpse to sing its threnody.

LENA: Who speaks?

LEONCE: A dream.

LENA: But dreams are blessed.

LEONCE: Then dream yourself blessed and let me be your blessed dream.

LENA: The most blessed dream of all is death.

LEONCE: Then let me be your angel of death, and let my lips descend like angels'

wings upon your eyes. [*He kisses her.*] You beautiful corpse, you lie so sweetly on the sombre pall of night that even nature turns her back on life, and falls in love with death.

LENA: No, leave me be! [*She jumps up and rushes away.*]

LEONCE: Too much! Too much! All my being is in this single moment. Now die. More is impossible. Out of chaos comes creation, bursting forth towards me, so alive and new, so radiant with beauty. The earth is a chalice of darkest gold: oh how the light within it effervesces, spills over the rim in streams, and from its sparkling bubbles all the stars appear. My craving lips reach out to drink - and this one taste of bliss makes me a precious vessel. And now into the deep, most holy cup! [*He makes to throw himself in the river.*]

VALERIO [*leaps up and grabs him*]: Hold it, your serene Serenitude!

LEONCE: Let me go!

VALERIO: Promise to let up and let well alone, and I'll let you go!

LEONCE: Blockhead!

VALERIO: Your Highness, have you really not outgrown such romantical posturing? You're like a half-baked lieutenant tossing his glass over his shoulder as soon as he's drunk to his sweetheart's health.

LEONCE: Perhaps you're fight!

VALERIO: Don't worry though. Even if you won't be sleeping *under* the grass tonight, you might as well sleep on it. It would be a second attempt at suicide if you used one of the beds in that place. You lie on the straw like a corpse, but the fleas soon tell you you're alive.

LEONCE: All right, why not. [*He lies down in the grass.*] Good God, man, you've deprived me of the most beautiful suicide. Never in my life shall I find such a perfectly suitable opportunity, and the weather is *so* ideal. I'm already quite out of the mood. This fellow here with his yellow waistcoat and sky-blue trousers has ruined the entire thing. - Pray God for a sound and dreamless sleep.

VALERIO: Amen to that. - As for me, I've saved a human life, and my good conscience will keep me warm tonight. Here's to you, Valerio!

## ACT III

### Scene 1

LEONCE, VALERIO.

VALERIO: Get married? Since when has your Highness been aiming for the eternal treadmill?

LEONCE: Do you realize, Valerio, that even the lowliest of people have so much within them that a whole lifetime is far too short to ever love them enough? In any case, why spoil the fun of those that fondly imagine there's nothing so sacred and beautiful that they shouldn't try to make it even more so. There's a certain pleasure to be had from such harmless arrogance. Why deprive them of it?

VALERIO: Very humane and philobestial. But does she know who you are?

LEONCE: She knows she loves me, that's all.

VALERIO: And does your Highness know who *she* is?

LEONCE: What a fool you are! Try asking a carnation or dewdrop its name.

VALERIO: At least that means she's *something*, if that's not too indelicate, or too reminiscent of a police description. - But let's see, how can we manage it? Hm! - Listen, Prince, will you make me Chief Minister if, this very day and in the presence of your father, you are fully, formally and officially spliced to this nameless, ineffable wonder? Word of

honour?

LEONCE : Word of honour!

VALERIO: That poor devil Valerio most humbly takes leave of His Ministerial Excellency Lord Valerio of Valerium.- 'I know thee not, old man! I banish thee on pain of death! [*He runs off, LEONCE follows him.*]

## **Scene 2: Open area in front of King Peter's palace**

LOCAL PREFECT, SCHOOLMASTER, PEASANTS in *their Sunday best, holding fir branches.*

PREFECT: Well, Schoolmaster, how are your people holding up?

SCHOOLMASTER: They are holding up so well in their agony that they've been holding on to one another for quite some time now. They're guzzling alcohol like mad - otherwise they couldn't possibly hold out so long in this heat. Keep it up, you lot! Hold your fir branches straight up in front of you, so people think you're a forest and take your noses for strawberries, your tricorns for antlers and your shiny backsides for moonlight amidst the trees. And don't forget, whoever's at the back must keep running to the front, so it looks as if there are twice as many of you.

PREFECT: Just remember, Schoolmaster, you stand for sobriety!

SCHOOLMASTER: Stands to reason, except that I can scarcely stand for sheer sobriety.

PREFECT: Listen here, you people! It states in the official programme that all subjects without fail must voluntarily place themselves along the road wearing dean clothes, a contented expression and a well-fed air. Don't let us down, do you hear!

SCHOOLMASTER: Be steadfast now! Don't scratch behind your ears or blow your nose with your fingers while the royal pair are driving past, and whip up a suitable show of emotion or you'll be getting a taste of the whip yourselves. Show some appreciation of your generous treatment - after all, you've been carefully positioned downmind of the kitchen so that just for once in your life you catch a whiff of roast meat. Have you remembered your lesson? Have you? *Vi -!*

THE PEASANTS: *Vi -!*

SCHOOLMASTER: - *vat!*

THE PEASANTS: - *vat!*

SCHOOLMASTER: *Vivat!*

THE PEASANTS: *Vivat!*

SCHOOLMASTER: There you are, Mr Prefect, sir. You can see how intelligence is on the increase. Just think: it's *Latin!* But in addition this evening we'll be living a transparent gala-ball by dint of all the holes in our jackets and trousers, and we'll punch each other's heads so we have bruises for cockades.

## **Scene 3: Grand stateroom**

LADIES and GENTLEMEN in *full finery, carefully grouped.* MASTER OF CEREMONIES with *sundry* SERVANTS in the foreground.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES: What a miserable fiasco. Everything's getting ruined. The roasts are shrivelling. The congratulations are turning sour. The stand-up collars are drooping like melancholy pig's-ears. The nails and beards of the peasants are already growing long again. The soldiers' hairdos are starting to collapse. Of the dozen maids of honour there's not one that wouldn't rather be horizontal than vertical. In their little white dresses they look like tired angora rabbits, and the Court Poet goes grunting and shuffling around them like a fretful guinea pig. The officers of the guard are visibly wilting. [*To a servant.*] Tell that young teacher he'd better send his boys for a piddle. The poor Court

Chaplain! The tail of his coat has such a melancholy droop. I do believe he has ideals and is busily transforming all the chamberlains into chamber pots. He's quite worn out from all this standing.

SECOND SERVANT: All flesh is weak when it comes to standing. Even the Court Chaplain has become thoroughly got down since he first got up.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES: The ladies are glistening with so much sweat they look like mobile salt machines, their necklaces look like crystallized salt.

SECOND SERVANT: At least they're trying to make themselves comfortable. No one could accuse them of taking too much on their shoulders. Though not open-hearted, they're certainly bare-chested.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES: Yes, they're like maps of the Ottoman empire: you can see the Dardanelles and the Sea of Marmara! Get cracking, you scoundrels! Keep watch by the windows! His Majesty's coming.

*Enter* KING PETER *and the* PRIVY COUNCIL.

PETER: So the Princess has disappeared as well? Is there still no trace of my beloved heir? Have my orders been followed? Are the borders being watched?

MASTER OF CEREMONIES: Yes, your Majesty: the view from this room here allows us to keep the most rigorous watch. [To the First *Servant*] What have you seen?

FIRST SERVANT: A dog's run right through the kingdom in search of his master.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES: [*to another Servant*] And you?

SECOND SERVANT: Someone's out walking on the northern border, but it's not the Prince - I'd recognize him from here.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES: And you?

THIRD SERVANT; Begging your pardon, Sir: nothing.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES: That's not very much. And you?

FOURTH SERVANT: Nothing here either.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES: That's even less.

PETER: But my dear Privy Council, did I not make a clear resolution that on this very day my Royal Majesty should be joyful, and the wedding be celebrated? Was this not our most solemn resolve?

PRESIDENT: Yes, your Majesty, that is indeed what the minutes record.

PETER: And wouldn't I be compromising myself most profoundly if I didn't adhere to my own resolution?

PRESIDENT: If it were ever possible for your Majesty to compromise yourself, then this may be a case where you might possibly be compromised.

PETER: Have I not given my royal word? Yes, I shall put my resolution into effect this instant: I shall herewith be joyful. [*He rubs his hands.*] Oh I am full of quite extraordinary joy!

PRESIDENT: We all share your Majesty's feelings, insofar as mere subjects are entitled and able so to do.

PETER: Oh I am quite beside myself with joy. I shall clothe my chamberlains in new red tunics, I shall promote a few cadets to lieutenant, I shall allow my subjects to . . . - but then, what about the marriage? Doesn't the other half of my resolution declare and determine that the marriage shall be celebrated?

PRESIDENT: Yes, your Majesty.

PETER: But what if the Prince doesn't come and the Princess neither?

PRESIDENT: Yes, if the Prince doesn't come and the Princess neither - then - then .

PETER : Then what?

PRESIDENT: Then it must be admitted that they cannot marry.

PETER : But stay, is your conclusion truly logical? If. . . , then . . . : quite right. - But what about my word, my royal word!

PRESIDENT: Let your Majesty take comfort from other Majesties. A royal word is a thing - a thing - a thing that is nothing.

PETER [*to the servants*]: Do you still see nothing?

SERVANTS: Nothing, your Majesty, nothing at all.

PETER: And I had resolved to be so full of joy. I wanted to start on the stroke of noon and be full of joy for twelve whole hours. It's making me quite melancholic.

PRESIDENT: Your subjects will be ordered to share your emotions.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES: For the sake of propriety, however, all persons not equipped with a handkerchief are forbidden to shed tears.

FIRST SERVANT: Wait! I can see something! It's a sort of protuberance, a kind of nose, the rest of it hasn't yet crossed the frontier. And I can see a man as well and another two persons of opposite sexes,

MASTER OF CEREMONIES: Which way are they going?

FIRST SERVANT: They're coming closer. They're approaching the palace. They're here.

*Enter VALERIO, LEONCE, the GOVERNESS and the PRINCESS, wearing masks.*

PETER: Who are you?

VALERIO: I'm not sure I know. [*He slowly removes several masks, one after the another.*] Am I this? Or this? Or this? What a frightening thought: if I keep on removing layer after layer, I might peel myself entirely away.

PETER [*disconcerted*]: But surely you must be *something*?

VALERIO: If your Majesty so commands. But in that case, gentlemen, turn the mirrors to the wall, cover your shiny buttons, and don't look at me like that lest I see my reflection mirrored in your eyes - or I truly won't know any more who I am.

PETER: This fellow is throwing me into total turmoil and deep desperation. I'm calamitously confused.

VALERIO: But what I really wanted to do was to announce to this noble and venerable company the arrival of these two world-famous automata. I would have added that I am perhaps the third and the oddest of them all - *if that is*, I myself actually knew for certain who I am, though no one by the way should be surprised that I don't, since I myself know nothing of what I say, and don't even know that I don't know, so that it's highly probable that I am simply being *made* to talk like this, and that in reality it is nothing but cylinders, pipes and windbags speaking these words of mine. [*In a mechanical, rasping voice*] Ladies and gentlemen, you see before you two persons of opposite sex, a male and a female, a gentleman and a lady. Nothing but cunning clockwork, nothing but springs and paste board. Each of them has the most delicate ruby spring beneath the nail of their left little toe: press it very gently, and the mechanism runs for a full fifty years. They're so perfectly crafted, these people here, that you couldn't distinguish them from ordinary humans if you didn't already know they were paint and pasteboard. They could even be turned into fully fledged members of proper society. They're extremely noble, since they speak with the right kind of accent. They're extremely moral, since they rise by the clock, take lunch by the clock and retire by the clock. They have a good digestion, which is certain proof of a good conscience. They have the most exquisite sense of decorum, since

the lady knows no word for trousers, and the gentleman would never dream of going *upstairs behind* a woman, or *downstairs in front* of one. They're extremely cultured, since the lady can sing all the latest operas and the gentleman wears cuffs. Take note, ladies and gentlemen, they are now at an interesting stage: the mechanism of love is beginning to operate, the gentleman has already carried the lady's shawl a few times, the lady has already rolled her eyes and gazed heavenwards a few times. On several occasions they have both whispered, 'Faith, love, hope!' They already seem to be as good as hitched. All that's needed now is a quick 'Amen'.

PETER [*putting his finger on his nose*]: In effigy, that's it, in effigy! Tell me, President, if someone's hanged in effigy, isn't that just as good as if he were hanged for real?

PRESIDENT: Begging your Majesty's pardon, but it's better by far, since he comes to no harm, yet is hanged all the same.

PETER: That's it, I've got it. We'll celebrate the wedding in effigy. [*Pointing at Leonce and Lena*] That's the Prince, and that's the Princess. I shall carry out my resolution after all: I shall be joyful. Let the bells ring out! Get your congratulations ready! Look lively, Chaplain!

*The COURT CHAPLAIN steps forward, clears his throat, repeatedly rises his eyes towards heaven.*

VALERIO : Begin! Pox, leave thy damnable faces and begin! Come!

COURT CHAPLAIN [*in a state of utter confusion*]: If we . . . , or rather . . . , but on the other hand . . .

VALERIO: In consideration whereof and notwithstanding -

COURT CHAPLAIN: For inasmuch. . .

VALERIO: - as it came to pass before the creation of the world

COURT CHAPLAIN: - that . . .

VALERIO: - God was desperately bored -

PETER: Do get on with it, dear fellow.

COURT CHAPLAIN [*recovering his composure* ]/ If it so please your Highness Prince Leonce of Bum, and if it so please your Highness Princess Lena of Piddle, and if it so please you both together, to take each other conjointly and mutually in wedlock, then speak a loud and audible Yes'.

LEONCE *and* LENA: Yes.

COURT CHAPLAIN: Then I say, 'Amen'.

VALERIO: Very well done, short and sweet. So that's it then: man and woman created in a trice, with all the beasts of Paradise around them.

LEONCE *takes off his mask.*

ALL : The Prince!

PETER: The Prince! My son! What a disaster! What a deception! [*He rushes towards the Princess.*] Who is this person?! I declare the whole thing null and void!

GOVERNESS [*triumphantly, as she removes the Princess's mask*]: The Princess!

LEONCE: Lena!

LENA: Leonce!

GOVERNESS: Paradise, Lena - I do believe we fled to Paradise!

LENA: I've been deceived!

LEONCE: *I've* been deceived!

LENA: Oh chance!

LEONCE: Oh providence!

VALERIO: I have to laugh, I really have to laugh. By chance your Highnesses happen to have happened on each other. I hope you'll be happy it happened this way.

GOVERNESS: Fancy me living to see the day! A wandering prince! Now I can die in peace!

PETER: Children, I am moved, so deeply moved I am quite transfixed. I'm the happiest of men! But I hereby transfer my regal powers to you, my son, and from this moment on I shall start to do nothing but think undisturbed. So that ' am properly assisted in this arduous task, my son, you will grant me possession of these fountains of wisdom [*pointing to the Privy Council*]. Come, gentlemen, we must think, we must think undisturbed. [*He exits with the Privy Council.*] That man made me so confused just now, I must order my thoughts all over again.

LEONCE [*to all those remaining*]: Gentlemen, my wife and I are most infinitely sorry that you have spent so much time today standing about on our behalf. Your position is so pitiful that we should not wish at any price to make you withstand more standing. Go home now, but don't go forgetting your speeches, your sermons, your verses, for tomorrow we shall calmly and quietly do the whole farce again from beginning to end. Good bye, good-bye!

*Exit all except LEONCE, LENA, VALERIO and the GOVERNESS.*

LEONCE: There now, Lena, do you see how full our pockets are, full of puppets and playthings? What games shall we play with them? Shall we fit them all out with moustaches and muskets? Shall we stick them in tail-coats, dump them in the dunghill of politics and diplomacy, and settle down with a microscope to study their antics? Or do you fancy a barrel-organ on which sundry aesthetical, milk-white shrew mice dance and caper? Shall we build a theatre? [*Lena leans against him and shakes her head.*] But I know better than that what you really want. We'll have all the clocks in the kingdom destroyed, all calendars banned, then measure the hours and months by the flower clock alone, by the rhythms of blossom and fruit. And then we'll surround our entire little kingdom with sun trap-mirrors so that winter will be banished for ever, in summer we'll have the warmth of Capri and Ischia, and all through the year we shall wander amongst violets and roses, oranges and bay.

VALERIO: And I shall be Chief Minister and issue a decree that anyone getting calluses on their hands shall be taken into care, anyone working themselves sick shall be guilty of a crime, anyone boasting of earning their bread by the sweat of their brow shall be declared insane and a danger to society. And then we shall all lie down in the shade and pray God for macaroni, melons and figs, for melodious voices, classical bodies and a comfortable religion.

***The curtain falls.***