FINACHE. Every insurance company demands these little episodes of official nudity. And may I compliment you, madame. What a husband. What a specimen. What stamina.
LUCIENNE. Don’t I know it.
FINACHE. So virile.
LUCIENNE. Yes, and so exhausting.
FINACHE. Alas, the price of joy.
ETIENNE. My wife’s too much for me in the joy department. She needs a husband like yours.
FINACHE. With Madame’s authorization and her husband’s consent, maybe that could be arranged.
LUCIENNE. (Laughing.) I’ll decline as well, thank you.
FINACHE. I beg your pardon, madame, it’s this devil here who makes me talk such gibberish. Well, I’ll be off if I’m going to be back in time. Enchanté, madame. (Etienne and Finache start out up center.)
ETIENNE. Just to get back to my ovaries, doc. When I press myself here …
FINACHE. A good strong laxative. That’ll clear that up. (Etienne and Finache go out up center.)
LUCIENNE. What an odd fellow. (Checks watch.) And seven minutes past one already! (She leafs through the magazine as Camille enters from up right.)
CAMILLE. Oh! Haw huh her, ha ha. [Oh! Pardon me, madame.]
LUCIENNE. Monsieur …
CAMILLE. [I suppose you’re waiting for M. Chandelier?] LUCIENNE. I’m sorry…?
CAMILLE. [I say, I suppose you’re waiting for M. Chandelier? Something to do with insurance?]
LUCIENNE. I beg your pardon, I didn’t quite catch what you said.
CAMILLE. [I beg your pardon. You’re waiting for M. Chandelier?]
LUCIENNE. No, no, no. I’m French. Me — French. Französisch! Frances!
CAMILLE. [Well — so am I]
LUCIENNE. (Loudly, with sign language, as if he were hard of hearing.) Maybe you — ask — valet. I — wait — Madame Chandelier — she write me — come see her.
CAMILLE. (Also with sign language.) [Oh, I beg your pardon. I only ask because, if you had been waiting for Monsieur Chandelier …]
LUCIENNE. (No idea what he’s saying.) Well, there you are! I couldn’t agree more.
CAMILLE. [Your servant, Madame.] (Camille exits up right.)
LUCIENNE. What was that? An Iroquois? (Etienne enters from up center.)
ETIENNE. So how’re you doing in here?
LUCIENNE. There was a fellow who just came in. He said Hai heh ho ha ha.
ETIENNE. Oh, that’s Camille Chandelier.
LUCIENNE. A foreigner?
ETIENNE. No, he’s a nephew, works for M. Chandelier, lives upstairs. You see, he can’t pronounce, whatdyacallem, constonants. That’s why the boss took him on. You can’t get a job nowadays without constonants.
LUCIENNE. A man with only vowels. How sad.
ETIENNE. Would you believe he’s never had a woman?
LUCIENNE. Easily.
ETIENNE. Some guys have all the luck. (The outside door is heard closing.) But here comes the missus. (Raymonde enters up center.)
LUCIENNE. Raymonde!
RAYMONDE. Lucienne, I’m so sorry. I made you wait, didn’t I. I had to come such a long way. Leave us, Etienne. No disturbances. (Etienne exits center, closing doors.) There’s so much to explain. Sit. Lucy, I wrote asking you to come because something extremely grave has happened. My husband is being unfaithful.
LUCIENNE. What? Victor-Immanuel?
RAYMONDE. The same. He’s deceiving me.
LUCIENNE. With whom?
RAYMONDE. I don’t know.
LUCIENNE. He has a mistress?
RAYMONDE. I don’t know. He might have five or ten. But I’m certainly going to find out.
LUCIENNE. You mean you have no facts? No proof?
RAYMONDE. Not yet. But you’ll get the proof, all right.
LUCIENNE. If?
RAYMONDE. Yes, you’ll figure something out.
LUCIENNE. Me?
RAYMONDE. Lucy, time has separated us. But we are alumnae of the same convent, and sharing nuns is something that nothing can erase. When I first met you, you were sweet little Lucienne Vicard. Now you are Madame Carlos Homenides de Histangua. Your name has gotten longer, but your heart remains the same. So tell me, my friend. What do I do?
LUCIENNE. What do you do to do what?
RAYMONDE. Why, to trap my husband!
LUCIENNE. You won't trap Victor. He's the most faithful of husbands.
RAYMONDE. I'm not a child, Lucy. No fairy tales, please. Some things do not deceive.
LUCIENNE. Your husband may be one of them.
RAYMONDE. Oh, yes? What would you say if your husband, after having been a husband, and what a husband, abruptly stopped being one? Just like that? Stopped being, if you catch my meaning, a husband.
LUCIENNE. I'd say thank God!
RAYMONDE. That's what one always thinks before this happens. Yes, yes, I know. The endless love, this eternal springtime, it gets tedious. Monotonous. I was always saying, Oh for a cloud in my sky, a pebble in my shoe, a care in the world. I'd gone so far as to think I should take a lover, just to remind myself there still are troubles in this world.
LUCIENNE. You? A lover?
RAYMONDE. One has these moments. I had even set my sights on him. Not to name names — Monsieur Romain Tournel. He's been begging me to be his mistress. Why, he and I have been within an inch of it.
LUCIENNE. That close?
RAYMONDE. An inch. And he is my husband's best friend. So it would be perfect. Now that my husband's deceiving me, it would be brilliant.
LUCIENNE. But Raymonde, you're mad about your husband.
RAYMONDE. Of course I am, and it makes me furious! I'd love to deceive Victor — but to have him deceive me first? It's unspeakable!
LUCIENNE. You have delicious principles.
RAYMONDE. Thank you. Traditional, too.
LUCIENNE. But what you've told me proves nothing.
RAYMONDE. Oh, prove, prove. When a husband's been a raging torrent for years and abruptly pffft! Nothing? Bone-dry?
LUCIENNE. Spanish rivers dry up in summer. It doesn't mean they've left their beds.
RAYMONDE. Oh, really? Then what about this? (She takes a pair of suspenders from her purse.)
LUCIENNE. What is that?
RAYMONDE. It's a pair of suspenders.