

(The guests disperse gradually, leaving ANNA with ZETA and NJEGUS.)
ZETA: Madame, I congratulate you! Your party in honour of Pontevredo couldn't be—how shall I put it?—more Pontevredian!
ANNA: Thank you, your Excellency! Later on I'm providing something more—how shall I put it—more Parisian.
ZETA: Indeed?

ANNA (conspiratorially): If I may tell you in the strictest confidence . . .
ZETA (leaning towards her eagerly): Oh, definitely "entre nous"—
ANNA: Well then . . . I've arranged a little surprise for Count Danilo.
ZETA (intrigued): For Count Danilo?

ANNA: I understand he's very fond of night life, and spends a lot of his time at a place called Maxim's, which unfortunately I don't happen to know—
ZETA: And which I do happen to know—even more unfortunately!
ANNA: So we—(indicating NJEGUS and herself.) Have arranged for the garden to be transformed to look like Maxim's—and we've engaged a sextet of Grisettes.
NJEGUS: I did the engaging. (He smirks complacently.)
ZETA: Real life Grisettes?

NJEGUS: Extremely real and very much alive. (Starts to count on his fingers.) Lolo, Dodo, Jou-Jou, Clo-Clo—
ZETA: Do you know them all, NJEGUS?
NJEGUS: Very well indeed. Or as very-well-indeed as anyone could on my Embassy salary.
ANNA (laughing): Oh, I'm sure his Excellency will do something about that, NJEGUS!

ZETA (grimly): I will—but not quite what you think.
ANNA (as she turns to go): You'll not forget that for the moment what I've told you is "entre nous"—?
ZETA (giving her a little bow, with a click of the heels): Entre nous, Madame . . . (NJEGUS imitates ZETA's bow and heel-click, as ANNA, with a little wave of the hand, exits up R.)
ZETA (reflectively, as he looks after her): H'm . . . So she is interested in Danilo, after all? (Turning to NJEGUS.) Where is he, by the way? Not under a tap again, I hope?

NJEGUS: Not as far as I know, Excellency . . . As a matter of fact, he doesn't want to come.
ZETA: What?
NJEGUS: He said that as far as he was concerned, the party could go to blazes.
ZETA: "To blazes"—? Didn't you make it clear to him that this is an official occasion, and he has a duty to the Fatherland?
NJEGUS: Yes, Excellency, I did. He said the Fatherland could also go to blazes.
ZETA (outraged): That amounts to treason! High—in fact—treason!
NJEGUS: I pointed that out, Excellency, but he said a flock of wild horses wouldn't drag him here.
ZETA (testily): Wild horses don't go in flocks, you idiot! They go in herds, or schools, or something . . .

NJEGUS: Yes, Excellency.
ZETA: So he won't come, neh?
NJEGUS: No, Excellency.
ZETA: We'll see about that . . .
(As he makes to exit, he almost collides with DANILLO, who enters down R.)
Aah! . . . So you've decided to honour us after all, have you? What the deuce have you been up to?

DANILLO (airily): Arranging a few removals, as promised.
ZETA: Well, you've been wasting your time.
DANILLO: How do you mean?
ZETA: Why don't you keep in closer touch with the Master Mind? I've discovered who the real menace is.

DANILLO: Who?
ZETA: Count de Rosillon.
DANILLO: Camille?
ZETA: The Widow's definitely interested, so we've got to find a way of eliminating him . . . Some secret in his past, perhaps . . .
NJEGUS (slyly): There's a secret in his present, Excellency.
ZETA: Oh? Well, that's something! What is it?

NJEGUS: He's in love—with a woman.
ZETA: Aren't we all—more or less?
NJEGUS: A married woman, Excellency.
ZETA: Ah! . . . Who is she?
NJEGUS: Well—er—he didn't exactly say—
ZETA: A lot of use you are! I shall have to find out through diplomatic channels. We must confront him with this married woman, coerce him into doing the honourable thing, and that'll be that.

DANILLO: How's the married lady's husband going to like it?
ZETA: Pooh!—I shan't have any qualms about making him a cuckoo! (Moves away, chuckling, and looks off L.) Ah, there's de Rosillon now—with my wife. (Coming back to DANILLO and NJEGUS.) You know, my wife seems to have quite a lot of influence with our young Frenchman. She'd be the very one to get to work on him, and find out the name of the married woman he's in love with! Now isn't that a good idea?

(NJEGUS raises his eyes to heaven in despair.)
NJEGUS!
NJEGUS (snapping out of it): Yes, Excellency—
ZETA: When you get a chance, let her Excellency know I shall shortly be requiring a confidential word in her diplomatic little ear.
NJEGUS: Yes, Excellency . . . (Exit R.)