

THEO

Someone he met last night. Said he had never been so moved by a woman before. Said he wanted to write poems to her.

LOUISE

Oh.

*(He retreats into the bedroom. She takes the poem Versati gave her from her bosom and reads it.)*

"Once in place, love never breaks."

*(She takes the poem to the stove and throws it in, then turns and glares at Klingehoff. She walks toward him.)*

So you're just another man applying for a room in our house.

KLINGLEHOFF

That is why I'm here.

LOUISE

Yes, you're just looking for a room, I suppose, to do your work. A room to get away from it all.

KLINGLEHOFF

Exactly.

LOUISE

To pursue with diligence whatever is your area of interest, which is, in this case, let's see, poetry? A quiet study of the arts?

KLINGLEHOFF

In fact, science.

LOUISE

Ah, science. And I wonder if perhaps you were in the park the other day for the King's parade?

KLINGLEHOFF

It is one's patriotic duty.

LOUISE

Under a linden tree?

KLINGLEHOFF

Linden trees line the boulevard.

LOUISE

And what did you see?

KLINGLEHOFF

Something wonderful!

LOUISE

So it's just coincidence, is it, that you came here, to this place, to seek a room next to a famous pair of underpants.

KLINGLEHOFF

How dare you!

LOUISE

*(Her voice rising.)*

Oh, please. Now that I've learned to read a man's face, I can see that lust is written all over yours.

*(Klingelhoff turns toward audience, mulls this.)*

KLINGELHOFF

Madam, I have no idea what you are talking about!

LOUISE

Oh really? Well, does this ring any bells?

*(She lifts up her skirt high and shows him her underpants.)*

KLINGELHOFF

Oh my Lord High Chancellor!

*(There is a pause.)*

LOUISE

Did you say you don't know what I'm talking about?

KLINGELHOFF

I swear it! I don't know!

ce,

LOUISE

But you said you saw something wonderful.

KLINGELHOFF

The King! I saw the King.

LOUISE

Then, you really don't know?

KLINGLEHOFF

Let me just say that this is the kind of conversation that I have avoided my entire life. I have not only left rooms, but countries that have tried to engage me in perversity. And I cannot believe that filth of this kind has penetrated into the very heart of the German home! You are behaving like, like an American.

*(Louise suddenly changes her tone to friendly.)*

LOUISE

You're here to rent a room?

KLINGLEHOFF

*(Struck by her sudden change.)*

Pardon me?

LOUISE

You're here to rent a room?

KLINGLEHOFF

I was.

LOUISE

And you changed your mind?

KLINGLEHOFF

Most undoubtedly.

LOUISE

May I ask why?

KLINGLEHOFF

Why? Because a few seconds ago, you lifted your dress over your head!

LOUISE

*(Feigning shock.)*

I did what?

KLINGLEHOFF

You lifted your dress over your head!

LOUISE

I have to ask you. Are you subject to delusions?

KLINGLEHOFF

What do you mean?

LOUISE

Do you ever misplace things?

KLINGLEHOFF

On occasion.

LOUISE

Ever go to the market and forget why you went?

KLINGLEHOFF

Sometimes. Age does that.

LOUISE

Yes, age can do that. As well as make one believe that someone has lifted her dress over her head.

KLINGLEHOFF

You're saying you didn't?

LOUISE

I assure you it's not in my nature. I just came back from church. But I forgive you.

KLINGLEHOFF

Well then, my dear lady, I apologize.

LOUISE

That's all right, it's quite a common symptom of genius.

KLINGLEHOFF

Oh yes, I'm sure I've heard that. I think I need to rest. Would you tell your husband that I'll come by tomorrow to sign the contract, and that my things will be here at week's end?

LOUISE

I will, Herr . . .

KLINGLEHOFF

Klingelhoff.

LOUISE

Herr Klingelhoff.

KLINGLEHOFF

I'm sorry if I offended you.

LOUISE

Don't think about it. Go off and rest.

*(He exits. Theo enters from the bedroom.)*

THEO

Where is he?

LOUISE

He said he will come by tomorrow to sign. He wasn't feeling well.

THEO

He'd better. We already have a verbal agreement.

LOUISE

He seemed sincere.

THEO

And what would you know about it?