

Scene Five

Lights up on RENÉ's and EDITH's bedroom.

EDITH is in a forshortened double bed, facing the front. She has her hair in curlers and sliced cucumber on her eyes.

EDITH René, René. Are you coming to bed?

RENÉ (*offstage*) Ultimately.

EDITH You are so long in the bathroom. What are you doing in there? Are you putting on that cologne that has a strange effect on me?

RENÉ (*offstage*) Definitely not.

RENÉ appears, in nightshirt. He carries a small jar with an ointment which he is putting on his moustache.

EDITH (*removing cucumber eye patches*) What are you putting on your moustache?

RENÉ It is a new product. It guarantees for the moustache more body and stiffness.

EDITH Give it to me. I will keep it beside the bed.

He climbs in beside her.

René, do you realize this is the same mattress on which we spent the night of our honeymoon?

RENÉ Yes. What a story it has to tell.

EDITH It is still comfortable but it is sagging a bit.

RENÉ Everything is sagging a bit.

EDITH How different it all was. You were so young and so virile. You could scarcely keep your hands off me.

RENÉ You have taught me to control myself, Edith. Do you have to wear all that cucumber and lettuce on your face?

EDITH (*putting the cucumber slices back on*) I wear it so that I will look beautiful for you tomorrow, René.

RENÉ What is so great about tomorrow? What about tonight?

EDITH René, do you mean... (*She takes the cucumber off again*) I will take it off, René, at once.

RENÉ No, it is too late now. Climbing into bed with a mixed salad does not bring out in me the Casanova.

EDITH I could turn out the light.

RENÉ I would still taste the vinegar.

EDITH Where did we go wrong, René?

RENÉ I expect it was the war.

EDITH The war has only been on two years. You have not made love to me since Czechoslovakia was invaded.

RENÉ As recently as that? I must have been drinking.

EDITH If there is anyone else, René, I will kill myself.

RENÉ How?

There is a knock on the door.

EDITH Who is that?

LECLERC enters, in a nightshirt, and holding a lit candle.

LECLERC It is I, Leclerc.

RENÉ Why are you disguised as Wee Willie Winkie?

LECLERC I have an urgent message from Michelle. She wishes to see you.

EDITH How could anyone expect my husband to get up at this time of night?

RENÉ Quite right.

LECLERC Michelle is here. I came in first in case you were engaged in the nooky.

RENÉ What delicacy of feeling. Show her in.

LECLERC Psst—Michelle.

MICHELLE *enters as a nun.*

MICHELLE I have for you the batteries for your radio that were dropped behind the barn. (*She lifts her skirt and puts her foot on the bed, revealing the batteries strapped to her suspended leg*)

RENÉ Mine eyes have seen the glory.

MICHELLE (*handing over the batteries*) They are long life ever ready.

LECLERC (*candle shaking in his hand*) I wish I was.

MICHELLE Now listen very carefully. I shall say this only once.

LECLERC Beg pardon?

RENÉ Shut up.

MICHELLE Hitler has changed his plan. He is coming by car. It will stop at the town square. While they are repairing the puncture in the tyre, Hitler will visit the only café open in the square, which will be yours.

RENÉ Hitler is coming here?

EDITH How do you know that he will have a puncture?

MICHELLE We will break your empty bottles and put the glass in the square. While he is in your café, we will capture him.

RENÉ (*getting out of bed*) You are not capturing Hitler in my café. I have a business to run. Have you gone mad or something?

MICHELLE I have not finished. The guards will not know that he has been spirited away because somebody looking like Hitler will be sitting in the window of your café.

RENÉ And who is this master of disguise who will deceive the whole German Army before he is taken out and shot?

MICHELLE You.

RENÉ Me?

LECLERC He is too fat for Hitler.

RENÉ Yes, I am too fat for Hitler. Who are you calling too fat?
And I am too old and too tall and too scared. It is the ravings
of a mad nun. I give you a simple answer. No, no, no.

EDITH If you do not do this, you are no longer my husband.

RENÉ You see. Already my actions have compensations.

MICHELLE I would reveal more but there is no time.

RENÉ Then we must save the candle. *(He blows it out)*

Blackout.