PROLOGUE

DIRECTEUR
Dear public, wait patiently. I offer you a play that will try to reform your morals. It is about children in the family, a domestic topic that we will present in a familiar way. The actors will not threaten you. They will simply appeal to your common sense. Above all, they will do their best to entertain so that you may profit from the lessons of this play. And the world will shine with the smiles of newborn babies, more numerous than the twinkling stars.

Listen closely to the lessons of war, and make babies as you never have before! Here you will find peculiar actions embellishing the main plot. The tone will change from pathetic to comic, with a heavy dose of improbability. It is only right that a playwright should use all of the illusions available to him. If he wishes, a crowd should speak and inanimate objects should talk. He need not be accountable to time and place. His universe is a stage, where he rules as God and Creator. Motion, color and sound are all at his command, and they illuminate truth and life. For a play must be a complete universe, its own creator.

Forgive me: I’ve spoken much too long. But a fire is still rising up from the ashes. And it’s up to you to keep the flame burning. You must be the inextinguishable torch of this new fire, and make babies as you never have before!

ACT I SCENE 1

THÉRÈSE
No, my husband, you cannot make me do whatever you want. I am a feminist, and I do not acknowledge the authority of men. From now on, I wish to do as I please. Men have done as they pleased for far too long. I also want to fight the enemy, be a soldier and go to war. I don’t want to have the babies!

HUSBAND
Give me some bacon, I tell you!

THÉRÈSE
Do you hear him? All he thinks about is love.

Have no doubt, foolish man. After having been a solider, I want to be an artist... a politician, lawyer, senator, minister, and president... a doctor and psychiatrist, famous from Europe to America. Having babies and slaving away in the kitchen is not enough. I'll be a mathematician, a maître’d, a telegrapher... And if it pleases me, I'll take up with an old dancer and be her sugar daddy.

HUSBAND
This is not my wife. What boor has put on her clothes? No doubt about it, he's a murderer and he's killed her. My little Thérèse, where are you? As for you, vile man disguised as Thérèse... I will kill you!

THÉRÈSE
You are right. I am no longer your wife.

HUSBAND
Really!?

THÉRÈSE
And yet, I am Thérèse.

HUSBAND
Well, I never...!

THÉRÈSE
But Thérèse who is no longer a woman...

HUSBAND
This is too much.
THÉRÈSE
And since I’ve become a handsome lad…

HUSBAND
I missed that detail…

THÉRÈSE
From now on, I shall bear a man's name: Tirésias.

HUSBAND
Adieu… sias… !

ACT I SCENE 3

THÉRÈSE
I'm moving out. The piano! The violin! The situation is getting serious.

ACT I SCENE 4

PRESTO
My old friend Lacouf, I've lost everything to you while gambling in zanzibar.

LACOUF
Monsieur Presto, I have won nothing, and I'm not even talking about Zanzibar. You're in Paris.

PRESTO
In Zanzibar…

LACOUF
In Paris!

PRESTO
This is too much, after ten years' friendship and all the bad things I've said about you.

LACOUF

PRESTO
In Zanzibar. The proof is that I lost everything.

LACOUF
Monsieur Presto, we must fight a duel.

PRESTO
We must. On equal terms, firing at will.

BOTH
No holds barred. Fire!!

ACT I SCENE 5

THÉRÈSE
Dear freedom! I have won you at last! But first I’ll buy a newspaper to find out what’s happening. Since he lost at zanzibar, M. Presto has lost his bet. Since we are in Paris, M. Lacouf has won nothing. Since the scene takes place in Zanzibar, just as the Seine flows through Paris.

THE PEOPLE OF ZANZIBAR
Since he lost at zanzibar, M. Presto has lost his bet. Since we are in Paris, M. Lacouf has won nothing. The scene takes place in Zanzibar, just as the Seine flows through Paris. Since he lost at zanzibar, Monsieur Presto has lost his bet because we are in Paris.

THÉRÈSE
Lacouf has won nothing, since the scene takes place in Zanzibar, just as the Seine flows in Paris.

HUSBAND
Since he lost at zanzibar, Monsieur Presto has lost his bet because we are in Paris.

THE PEOPLE OF ZANZIBAR
Lacouf has won nothing, since the scene takes place in Zanzibar, just as the Seine flows in Paris.
THÉRÈSE
I'll conquer the universe, rally women to my cause, take over the government and become a town councilor. But I hear a noise. Perhaps it would be better to leave.

ACT I SCENE 6

GENDARME
It stinks of crime here.

HUSBAND
Ah! Since we finally have a representative of Zanzibaran authority, I will question him. If you have business with me, be so good as to take my military papers out of my pocket.

GENDARME
Ah, a pretty girl...Tell me, my pretty child, who has treated you so meanly?

HUSBAND
He takes me for a girl. This gendarme is an old fool.

GENDARME
Tell me, my pretty child, who has treated you so meanly?

HUSBAND
He takes me for a girl. If it's marriage you're looking for, begin by undoing me!

GENDARME
The duelists will not prevent me from telling you that I find you as nice to touch as a rubber toy.

HUSBAND
Achoo!

GENDARME
Mademoiselle, I'm madly in love with you and wish to be your husband.

HUSBAND
You don't you see that I'm a man? You'd do better having children yourself.

GENDARME
Fancy that!

ACT I SCENE 7

HUSBAND
Great representative of all authority: I believe you hear clearly what has been spoken. The women of Zanzibar want political rights and suddenly renounce their fertility. You hear them cry, "No more children." To populate Zanzibar, turn to the elephants, monkeys, serpents, mosquitoes, and ostriches...Woman is sterile like the bee in the hive; but bees at least make wax and honey...Woman is barren in the eye of heaven. And I tell you, my good sir, Zanzibar needs children. Sound the alarm, cry in the streets and boulevards that someone must make babies in Zanzibar. Women no longer make babies... Too bad. Why not let men make them? I look you straight in the face and tell you I'll make the m!

ACT I SCENE 8

THE PEOPLE OF ZANZIBAR
You?

What scandalous news! People outside of Zanzibar need to hear about this!

You who weep upon seeing our play, pray that this works, so we can keep having children! See the unfathomable
passion that comes from this sex change.

HUSBAND
Come back this very night, and you shall see how nature can give me children without a wife.

THE PEOPLE OF ZANZIBAR
Do not make him knock impatiently on the door. He will return tonight and take you at your word.

HUSBAND
The gendarme is so ignorant! The music hall and bar hold more charm for him than repopulating Zanzibar.

LACOUF
What names will you give your babies?

PRESTO
They are just as we are. They're just not grown yet.

THE PEOPLE OF ZANZIBAR
Smoke your pipe, and I'll play my pipe to you. The baker's wife gets the seven-year-itch.

Every seven years? Honestly…?

ENTR'ACTE
THE PEOPLE OF ZANZIBAR
You who weep upon seeing our play, pray that this works, so we can keep having children! See the unfathomable passion that comes from this sex change.

THE CHILDREN
Papa!

ACT TWO SCENE 1

HUSBAND
Ah, how crazy are the joys of fatherhood! 40,049 children in a single day. My happiness is complete.

THE BABIES
Tra la la la la la la la la la la

HUSBAND
Silence!

HUSBAND
A happy family life, with no wife on my arm. Perhaps I won't be able to spare the rod, but I don't want to make things any worse. Instead I will buy them bicycles, so my child prodigies can give open-air concerts.

ACT TWO SCENE 2

HUSBAND
Come in.

JOURNALIST
Hands up! Good day, Monsieur Husband. I am a newspaper correspondent from Paris.

HUSBAND
From Paris! Welcome!

JOURNALIST
The Paris papers have announced that you have found a way for men to have children.

HUSBAND
That's true.

JOURNALIST
And how does it work?

HUSBAND
Willpower, sir, can achieve anything.

JOURNALIST
Are they just like normal children?

HUSBAND
It depends on your point of view.

JOURNALIST
You must be rich, then.

HUSBAND
Not at all!

JOURNALIST
Well then, how will you support them?

HUSBAND
After I've finished bottle feeding, I hope they'll feed me.

JOURNALIST
So you're a Mr. Mom with a maternalized paternal instinct.

HUSBAND
No, my dear sir, I act out of self-interest. Children are the wealth of the family far more than money and inheritance. This one is named Arthur, and he has a monopoly on curdled milk. He's already made a million!

JOURNALIST
Smart for his age.
**HUSBAND**
That one, Joseph, is a novelist. His last novel sold 600,000 copies. Allow me to give you one.

**JOURNALIST**
What luck!

**HUSBAND**
Read it at your leisure.

**JOURNALIST**
A… lady… whose… name was… Poop. A lady whose name was Poop!

**HUSBAND**
Doesn't he show a certain politeness of expression and precocity?

**JOURNALIST**
Something you don't see every day.

**HUSBAND**
Anyway, that novel made me more than 200,000 francs.

**JOURNALIST**
But have you no daughters?

**HUSBAND**
I do. This one here is a better actress than anyone in Zanzibar. She recites beautiful verses at dreary soirées. Between her gigs and her patrons, she nets every year what a poet receives in 50,000 years.

**JOURNALIST**
I congratulate you, my dear, but you have some dust on your duster.

**HUSBAND**
Since you're so rich, lend me a hundred sous.

**ACT TWO SCENE 3**

**HUSBAND**
Yes. It's as simple as a periscope. The more children I have the richer I shall be, and the better I shall be fed. They say the cod lays enough eggs in one day to feed the world on fishcakes and aoli for a year. Isn't it just wonderful to have a big family? Who are those idiotic economists who tried to make us believe that children mean poverty? It's exactly the opposite! Did anyone ever hear of a cod that died in poverty?

**SON**
Papa, if you want me to dig for scandal, you've got to give me some pocket money. For 500 francs, I'll not say a word about your affairs. If not, I'll tell everything and implicate father, sisters, and brothers. I will write that you married a woman who was expecting triplets. I'll say that you've stolen, murdered, informed and snitched.

**HUSBAND**
Bravo! What a blackmailer!

**SON**
My dear parents, two in one: If you want to know what happened last night, here it is: A great fire destroyed Niagara Falls.

**HUSBAND**
Too bad.

**SON**
The builder Alcindor, masked as a soldier, played his horn till midnight for an audience of assassins. And I am sure that he is still playing.

**HUSBAND**
As long as it is not in this room.

**SON**
But tomorrow the princess of Bergamo will marry a lady she met in the subway.

**HUSBAND**
Do I know these people? I want good information on my friends.

**SON**
The news from Montrouge is that Picasso invented a picture that moves just like a cradle.

**HUSBAND**
Long live the brush of my friend Picasso!

Oh, my son, leave it for another time. I now know enough
about what happened yesterday.

SON
I'm going off… to invent… tomorrow's news!

HUSBAND
Have a nice trip.

ACT TWO SCENE 5

HUSBAND
That one was a total dud. I should disinherit him. Let's have no useless mouths to feed. Let's economize.
   I shall make my next child a tailor so I will be well dressed when I go for a stroll. And since I'm not hard on the eyes, all the pretty girls will fancy me.

GENDARMERIE
Well, you've kept your promise. 40,050 children in one day. You're really spreading your seed.

HUSBAND
I am making myself rich.

GENDARMERIE
But Zanzibar, famished because of these excess mouths to feed, is about to die of hunger.

HUSBAND
Tell their fortunes; that will fix everything.

GENDARMERIE
Where?

HUSBAND
At the fortuneteller's.

GENDARMERIE
Is she extra clairvoyant?

HUSBAND
Who cares? She'll keep us from starving.

ACT TWO SCENE 7

FORTUNETELLER
Chaste citizens of Zanzibar, here I am.

HUSBAND
Yet another visitor. I'll pretend I'm not home.

FORTUNETELLER
I thought you might not be displeased to have your fortune told.

GENDARMERIE
Don't you know that you're practicing an illegal profession? It's astonishing to what lengths people will go to avoid an honest day's work.

FORTUNETELLER
You, sir, will very soon give birth to three identical twins.

HUSBAND
I already have competition?

A WOMAN
Madame Fortuneteller, I think he's being unfaithful to me. Keep him warm in a Dutch oven.

FORTUNETELLER
Oh my goodness… You're an incubator!

HUSBAND
Are you the barber? Give me a haircut.

FORTUNETELLER
New York girls pick only blueberries, eat only York ham. That's what makes them so beautiful.

HUSBAND
The ladies of Paris are far more beautiful than the rest. As the cat loves the mouse, so we love yours...

FORTUNETELLER
You mean my mouth?

GENDARMERIE
He sings from morn till night and scratches where it itches. Variety is the spice of life. See?

FORTUNETELLER
I thought you might not be displeased to have your fortune told.

HUSBAND & GENDARMERIE
She thought? ...

FORTUNETELLER
Chaste citizens of Zanzibar, you who make no more children... Realize that fame and fortune, pineapple groves and elephant herds... They will belong to those who have earned it by having children. Thus you, monsieur, who are so fertile...

HUSBAND
Fertile.
FORTUNETELLER
You will become a billionaire ten times over. While you, who have no children, will die in abject poverty.

GENDARME
You insult me. In the name of Zanzibar, I arrest you.

FORTUNETELLER
Lay hands on a woman? How shameful.

HUSBAND
And smoke your shepherd's pipe while I play my pipes for you. The baker's wife gets the seven-year itch and sheds her skin.

FORTUNETELLER
Every seven years? Honestly…!

HUSBAND
Meanwhile I'm going to turn you in to the police, you murderer.

FORTUNETELLER
My dear husband, don't you recognize me?

HUSBAND & GENDARME
Thérèse!

HUSBAND
But look at you, flat as a board!

THÉRÈSE
What does it matter? Come pluck my strawberry with your banana flower. Chase away the elephants the Zanzibar way, and come rule over the ample heart of your Thérèse.

HUSBAND
Thérèse.

THÉRÈSE
Forget the throne and the tomb. We must love each other or I will succumb before the final curtain.

ACT TWO SCENE 8

HUSBAND
Dear Thérèse, you need no longer be flat as a board.

THÉRÈSE
Let's not complicate things. Fly away!

THE PEOPLE OF ZANZIBAR
We must love. And sing from morn till night, and scratch where it itches. Variety is the spice of life. Vive la difference! See? Listen closely to the lessons of war, and make babies as you never have before! Old Gendarme, make babies, you who scarcely have any, you who no longer make them! Scratch where it itches, and then sing from morning till night. Variety is the spice of life. Vive la difference!