**Monsieur Léotard**

**by Dave Carley**

## **Cast**

DOMENICA – 20 - a woman scorned once too often. Now she’s hell-bent on suicide, or at least creating a little scandal. Beautiful and tragic.

JULES – 24 – Parisian trapeze superstar and intermittently attentive husband of Domenica. A hunk of an homme.

Father EUSTACHE – Priest. Domenica’s pragmatic spiritual guide. Sexually, a man of catholic tastes. With food, probably ditto.

**Scene and Time**

Paris. On a bridge or high wall above the Seine. 1862.

## **Plot Synopsis**

He was the original daring young man on a flying trapeze. In order to better perform his acts of aerial athleticism, Jules Léotard encased his gorgeous physique in a flexible, body-revealing costume that set Parisienne hearts aflutter. M. Léotard quickly became France’s top athlete, on the trapeze and in the boudoir.

Jules Léotard the trapezist was eventually nudged out by other, more daring performers. He died in 1870 at age 32, officially of smallpox but more probably from something venereal.

Léotard left a snug legacy: that sexy outfit eponymously named in his honour. He also left a very bitter wife. And, if this short play is to be believed, he very nearly didn’t leave the latter...

**Monsieur Leotard**

Lights come up on DOMENICA, standing upstage. She is wearing a leotard and a showy wig from another era. A beauty mark or three.

DOMENICA rushes to the edge of the stage. It is a determined rush but ends in uncertainty. She may stop once during her forward charge in order to strike a tragic pose.

At the edge of the stage she stops and peers down.

**DOMENICA:** Bernadine, Celestine, Victorine that doxy!

Scholastique, Veronique, Marcelline the poxy!

Idolette, Pascalette, rubber leggy Adriette!

Plus: Isabelle, Annabelle, Christabelle, Juliette!

Don’t forget: Olympiade’s sweaty marathons of love - On my bed! Under my Jules! Whore below, God above!

Plus plus plus: squirmy Irma and no-pantsy Nancy And hundreds more who have tickled his fancy…

With dramatic flair DOMENICA tears off a bracelet or an earring and tosses it down to the river. She watches a long time and then there is a faint splash. She storms back upstage, where she turns again to face the audience, her visage a crowd of emotions. She takes another deep breath and runs hard towards the edge of the stage before skidding to a halt.

She begins pulling letters out of her leotard.

Stuffed ‘neath our mattress – the secret life of Jules! Billet a doux - from soft-headed fools.

(Reads) Aglantine squawks, ‘Jules, make me cluck again! Put my eggs in your basket. I’ll be your fair hen!’

Sweet Marie begs, ‘Let me worship your golden calves!

Your red tongue, your pink sabre – Jules, split me in halves!

DOMENICA throws the letters down into the river, and starts back upstage again. Once there she martials her courage and begins walking back to the edge.

Jules Léotard - the strutting cock of the Paris soir, Swinging his way through a thousand boudoirs.

Well Jules, your long-suffering wife is so depressed that I’ve made peace with my priest - and final-confessed!

‘Father Eustache!’ I cried. ‘I wed a monster with two heads! But I have just one heart - and he’s philandered it dead.

I have no choice because the church shuns divorce!

I’ll marry the Seine, before this day runs its course.

This time she strides purposefully towards the edge and looks like she’s about to go over for sure. But she is also a mistress of the false exits.

I’ll ease into the river, so to keep my hair in place. Why surrender beauty when sealing his disgrace?

O murky Seine! To you I commit my betrayed soul!

From hell I’ll watch scandal make his heads roll.

I’m going! I’m going! And with determination!

The Drowning of Domenica will transfix this nation!

DOMENICA starts easing herself over, holding on to her wig. She plugs her nose and prepares to drop when she is distracted by the dramatic arrival of JULES, preferably by trapeze but tumbling on stage would do the trick as well. If no actual trapeze :) then a trapeze handle would suffice.

JULES rolls to a halt and admires himself, perhaps in the reflection of the Seine.

**JULES:** I swing and I flex, a thousand women sigh!

All my life’s a circus - I can tell you why:

I invented these clothes for work - they hug my physique And when les dames get close? They go knee-weak.

So after work, I ‘play’, and it’s much play, with many. The sexploits of Jules? Vidi, vici, veni!

JULES does a double take, noticing DOMENICA.

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| **JULES:** | Domenica! Why are you so sadly standing there? |
| **DOMENICA:** | Your infidelities cause me existential despair. |
| **JULES:** | But I love you, petit soufflé, please come hither |
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| **DOMENICA:** | Your soufflé is falling, taking your fame with her. |

DOMENICA starts to jump and JULES rushes in and grabs her.

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| **DOMENICA:** | Unhand me you monster! Let me drown in my sorrow! |
| **JULES:** | Come home to our bed! We’ll make love til tomorrow! |
| **DOMENICA:** | It’s too late! I’ve made peace with God, via my Priest! |
| **JULES:** | Father Eustache?! Why’s he waddling in from the east? |
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Dramatic entrance. Father EUSTACHE in black soutane. He might be a large man but he can move in haste when he believes he has a suicidal sheep in his flock.

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| **EUSTACHE:** | Your rescuer is here! ‘C’est moi’ states Le Eustache! |
| **DOMENICA:** | But Father, I’ve confessed – my suicide you’d crash? |
| **JULES:** | You’re in the nick of time – she wants to splish splash! |
| **EUSTACHE:** | Hey! Grant me my couplets, you’ve both had yours.  Let’s hear from the virtuous, enough from you whores. |

In an ancient convention beaucoup dramatique

The maiden is saved at the moment climactique

My lamb Domenica, you’ve been serially betrayed –   
I’d have gotten here sooner but I was waylaid.

By the delivery of my stretchy new clerical habit When a fad comes along – even a priest will grab it.

Father EUSTACHE drops his soutane and, underneath, he too sports a leotard.

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| **JULES:** | Father Eustache - on my copyright you’re infringing! |
| **DOMENICA:** | And Father I fear on good taste you’re impinging! |
| **EUSTACHE:** | The Bishop loves me in it, so both stop your whingeing. |
| **JULES**: | Whaaat! The Bishop has torn a page from my book?! |
| **DOMENICA:** | I thought he preferred pink silk – does he wield a big crook? |
| **EUSTACHE:** | An all-nighter with his mitre - oh, my heavens they shook. |
| **EUSTACHE:** | But enough of the Church in its unvestment glory! |
| **JULES:** | Let’s stop your life divestment – can’t I just say sorry? |
| **DOMENICA:** | You’re worried what the press will do with this story. |
| **DOMENICA:** | When I drown my sorrows in the Seine it’ll be |
| **JULES:** | A bloody big scandal! And the real victim is me! |
| **EUSTACHE:** | It’s a pyrrhic win if you die – I have a better i-d. |

They all stare at him.

**EUSTACHE:** A?

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| **EUSTACHE:** | No scandal tops eloping with a priest to the hereafter. |
| **DOMENICA:** | Brilliant i-d. A. His fame will be drowned by laughter! |
| **JULES:** | You’d run off with him? You could do nothing dafter! |
| **JULES:** | And did you not hear him? With the Bishop he plays! |
| **DOMENICA:** | We’ve shared a confessional – I know how he prays! |
| **EUSTACHE:** | While he’s out trapezing, I’m swinging both ways! |
| **JULES:** | Come back! Don’t leave me alone and annoyed! |
|  | And at the mercy of the republican tabloids. |

EUSTACHE and DOMENICA run and waddle off. JULES is left alone. He stares at river.

**JULES:** Perhaps it’s me who should cut bait and go splash!

Despite my ethereal beauty, and aerial panache.

But forgive me dear audience, is it not kind of odd - when a God of a Man - loses to a Man of God?

JULES some posing. He can’t help realizing how beautiful he looks. Looks down at water.

Cuz lo – when’er I look down and see my reflection My undying beauty rewards my inspection.

It would be a crime against nature to harm this perfection These arms, these legs, my four hour confection.

And I can’t help but notice I could swoop o’er this river

It’s just a hundred yards wide, that’s three swings and a shiver

So what if I lose the wife to a priest? Léotard can still please In my daring outfit - and on my flying trapeze.

An effect. Perhaps he tumbles off the stage. Or even trapezes out if it’s a truly big budget production.

**The End.**