

**POET LORE. VOLUME  
XXIII. NEW YEAR, 1912  
NUMBER I. BY OURSELVES:  
(A COMEDY IN ONE ACT)**

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Ludwig Fulda

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**LUDWIG FULDA**

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# Poet Lore

VOLUME XXIII

NEW YEAR, 1912

NUMBER I

## BY OURSELVES

(A comedy in one act)

BY LUDWIG FULDA

Translated from the German by Haya Wally



### CHARACTERS

DR. FELIX VOLKART, physician.  
HERMINE, his wife.  
BARON HUBERT VON BERKOW.  
BAUMANN, a servant.  
LOTTE, lady's maid.

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(Dining-room in DR. VOLKART'S house. Doors at right and left. To the right a window. In the middle of the stage, a long, richly decked table, on which are placed between thirty and forty covers. In the foreground, to the right, a small sofa; to the left several armchairs. In the background, a drawing-room is seen through the portieres. Chandeliers in both rooms.)

### SCENE I

HERMINE (in full evening dress). LOTTE. BAUMANN busy lighting the chandelier in the drawing-room. Later FELIX.

Hermine (to LOTTE, who is holding a hand mirror before her, pointing to a rose in her hair).— Put this rose up a little higher,— still higher. What could that hair-dresser have been doing with his eyes! That's right! But be careful; you are mussing up my lace!

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*Lotte.*— You look charming again to-day, dear madam. (*Lays aside the hand mirror.*)

*Hermine.*— Do you think so? I do not feel at all well. Our first party — it is so easy to say; but oh, these cares, this work, this disorder! One must think of a thousand things at once, and there is always the fear that one has forgotten a thousand more. And old Baumann is no longer to be depended upon, past sixty as he is. (*Calls*) Baumann!

*Baumann* (*hurrying forward with a lighted taper in his hand*).— Did you call, madam?

*Hermine.*— Heavens, it is dripping! Blow it out!

*Baumann* (*blows out the taper*).— Did you call? Everything has been attended to.

*Hermine* (*glancing at the table*).— Have the place-cards been properly arranged?

*Baumann.*— To be sure! But at the end of the left side —

*Hermine* (*impatiently*).— What?

*Baumann.*— At the left end three gentlemen are seated together.

*Hermine.*— There you are! Another confusion! See to it that they are properly arranged.

*Baumann* (*does not move*).— Oh, if only your blessed mother could have lived to see this day! The baroness always used to say —

*Hermine.*— I know what my mother used to say. Go now, and attend to your work. (*BAUMANN goes to the table.*)

*Felix* (*enters at the left in ordinary attire*).— At last I have found you, Hermine! Where is my desk?

*Hermine.*— In the store-room.

*Felix.*— A nice place, truly. I must look up something on rheumatism; now, I suppose, I myself shall contract it. (*Hurries away to the right.*)

*Baumann* (*coming forward again*).— The small tables, too, are covered. Shall I not place cards upon them?

*Hermine.*— Which small tables?

*Baumann.*— In the blue drawing-room.

*Hermine.*— Heavens! Those are the card tables, Baumann. You must remove the covers from them at once.

*Baumann.*— Yes, when you were a child in arms, dear madam, I never expected to be so fortunate as to live to see the day of your first party, given by yourself —

*Hermine.*— Terrible! Lotte, kindly see to it —

*Felix* (*from the right*).— It's simply awful up there! My desk is there; but not my books. Who has removed them?

*Lotte.*— They are in the large linen closet in the bathroom.

*Felix.*— In the bathroom? Fine logic of events! (*Exit to the left.*)

*Hermine.*— Lotte, kindly go and see whether the carpet has been spread as far as the street. (*LOTTE exit to the right.*) And you, Baumann, go ask the cook whether the lobster has yet been brought; if not, telephone.

*Baumann.*— To whom? To the lobster?

*Hermine.*— No, to the delicatessen dealer. Number seven hundred and forty-six.

*Baumann.*— It will all be attended to. Just to think, that twenty years have passed, and that I still have the honor and the pleasure — (*goes into the drawing-room and busies himself with something.*)

*Hermine (aside).*— He is incorrigible!

*Felix (enters at the left, with a lighted cigar).*— I cannot find the key of the linen closet.

*Hermine.*— It is, doubtless, in your desk.

*Felix.*— This is a fine wild goose chase! So I must go again to the store room? No, now I give it up! (*Sits down in an armchair.*)

*Hermine.*— Felix, you are smoking! Here in the dining-room.

*Felix.*— No one is here yet.

*Hermine.*— A smell of stale tobacco at our first party! That would mean our social annihilation.

*Felix.*— Then I'll stop. (*Puts away his cigar.*)

*Hermine (calls).*— Baumann!

*Baumann (comes from the drawing-room).*— Did you call, madam?

*Hermine.*— Take this dreadful stump away!

*Baumann.*— At once. (*Takes the cigar and smokes it slyly.*) This is the real thing! (*Exit to the right.*)

## SCENE II

## HERMINE, FELIX

*Hermine.*— Felix, it is high time that you were dressed.

*Felix.*— If I can find my dress suit I shall attempt it. Judging by the state of things here, I suppose I shall locate it somewhere in the cellar.

*Hermine.*— You are in very good humor, indeed.

*Felix.*— Grim humor, the humor of despair! Besides, we have not yet seen each other to-day. So I thought —

*Hermine.*— We shall see enough of each other this evening.

*Felix.*— Just in passing by, among all the people.

*Hermine.*— Have you no feeling whatsoever of the duties of a host?

*Felix.*— Certainly! But also of other duties. It is just about this very thing that I should like to chat with you for a moment or two.

*Hermine.*— Chat, now? This is no time for chatting. To-morrow.

*Felix.*— But to-morrow you are going to the races.

*Hermine.*— Well then, the day after to-morrow.

*Felix.*— In the morning you are going to the matinee for the benefit of the water sufferers, and in the evening to the living pictures for the benefit of the fire sufferers. What do you call the picture in which you are taking part?

*Hermine.*— Home life.

*Felix.*— Is that so? Home life. A very promising name. So you see, my dear, that for the present we shall have no time to chat, just as we have had no time until now. It is almost four months since we were married; but we always have time only for others, never for ourselves.

*Hermine.*— Felix, I still have a hundred things to attend to, please get dressed at once. What if people should come —

*Felix (looking at his watch).*— Nobody ever comes during the first half hour, and you know with what marvellous rapidity I can slip on my dress suit.

*Hermine.*— Well, for goodness sake, tell me in as few words as you can, what is on your mind. Otherwise, I see, I shall not get rid of you.

*Felix.*— Will things continue in this way, Hermine?

*Hermine.*— What are you talking about?

*Felix.*— Well, that we associate with each other only at a distance, that the only privileges of my dignity as your husband consist in this: to accompany you to parties and then to bring you home again; to sit behind you in your box at the theater; at races to follow you about holding your field glass; at dances to hold your bouquet or fan; and everywhere, when any one pays homage to you, to stand near by with a face expressing the utmost satisfaction and indifference. I am like a subordinate figure in a show, that only spoils the effect when it interferes with the action of the play. And people regard me as a perfect model of the wholly noiseless husband. For, since you consider it most improper that I should ever sit near you at a supper, or dance with you at a party —

*Hermine.*— To be sure it is improper. Married people are together enough at home; in society, on the contrary —

*Felix.*— At home? But when are we at home, dear child? At home, that is so to speak, merely a geographical idea for us; that is only the base of operations from which we undertake our expeditions out into the world at large.

*Hermine.*— How you exaggerate! Do we not have the whole morning for ourselves?

*Felix.*— The morning? You are in bed the whole morning.



*Hermine.*— But when I get up —

*Felix.*— I have my consultation hour and am busy.

*Hermine.*— And as soon as you are through —

*Felix.*— You are already gone on a round of visits, or you receive company — the very best society, I must admit. They are all people of merit, were it only the merit of being nobly born, of having ribbons in their buttonholes, and of being able to speak on every subject under the sun, particularly on such as they do not understand. At lunch we either have guests or are invited elsewhere.

*Hermine.*— Did you not find it charming at the Chinese ambassador's, the other day?

*Felix.*— Very interesting. Even the spirit of the lady who sat next to me at table was completely surrounded by a Chinese wall. When you are in Rome, do as the Romans do. I made spasmodic efforts to entertain her, but the only answer she made was, "How funny!" In my despair, I finally read her a lecture on hydrophobia. How funny!

*Hermine.*— That was your own fault! I enjoyed myself ever so much better.

*Felix.*— With Herr von Walheim?

*Hermine.*— An extremely amiable companion.

*Felix.*— What did you talk about?

*Hermine (trying to recall).*— Well, about — about —

*Felix.*— Yes, that is what one always talks about with people of that kind.

*Hermine.*— Why, you do not even know what we were talking about.

*Felix.*— Nor do you know,— and still less does Herr von Walheim know.

*Hermine.*— But we do have the afternoon for ourselves.

*Felix.*— In the afternoon you go out riding, or shopping, or you have guests for tea. And in the evening —

*Hermine.*— You exaggerate!

*Felix.*— And in the evening,— we usually do not get home until next morning.

### SCENE III

HERMINE. FELIX. BAUMANN (*entering from the right*)

*Baumann.*— The lobster is here.

*Hermine.*— That is good.

*Baumann.*— A splendid animal! It is still alive.

*Felix.*— Very good, Baumann.

*Baumann.*— Shall I kill it?

*Hermine.*— Just give it to the cook.

*Baumann.*— Ah, could your mother only have seen this. (*Exit to the right.*)

## SCENE IV

FELIX. HERMINE

*Felix (after a short pause).*— Remarkable, that your family doctor should have started on his journey on the very day that your mother got a headache. I still recall quite clearly how I was called in his stead to attend to Madam von Forstner.

*Hermine (earnestly).*— I also recall it.

*Felix.*— The case stamped itself upon my memory, because it was the third I had had in all my medical practice to that day, and the first two can hardly be counted. The first was a servant girl who had sprained her hand, and the second, a young man who confidentially asked for a prescription to prevent his hair from falling out. But a baroness, who had a headache, that was a decisive turning point, decisive also for another reason; for that was the beginning of our acquaintance.

*Hermine.*— Felix, I really believe you are becoming sentimental.

*Felix.*— Well, why not for once? It is only for the sake of variety. Yes, it was the beginning of our acquaintance. Your mother was perfectly well then; I, however, left your house a sick man. Even the arrow of love, in the light of modern science, proves to be a sort of microbe. I was head over heels in love with you. And after a few more visits, in order to prescribe the purest raspberry juice for your mother, a tablespoonful every hour, I knew it was all over with me; I was passionately in love with you.

*Hermine.*— Had you not better put on your dress suit, before you repeat your declaration of love to me?

*Felix.*— I shall soon finish. I knew perfectly well that you were a true worldling, reared in a whirl of pleasures; that you regarded the art of sewing on a button as a sort of higher magic, and that for you, a cook book was a book closed with seven seals. But, I also knew from experience, that girls who are trained for a domestic life become most eager for pleasure after marriage. From this I inferred that the opposite would occur with you; and as I said before, I love you, and if you have no objections, I love you still.

*Hermine.*— Well, that is just as it should be.

*Felix.*— Naturally.

*Hermine.*— On the other hand, you have not yet told me how you like my new dress.

*Felix.*— I do not know the value of such works of art, until I see the — dressmaker's bill. You had better ask the experts that will be here this evening. I like you in any dress, even in a simple one.

*Hermine.*— You have no taste.

*Felix.*— At least none that keeps pace with the current number of the fashion journal. I read this paper too irregularly. In such things I cannot at all compete with our friend Hubert. He is coming this evening, is he not?

*Hermine.*— We have asked him.

*Felix.*— Have we?

*Hermine.*— It would be a thousand pities if he did not come. He dances divinely.

*Felix.*— It would be horrible! (*Suddenly steps up to her.*) *Hermine*, either you do not understand me or you do not wish to understand me. Can you not see that this life is a torture for me, that it brings me to despair? Can you not feel that it is my most earnest desire to have my wife for myself and to be able to feel at home in my own house? And if you do not feel it, so much the worse. I am neither a toy nor a dummy to be exhibited for a show; I shall make an end to these doings.

*Hermine.*— I understand you perfectly; but since the moralizer has developed into a stern tyrant, I must tell you that the time is very ill chosen. I have no desire to continue such a scene ten minutes before the arrival of our guests. I have never given you occasion to doubt my love; you know that I preferred your hand to the most brilliant offers.

*Felix.*— I suppose I should regard it a great favor!

*Hermine.*— It was no favor; I have already told you that it was love. If, however, you demand that I shall mope away my youth in a chimney corner; that I shall rave over you all day like a mawkish boarding-house spinster, if you demand that I die of ennui because of my love, then I shall never yield, never! It is my right, my inalienable right to enjoy my youth, and instead of its being a torture, it should please you when people find your wife charming and do homage to her. I need these attentions; they give wings to my soul, they fill my existence with a thousand delights, for which your humdrum chimney corner can offer me no compensation. The great world at which you sneer, animates, charms, intoxicates me. Are not all of you ambitious, you men? You are, every one of you, and why should not we women be likewise? I am ambitious; I want to be the queen of the feast; I want all to envy you your possession of me. Time enough to bury myself within my own four walls, when I am old. But now I am young, I am young; I want to dance, laugh, jest, be vivacious, and this you should not prevent.