

TOTUS MUNDUS (agit histrionem)

a comedy in ten episodes

Theo Hakola

2022

(English translation from the original French by the author)

key characters:

Anne-Marie Pronzac

Assistant to the director of the Théâtre Voltaire in Paris's 11th arrondissement. Simply pretty, easily caustic, well versed in self-deprecation and fully aware of her neuroses, she still knows herself to be more intelligent than most. Lives alone in a two-room apartment in the Montmartre area where her best friend/enemy may well be her neighbor William Brio who, for the record, was her lover twenty years ago when she was a raging postadolescent caught up in what was left of the punk scene. Born and raised in a working class suburb, she struggles with the neo-artists that she feels dominate *le théâtre public* in France.

James Stark

One-time Wunderkind on the other side of the Atlantic – director at 28 of The American National Theater in Washington – Stark, now a has-been at 50, will try to give new life to a crumbling career by accepting a residence at the Voltaire in order to stage a play he's been trying to get off the ground for ages – "The Ballad of Carson Clay." Once he lands in Paris, it appears the American is far from mastering French, and the role of personal interpreter will fall to Anne-Marie. It will also be with this Frenchwoman that the American might be falling in love and the *will they/won't they* roller coaster of their relationship will be a key thread running through the series.

Serge Makaver

Director of the Théâtre Voltaire. Liar – for gain or for a laugh – and misanthrope, he takes pleasure in abusing his power with the *théâtreux* who court him. Sexual orientation far from certain, he also seems to enjoy playing with this ambiguity. Illegitimate child of May '68, it seems he never found his place in this generation and anyone who tries to get close – tries to get to know him – fails. He and Anne-Marie use the formal *vous* form and don't much like each other, but Makaver is totally dependent on his assistant; it is she, in fact, who keeps the theater running.

Cécile de Saint-Frère

A *grande dame* of the theater. Elegant, charismatic, gifted with an exceptionally sultry voice, she is also infected by a certain bitterness over all she has not had in life (and in the cinema) as well as the unjust ravages of age that are everyone's lot but that much harder when you've spent your life hearing people sing the praises of your beauty. She tries to be more zen and pay greater attention to her health, to eat better... but without much success. She's also the ex-wife of Makaver, and (discreetly) the mother of actor Jean-Jacques Bienassis.

Arnaud Delamuratine

Artiste associé of the Théâtre Voltaire, he's a rich kid who does what he can to not look like one, but his unwashed aura and rumpled clothes do not prevent his romantic conquests. A Brecht wannabe expressing himself in the cliché theater-speak of his milieu, he's one of the rising stars of 'La Nada' – a movement active in contemporary art now taking hold in subsidized theater. La Nada abhors "psychology" and narrative plot, advocates distancing and draws its inspiration from the *no future* punk of 1977 as well as the 19th century Russian nihilists... "Little boys bullshit" laments Anne-Marie. Delamuratine fears that the arrival of Stark will alter for the worse his position at the Voltaire.

William Brio

58, he's Anne-Marie's across-the-hall neighbor and a sports journalist (who hates sports) at *Libération* who stumbled onto the job by chance – hired by an admiring editor – and uses it to pay his rent. Ex-punk "anarchist" and highly educated, he made his mark with his writings and work on free radio in the 80s, but now is increasingly... bitter, reactionary, perhaps lost, though he doesn't admit it. He meets his friend the enigmatic 70-year-old rock critic Carl Crash at the same café every day. Nada adepts imagine them remaking (or unmaking) the world; in reality, they only talk about music and their medical issues... if they even talk.

Augustine Derrart

Actress, 25, girlfriend of Brio over whom she towers and to whom she was introduced by Anne-Marie. It appears that she lives with him, but his place is not in fact her hers and, as she can't smoke there, she can often be found outside on the landing. Eyes ever underlined in black retro eyeliner à la Juliette Greco, she's prematurely eccentric child of the *haute bourgeoisie* – verbal tic: speaking in rhymed verse... Delamuratine has courted her to no avail, leading Anne-Marie to wonder if this is why he continues to cast her in his productions.

Jean-Jacques Bienassis

28, son of Cécile de Saint-Frère hence former stepson of Makaver, he might seem to not quite know where he is or why he's there at times, but he's incapable of telling anything but the truth. As handsome as his mother is beautiful, he shows little obvious ambition for an actor, though he did graduate from the prestigious *Conservatoire national*. Might this only be due to his theatrical blue blood? Might he actually be a bit... simple? Such are the questions that could well be asked until the panache and musical prowess of his performance in Stark's play answers them most emphatically.

Julien Ledine

A young intern, originally from a town in the Pyrenees, he came to the Voltaire expecting to work in scenography and found himself apprenticed to Anne-Marie for administration, at first, then to babysit James Stark. Unable to alter this turn of events, Julien will end up making a place for himself at the Voltaire as Stark's de facto assistant director. Touching, smart, sometimes a little lost, he will have to parry Anne-Marie's alcohol fueled advances before ultimately taking on the vital role this production will need him to play.

and for the transposition of *The Charterhouse of Parma* to "The Ballad of Carson Clay":
 Carson Clay = Fabrice del Dongo – Jean-Jacques
 Rachel Donnelly, his aunt = La Sanseverina – de Saint-Frère
 Cecilia Steunenberg, his love = Clélia Conti – Augustine Derrart
 Mme Clay, his mother = La Marquise Del Dongo – Francine Faudot
 Prosper Clay, his brother = Ascagne del Dongo/Crescenzi – Boris Tola
 Shelly Ballou, singer = Marietta/La Fausta – Paola Ninona
 Danny Miller, Shelly Ballou's suitor = Giletti – Florent Bigot

Note: lines to be spoken in English are in *italics* here. While especially applicable to scenes featuring James Stark, as the series progresses, he and his interlocutors will increasingly mix *English* and French, sometimes in the same line.

EPISODE 1

1 INT. MORNING - JEAN-JACQUES'S LOFT, BED 1

Anne-Marie, naked, still half made-up, opens her eyes, looks over at **Jean-Jacques** sleeping like a baby, strokes her temples and closes her eyes. Hungover.

2 FLASH-BACK: INT. NIGHT - THEATER - PREMIERE PARTY 2

Music fortissimo. Anne-Marie in a little black dress - a glass in one hand, a cigarette in the other - bobs her head in rhythm... tosses the cigarette and the glass and starts dancing. Fluid, sensual, she dances like she breathes.

3 INT. MORNING. BED, JEAN-JACQUES'S LOFT - CONT... 3

Anne-Marie would like to wake Jean-Jacques up. She taps the mattress, makes whistling noises, sits up a little and falls back down... nothing.

ANNE-MARIE

Hey! Are you dead?

The young man continues to sleep peacefully.

4 INT. MORNING. JEAN-JACQUES'S LOFT, SHOWER 4

Soaping up Jean-Jacques's back, Anne-Marie finds her hands working their way to the young man's front and going lower in an attempt to transform the moment into something more intimate... without success.

ANNE-MARIE

Still not in the mood, huh?

JEAN-JACQUES

What do you mean by *still*?

ANNE-MARIE

You know, because of... last night.

JEAN-JACQUES

Last night I was drunk. We were drunk, really too drunk... Don't you think?

ANNE-MARIE

And now?

JEAN-JACQUES

And now, I... I'm, like... You know? Super tired.

ANNE-MARIE

Like, yeah, I know.

(sigh)

And you, do you know you're gorgeous? Too gorgeous and too stupid.

JEAN-JACQUES

Anne-M...

ANNE-MARIE

What is it?

JEAN-JACQUES

(exiting the shower)

You're mean.

ANNE-MARIE

I can be, sure.

JEAN-JACQUES

But you could also not be, you know? Deep down, you aren't, and we all know it.

ANNE-MARIE

We?

JEAN-JACQUES

Yes, we. People who know you.

ANNE-MARIE

And you, are you one of those?

JEAN-JACQUES

One of what?

ANNE-MARIE

Of the people who know me.

JEAN-JACQUES

I'm getting there, yeah.

ANNE-MARIE

Even when you're *super tired*, J-J?

JEAN-JACQUES

Yep.

ANNE-MARIE

But this *super tiredness*, it doesn't really explain all, does it.

JEAN-JACQUES

No, I guess not... Not all.

Wrapped in a towel, Jean-Jacques exits the bathroom leaving Anne-Marie to the water pouring over her head. Pressing her hands into her face for a moment, she slaps herself with each one and lets out a moan of pain.

ANNE-MARIE

Idiot... Stupid fucking idiot!

5 INT. MORNING. JEAN-JACQUES'S LOFT, KITCHEN

5

The place is a mess; clothes and underwear litter the floor and unfinished bottles of beer and overflowing ashtrays are strewn about the kitchen area. Jean-Jacques, in a hoodie and boxers, waits quietly at the table while Anne-Marie, in a towel with dripping hair, comes up with coffee, Melba toast, butter and jam...

ANNE-MARIE

Got any milk?

JEAN-JACQUES

I don't know.

ANNE-MARIE

You don't know?

JEAN-JACQUES

Yeah... There could be some...
But maybe there isn't.

ANNE-MARIE

(fake smitten)
Such a sweet little doll, this
boy... Tells nothing but the truth!

The sudden sound of a key struggling with a high-end lock freezes Anne-Marie tightening the towel around her...

JEAN-JACQUES

(vaguely surprised)
Hmm...

ANNE-MARIE

(hissing)
Who is it?

Click, clack, click, schlack goes the lock.

JEAN-JACQUES

Cécile.

ANNE-MARIE

(jumps up and spins around as
if to fend off an attack)

Who?!?

Coin-coiiiiiiin goes the heavy metal door opening to **Cécile de Saint-Frère**, a beautiful woman in a beautiful mauve suit who, with a histrionic sigh, drops a suitcase in the middle of the gray concrete floor.

JEAN-JACQUES

Cécile. She wasn't supposed to...

ANNE-MARIE

(whispering)

Cécile, yeah, I figured that out, but,
is she your... *Your girlfriend?*

JEAN-JACQUES

No.

ANNE-MARIE

So what? Just a pal who has your keys?

JEAN-JACQUES

No, more like... More like my mother.

ANNE-MARIE

(sitting back down)

Cécile de Saint-Frère is your *mother?!?*

JEAN-JACQUES

Yes.

ANNE-MARIE

And she just walks into your
place like that?

JEAN-JACQUES

It's more like... It's more like
her place, in fact.

Anne-Marie has barely begun to assimilate this information when she sees de Saint-Frère still in the entrance and eying her sullenly.

ANNE-MARIE
 (overly cheerful)
 Good morning, Cécile!

DE SAINT-FRÈRE
 Yeah right, good morning...

ANNE-MARIE
 (whispering again)
 Go see her! Give her a hand!

JEAN-JACQUES
 (gets up)
 Yeah...

ANNE-MARIE
 (preadolescent stomach-
 turning fear - *caught*)
 Oh shit, the bedroom...

JEAN-JACQUES
 (smiling, to his mother)
 All good?

DE SAINT-FRÈRE
 Oh sure, all is super good!

All is clearly not *super good*. She heads for the bedroom before her son gets to her, her son who comes back to the table apparently with no idea what to do next.

ANNE-MARIE
 (getting up again)
 The bathroom! Fuck shit fuck! The mirror in the bathroom!

JEAN-JACQUES
 Yeah... What?

ANNE-MARIE
 I wrote you a note...

JEAN-JACQUES
 A note?

ANNE-MARIE
 (nodding)
 So you didn't even see it. And there I was thinking you didn't understand English... With lipstick, J-J. I thought you had a girlfriend, that it was your girlfriend's stuff, but I...

DE SAINT-FRÈRE (OFF)
 JEAN-JACQUES ?

6 FLASH-BACK: INT. NIGHT. LOFT, BATHROOM

6

Music again, coming from another room. Anne-Marie in her black dress - concentrated, drunk - completes a lipstick touch-up, then starts drawing on the mirror... Steps back, takes a long look, is pleased with her oeuvre.

7 INT. MORNING. LOFT, KITCHEN - CONT...

7

Anne-Marie waits, listens to the voice of the woman rising and falling - the woman is not pleased - while while trying to light a cigarette butt picked out of an ashtray... Jean-Jacques returns with the dress, red underwear, purse and shoes he now hands her.

ANNE-MARIE

(seeing he says nothing)
 So? ¿Que pasa?

JEAN-JACQUES

I think I got everything.

ANNE-MARIE

I'm supposed to get dressed here?

JEAN-JACQUES

I'll meet you in the café... The Diplomate on the corner - it's the first one you come to.

ANNE-MARIE

Ah, I see. I'm being kicked out.

JEAN-JACQUES

I mean, it's, yeah, complicated. Just wait for me in the café. Ten minutes to clean up a bit and I'll be there.

ANNE-MARIE

It's OK, I'll just go home.

JEAN-JACQUES

(attempting a smile)
 No, I mean... Please, just ten minutes, Anne-Marie.

ANNE-MARIE

Seriously? You kick me out and
then expect me to wait for you?
How classy can you get?

De Saint-Frère comes out of the bedroom.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Just ten minutes! You can have
yourself a nice coffee in the café.

ANNE-MARIE

(whispering again)
I don't have a cent on me...

JEAN-JACQUES

It's OK. I'm coming...

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

There you go, he said he's coming
and he never lies.

Anne-Marie the intruder... who truly does want a proper
coffee, will go to the Diplomate.

CREDITS MUSIC

CREDITS

8 INT. MORNING. JEAN-JACQUES/DE SAINT FRÈRE'S BUILDING 8

Anne-Marie, back in her party dress, heads down the
stairs checking her telephone. In vain. Dead battery.

ANNE-MARIE

Shit, shit and... shit.

9 INT. MORNING. DE SAINT-FRÈRE'S LOFT 9

Perfectly out of his depth now, Jean-Jacques, listening
to his mother muttering in the bedroom, goes into the
bathroom where he becomes the camera that enters it
framing the mirror framing the heart drawn by Anne-Marie,
the big heart itself framing two words: *FUCK ME!*

DISSOLVE TO:

10 INT. DAY. CAFÉ

10

Alone at a table, Anne-Marie has finished her café au lait and has nothing left to do now but wait. And wait.

END CREDITS

ELLIPSE (45 minutes)

11 INT. DAY. CAFÉ

11

Anne-Marie finishes off a glass of beer as Jean-Jacques, skateboard in hand, arrives at last. He smiles - she hasn't left! - orders a beer and takes a seat.

ANNE-MARIE

Ten minutes, Jean-Jacques ?

JEAN-JACQUES

I know...

ANNE-MARIE

Ten fucking minutes! Did you have a skateboard accident on the way?

JEAN-JACQUES

I'm sorry. Things got a little complicated with...

ANNE-MARIE

I didn't know Cécile de Saint-Frère was your fucking mother!

JEAN-JACQUES

She doesn't really like people to...

ANNE-MARIE

And... shit, I didn't know you were living at your fucking mother's!

JEAN-JACQUES

But I... I don't really live there, in fact. It's just...

ANNE-MARIE

And if I'd known, I never would have... But really, would it have killed her to let me have five fucking minutes in the bathroom to get dressed?

JACQUES

(truly uncomfortable)

I... She... She'd told me she...

ANNE-MARIE

And just drink my morning coffee
like, you know, a grown-up?

JEAN-JACQUES

I know, but the problem, what the
problem was... is... You sort of
took her lipstick.

(faced with Anne-Marie's
black glare, he pursues)

Her lipstick in the bathroom, Anne-Marie.

ANNE-MARIE

My ass!

JEAN-JACQUES

She always has one in her bag and
another in the bathroom, and you took
the one in the bathroom. She wasn't
crazy about the note you left on the
mirror either, but the fact that you
took off with her... She doesn't like
anybody touching her...

ANNE-MARIE

(stunned)

You... Me... Last night, we were
adults. I thought I was spending the
night at an adult's place.

JEAN-JACQUES

But... You weren't exactly *thinking*.
You weren't thinking at all, in fact.

ANNE-MARIE

(raising her voice)

Oh, shut up... You imagine you're going
to bed in a man's place, and you wake up
to find a little asshole living with his
mommy! *Pfft*, who cares... I couldn't
give a shit about either of you.

JEAN-JACQUES

You know, Anne-M, I didn't actually
invite you home.

ANNE-MARIE

Oh really? Then how, pray tell, did
I actually end up at *home*?

JEAN-JACQUES

I don't know, but you were pretty wasted... There was a moment when you could hardly even walk.

ANNE-MARIE

(banging her fist on the table, hissing)

We were two in the cab, two in the bed, two in the shower, and now? *Fuck off...* Just *fuck off*, Jean-Jacques!

He gets up, barely failing to knock over the glass on the table as the whole café now eyes them. Nothing - not the menu, not the TV, not today's races nor yesterday's results - is more interesting than a hysterical beauty ripping into her pathetic boyfriend.

ANNE-MARIE

(tears in her eyes)

Yeah yeah, go! Walk away, you fucking... coward!

The assault is too much for Jean-Jacques. Backing away, he almost knocks over the waiter bringing his beer...

JEAN-JACQUES

Pardon me, monsieur... Very sorry.

...and turns around to head for the door, leaving his beer to Anne-Marie who downs it in one long draft, catches her breath, and waves to the waiter.

ANNE-MARIE

(forcing a smile)

It's just that, well... We weren't made for each other, I guess...

(indicating the empty glass)

Another one of those if you please.

(under her breath)

Fucking diot... Just shut up.

12 INT. DAY. CAFÉ

12

A half an hour later, Anne-Marie has drunk a couple more "of those" and is starting to feel better, the fear tailing off and with it the hatred. Rifling through her purse, she comes up with a compact and... the disputed lipstick which she examines an instant then applies before turning the cardboard coaster over to kiss the blank side and, going back into her bag for a pen, scribbles a note next to the mark of her lips:

*Monsieur, please excuse me.
I'll be back shortly to pay my bill.*

Seeing the waiter caught up in an animated conversation with the bartender, she slips out the door and runs off.

13 EXT. DAY. STREET

13

Anne-Marie, running, jostles an old man, stammers an apology without a pause, and heads full speed for the Colonel Fabien métro station.

14 EXT/INT. DAY. MÉTRO

14

Going down the stairs, doesn't turn around to see if there's a white shirt armed with a bottle opener on her heels until she's well underground. 'Yes!' she triumphs once inside the car. Those observing her - which is to say all the other passengers - see a wacko woman in dress that fits her like a glove. With a red bra peeking out at the shoulder, patterned tights, red heels and a bleached blond chaos of hair, she's dressed at noon to light up the night, smiling to herself, staring back at all who dare stare at her and half-singing to them in her head with a melodious calm:

ANNE-MARIE (OFF)

I won't shut my mouth or scrap my
smile or keep my eyes straight
ahead...
I'll walk where I want, won't swallow
my bile, I won't pretend I'm almost
dead...

15 INT. DAY. MÉTRO BARBÈS

15

Walking down the metro hallway, she stops to greet a man headed in the opposite direction as he catches her eye. forty-something, a baby in a lavender carrier that contrasting sharply with his "tough" appearance - jeans, white t-shirt, leather biker's jacket, head shaved - he walks right by and she turns to run after him.

ANNE-MARIE

Patrick! Hey, Patrick!

The man spins around - tense...

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)

But you... It's crazy! Didn't you see me?

PATRICK

No, I didn't see you.

A lie. She leans forward to deliver the habitual pair of pecks on the cheek, but he jumps back raising an arm as if to protect his child.

ANNE-MARIE

I mean, I wasn't going to bite you!

PATRICK

Oh really, you don't do that anymore?
Opted for a change of diet then?

(looking over her body)

Yep, looks like you have...

ANNE-MARIE

(smiling)

Oh come on, Patrick...

Patrick says nothing. Eyes her. Distrustful.

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)

So... A little baby? Is it yours?
What kind is it?

PATRICK

It's a... *She* is a girl, and she's mine, yes.

ANNE-MARIE

A girl... That's wonderful! And the mother, is it... Sylvie? How is she?

PATRICK

Sophie... She's fine. I'm fine.
We're all fine, so there's no reason to... Shit, Anne-Marie...
You know we're coming tonight?

ANNE-MARIE

Coming where?

PATRICK

To the Voltaire for the Delamuratine. You know Sophie worked with him before and she...
So we're coming tonight.

ANNE-MARIE

Crazy! We never see each other anywhere
and *boom*, twice in the same...

PATRICK

Yeah... Crazy.

He takes off down the hallway.

CREDITS MUSIC RETURNS

16 EXT. DAY. STREET. 16

Anne-Marie walks down a street, heading home...

17 INT. DAY. ANNE-MARIE'S BUILDING, LANDING 17

To the three-door landing comes a young man - jeans, sneakers, backpack, shortish curly hair, beginnings of a beard, a bottle of wine in a plastic bag... He doesn't notice the woman smoking in front of the door opposite with an ashtray in hand. The music gives way to the sounds of the building - someone playing scales on his trumpet, hammering, plumbing... The woman watches the young man ring the doorbell. Nothing. He rings again, looks at his wrist, does not find a watch.

END CREDITS MUSIC

WOMAN

Twelve thirty-five.

YOUNG MAN

(jumps, lets escape a
little cry)

Fuck... Oh, sorry... Thank you.
Twelve thirty-five, it's...

WOMAN

It's for Anne-Marie.

YOUNG MAN

Yes. We were supposed to...

WOMAN

Have a drink at her place? Candles
and wine face to face? No, too
early for candles...
An Italian restaurant! But not for the
pizza, Anne-Marie's not into crust, but
pasta for her is always a must.

(MORE)

WOMAN (cont'd)

You'll talk about Nada, she'll talk about Dada, and... Oh là là, life is a saga!

He's holding her gaze, trying to figure if she's serious or... when a man, **William Brio**, opens the door behind the woman, **Augustine**.

BRIO

(to Augustine)

Hey... I need you to program the thingy to record the match before you go...

(seeing the young man)

Hello.

YOUNG MAN

Hello. Who's playing?

BRIO

Assholes...

(to Augustine)

You coming?

AUGUSTINE

This is Anne-Marie's new... something.

YOUNG MAN

It's Julien... Her new intern.

AUGUSTINE

Ah, her new Julien, but you know?

Interns, externs, boy toys and co...

With Anne-M, it's all the same show.

BRIO

Right... Good luck, Julien.

(to Augustine, impatient)

So, baby, you coming? I really...

The sound of steps on the stairs cuts him off... And Anne-Marie arrives out of breath. Surprised to see him, she gives **Julien** a peck on each cheek while Augustine, all the impassioned spectator, remains at her post.

ANNE-MARIE

Hi everybody, I... I uh...

(confused, gaze fixed on Julien)

You... Why are you here?

JULIEN

Yesterday, I mean last night, you don't...? You said you wanted me to...

(MORE)

JULIEN (cont'd)

Because of the American coming next week, you wanted to talk about what we were going to, you know, do. And you invited me for lunch.

ANNE-MARIE

Lunch? Here? I never have lunch here.

BRIO

(taking Julien's Pyrenees accent)
Come on, Anne-Marie, give the kid something to eat. He seems nice enough, this...

AUGUSTINE

Boys band! He's a boys band from the southern land!

ANNE-MARIE

(shaking her head)
No, seriously, I know I fuck up on occasion, but I have no memory of...
For lunch I said?

18 FLASH-BACK. INT. NIGHT. THEATER, PREMIERE PARTY

18

Music fortissimo again. Anne-Marie in her little black dress again - a glass in one hand, a cigarette in the other - bobbing her head in rhythm... then tossing both cigarette and glass away as she starts dancing, working her way to Julien, pulling him away from the wall, forcing him to dance with her. (With the music blasting, the following dialogue is subtitled).

ANNE-MARIE

You know I'm counting on you. He can be difficult, Stark - everyone says so - and I won't be able to handle him alone.

JULIEN

Him? Who?

ANNE-MARIE

The American! James Stark! That's why you're here, dude, and it ain't gonna be easy. Makaver sets off any bomb he wants and it's always up to us to pick up the pieces. Now he's got this big deal jerk coming next week, and I really don't know how we're going to...

(MORE)

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)
 We're going to have to talk business together, don't you think? How about you come to my place?

JULIEN
 When?

ANNE-MARIE
 Whenever you like, kiddo, whenever you like.

JULIEN
 But...

ANNE-MARIE
 What's the problem? Have you seen my shoes? Don't go getting all old school on me. Don't tell you got better things to do!

JULIEN
 But... You want me to... Uh...
 When do you want me to...?

ANNE-MARIE
 (put off, knows she has to change her tack)
 I don't know... Tomorrow. Let's say tomorrow and I'll make you a fucking tart for lunch.

Julien takes out his telephone to note the necessary.

19 INT. DAY. LANDING. ANNE-MARIE'S BUILDING - CONT...

19

ANNE-MARIE
 (to Julien)
 Do you like pasta?

AUGUSTINE
 (also taking on the Pyrenees accent)
 Oh come on, Julien, don't be shy. Say yes to the lady and don't ask why.

ANNE-MARIE
 (before Julien can answer, to Augustine and Brio)
 Oh! Did you know that Jean-Jacques's mother was...

AUGUSTINE

Cécile de Saint-Frère, yes, of course.

ANNE-MARIE

But me, why didn't I know that?

AUGUSTINE

It's a secret, Anne-Marie.

ANNE-MARIE

I knew about Makaver, that he was Jean-Jacques's stepfather or something at some point, but Makaver and de Saint-Frère together? It's like... unnatural.

AUGUSTINE

As is every couple!

ANNE-MARIE

(to Julien)

I'm sorry... This is my neighbor William Brio and his... his Augustine who you already know and who doesn't have the right to smoke inside because Brio's an asshole and... Oh là là! It's really my day today, you wouldn't believe who I just ran into at Colonel Fabien!

AUGUSTINE

(not joking)

Hanna Schygulla ? Me, I've seen her three times in the métro, and each one of those was at Reuilly-Diderot.

All three stare at Augustine without responding.

DISSOLVE TO:

20 INT. DAY. LANDING. ANNE-MARIE'S BUILDING, CONT...

20

ANNE-MARIE

And then he took off, I mean, literally running away from me. Two years we were together, and he wouldn't even give me a kiss!

JULIEN

Two years... Is that the one you were telling me about last night?

ANNE-MARIE

No, that was... I don't believe it,
what did I tell you?

AUGUSTINE

Ivan... She always ends up on Ivan
when she's three sheets to the wind.

ANNE-MARIE

Maybe so. In any event, he wasn't a
cad, Ivan, not like that other jerk...
It was as if he was protecting his
fucking baby!

BRIO

Why wouldn't he? His last souvenir
of you was that note you wrote on
his door with your blood.

JULIEN

Your *blood*?

ANNE-MARIE

Well, yeah, I'd left my bag at home.

BRIO

Along with her shoes, as I remember.
(clutching Augustine's arm)
Come on, let's go...

JULIEN

And so?

ANNE-MARIE

And so, I didn't have a pen!

AUGUSTINE

Good luck, Julien !

ANNE-MARIE

Hold on, Willy! You never come
to see Augustine perform...

BRIO

I have. I did. Once.

ANNE-MARIE

Before you slept with her, of course.

BRIO

Of course, and that was enough.

ANNE-MARIE

Come tonight. It would be a nice change from your stupid matches.

BRIO

For sure, a change for the worse, but they pay me for those stupid matches and I got one tonight.

ANNE-MARIE

So you you record it and watch it sped up as usual, and me, I'll pay you to come tonight.

AUGUSTINE

No, Anne-Marie.

ANNE-MARIE

Yes, Augustine. He comes to the theater and watches the match after. It's all good.

BRIO

How much?

ANNE-MARIE

What to you get for one of those matches.

BRIO

That's... It's complicated

AUGUSTINE

Pretty sure *Libé* doesn't pay much.

ANNE-MARIE

And me, I'm not asking you to write, just to be there and have a drink after... And come with Crash.

(searching)

So... Let's say Dylan, "Basement Tapes", American pressing.

BRIO

That I gave you.

ANNE-MARIE

Before sleeping with me, yep.

BRIO

And then?

ANNE-MARIE

(sigh)

Clash. Single. "White Man in
Hammersmith Palais..."

BRIO

Deal.

ANNE-MARIE

I hate you.

They shake hands. It's clearly a regular practice.

BRIO

Now you tell me why.

ANNE-MARIE

You'll see tonight.

BRIO

Come on, it's a deal, we shook on it,
so...

ANNE-MARIE

Patrick.

BRIO

Oh Jesus! He's coming?

ANNE-MARIE

Yes... I want my friends there for him
to see how things are for me, how I am
now and, you know, that all is fine.

BRIO

That *all is fine*? Really, Anne? This
little number you're doing is is
anything but *all is fine*. More like
crazy girl losing it.

ANNE-MARIE

I know, but that's the way it is.

BRIO

Well, as long as you don't bite
anybody... I still have nightmares about
that - post-traumatic stress disorder!

ANNE-MARIE

Why is everyone still going on about
that? It's the past!

BRIO
 (meditative)
 Never heard a girl scream like that
 before or since...

Their roles reversed, Augustine is now pulling Brio inside.

AUGUSTINE
 Have a nice meal, kids!

While Anne-Marie's open hand indicates her door to Julien, he remains rooted to the spot.

ANNE-MARIE
 OK, what's the problem? Do you too,
 have a problem with older women?

JULIEN
 No it's... I get the impression you
 didn't really want me here now.

ANNE-MARIE
 Listen, young fellow, I just had one
 of the worst mornings of my life,
 maybe even the worst - which says a
 lot! I messed up so badly there's no
 mess left to mess with. In other
 words, this is now a no risk zone.

JULIEN
 Now, but... In an hour as well?

ANNE-MARIE
 In an hour as well.

JULIEN
 OK, that's good. And why not
 tomorrow and after tomorrow while
 we're at it?

A little taken aback, a tad impressed, Anne-Marie eyes Julien, maybe seeing him for real for the first time.

ANNE-MARIE
 But... We hardly know each other and
 here you are already trying to coach me?

JULIEN
 Trying to help you, yes, if I can.

ANNE-MARIE
 A little cheeky, wouldn't you say?

JULIEN

Maybe so, but nothing wrong with trying to help and trying to understand why you...

ANNE-MARIE

OK OK, but enough of this hick-from-the-sticks shtick using the *vous* form of address with me, OK? Time to *tu* me, kiddo.

She steps behind him and gives a hard shove sending him towards her door.

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)

Here we go, kiddo, linguini with a ton of butter and pepper, yum-yum! We're gonna paint the town red!

MUSIC: "White Man in Hammersmith Palais"

CLOSING CREDITS

EPISODE 2

1 INT. NIGHT. A BEDROOM - IN BLACK AND WHITE

1

Silence... A pair of slender, backlit silhouettes awakening, slowly sitting up in their four-poster bed where the male figure begins tracing a line across the back of the female figure, his nails digging into her flesh, while three small children start hopping in a circle around the bed, tapping the floor in time with musical punctuations provided by an accordionist playing in the dark. The flow of the dialogue is exaggeratedly protracted, flat...

MALE SILHOUETTE

Yes. That's a nice one. And on a so excruciatingly beautiful back. Ah... the red snake trail. What a creation! But art can't last forever. This one's only good for a week. Such is life. Do you like it?

FEMALE SILHOUETTE

I can't see it.

MALE SILHOUETTE

Of course... But do you like how it feels? The cold sting?

FEMALE SILHOUETTE

You already know I do.

SILHOUETTE MASCULINE

Yes, beautiful one. It's your favorite caress, but it's failing me now. I am still outside you. Please, wait no longer... Take me in!

FEMALE SILHOUETTE

I can't. You can't... No. It's not right. Stop! I feel as sexual as dirt when you're like this... Have another drink.

MALE SILHOUETTE

Good God above, a historic moment! She wants me to drink!

He takes a long swig of whiskey and lurches to the side of the bed to throw some of it up. Muffled laughter as the camera pulls back to reveal what we already suspected: it's a play being performed for an audience.

2 INT. EVENING. THE VOLTAIRE - IN COLOR 2

Dolly shot of a row in the audience towards the front (illuminated by the stage backlighting) where we find Brio fast asleep next to his friend **Carl Crash** paying close attention and, a little further down, the man from the metro - Patrick - with a blank stare and the woman next to him holding his hand.

MALE SILHOUETTE (OFF)
For the love of God, love me the
way I want to be loved!

3 INT. EVENING. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE - IN BLACK AND WHITE 3

FEMALE SILHOUETTE
That's enough, Kolya, stop it!

She slaps him hard. The man collapses with a moan of misery. Lights out. Scattered clapping... Is it over?

4 INT. EVENING. THE VOLTAIRE, SEATS AND STAGE - IN COLOR 4

The lights come back on. The applause starts up again, for real this time and interspersed with *bravos* while the couple - we now see it's Augustine and Jean-Jacques - climb off the bed each wrapped in a sheet to join the accordionist, an elderly man and the children taking their bows. With everyone squinting in the sudden glare, Crash dons his dark glasses as Brio wakes up. On stage, the bows continue with the old man making grand gestures towards the audience and the control room.

5 INT. EVENING. THE VOLTAIRE, OFFICES AND BACKSTAGE 5

We hear the distant applause as Anne-Marie goes over past programs of the Voltaire with growing agitation.

ANNE-MARIE
I don't believe this! It's just...
I mean... Shit!

We follow her as she rummages through another office before heading down the stairs, passing the hallway where the dressing rooms are, seeing the actors coming - Jean-Jacques and Augustine in the lead - at the far end and, taking a step back to hide from their view, but...

AUGUSTINE
 (ever pleased to to see
 her friend)
 Anne-M! Anne-M!

... too late. Anne-Marie waves and, realizing it's not enough, joins the group now warmed by the crowd's cheers. While she doesn't dare approach Jean-Jacques, he comes up to her and plants a pair of kisses on her cheeks as if all - the night, the morning, the horrible scene in the café - were forgotten. Looking him the eye, she mouths a silent *thank you*... then:

ANNE-MARIE
 All good?

JEAN-JACQUES
 Yep.

AUGUSTINE
 All good with me too, Anne-M.

ANNE-MARIE
 (making an effort)
 That's the way we like it, kids.
 Everybody's... all good. And me, I'm...
 yeah... running. See you downstairs!

She turns around abruptly, trots back to the stairs and heads down to the ground floor.

CREDITS MUSIC

CREDITS

6 INT. EVENING. THE VOLTAIRE, FOYER

6

Anne-Marie enters the foyer where Julien is waiting for her at the bottom of the stairs as the audience exits the theater. The decor of this modern structure is dominated by several typographic works in English and Latin - TOTUS MUNDUS AGIT HISTRIONEM - à la Jenny Holzer, as well as a series of AIDS-WISE posters and an installation with a basket full of condoms crowned by the slogan PROTECT YOURSELF / HELP YOURSELF.

END CREDITS

ANNE-MARIE

I swear, it makes me want to
fucking break something.

JULIEN

What, the play?

ANNE-MARIE

The theater! *This* theater!

7 INT. EVENING. THE VOLTAIRE, BAR

7

Serge Makaver is spouting theater-speak commonplaces with Cécile de Saint-Frère over glasses of red wine. It's a celebration of hypocrisy or maybe some kind of a contest as each one tries to outdo the other making increasingly meaningless observations...

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

A truly distinctive universe,
wouldn't you say?

MAKAVER

I would indeed. They ask questions,
they know how to hear, and they know
how to... to say.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

It's necessary to know how to say, to
know how to ask, and to know how to
tear up one's flesh on stage.
Otherwise, I ask you, what's the
point? Why even do theater?

MAKAVER

Precisely. It's in the theater that
the *place* finds its essence in the *je
ne sais quoi* of life.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Truly the very last space of freedom...

MAKAVER

Not afraid to put oneself in danger, to
listen to the challenge, to go into the
darkness and be unafraid to share it.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Without forgetting the red and the
white of the flesh torn onstage, the
place of self and the self of place...

MAKAVER

Stop! I give in, dear friend, you win
once again... Another glass?

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Gladly, dear friend, thank you.

Anne-Marie, coming up to the bar, programs and leaflets
in hand, pauses a moment when she sees Cécile de Saint-
Frère at Makaver's side.

ANNE-MARIE

(to Julien)

I swear to God, it's truly my day today.

JULIEN

No no, it's either July 26th, for
Marie, or the 15th of August for
Anne... I think.

ANNE-MARIE

My name day? Is that you trying to be
funny, Julien?

JULIEN

I don't... Maybe?

Just as she reaches Makaver, Brio, with Crash at his
side, jumps on her.

BRIO

You lying sack of... Three hours?
That's a long way from ninety minutes!

MAKAVER

Come now, you don't see time passing in
the work of comrade Delamuratine. Where
time is elastic, nobody's counting!

BRIO

I am, and I've always been good at math.

ANNE-MARIE

I'm sorry, William, he must have
changed some things. It's moved
around a bit since the... You know?

She exchanges a flat look with de Saint-Frère before
ordering beers for herself and Brio... who will gulp down
his in one go. As for Crash, he orders a tomato juice
that he insists on paying for.

CRASH

(to Anne-Marie)

Thank you. That was an excellent
experience I just had.

Anne-Marie eyes him for a moment wondering if he's
serious or not.

BRIO

Three fucking hours, and now we
have to run to catch the subway.

ANNE-MARIE

No! You stay put. The cab's on me.

BRIO

The cab, OK... And?

ANNE-MARIE

And... Fuck you!

MAKAVER

(English)

This man is a terrorist, isn't it?

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

*And this woman also. Manners most
discourteous.*

BRIO

I don't see Patrick anywhere, so...

ANNE-MARIE

(searching)

I don't either, but... He must have
stayed for the discussion after.

BRIO

Oh God, a discussion after *that*? What
is this place, a CIA black site? You're
going to kill people if they don't kill
you first.

MAKAVER

*The people, Monsieur Brio, he is here,
and the life in the public theater,
it's educative!*

ANNE-MARIE

(to Brio)

There were two high school classes
tonight, that's why they...

(MORE)

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)
 (to Julien)
 Hey, do you speak English?

JULIEN
 Yes... Why?

ANNE-MARIE
 Serge says Stark speaks French, but me, I say anytime we try to switch to French in e-mails, he gets lost. I think it's going to be a bit of a shambles when he comes.

MAKAVER
 A bit of *huge*, you mean, Pestina. We're talking about James Stark!

DE SAINT-FRÈRE
 (diving back in)
 Exactly. And what is language? And James Stark won't need to speak to make himself understood...

MAKAVER
 (taking up the challenge)
 Nor will he need to make himself understood in order to understand!

Julien stares at Anne-Marie, waiting for her to say something, to point out the absurdity of what's just been posited, but Anne-Marie is elsewhere, or simply too used to this kind of nonsense from her boss to notice.

8 INT. EVENING. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE AND SEATS

8

Pacing the stage, Delamuratine in dynamic mode, microphone in hand, chatting with audience members who stayed for the question and answer session: several adults including Patrick and his partner, along with a couple dozen high school students and two teachers.

DELAMURATINE
 Yes, each actor has to learn their text by heart. And yes, they're paid to do this.

MALE STUDENT 1
 How much?

DELAMURATINE

That depends. It depends on the actor, the show, the theater... But basically they make enough to live on.

FEMALE STUDENT 1

Seriously?

FEMALE STUDENT 2

I heard they get paid even when they're not working.

DELAMURATINE

Well, quite a few of them get unemployment benefits with the intermittent performance category that's still in effect.

MALE STUDENT 1

How much?

TEACHER

How about we talk about the play you just saw? Doesn't anybody have any questions about the show?

FEMALE STUDENT 3

Yeah, me, I'd... I... Why do they talk so slowly?

MALE STUDENT 2

It's true, it's sort of like they're... retarded or something.

Laughter. Nods of agreement. The boy is pleased with his effect.

FEMALE STUDENT 3

And you can't even see them! Is it because they're naked?

MALE STUDENT 1

Naked, they get paid more!

A few more laughs leading to separate exchanges between friends while a small balloon fight (hitting each other on the head with inflated condoms) breaks out in the back. The teacher gets up, approaches the troublemakers.

TEACHER

Stop that! Dimi, Jalhil, that's enough now!

(MORE)

TEACHER (cont'd)

Calm down, it's almost over, so...
Jennifer, didn't you have another
question? A serious question?

FEMALE STUDENT 3

Yes... There's a lot of... you know,
silence... and it's super long so I
wanted to ask...

(noise, more movement and
giggles making it hard for
her to finish her question)

Yeah, so uh, monsieur, I wanted to
ask... Why?

DELAMURATINE

Yes, *why*, that's a very good question.

Raucous applause, cries of "yeah, you go, Jenni!"
provoking disagreement and boos.

DELAMURATINE (cont'd)

A necessary question, just like the
theater itself is a question both
necessary and limitless, otherwise,
why practice it? We are all here for
the questions, the questions and the
doubts. As for the answers, well,
that's really the question! And as
for the silences, I would like to
answer as Miles Davis once did to a
journalist: it's the silence that
gives value to the notes played in
the music.

TEACHER

Very well... A last question for
Monsieur Delamuratine?

Silence... Then Patrick's partner - **Sophie** - raises her
hand, an exchange of smiles betraying the fact that she
and the director know each other. Collective grumbling
among the young people more than ready to leave, and a
disciplinary *HUSH!* from the teacher.

SOPHIE

The Nada movement that infuses
your approach to the stage, could
you explain to us what it is? I
mean, is it a political party,
some kind of private club, or...
I don't know... a religious cult?

9 INT. EVENING. THE VOLTAIRE, BAR - CONT...

9

Julien perplexed... It's a situation we'll be seeing again: He arrives, doesn't fully grasp what's going on, wants to grasp what's going on and, maybe, will come up with solutions for what is going... wrong.

JULIEN

This thing with Patrick, I don't understand why you...

MAKAVER

You'll see, my little Julien, *this is your boss*. She damages lives when she can, old Anne-Marie, but you have to understand: fate has not been kind to her - she came of age in Sarcelles - so she takes her revenge when and wherever she can. She is, in fact, what some might well call a bitch.

ANNE-MARIE

(brandishing a program)

Yeah, let's talk about bitches. Or rather bastards. How come my name is nowhere to be found in here? Three years I've been at it and it's like I don't even exist.

MAKAVER

It's you, my little Pestine.

ANNE-MARIE

What do you mean, *it's me*?
What's he talking about?

MAKAVER

Who do you think put this charming bit of a promotional piece together if not Señora Pestina herself?

ANNE-MARIE

(caught off guard)

Yes, but... You... You could have checked, you know, checked it before printing, but you don't give a shit!

MAKAVER

Indeed, I couldn't care less. But you, Pestinette, does it really truly matter to you?

ANNE-MARIE

I... I don't... I'm tired.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

All the same, I'm curious. What is it exactly that you do do, mademoiselle? What's your job title here?

ANNE-MARIE

My job title? I...

AUGUSTINE

(cutting her off as she
joins them at the bar)

Anne-Marie is the sun without which the rain never ceases. The pillar without which the Voltaire falls to pieces.

(turning to de Saint-Frère
holding out her hand)

Augustine Derrart, the show's female star.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

(taking her hand, amused)

Yes, delighted to meet you... for the tenth time.

ANNE-MARIE

Augustine, she knows, her role is well defined. But me, what am I? Assistant to the director of the Voltaire? The head of programs? The... the...

(searching, still not seeing
Patrick, lowering her voice)

The best piece of ass that other asshole ever had.

MAKAVER

My poor girl, seriously, who cares? Isn't that right, my little Julien? Nobody cares.

ANNE-MARIE

I do. The more I think about it, the more I want to...

BRIO

Move on? Turn the page? Nope... You don't know how to move on. So how about another beer?

He places the order.

ANNE-MARIE

With his stupid fucking biker's jacket and that dorky fucking baby carrier... hard to get any more ridiculous than that!

The sound of light applause from inside the theater.

AUGUSTINE

That's it, it's over. I'm going to get my flowers.

ANNE-MARIE

But come back quickly, OK! And with Arnaud if you can.

BRIO

Attention, attention...
 (in a radio voice nodding
 towards the exit)
 Patrick Texier at 3 o'clock...
 Subject about to leave the premises.

ANNE-MARIE

(shouting)
PATRICK!

The whole place hears her. Patrick is startled and lowers his head as if to dodge a projectile, still in jeans, T-shirt - black now - and leather jacket. Sophie, more on the new age/natural side, turns around. Anne-Marie, not wanting to leave the scene of her vignette, gestures for them to approach. Sophie smiles, nods, and leads Patrick to the bar.

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)

Nice to see you! I was starting to wonder... Oh, you didn't bring the...

She mimes a baby being rocked. Makaver and Brio roll their eyes.

SOPHIE

(shaking her head and
 chuckling)
 She's eight months old!

ANNE-MARIE

Yes, of course, I'm don't know why I... And you, you're...

SOPHIE

Sophie...

ANNE-MARIE

Sophie... *Sophie*, of course! I... I remember. Good evening.

SOPHIE

Good evening to you. It was...
It's always interesting, what
Arnaud does.

BRIO

(guffaws)

And such a distinctive universe,
wouldn't you say, Patrick ?

Finally raising his eyes, Patrick remains mute.

BRIO (cont'd)

(touching his shoulder
with fake compassion)

Hey buddy, are you OK?

PATRICK

Hi, William.

ANNE-MARIE

(for Sophie)

William Brio, Augustine Derrart's
boyfriend.

MAKAVER

(spinning around,
playing along)

Well, I'll be... William Brio and his
trusty sidekick Carl Crash in our
very theater - a true honor!

ANNE-MARIE

Serge Makaver, the Voltaire director,
who surely has some very important
people to see to now.

MAKAVER

(to Julien once again)

Yes, surely, but it's more fun here.

ANNE-MARIE

(grabbing Julien's arm)

Oh, and this is Julien, my... friend.

Augustine, arms laden with several bouquets returns followed by Delamuratine in a serious conversation with a young woman, and Jean-Jacques; there will be no more than a nod and a wink - a well-honed process - between the latter and his mother. Augustine tosses one of her bouquets into Brio's arms, gives another to Julien and a third to Patrick.

ANNE-MARIE

And this is my very close friend...

AUGUSTINE

Augustine Derrart, the show's female star. How do you do?

ANNE-MARIE

(reaching for her second beer)
What can I offer you two to drink?

SOPHIE

Well, us... We don't actually drink.
We...

BRIO

(like a father disappointed
with his son)
Pa-trick...

Patrick shrugs, has no wish to explain.

SOPHIE

And we really have to go. We've
got the baby-sitter.

AUGUSTINE

I do hope she's not English.
(to Anne-Marie)
I had one who tried to... You know?
I was only, like, eight or nine, and
I swear, she...

BRIO

(to Sophie and Patrick)
Which way are you going? You have a car?

ANNE-MARIE

No!

BRIO

Why not? They're leaving anyway.

ANNE-MARIE

(smiling)

Because Patti Smith. The 45 of "Piss
Factory".

BRIO

No... You have that? You don't
have that!

Anne-Marie offers up an ambiguous half-nod, remains
focused on Sophie and Patrick.

ANNE-MARIE

OK, I understand... Maybe we'll see each
other another time.

BRIO

Yeah, to have a bite!

AUGUSTINE

(trying not to laugh)

That's mean.

Patrick et Sophie exchange a glance.

MAKAVER

(to Sophie)

Indeed, Anne-Marie has exquisite taste.

He snaps his teeth.

SOPHIE

(imperturbable, to Anne-Marie)

Patrick told me about... He
explained a bit. It would be good
if we could...

ANNE-MARIE

(losing her smile)

Explained what?

SOPHIE

... see each other now without...

ANNE-MARIE

Sorry, what did he *explain*? That I've
changed? That I'm fine now?

AUGUSTINE

It's true, she's fine now.

MAKAVER

(to Julien once more)
 Fine like a piranha, yes sir.
 (then, exasperated by
 the lack of reaction)
 Young man, please... One is in the
 theater now, it's a cool place to be,
 so kindly make an effort to be cool!

ANNE-MARIE

He, he depends on me. This theater
 depends on me, and so do my friends
 here, so there's no reason to think
 that I can't... you know...

SOPHIE

No, not at all. We got that. It's
 just that Patrick, he's... Well, he's
 still afraid of you.

MAKAVER

Sagacious fellow, knows to play it safe.
 I bet his pockets are full of garlic!

No laughs. No reaction at all. Not pleased, Makaver takes
 off to look for trouble elsewhere while de Saint-Frère
 gets off her bar stool, turns to Anne-Marie and holds out
 her hand as if to ask for money. Anne-Marie understands,
 sighs, reaches into her bag and comes up with a lipstick
 that she drops into the outstretched hand of the woman...
 who nods, satisfied, and heads off to join her ex-husband
 at the other end of the bar while Sophie resumes.

SOPHIE

People can change, Anne-Marie. Patrick
 and I, we too have changed and
 accepted the... the... Let's say we've
 accepted a new approach to life.

BRIO/CRASH

Oh, shit.

SOPHIE

That thing with Nada, it wasn't
 good for Patrick, too... negative.
 It made him nervous. We think we've
 found the truth elsewhere, but we
 still have to work on ourselves. To
 begin, we are trying to forgive, to
 follow the example of... you know?
 And you, I forgive you.

ANNE-MARIE

(heated)

Forgive me? And why would you want to forgive me?

SOPHIE

(tapping her own shoulder)

Well, because of the... when you...

ANNE-MARIE

(gasps)

Ah... That was you.

(sheepish)

I'm sorry, I... Yeah, I sometimes sort of lost it back then.

His face saying *you can say that again*, Patrick's had enough, steps away from the bar and heads for the exit.

SOPHIE

But I truly do forgive you. For Patrick, I think it's still a bit too soon. It'll take some more time, but... well, bye bye and thank you!

ANNE-MARIE

(at a loss)

Yes, thank you and, uh, be careful driving, or in the métro or the taxi, or...

AUGUSTINE

Wow!

Delamuratine, taking advantage of Patrick and Sophie's departure and his young friend having gone to powder her nose, jumps on Anne-Marie as she finishes her beer.

DELAMURATINE

Free rubbers? Really? The kids wouldn't stop filling 'em with air to make 'em squeak and fly around. And programming a discussion on the second night when we're all burned out?

ANNE-MARIE

Fuck off!

DELAMURATINE

See how she talks to me!

AUGUSTINE

Oh that's just so you can get used to it, dear Arnaud, with the American here in a week.

DELAMURATINE

Yeah, great, we're gonna have our asses colonized now. I've had some experience with American occupations and that was more than enough for me... And you'll see, it'll be Anne-Marie the first to get colonized.

(salacious smile, a nod
towards Jean-Jacques)

Apropos, you have a good time last night?

ANNE-MARIE

Fuck off!

DELAMURATINE

Oh, the shameless tart!

AUGUSTINE

You can talk... With your little cutie from rue Blanche.

(Delamuratine shakes
his head "no")

Don't tell me it's the one you were talking about yesterday, fresh out of the Conservatoire!

DELAMURATINE

(both abashed and proud)

It is.

ANNE-MARIE

(joining in despite herself)
Impossible. They're all lesbians there at the moment.

AUGUSTINE

Yep... It's crazy what girls will do to get a part.

ANNE-MARIE

Crazy or just sad, yeah, but you, you've never got a part that way.

AUGUSTINE

Never had to, not yet at least, and Arnaud keeps giving me work.

ANNE-MARIE

Of course he does, still hoping that
some day you'll give in...

DELAMURATINE

Fuck off!

10 INT. EVENING. THE VOLTAIRE, BAR

10

Much later... With the bar awaiting the maintenance staff to put it back in order the next day, Anne-Marie, Augustine and de Saint-Frère - drunk - are the last to go. We catch them in the middle of a talk by the trio's eldest playing a late night radio psychotherapist. Her voice is soothing, her accent Russian...

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Yes... indeed. We all feel a powerful
need to - how shall I put it? - slam
the door on our bullshit because...
Well, once you've wet the bed, those
dirty sheets will not leave you
alone, coming after you like a horde
of ghosts, leeches stuck to your
behind, and you need to, no, you
absolutely *must* wash this laundry
because your mothers are no longer
there to do it for you... And it is
thus that our pee-pee past will
rudely resurface to be brandished
like so many yellow sheets in the
public square, banners into which our
initials have been sewn in large red
letters for all the populace to
observe while the Almighty, the
creator - he too watches.

AUGUSTINE

(impressed)

Heavens!

Anne-Marie shakes her head and begins - or pretends? - to
sniffle...

ANNE-MARIE

I hate myself, I hate myself. For
the last twenty-four hours I've done
nothing but stupid shit. I hate
myself, I hate myself!

AUGUSTINE

My dear Anne-M... William is less than perfect, I know that, but he knows you and loves you as well as anyone, and he, he says that sometimes you should maybe listen to yourself a little less.

ANNE-MARIE

I know. I'm an idiot. If there's one thing I know, it's that I'm an idiot, but... "White Man in Hammersmith Palais", you can't understand the importance of that song for me.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Quite... We can't, and there's little chance we someday will.

ANNE-MARIE

But it's what was playing... It's what we were listening to when I...

She stops in order to blow her nose.

AUGUSTINE

When you found out Marlene Dietrich had died? Me, it wasn't The Clash. Nope, it was Bobby Lapointe. I know this for a fact because we had this Swiss baby-sitter completely nuts who'd tattooed a scary spiderweb on her neck, but...

This puts an end to Anne-Marie's tears as she glares at Augustine.

ANNE-MARIE

No, you fool! I'm talking about my first time, the first time I was...

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

... sodomized?

ANNE-MARIE

No, madame, sheesh! The first time I made love, had sex, did it... In all the normal ways.

AUGUSTINE

Sorry, Anne-M, but you're too gone to get your story straight. The last time you told the tale of your first time it was "Gigantic" by the Pixies.

ANNE-MARIE

(apparently not even
hearing her)

And to think I gave it to that
little prick, that...

AUGUSTINE

(enthusiastic)

That base extortionist! That faux
journalist! I swear, I can't see how
you two were ever a pair!

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

As for me, I can't see how anybody
is ever with anybody.

ANNE-MARIE

Huh! And me, I can't fucking see.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

And also, how is it that me, I
am with *nobody*?

ANNE-MARIE

What? You? Seriously? If you really
want an explanation, it's not all that
hard... You're intimidating, Cécile,
too intimidating.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Oh, that's hogwash! I'm old, too old.

ANNE-MARIE

You think so? Would that be why Julien
didn't want me? Too old?

AUGUSTINE

No no, he's a boys band, I told you,
and had to get up this morning to
shoot the clip for his new single.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Too old, you, Anne-Marie? No. Just too
gluttonous, and it's pretty grating.
You're after Julien now, really? Jean-
Jacques wasn't enough for you?

ANNE-MARIE

Oh no, that was... I'm sorry, that was
a misunderstanding. Me and Jean-
Jacques, we didn't... didn't really...

DE SAINT-FRÈRE
That wasn't how it looked.

ANNE-MARIE
I know, but me and him? Nothing,
or, you know, next to nothing.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE
Yuck!

ANNE-MARIE
Sorry.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE
But as regards the other one, sure,
the child's an Adonis, but seriously,
do you really care?

ANNE-MARIE
No, you're right. I sort of don't if
I really think about it, sort of
don't care at all.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE
God, I hate young people!

Silence. Augustine and Anne-Marie exchange a glance and a shrug - nothing more to say - and:

MUSIC: "Piss Factory"...

CLOSING CREDITS

POSTFACE:

11 INT. EARLY MORNING. CH. DE GAULLE AIRPORT, ARRIVALS 11

One week later... Anne-Marie - apparently fresh out of bed - is waiting with Julien who's holding up a *JAMES STARK* sign as a frenetic montage set to the music renders the arrivals: numerous at first and replete with sweet scenes of reunion, then increasingly sparse as the song comes to a disjointed end to mirror Anne-Marie's growing anxiety as she studies her phone.

On the screen, a text from Makaver appears:

HE'S COMING ACCOMPANIED, IT SEEMS, BY A CERTAIN EDWARD.

Anne-Marie's reply:

WHO'S THAT?!? HIS BOYFRIEND? HIS SON? HIS... ???

Makaver's answer:

YES, GOOD COURAGE TO YOU!

Exasperated, Anne-Marie calls her boss.

ANNE-MARIE

(eyes glued to the
exit doors)

It's been at least a half hour. Are you sure that... No, I'm telling you. You... Really? Are you sure he didn't... Really? No... No... No... Ah, hold on! I think I see him!

A tall, dark-haired man pushing a cart loaded with two bags and a transport kennel comes through the door, a man in a gray suit moving with some difficulty as he's also carrying a dog - a multicolored mongrel the size of a small boxer - who is either asleep or... The man gently pets the mutt as he walks right by Anne-Marie and Julien who's waving his sign.

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)

Mister Stark!

The man keeps walking, speaking softly to the animal in his arms that's showing no sign of life

JULIEN

Maybe it's not him.

ANNE-MARIE

No no, it's him. He's just...
(starts following the man,
puts a hand on his shoulder)
James Stark!

Stark jumps, spins around with eyes bulging.

STARK

It's OK, I told them! He's just sleeping - always been a really good sleeper, I mean the way that boy can cuddle with old Morpheus, you would not believe! About the only time he behaves, the little devil, as you can see, but now it's the pills...

(struggling to stay calm)

All right, I guess I overdid it... They thought he might be, you know, kaput, ha ha, didn't want to let me go, but he's not dead at all.

(MORE)

STARK (cont'd)

*Touch him, you'll see. He's warm,
he's breathing... just a little puppy
having not so little puppy dreams.
We'll just have to wait for the pills
to wear off, won't we, Edward.*

ANNE-MARIE

Edward?

At a loss, understanding next to nothing of this monologue, she looks at Julien.

STARK

(nodding at the dog)

*He's Edward, not me. And he's alive,
really alive, my dog, just... Touch
him. Touch, he won't bite.*

Anne-Marie touches the dog.

STARK (cont'd)

*Won't wake up either, but you see?
He's warm, not dead at all!*

ANNE-MARIE

*Yes, not dead... Me, I'm Anne-Marie,
from the theater.*

STARK

*Uh huh... Yeah, sorry. To tell the
truth, I took a pill for the trip
too - I don't like airplanes - and
now I kind of don't know where I am.*

ANNE-MARIE

*Paris... The airport now and later
the Voltaire Theater. And if this is
Edward, you are James Stark, no?*

STARK

(chuckling)

Yep, that's me... Got me there, sister!

ANNE-MARIE

Well, Mr. Stark... Welcome in France!

The music - "Piss Factory" - returns. Julien starts pushing the cart, Stark hands the dog to Anne-Marie who doesn't quite know how to hold it, and they're off.

FADE TO BLACK

EPISODE 3

1 INT. MORNING. ANNE-MARIE'S APARTMENT, BED

1

Anne-Marie in her bed, waking up, raising an arm, stretching it out, reaching, touching... the furry flank of **Edward**. The shock of this unexpected presence causes her to jump from the bed with a scream which in turn electrifies the dog, on its feet in a flash and howling to wake the dead... Seeing he's not about to lower his guard, she calls Stark:

ANNE-MARIE

(shouting into her phone)

It's me, Anne-Marie! Do you hear the dog? He won't stop to... What? The password? I must... San Francisco Giants? I... OK, I try.

(formerly addressing the dog)

Edward, San Francisco Giants!

(no effect, the din continues)

What, my accent? Putain, c'est... OK. The s, OK!

(tries again with an exaggeratedly nasal tone)

San Francisco Giantsss!!!

It works. Edward lowers his guard, stops growling.

ANNE-MARIE

(still into her phone)

Yes, it worked, it's good... Tell him? OK... Good boy, Edward!

This also works. Edward hops off the bed as if what just happened never did. He sits, waits...

ANNE-MARIE

(hardly reassured)

He... I don't know, he's still looking at me... OK, but... I have nothing for the dogs... No... Yes... A sandwich? For the dog?

2 INT. MORNING. STARK'S HOTEL ROOM

2

Half-dressed, eyes on the giant flat screen showing a French morning program, he's pacing about his designer hotel room as he talks on his phone.

STARK

He likes his bread toasted, and with a little butter... You don't have any butter? Well aren't you the drôle d'oiseau, Auntie M! Who doesn't have butter? The indigenous peoples of Alaska maybe, but... What are you, an Eskimo? I don't know... Maybe a little olive oil - you could try that just to give it some taste, but not too much!

3 INT. MORNING. ANNE-MARIE'S APARTMENT, KITCHENETTE

3

Dirty dishes piled up around the sink, unfinished glasses of wine, empty sushi boxes, bottles... Not the home of the perfect little homemaker. Anne-Marie finds a half of a baguette, bangs it against the counter - old, hard - cuts it up anyway and puts a couple slices in her toaster... while juggling with the phone.

4 INT. MORNING. STARK'S HOTEL ROOM

4

STARK

(still on the phone)

And after that, you'll need to take him for a walk - that's what that laser thingy I gave you is for. It's easy, just keep it one or two yards in front of him... Yes... two or three meters.

CREDITS MUSIC

CREDITS

5 EXT. DAY. ANNE-MARIE'S NEIGHBORHOOD, SIDEWALK

5

Walking the dog without a leash... Not so easy at first, but after a while Anne-Marie gets the hang of it, projecting the red dot in front and trotting along with Edward as he keeps trying to catch it... all the while attracting looks and smiles from passers-by.

6 INT. DAY. ANNE-MARIE'S BUILDING, LANDING

6

Climbing up the stairs behind Edward, Anne-Marie - out of breath, drained - arrives on her floor's landing just as a very old woman, **Madame Jamet**, emerges from her apartment led by her little Bichon Frisé, **Monarque**... who stops Edward dead in his tracks. What follows is a dance of canine seduction: tail wagging hopefully, Edward carefully approaches Monarque. Monarque, suspicious, turns around as if to go back inside. Edward whines softly. Monarque stops, turns back towards him, allows him to come closer until they're nose to nose and Edward, all shook up, begins to sniff his fellow creature...

END CREDITS

MME JAMET

Oh là là, it's a serious crush!

ANNE-MARIE

You're joking.

MME JAMET

No, my pretty. That boy is smitten. Where'd he come from? He not yours, is he?

ANNE-MARIE

No, I... He's from New York... or San Francisco, I think.

MME JAMET

(with a disdainful look)

No, that's not possible. Monarque, she's not the kind of girl who'd...

All the same, her little dog has begun wagging her tail and circling Edward. Meanwhile, Augustine comes out, says hello to her two neighbors and lights a cigarette.

MME JAMET

Well, I'll be a... Just look at that! The boy doesn't even speak French and he's swept her off her feet.

ANNE-MARIE

You really think so?

MME JAMET

Just look at them, it's obvious!

AUGUSTINE

When it comes to dogs, Anne-Marie is illiterate.

MME JAMET

Really? And yet, she has one. I didn't know she had one...

ANNE-MARIE

But, he's not mine, Madame Jamet.

MME JAMET

Really? Then where'd he come from? Whose dog is he?

ANNE-MARIE

Someone I work with, an American who just got to Paris.

MME JAMET

Monarque mad about an American... Now I've seen everything!

Anne-Marie and Augustine exchange a glance.

MME JAMET (cont'd)

Had I known, I never would have let her... But look at that, they just love each other!

Edward crouches nose to the floor, jumps up and circles Monarque once again. The two dogs "play" together.

ANNE-MARIE

(not really seeing it)
Yeah, I guess...

AUGUSTINE

You taking him to the theater?

ANNE-MARIE

I don't think so. I suppose I'll have to leave him here until...

MME JAMET

No no, you're not doing that! You can't leave a dog alone all day! I'll take him. The more the... The more the... Isn't that right, Monarch? What's your dog's name?

ANNE-MARIE

Edward.

MME JAMET

Edward? Really! Sounds English. For the love of God, don't tell me this pooch is a Brit!

7 EXT. DAY. STARK'S HOTEL

7

Anne-Marie, running, arrives at a high-end hotel on boulevard Beaumarchais where Julien is waiting for her next to the understated entrance.

ANNE-MARIE

The Ponderosa? Seriously? Insane! Who booked him here?

JULIEN

It wasn't you?

ANNE-MARIE

Of course not! A government funded institution has no business paying for hotels like this one. Makaver... Makaver put him here. It's like he's mocking us.

JULIEN

Maybe he got a special deal?

ANNE-MARIE

What? Just for his nice smile? No, my friend, this is not the kind of hotel that makes deals - doesn't need to.

JULIEN

You know it?

ANNE-MARIE

Yeah, I...

(a little sigh)

You could say I knew it, yeah.

JULIEN

Anyway, he can't stay here.

ANNE-MARIE

He told you that? You've seen him already?

JULIEN

No, but... Dogs not allowed.

ANNE-MARIE

Ah... Of course. We'll see if we can get a furnished place through the mayor's office... You haven't rang or called? What were you waiting for?

JULIEN

You. You told me to wait for you out front... At 10.

ANNE-MARIE

Yeah, sorry... I had his dog and...
(sees Stark coming out)
James!

STARK

What the hell? I was waiting for you inside and you were waiting for me out here?

ANNE-MARIE

I was a little late, because with the dog and...

STARK

Yeah, where is my dog?

ANNE-MARIE

He's... My neighbor, a nice lady with a nice dog goes to keep him for the day.

STARK

You're kidding.

ANNE-MARIE

(shooting a glance at Julien, she's about to lie)
Yes, no dogs can be in the theater.

STARK

Really... So it's a full-blown conspiracy. Who's this lady who's got him?

ANNE-MARIE

Oh, a very nice, very old lady with a very nice little dog... Monarque.

STARK

Monarque...

ANNE-MARIE

Yes, Monarque. Like for the king.

STARK

Or the queen. Do we have to pay this very nice old lady?

ANNE-MARIE

No, I mean... No. We don't have to pay her.

STARK

Then why's she taking care of Edward?

ANNE-MARIE

Well... she... I don't know. She proposed herself for it. And Edward loves Monarque. Really.

Julien, closely following this exchange, eyes Anne-Marie, trying to see if she's serious.

STARK

Yeah, that dog's got game, always has, I can tell you that. Did you tell her about the San Francisco Giants?

ANNE-MARIE

No, I...

STARK

You need to tell her about the San Francisco Giants, it's like a safe word when he loses it. He sort of... He sort of has security issues, but music can help with that. Edward likes music, not all music, but certain things. He loves Joni Mitchell. Got any Joni Mitchell?

ANNE-MARIE

(shaking her head)

Joni...

STARK

You put on "Coyote," the live version with The Band, and he might not even want to go out for a walk... I'm not joking, he loves it.

ANNE-MARIE

Joni...

STARK

Mitchell... Hey, you guys, I'm starving! I don't know if it's breakfast, lunch or dinner, but I gotta eat something now.

(nods towards the hotel)

All they had there was coffee and croissants and some warm yogurt or something.

ANNE-MARIE

Is a café OK?

STARK

Is the Pope catholic?

ANNE-MARIE

I'm sorry? The Pope is... what?

8 INT. DAY. CAFÉ

8

Close-up of a Jack Russell noisily lapping up water that his mistress has poured into a bowl on the floor... Wide shot of Anne-Marie, Julien and Stark at the next table. Stark is devouring a *croque-madame* - grilled cheese sandwich - with a beer. Anne-Marie has a beer as well, and Julien an espresso.

STARK

Let me get this straight: you can have them in restaurants and cafés but you can't have them in hotels or theaters?

ANNE-MARIE

That's it.

STARK

How about churches?

ANNE-MARIE

Uh... I don't know.

JULIEN

It depends on the church. Some churches you can. The church has each one its own... réglemations.

STARK

Well, I'd think a restaurant would be the last place for a dog.

ANNE-MARIE

Why?

STARK

Are you kidding? For reasons of hygiene!

ANNE-MARIE

They are not clean?

STARK

They're animals, hairy animals, Auntie M! For starters, they don't wear shoes. And have you seen the places they put their noses?

ANNE-MARIE

(worried)

Oh... Edward was on my bed, sleeping on my bed.

STARK

Of course he was, that's where he sleeps. But if you start getting a little itchy around the head now, you'll know why.

ANNE-MARIE

Itchy?

STARK

(mimes scratching)

Yeah, itchy, scratchy... from fleas. Dog sleeps around, dog likes to leave a trace of passage. You'll know to use protection next time.

ANNE-MARIE

(to Julien, in French, under her breath)

What an asshole! Is he joking or what? You think he's joking?

JULIEN

Yes.

STARK

What'd she say, Bud? Is she in love with my dog? God, I hate that. When it comes to dogs, women are so predictable.

JULIEN

Anne-Marie is not predictable.

ANNE-MARIE

Thank you, Julien.

STARK

You don't say?

JULIEN

Yes, I do say. Anne-Marie is not predictable. Really not.

STARK

OK, good to know... and truly a bonus point as far as this cowboy's concerned. So... How about we get to work? Anybody want to work here? I know the French don't like to work, but I ain't French!

Stark finishes off that last line with a laugh - a sudden high-pitched cackle - then goes silent, lowering his eyes in thought as Anne-Marie pays the bill and, his face a blank, he gets up and exits the café.

ANNE-MARIE

Where does that cretin think he's going?

JULIEN

I don't know... And neither does he.

ANNE-MARIE

Still, it's true, I do kind of like that stupid mutt of his.

JULIEN

OK.

ANNE-MARIE

You keep that to yourself, all right?

JULIEN

OK.

9 EXT. DAY. PARIS

9

The American and his two French associates in the streets of Paris, on the way to the theater.

10 EXT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, ENTRANCE 10

Stark pauses out front and, eyes raised, mouths the Voltaire motto in neon blue letters above the door - *Totus mundus agit histrionem.*

STARK
Hello pretension... I like!

11 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, THEATER 11

We follow the trio as they go down an aisle between the seats then climb onto the Voltaire's stage. Keeping to himself now, Stark says nothing.

12 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, GREEN ROOM 12

A coffee machine, fruit and snacks laid out on a table, two sofas occupied by three or four men between the ages of 20 and 55 as well as a young woman... They're sharing a hand-rolled cigarette... Stark takes in the smell, chuckles softly.

STARK
Yep... Dope.

ANNE-MARIE
(slightly artificial)
Ah, good timing, they're on their break.
Hey, everyone, this is James Stark.

One of the guys - **Manu** - jumps up from the sofa and fist bumps Stark who appears vaguely amused.

MANU
Salut! I mean, hey man, welcome in France... I'm Manu.

STARK
Like Manuel?

MANU
No like Manu. Or... manutentionnaire. I'm the technical director of this shithouse.

STARK
You sound like a Brit. Where'd you learn your English?

MANU

In England, man. I was a tech for the most great punk bands.

STARK

Tech?

MANU

Roadie!

STARK

Like for The Clash?

MANU

Fuck no!

STARK

Sex Pistols?

MANU

I say the greatest! Fuck, this guy! I'm old but not so... I was touring with the Grumpy Navels, the Blackheads - we have opened one time for Love and Rockets, but they was shite, know what I mean? Jizz and the Broken Bones was my best gig, played everywhere... Fucking Scotland! I was living in Vauxhall with my mates in a squat. T'was fucking brilliant, but I had to come back here when my mum, you know, my mum, she... fuck... Know what I mean?

STARK

(smiling, opening up)

Yeah... Your English is something else, man. You could be my translator.

MANU

Fuck, this guy... Why of fuck I want to be doing that?

13 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, STAIRS

13

Anne-Marie, Julien and Stark head up to the administrative offices.

STARK
 (chuckling)
*I love that guy, or that... That
 was a guy, right?*

Anne-Marie looks at Julien, says nothing.

STARK (cont'd)
Auntie M? Bud? Manu's a guy right?

ANNE-MARIE
*A man, you mean? I don't... We
 don't know, in fact.*

JULIEN
Maybe you can tell us.

STARK
*You mean maybe I could just ask
 him... or her... or them?*

14 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, MAKAYER'S OFFICE

14

Makaver, his feet up on his desk, slightly alters his position, searching for the right pose. Reaches for a file, acts like he's reading it. No, no good... Pushes away from his desk, then back towards it. Digs around in a drawer, comes up with a pack of filterless Luckys that he places on the desktop, takes one out, plays around with it absent-mindedly... and breaks it in half. Tosses the two halves into the waste basket. Picks up the phone, wedges it between shoulder and ear in order to have his hands free to page through the file... Yes! He's got it.

It's at this moment that **Pénélope**, the imposing forty-something, Senegalese head of maintenance, walks into his office. Caught off guard, Makaver looks up causing the telephone to drop from its perch and starts blushing...

MAKAVER
*Pénélope! I didn't know that you...
 that you...*

PÉNÉLOPE
 (clearly amused by her boss's
 confusion)
 Hello, Monsieur Makaver.

MAKAVER
 Serge.

PÉNÉLOPE

Yes... Serge...

MAKAVER

Serge, that's my first name.

PÉNÉLOPE

I know, Serge. Me, it's Pénélope.

MAKAVER

Pénélope.

PÉNÉLOPE

(hardly hiding her smile)

Very well. Now that that's clear, I have to tell you, Serge, I'm a little disappointed.

MAKAVER

But... Why?

PÉNÉLOPE

Well, I said *hello* to you, but you, you didn't say *hello* to me. In the life of any establishment, when one person says *hello* to another, the other person should reply with a similar greeting, don't you think?

MAKAVER

... Hello, Pénélope.

PÉNÉLOPE

(walking out)

Much better... See you later!

MAKAVER

(weak)

Yes, later.

Little by little, Makaver puts his pose back together: feet on desk, file in hand, telephone wedged between ear and shoulder... Got it!

15 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, MAKAVER'S OFFICE

15

Anne-Marie knocks on the half open door then enters with Stark. Makaver, on the phone, comfortably sure of himself now, signals for them to wait a minute.

MAKAVER

Of course. No worries, you'll be hearing from me... Yes, that's it, baby. Ciao!

(hangs up shaking his head,
clearly irritated)

How can anyone be so...

(rising from his seat)

Mister Stark! You see me very happy to meet you at last!

STARK

(shaking his hand)

Yep. Same here.

MAKAVER

Did you make a good trip?

ANNE-MARIE

Ah, isn't that interesting, you're speaking to him in English right off the bat. It's as if you knew he didn't speak French.

MAKAVER

(artificially cheerful)

And a good morning to you too, Pestine. All good?

ANNE-MARIE

No, all not good. The hotel you put him in isn't expensive enough, it'll take at least a week to eat up the accommodation budget. Then there's the fact that the Ponderosa doesn't allow dogs. His *Edward*, Serge, is a dog, a dog that is now living with me, so... First of all, thank you for that, and secondly, we need to get a furnished apartment from the arrondissement immediately.

MAKAVER

Well then get it, get it!

ANNE-MARIE

(to Stark)

We will find you some apartment near the theater with, you know, bed and chairs and all the things so you can have Edward.

MAKAVER

Of course, no problem. The man must have his dog! Take a seat, Mr Stark!

STARK

(putting a foot on the desk, doing a bit of stretching)
I can't right now. My back...

Delamuratine comes through the door, already voicing complaints before seeing that Makaver isn't alone.

MAKAVER

(to Stark)
This is Arnaud Delamuratine. It's his play, the spectacle he now directs in the theater.

Sizing each other up, Delamuratine and Stark each nod a greeting.

DELAMURATINE

Doesn't speak French?

ANNE-MARIE

Not so much, no.

DELAMURATINE

Hmm... Still, he should come tonight. And we've got notes at 6:00, tell him he can come for that too if he likes.

ANNE-MARIE

That's nice.
(à Stark)
He invites you to see his spectacle tonight and to come to the... the meeting for the notes he gives to the actors before.

Stark ends up taking a seat, rubbing his face.

STARK

Cool... I want to work. I really want to work, but right now I'm jet-lagged out of my mind and my fucking back, it's... I gotta go back to the hotel and lay down. Maybe somebody could come and get me a little later, like around 5:00?

ELLIPSE

16 INT. EVENING. THE VOLTAIRE, DRESSING ROOMS

16

Delamuratine is sitting with a notebook on his lap, going over various artistic and technical issues before his more or less made-up actors - Augustine, Jean-Jacques, the old man and the accordionist seen taking bows in the second episode, and several members of the technical crew including Manu. Arriving late, standing in the doorway: Stark and Julien.

AUGUSTINE

Three times I did it... I mean, I wasn't thinking we had a machine that could eat my card!

Jean-Jacques bursts out laughing. Alone.

DELAMURATINE

It did what it did. I didn't expect that either, but it did what it did precisely because nobody was expecting it to.

JEAN-JACQUES

I was. Well, I was hoping...

AUGUSTINE

And my card?

DELAMURATINE

You shouldn't fear accidents. When things are static, frozen, it's...
(grimaces, shakes his head)
I assure you, it... it functioned. Something happened in the room at that moment, something that...

AUGUSTINE

I know I did the right code - OK, maybe not the first time - but I concentrated and I'm absolutely positive about the second and third!

DELAMURATINE

The cash machine was a bad good idea. Some killer wheels, a hot shit car, that would have made more sense, but hey, there's the fucking budget, always the budget king, folks. We'll leave the ATM on stage, but only as decor, not as a prop. You won't have to take money from it anymore.

AUGUSTINE

Cool, but what about my card, Arnaud?
Can I have it back?

DELAMURATINE

Check that out with... Manu? That
machine, can you open it?

MANU

Fuck, if only... I'd be loaded!

DELAMURATINE

Well then, could you call the bank?
Could somebody call the bank?

ELLIPSE

17 INT. EVENING. THE VOLTAIRE, BAR

17

In the background, applause and "bravos" from inside... Stark, accompanied by Julien, comes out of the theater and heads straight to the bar where Anne-Marie awaits. Putting both elbows on the counter, the American takes his head in his hands and draws a deep breath.

STARK

Jesus God, my back is killing me... I think I need a drink. No no, I know I need a drink. Maybe two. Yes two!

ANNE-MARIE

(looking at Julien who
shrugs his shoulders)
What's with him?

JULIEN

I don't know. He wouldn't stop
laughing.

ANNE-MARIE

During the show?

JULIEN

Yes, all through it.

ANNE-MARIE

So... You were laughing?

STARK

It was funny. Thank God it was funny, I was having to fight off sleep the whole time.

ANNE-MARIE

Funny?

STARK

Funny ha ha and funny Jesus Christ what the fuck are these people doing here? Funny ha ha and funny is this a Monte Python sketch or just divine retribution for all my past sins? Funny ha ha and... Any particular reason why they did half the show with their backs to us?

ANNE-MARIE

Uh... Perhaps to concentrate the attention? The listening?

STARK

Oh please! A drink, my residency for a drink! If they don't have anything hard, two beers will do me fine.

Anne-Marie orders two beers for Stark and another glass of wine for herself while Makaver joins them, once again accompanied by de Saint-Frère more dressed to kill and more dramatically made up than ever - total femme fatale.

ANNE-MARIE

*(surprised, slightly awed)
You here again? ¿Que pasa? Contriving to take over the Voltaire, are we?*

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

*(already tipsy)
Precisely. With this golden-ager but one step from retirement and hardly two from the grave, somebody has to step up... Don't you think, Serge?*

MAKAVER

*(not listening to her,
to Stark)
So... How did you, you know...
What did you...*

STARK

Dire.

MAKAVER

Dire?

STARK

Truly dire... And I got the feeling that if I'd really understood what they were saying it would have been worse. Does somebody pay the audience to clap like that at the end?

The two beers served, Stark grabs one and downs half of it in a single swallow.

MAKAVER

You know it's complete sold-out all the nights and very good press?

STARK

I swear to God, I love France! I want to move here.

MAKAVER

But you have moved here, isn't it?

STARK

I mean if you can fill the house doing that? Damn... This is God's country when it comes to theater. Who'd a thunk it!

MAKAVER

Sorry?

STARK

Just an expression... expressing amazement like how 'bout that! To think that people actually pay to see what I just saw! To think you can, you know, follow your creative star to wherever it leads you and still fill the house... Long live France!

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

*(raises her glass of champagne)
Yes, long live France!*

Stark stares at her for a moment, raises his glass, empties it, sets it down, reaches for the other one, stops... turns back towards Saint-Frère.

STARK

I know you.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Very well, thank you.

STARK

No really. I know that voice. I know you.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

No... No person knows me in truth.

STARK

Ariana!

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Drat! I've been unmasked!

ANNE-MARIE

Ariana?

MAKAVER

Oh poor Pestine, the Rohmer film! When you were still a little nothing, Cécile was making them all in love with her Ariana.

STARK

Me included. Hopelessly head over heels. She was sort of a...

MAKAVER

(most pleased with the impression his ex-wife is making)

A dream?

STARK

Yeah, in a way, if someone you think of when you... if you mean the kind of dream you don't have to sleep to have, yeah, a dream.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Oh, that's sweet.

STARK

Can you sing, madame?

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Sorry?

STARK

(singing)

La la la la laaaaa... Do ré mi? Sing. Can you do that?

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

All the world can do that.

STARK

Not true. But you, can you?

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

I can, yes.

STARK

*Well then, wanna be in my
spectacle? Would you like to play
American Sanseverina?*

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

(not sure she understands)

Everything is... Everything is possible.

STARK

*It better be possible, because it
makes perfect sense. This is
Stendhal-goes-to-Idaho and if you can
sing - there are songs in my play -
why couldn't you be our sultry
Sanseverina opposite...*

Jean-Jacques and Augustine come in and head to the bar, but Jean-Jacques is waylaid by a group of acquaintances before he can reach it.

STARK (cont'd)

*Jesus... This is too easy!
(pointing at Jean-Jacques)
Opposite that tall drink of water
over there - Fabrice del Dongo in the
mountains of Idaho mining country.
(on fire)
Seriously, he could do it! He's even
got the del Dongo curly locks -
guy's perfect! Can he sing?*

ANNE-MARIE

James?

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

(losing a bit of her composure)

Can he...

Stark turns towards Julien who's been following from a distance just as Augustine joins them.

STARK

Bud, help! I need my translator. I'm asking her or anybody if that guy we just saw in action can sing.

Julien comes closer. Looks at de Saint-Frère.

JULIEN

He wants to know if Jean-Jacques can sing... I think.

De Saint-Frère doesn't know what to reply. Makaver gives her an impatient look.

MAKAVER

What's the matter, dear friend?
Have you lost your voice?

(to Stark)

I'm certain Jean-Jacques can sing. They all have to sing in the theater school.

STARK

Would you mind asking him, Bud?

JULIEN

Now?

STARK

(surly)

Yes, now, unless for some reason you'd rather wait until next week.

ANNE-MARIE

Attends Julien... Augustine knows, she can say.

AUGUSTINE

Yes, I can say... Jean-Jacques can sing, yes. He can sing like he is breathing, in fact.

STARK

Ah hah!

(to Saint-Frère, nodding
towards Jean-Jacques)

Think you could lust after that boy?

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Well, I...

STARK

Bud, help!

JULIEN
 (already on his telephone)
Lust ? L-u-s-t ?

STARK
*Yeah, lust. Desire. Want. Wanting to
 do piggy things.*

JULIEN
 (reads definition in French)
Desire. To want to...

ANNE-MARIE
James, please...

STARK
 (to de Saint-Frère, nodding
 towards Jean-Jacques)
*Could you desire or want to with
 that tall boy?*

ANNE-MARIE
James!

STARK
What is it, Auntie M?

ANNE-MARIE
We have the auditions, you know...

STARK
*Sure, but if we can get a head start...
 I feel there's something right here,
 something I wasn't counting on.*

Arriving at the bar now, Jean-Jacques orders a beer.

ANNE-MARIE
And also the workshops planning...

Stark turns to speak directly to Jean-Jacques.

STARK
Young man, they tell me you can sing.

JEAN-JACQUES
It's true. I can sing.

STARK
*Could you also fall in love with
 this one?*

(MORE)

STARK (cont'd)
 (pointing at Augustine)
*I just watched you lusting after
 her for hours, but could you fall
 in love with this young woman?*

JEAN-JACQUES
Of course.

STARK
 (eyeing Augustine)
*She's a little old for the part.
 You're all a little old for these
 parts, but we can fix that. This is
 theater after all! Can you sing, uh...*

ANNE-MARIE
 (trying to stay in the discussion)
 Augustine.

STARK
Augustine. Augustine, can you sing?

AUGUSTINE
*I can sing like a king, like a...
 like a bell does ring, I can sing.*

STARK
*Bravo! Nailed it! And would you like
 to play an American Clélia Conti?*

AUGUSTINE
*You ask if I would like to make
 myself blind?*

STARK
Oh...
 (impressed)
You've read the play?

AUGUSTINE
Yes, Anne-Marie wanted me to.

STARK
Well, what do you say?

AUGUSTINE
*I say yes. We must talk of the dates
 and the times, but... Yes, I've
 always wanted to be blonde.*

ANNE-MARIE
But, James...

STARK

This is too easy. Or maybe it's magic? I vote for magic. Whatever, my back is already feeling better!

ANNE-MARIE

James, we have to talk about... if they are free to do it - a big question - but also Jean-Jacques... You must know that Jean-Jacques and Cécile, they...

De Saint-Frère glares at Anne-Marie. Shut up, girl, says her glare.

STARK

What's the matter Auntie M?

ANNE-MARIE

*(not yet daring to go against de Saint-Frère)
Don't you want to do the auditions?*

STARK

Nah. What I want to do is work! Start! I mean, auditions for the other roles, why not, but if we already have these three cast...

ANNE-MARIE

And the workshops planning...

STARK

I'm not really a workshop kind of guy. What I want is to get to work and if I already have my trio, I'd say today was a pretty good day's work.

ANNE-MARIE

But these three actors so fast, so...

She's not sure how to complete the expression of her idea, or even if her idea is the right one.

STARK

Listen, they're here, girlie. When I feel it, I feel it - in my gut. Nobody told you I'm a genius? Ask your boss, he'll tell you.

He emits another high-pitched giggle and turns towards Augustine and Jean-Jacques to pursue this improvised audition.

MAKAVER

(serious for a change)
Let him work, Anne-Marie. He
knows what he doing.

ANNE-MARIE

(vehement, voice low)
He knows what he's doing? I swear...
Fucked up or insane or I don't know
what, but what he's doing is bullshit!
Doesn't know any of them and, *boom*,
you're hired, just like that, and
we're off to the fucking races!

MAKAVER

Well, it's a nice change from
Delamuratine and his theory of the
silhouette or the silence of the
Nada, or your sister's ass and the
whatever... And workshopping the
shit out of everything is boring,
Pestinette.

ANNE-MARIE

(angrier, louder)
No matter the damage, you don't give
a crap, I know. Whenever, whatever,
it's fun time for Serge, but have
you even read his play? Do you
really want to see these two making
whoopee on stage?

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Making whoopee? Which two?

ANNE-MARIE

(louder still)
You two, for fuck's sake! You
and Jean-Jacques jumping each
other's bones!

De Saint-Frère still hasn't fully gathered what Anne-Marie is trying to say while Stark, hearing the latter's voice being raised, turns around.

STARK

What's the matter, Auntie M?

ANNE-MARIE

(emptying her glass)
It's OK, *there is no matter*, but...
*James, something you don't know I have
to tell you. Jean-Jacques, is the son...*

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Ta ta ta! That is no reason to...

ANNE-MARIE

Please, Cécile, you don't know the text... Because there is the aunt and the nephew having the... the lust, James, you have to know...

(pointing at de Saint-Frère)

She... is the mother of Jean-Jacques.

STARK

You're kidding.

ANNE-MARIE

I am not kidding.

STARK

Jesus. God. Damn... The jackpot! I hit the jackpot! His mother? Really? I mean, shit like this happens, you know there's a god, or something, and that god, or something, is on our side for a change.

(his eyes shining, he downs the rest of his beer)

I'm back! I'm telling you I'm back, and nobody can stop me now!

MAKAVER

He's back!

ANNE-MARIE

But James, they will be...

STARK

Come on, Auntie M! Don't you go getting all straight-laced on me. They can handle it, they're actors for crying out loud, so... I'd say champagne is in order!

(shouting)

Barkeep, give us a bottle of your best bubbles. Auntie M, give me some money to pay for it!

There's no one behind the counter to hear him.

ANNE-MARIE

James...

STARK

*You like saying my name or what?
 Seriously, I'll pay you back. I
 don't have any French money here.*

AUGUSTINE

*No, I'll get it... It's OK, I pay it.
 I'm rich and I can... Oh non,
 fiddlesticks, my card. I forgot - I
 don't have my card anymore! That
 stupid machine ate my stupid carte !*

CLOSING CREDITS MUSIC - "Coyote"

CLOSING CREDITS

18 EXT. NIGHT. PARIS STREETS. ANNE-MARIE'S NEIGHBORHOOD

18

Mme Jamet has two dogs on leash - Monarque and Edward -
 out for a late night walk. The dance of seduction
 continues as the two seem more interested in sniffing
 each other than any corner of the sidewalk.

MME JAMET

All right, you lovebirds, tickle
 time is over. Move it along, time
 to go wee-wee now!

FADE TO BLACK

EPISODE 4

1 INT. MORNING. ANNE-MARIE'S APARTMENT, BED

1

Anne-Marie, in her bed, eyes still closed, raises an arm, reaches out a hand, groping timidly, making sure there is not another being next to her... All clear.

Her phone rings. She picks up and, before she can even say "hello", we hear that it's Augustine, already at full gallop:

AUGUSTINE (OFF)

...And I swear, he's truly on a tear, can't see any obstacles, or just doesn't care... He wants us to read some scenes for the presentation? Fine, by all means, but we don't have the translation! When I ask why it's taking forever, it seems he doesn't know, but thinking we're so clever, that we can manage that endeavor, he's going down a rabbit hole.

ANNE-MARIE

What?

AUGUSTINE (OFF)

He's asking us to do it ourselves.

ANNE-MARIE

When?

AUGUSTINE (OFF)

Yes *when*, that's what I mean! At night, when I'm dead, after the Delamuratine? Or in the morning, in bed, before rehearsals reconvene?

ANNE-MARIE

Insane...

AUGUSTINE (OFF)

I don't make you say it!

ANNE-MARIE

Maybe William could...

AUGUSTINE (OFF)

Could, sure, if we paid him.

ANNE-MARIE

Of course.

AUGUSTINE (OFF)

And the presentation, it's in three days!

ANNE-MARIE

Shit...

AUGUSTINE (OFF)

Sorry?

ANNE-MARIE

It's just... It's insane.

Anne-Marie sighs and falls back into her bed. She is not yet fully awake.

MUSIC/CREDITS

2 INT. DAY. CAFÉ

2

Augustine and Anne-Marie enter Brio and Crash's café/HQ, find them at their usual table, take a couple chairs from another table and sit down with them.

BRIO

(sarcastic)

Make yourselves at home, girls!

ANNE-MARIE

We need your help.

BRIO

What? Another one of your legion of exes coming to the theater tonight?

AUGUSTINE

It's something serious, William.

ANNE-MARIE

And something urgent. For the presentation to the press, Stark wants the actors to read a few scenes from the play.

BRIO

So?

ANNE-MARIE

The play he wrote in English!

BRIO

OK. I don't know about the others, but Augustine's speaks English.

CRASH

I will never speak English.

Brio bursts out laughing. Alone. The two women look at Crash sipping his fifth coffee of the morning - he doesn't elaborate - then turn back to Brio.

AUGUSTINE

That's not the problem. He wants us to do it in French.

BRIO

Sure, that's reasonable, we're not in the States after all... So?

ANNE-MARIE

The play has not been translated!

BRIO

Ah... Bummer, should have thought of that before.

(in English, with an exaggerated French accent)

And now I guess you want that I aide you, that I translate ze piece for ze presentation.

ANNE-MARIE

Only parts of ze piece, some extracts... Two or three scenes.

BRIO

How much?

ANNE-MARIE

How much what?

AUGUSTINE

How much would we pay him.

ANNE-MARIE

There's no budget for that. Well, there was, but it's already been spent and the translation isn't done yet. I suppose it would be naif to imagine you might do it just to help out.

BRIO

Yes. You all get paid to do what you do, why shouldn't I?

ANNE-MARIE

How much?

BRIO

A lot. Seeing as it's a rush job and I'd have to put everything on hold to get it done in time... Thirty euros for each page of fifteen thousand characters.

ANNE-MARIE

Between doing us a favor and ripping us off, there could be some kind of middle ground, no?

BRIO

Yes, but... No.

ANNE-MARIE

Jerk. I understand, but... Jerk!

AUGUSTINE

(attempting to lighten things up)

And as they say in my family: haggle with a Yid, you'll be sorry you did...

BRIO

Your family, baby? You mean your old France collaborationist uncles?

(gaze fixed on his girlfriend, light tone darkening)

You know what? Both my Jewish and goy halves seem to have suddenly lost interest, so... Sorry, girls, you'll just have to figure it out on your own. Bye bye now!

Nothing more to say, Anne-Marie gets up at once to leave, shortly followed by Augustine.

3 EXT. DAY. STREET

3

The two women exit the café, head without a word to the nearby métro station.

4 EXT/INT. DAY. MÉTRO STAIRS

4

The heavy silence continues. And continues.

AUGUSTINE
(almost a supplication)
Anne-Marie...

ANNE-MARIE
Seriously? To say such a thing...
To even *think* such a thing!

AUGUSTINE
But I wasn't even thinking it, it was
just something...

ANNE-MARIE
It's not because your family is full
of assholes that you too have to...

AUGUSTINE
(lost)
Anne-Marie...

ANNE-MARIE
And it's not because you live on
another planet that you have the
right not to know what's happening
on this one... Shit, Aggie!

AUGUSTINE
I... I'm sorry, but I... I'm sorry.

5 INT. DAY. MÉTRO CAR

5

The two women standing side by side without talking,
without looking at each other. Outside this frame, a
man's voice comes to the fore.

MAN (OFF)
Come one! Just a little smile! You
don't know how to smile? Pretty as
you are, you really ought to know
how to...

YOUNG WOMAN (OFF)
Please...

Pulled from their somber musings by the scene playing out
behind them, Anne-Marie and Augustine finally look at
each other.

MAN (OFF)

What do you mean *please*? Hah!
 You wanna be looked at - that's
 obvious - and now that somebody's
 looking at you, you're not happy?

The two turn to discover, as do we, a young woman -
 skinny jeans, heels, satin blouse - seated on one of the
 fold-down seats and, her eyes wet with tears, looking at
 her telephone while the thirty something man hovering
 over her raises his voice:

MAN

She won't even look at me! She's
 just a... just a...

ANNE-MARIE

(loud)

Slut? Go ahead, say it! Just a slut?

MAN

But... What's her problem?
 (speaking to the other
 passengers)
 She's crazy, this...

AUGUSTINE

Slut?

MAN

What?

AUGUSTINE

Slut.

MAN

(a tad unsettled)
 I mean... What the? What's their...

AUGUSTINE

Sh-sh-sh shush... up.

MAN

What?

ANNE-MARIE

He must be deaf. She said *shush*
up. You don't talk to a woman if
 that woman...

AUGUSTINE

... doesn't actually want you to
 talk to her, get it?

As this injunction is being spelled out, the train comes to a halt, the door opens and the young woman quickly stands up and slips out of the car... while the man makes a move, apparently, to do the same...

ANNE-MARIE AND AUGUSTINE

No!

MAN

It's my stop!

They look like they're going to try to physically impede his exit when, further down this train without separations between the cars, we - along with Augustine - see the young woman boarding the next car.

AUGUSTINE

Well go if it's your stop!

Questioning look from Anne-Marie. Reassuring nod towards the next car from Augustine... and the man exits just before the doors close.

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)

She changed cars. It's OK.

ANNE-MARIE

We should go see her, shouldn't we?

AUGUSTINE

No... She could do without that.

ANNE-MARIE

Oh yeah? Why?

AUGUSTINE

Because me, if I'm her, I wouldn't want that.

ANNE-MARIE

But she didn't do anything wrong! It was that asshole who...

AUGUSTINE

All I can say is, if I were her, I'd only want for it to be over and done. To put it behind me.

A second questioning look from Anne-Marie.

6 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE

6

Stark, a ball of nervous energy, paces the stage spelling out the essence of his approach for the actors in his play. Anne-Marie, translating, struggles to keep up for a time before completely losing the thread, throwing in the towel, and sitting down with the others in the front row: Augustine, Jean-Jacques, de Saint-Frère, and a group of newcomers - three men, **Florent Bigot**, **Simon Bouchard**, **Boris Tola**, and a woman, **Francine Faudot** - along with Julien, pen in hand, notepad on lap, a pile of photocopies on the seat next to him, transcribing everything said as best he can...

STARK

Everybody here's always saying "ça va, ça va," and I'm telling you that ça va for real, this is going to work. You reading a few scenes will say so much more than anything I could about this Stendhal-goes-to-Idaho thing and La Chartreuse de Parme.

ANNE-MARIE

OK, James, so you have asked the actors to make the translation but there are some who can't because...

STARK

Hold on, Auntie M, the big boss took care of that!

ANNE-MARIE

What? How?

STARK

The translation. He got his nephew on the case.

AUGUSTINE

Whose nephew?

STARK

His nephew, Make-over's nephew.

ANNE-MARIE

*(eyeing de Saint-Frère... who's failing to follow)
Makaver? He has a nephew?*

AUGUSTINE

*(also eyeing de Saint-Frère)
He has a sister?*

ANNE-MARIE

A brother? A family?

STARK

He's got a nephew who's studying English or teaching English or something and the kid was happy to do it.

ANNE-MARIE

But... It's already done? So fast?

STARK

Why not, Auntie M ? It's just a few scenes, and with the software that's out there now...

Anne-Marie and Augustine give each other a look, far from convinced.

STARK (cont'd)

Call it a provisional version... So we can get to work. The final one's coming - it's my co-author that's doing it - but she's a little... She got started a little late.

ANNE-MARIE

But James, who is this co-author? You never have said...

STARK

Manon. She's French and she helped me write the play a long time ago - I think you know I've been carrying this for a while - and for the translation, she hasn't had much time... This thing in France came together so suddenly and, yeah, I know, we should have... But for the presentation, we can manage with this. Let's go, Bud, hand out the photocopies already!

Julien gets up and does as ordered.

DISSOLVE TO:

7 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE

7

The six actors, on stage now, seated in a semi-circle, photocopies in hand. Lights out on the rest of the house.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Carson Clay. Wrists in cuffs. An assistant deputy at his side. Walks from the car that has lifted him up at the station of the train. Hesitates, evaluates the building in brick with one stage where he is awaited - the prison of the county of Canyon... The deputy puts a hand on his back and pushes. Carson bristles and turns towards the man.

JEAN-JACQUES

Do not dare to touch me!

BIGOT

Ha ha!

JEAN-JACQUES

I have said...

BIGOT

No one worries about what you have said. Go there!

JEAN-JACQUES

One will not speak to me in such a path!

BIGOT

I have two revolvers here that say I can speak to you in the path I want, so go fuck yourself, little...

(hesitates)

little fanciful pants.

A ripple of laughter in the seats. The actors exchange glances. Augustine smiles...

STARK (OFF)

Come on, you guys! Jean-Jacques?

JEAN-JACQUES

(more angry)

Do you know who I am? Do you know from where I come?

BIGOT

Oh yes, you're one of the hard guys from the Coeur d'Alenes who have wanted to kill the governor.

(MORE)

BIGOT (cont'd)

Except that you do not seem to be so hard. I suppose you don't have to be so hard to commit a murder.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Carson raises his hands in cuffs, quickly balancing and hits the assistant in the face. They aren't.. uh... aren't a lot of force in the shot, but the metal bands trap the skin where it's stretched on the bone of the chopping block cheek and... on the bone of the chopping... uh...

(struggling, she takes a breath, tries again)

...and little force is necessary to open there a strap of deep cuts.

BIGOT

You, dirty son of... a dog!

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

(doing her best)

Cries the deputy pulling out his revolver, hitting Carson a hit on the crown that sends him to his knees before pursuing with several foot hits to the sides of the boy on the ground.

BIGOT

Kind of pisser sucker!

Muffled laughs on stage and in the seats.

MANU (OFF)

Ha ha! Pisser sucker? I like that!

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

While another buggy lifts up in front of the prison carrying Arthur Steunenberg - the brother of the late governor - and the daughter of the late governor, Cecilia.

MAN'S VOICE (OFF)

Never on time, what is he, Spanish?

Laughter in the seats.

BOUCHARD

Whoa!

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Cries Steunenber, who approaches the assistant brandishing his arm on the wrinkled silhouette at his feet.

BOUCHARD

What is going on here?

BIGOT

The prisoner has attacked me! I had to...

JEAN-JACQUES

Nobody treats... calls me a murderer!

BOUCHARD

It is not a path to do your work!
Case your arm!

More laughter in the seats.

ANNE-MARIE (OFF)

(at the end of her rope)

No, it's not possible! James, I'm serious now, this is not possible!

STARK (OFF)

What isn't?

ANNE-MARIE (OFF)

This. All. The translation, I assure you, it cannot work. They are laughing and for a good reason. You know what is a false friend?

STARK (OFF)

But...

The lights come on in the house where there are a couple dozen spectators: technical crew, administration staff, the communications director with several journalists... And Makaver in the back seated next to a young man around the same age (and same general appearance) as Julien - perhaps his nephew? - and Stark and Anne-Marie in the front row.

ANNE-MARIE

We need the good translation to work. You said she's French, your writer who is doing it? You must get it, James. Please, you must get it now!

(to the house)

Everybody? We're very sorry, but we're not quite ready yet...

(MORE)

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)

I mean the French text, uh... as you saw... I hope it gave you an idea, but isn't quite there yet...

(sotto voce in Stark's ear)

Do you believe strongly in your play?

STARK

Of course.

ANNE-MARIE

That it merits to be on the theater stage?

STARK

Why else would I be here? I've been trying to do it for over a decade. It was feeling like my Waterloo until I got the offer from Makaver.

Close-up of Stark and Anne-Marie.

ANNE-MARIE

Then you need to make it right. This now, it's not right, really not. Wrong for you and wrong for the Voltaire. We were not ready today, James. I don't understand how you can be so nonchalant, or so...

STARK

Impatient. I know, I sometimes get ahead of the music.

ANNE-MARIE

It has been a problem in your life, hasn't it?

STARK

Yes, it has Auntie M, at least that's what people say, or said, and what you're saying now, but...

(the exchange becomes intimate of a sudden)

I don't know sometimes. I think I know and then after... I don't know what I think... Sometimes, when I finally figure things out, it's too late, but you, you are a wise one, aren't you? Maybe you don't do that.

ANNE-MARIE

Me? I try.

STARK

Good. I think I can trust you, and I'm afraid I'll be needing you to, you know, to make this work. But I know this can work if we just... I know we can make this work, Auntie M.

Tenderness in Anne-Marie's eyes for the first time as the frame widens to reveal that they're alone now, alone in a theater totally empty...

SLOW DISSOLVE

8 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE

8

Several days - an indeterminate time - later. The semi-circle of six chairs remains, but other things have changed: the stage lighting has been fine-tuned and the actors are wearing the beginnings of their costumes, Augustine and De Saint-Frère in dresses from another time et Jean-Jacques in a vest and white shirt.

MILLER (BIGOT)

(shouting)

Fucking fancy pants little peeder-sucker! If they don't send you to the devil on a rope, you can be damn sure I'll be there to do it my way!

NARRATOR (FAUDOT)

Just as Arthur Steunenberg - the late governor's brother, closest confidant and family spokesman - and the late governor's daughter Cecilia pull up in a buggy.

STEUNENBERG (BOUCHARD)

Whoa! What the Sam Hill is going on here?

MILLER

The prisoner attacked me, I had to...

STEUNENBERG

That's no way to do your job!

CARSON (JEAN-JACQUES)

Nobody calls me a murderer!

NARRATOR

Cecilia starts, lets out a little cry. She's recognized Carson and Carson's recognized Cecilia, recognized the girl now a woman. The ash blonde hair pulled back in an expedient bun to reveal a face sweetly graced by an affecting remainder of childhood flesh in the cheeks presently flushed with emotion. And the eyes, the steel gray eyes like an angry ocean that had troubled him six years before.

CARSON

I do believe, miss, that once in another lifetime I had the pleasure of making your acquaintance..

Cecilia, taken aback by this direct address, opens her mouth to reply... In vain.

CARSON (cont'd)

I believe you were ill.

CECILIA (AUGUSTINE)

You... We... were ill.

CARSON

Ah, then you remember! You were with your father. When I learned of his death, I... I thought of you. I thought of you, Cecilia.

NARRATOR

Cecilia Steunenbergh. Is too moved to reply, the words won't come unstuck from her heart. Her uncle takes her arm and gently walks her back to the buggy where she tells herself that she just behaved horribly.

CECILIA

(an aside)

A simple word of kindness might have comforted him in a difficult moment, and I stood there mute while he, bent by his suffering, expressed compassion for me. Oh I was foul indeed! I can't bear to think what he must think of me now.

CARSON

(an aside)

Those eyes, and all they expressed!
The understanding, the pity... And
how they stayed attached to me. Oh,
with a cellmate like her, I could
stay in prison for life!

MUSIC - theme from the opening credits...

9 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE

9

... The beginning of an ensemble playing this music appears: three musicians - acoustic guitar, accordion, violin - bent over their scores at the back of the stage. The actors are still seated in a semicircle, but with costumes, wigs and make-up - Jean-Jacques has a bandage on his head, Augustine is bleached blonde - closer to complete now. Faudot stands up and, with greater confidence, approaches the imaginary audience.

NARRATOR

Carson Clay. Wakes up the morning of his eighth day in jail with the gamy yellow breath of sheriff Jack Charlesworth in his face. Feigns sleep as the man unlocks his handcuffs to free him from the bed and exits the room as the doctor comes in.

DOCTOR (BOUCHARD)

You know you're head's healing just fine. You can go now.

CARSON

(rubbing his wrists)

What do you mean? I'm a prisoner here.

DOCTOR

(handing Carson a newspaper)

Ah... Guess you haven't seen today's *Clarion*.

CARSON

Oh my God!

(MORE)

CARSON (cont'd)

(reading)

TIGER-POORMAN OWNER'S SON RELEASED. Carson Clay, arrested as a suspect in the Steunenberg murder, was released from the Canyon County jail after investigations found no link between this inhabitant of Wallace and the Western Federation of Miners conspiracy. The suspect nevertheless admitted to having called for "the murder of the Governor" in 1899 following the union violence in which Mr. Clay was implicated...

Lousy sons of bitches! I confessed to nothing of the sort! I have not been released and I will not leave here.

10 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE

10

The semi-circle of actors has given way to the decor of a medical clinic in 1906; medium close shot of de Saint-Frère in full costume and no text in hand.

RACHEL (DE SAINT-FRÈRE)

Take it easy, my dear man.

NARRATOR (OFF)

Rachel Donnelly... In the doorway. Her high-born neck wrapped in a ten strand pearl choker. Her mountain of auburn hair collected and caught just above the forehead by an emerald encrusted comb. Her iconic forms sheathed in white silk above the waist and an accordion-pleated riding skirt below. Rachel. Lighting up the somber room.

CARSON

(in bed)

Rachel...

RACHEL

Pack your bag, my dear man.

CARSON

What bag? I was not afforded any such luxury and, anyway, I'm not going anywhere. Have you seen the paper?

RACHEL

Calm down, Carson. They've let you go and we have a train to catch.

CARSON

No, I refuse to play their game.

RACHEL

Don't be silly.

CARSON

Rachel! Do you at least understand what they're doing? Or are you forgetting all you taught me? If you of all people can countenance this mendacity, what's to become of us?

RACHEL

You've nothing to gain by staying in jail. And what's the point of not admitting to something you actually said?

CARSON

Seven years ago! I said it seven years ago!

RACHEL

That matters little.

CARSON

I have to see Cecilia now. She was supposed to come today and... Oh God! She must have seen the paper!

RACHEL

Yes. She has.

CARSON

No! I'm lost...

RACHEL

You're going to make me angry, my boy.

CARSON

Rachel, please. You forget I'm an adult now.

RACHEL

I might say the same about you, my dear, and if you only acted your age, you might...

CARSON

Please, I'm sorry that my arrest has inconvenienced you to such an extent, but it is absolutely inconceivable that I leave Caldwell without seeing Cecilia. I can't... I won't.

NARRATOR (OFF)

Rachel Donnelly. Looks down into the emptiness. Feels old in her bones as her nephew's perseverance finally gets the best of her pluck.

CARSON

I'll need you to telephone her at home and tell her that if I can't see her, I will not leave Caldwell. Even if they throw me back in jail. Even if...

Rachel turns to leave.

STARK (OFF)

Non, Madame, too soon, trop tôt !

11 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE

11

We're back with the semi-circle of actors on stage, but now Jean-Jacques is laying on the floor and de Saint-Frère is on her feet, about to exit the stage.

STARK

(at her side in an instant)
Longer here... More time before going... Like you can't believe what you're hearing. Like you want to die.

De Saint-Frère looks towards the seats.

JULIEN

You have to stay longer there, like you can't believe your ears and like... like you want to die.

STARK

And Jay Jay? More authority! More... Egomania, more Fabrice del Dongo. You wanna be a man. You wanna show her that you're not the little boy she's making you out to be even though you are just that.

JEAN-JACQUES

I see.

STARK

You see? Then show me! More harsh. Mean! Self-centered. I keep telling you... You are not nice, you are not you. You do not give a flying fuck about this woman's feelings, and have no idea she's even pining for you!

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

12 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE

12

Definitive decor now: the greenhouse annex of a church. Dark. On one side of the stage, Cecilia; on the other, Carson. Silhouettes. A nod (if not an insolent rip-off) to Delamuratine staging in episode 2.

STARK (OFF)

OK? There's one thing and one thing only besides yourself that you care about and that's Cecilia... You'd die for her, kill for her. You're a raving idiot obsessed...

Little by little, his voice gives way to that of the Narrator now at the stage left apron and facing the imaginary audience.

NARRATOR

Cecilia Steunenberg. Feels the woman's primal response to the man's desire, the heat rising and the strange wetness in the heat. Feels the pain, again, along with the premonition of pleasure that she hadn't known possible.

Carson Clay. Doesn't knock. Turns the door handle, cringing as it creaks... Breathes in the air of a Moorish garden.

CARSON

Cecilia...

CECILIA

Here, friend of my heart. I'm here.
(feeling her way like a blind
person, she takes his hand)
I am here, Carson. For you.

CARSON

For me. You.

CECILIA

Oh Carson, my heart is going to stop.

CARSON

And mine his beating so hard, I...

He places her hand on his chest.

CECILIA

I feel it.

She then slaps him as hard as she can in the face. Carson staggers, stifles a reflex to hit her back, raises a hand to the side of his face...

CARSON

Son of a...

CECILIA

Don't you ever again threaten to take
your life. Never, ever again. Promise...
Promise, Carson!

NARRATOR

The power of the blow. The voice like
death itself. Make him compliant.

CARSON

I promise...

CECILIA

Swear it.

CARSON

I swear it.

CECILIA

On our love.

CARSON

On our love.

CECILIA

Very well. I'm here to ask you once and for all if you're ready to obey me...

NARRATOR

...she says pulling him closer as the miraculous demands of their respective sexes are too much for the reason that might now have saved them from each other.

CECILIA

I want to have your child.

NARRATOR

Collapsing into the folds of clothes shed below them in the dirt, he stays inside her until the end.

CECILIA

I will have your child and I will accept your brother's proposition. Will you obey me?

CARSON

Cecilia...

CECILIA

Answer me, Carson. Tomorrow, I'll be carrying your child.

CARSON

What are you... What are you talking about? My *brother*?

NARRATOR

Blinders falling, he is beginning to see the hateful logic draping its shroud over the miracle now dissolving in his grasp.

CECILIA

Prosper is going to ask for my hand. Hasn't anyone told you that?

NARRATOR

The voice of his lover diminishing, too far away now to be real...

(coming closer to the couple clasped in each other's arms)

What did she say?

CECILIA

Our child will have to have a name. I want it to be yours.

NARRATOR

The fog in his head, thicker...

CECILIA

Carson!

CARSON

A name, yes... I'll give you my name.

CECILIA

I'll have your name, Carson, but I will also honor my vow. Now more than ever, I have to think of our child.

STARK (OFF)

Faster, kids! It's too... slow.
Faster now. Think of it as an infernal machine!

CARSON

Our child...

NARRATOR

He rolls off her, turns away tightening his muscles and holding his breath until his lungs burst... and the fog is lifted:

CARSON

The village idiot is courting you?!?

CECILIA

Don't leave me, Carson... I'm cold.

CARSON

(on his feet in a split second, collecting his clothes)
Have you taken leave of your sanity?
Does anybody else know about this?

CECILIA

Prosper said it was your father that...

The Narrator backs away, exits the stage.

STARK

(to Faudot)

Not so fast, *chérie*. You listen, you want to find out how it ends...

CARSON

Of course! The stupid bastard wouldn't have thought of it himself because the stupid bastard has never been much of one for the ladies. No one bothered to tell you that? Oh God, Rachel'll love this!

CECILIA

She said your father would be needing to marry off his son... your brother.

CARSON

She... *She* told you that? She knows and she told you that?

CECILIA

Rachel loves you. That's why she...

CARSON

Why she what?

CECILIA

... why she spoke to your father.

CARSON

Rachel doesn't speak to him. She hates my father, and rightfully so!

STARK (OFF)

Acting like you're on your way out, you have to go because you're a childish jerk, and because, you know, objects in motion...

During his note from the director, we go from theater to cinema, to real decor, real costumes and we're in 1906.

STARK (OFF) (cont'd)

...tend to remain in motion.

CECILIA

We have to think of our child.

CARSON

Rachel is sick and so are you. It's *you and me* who will marry.

CECILIA

Carson... There's my poor father and he, along with the Lord, is watching us and he, he knows about my vow, knows I made it for him after learning what you said. I had not other choice. You know this, Carson! You know I can never again lay eyes on you!

CARSON

(feeling his way to the door)
Hah, if that's the case, I guess you're just going to have to cut them out!

CECILIA

Carson...

CARSON

And what about your marriage vows? What are you going to do once you're at the alter, huh? Cross your fucking fingers at the moment you say *I do*?

CECILIA

Oh, my love... It's too cold here without you.

MUSIC: "La Ballade de Fabrice et Clélia"

CLOSING CREDITS

EPISODE 5

1 EXT. DAY. WALLACE, IDAHO - JULY 4, 1906, BASEBALL FIELD 1

Music in the distance... Close-up of Carson, asleep on the grass, sweat dripping from his temples, drool down the side of his mouth. It's hot... A dog (played by Edward) jumps on him, sniffs him, licks his cheek. Carson opens his eyes, smiles, pushes the animal away, wipes off his cheek, closes his eyes. Chuckles. Drunk.

Music closer, louder, a band - squeezebox, stand-up bass, guitar, banjo, violin... and a singer - playing a polka.

CHANTEUSE (PAOLA NINONA OFF)

In seventeen hundred and seventy-six
the boys back East were spoiling for a fight
King George's Brits were givin' 'em fits
So they took up arms for what was right

Those Americans died to make us free
They paid the price of our liberty

Drawn from the haze by the power of this voice, Carson opens his eyes again and sits up for a better view as we discover the band (musicians already seen at the Voltaire) on a stage plastered with red, white and blue banners before a crowd dancing in their Sunday best.

CHANTEUSE

The Declaration was signed on the Fourth
and the boys fought hard so we could be free
They raised Old Glory from the South to the North
and kicked the Redcoats back over the sea

Those Americans died to make us free
They paid the price of our liberty

Boisterous applause and raucous calls for an encore as the singer takes her bows.

MME CLAY (FAUDOT OFF)

What a lovely girl she is! And what
a success!

Carson turns over to find his mother clapping her hands next to his brother Prosper holding the dog that licked Carson's cheek on a leash.

PROSPER (TOLA)

She's young and hardly dressed, so
of course she's going to please.

MME CLAY

No, it's how she moves, how she disports herself on that stage. That girl... You want to look at that girl!

PROSPER

Pooh...

MME CLAY

Hey boys, I'm thirsty! Too much dancing.

CARSON

Me too, Mother. Let's get ourselves a drink!

He stands up, wobbles, grabs his mother's arm to steady himself.

MME CLAY

(walking)

I just love a dance! Nothing like a dance to make me happy. When I was a little girl back in the old days before the mines, I think they called them balls, but we never had any. I only knew them from foreign novels - *Madame Bovary*, *War and Peace* and "Romeo and Juliet" of course... I do swear there are never enough dances and it's sad when you think of it. The only one we have now is this one today - why must we always wait forever for it?

PROSPER

The 4th of July dance can only take place on the 4th of July.

MME CLAY

But that's absurd! That's - how can I put it? - *small!*

PROSPER

It's the calender, Mother. You can't change the calendar.

MME CLAY

Ah, like a clock! You wait and wait, then all of a sudden, the 4th of July is here and neither God nor your father could ever... I'd still say it isn't fair, because I...

(MORE)

MME CLAY (cont'd)

Did I ever tell you boys how much I liked dances?

CARSON

No... Liked what, Mother?

PROSPER

Stop it.

MME CLAY

Why, dances, for goodness sake!

CARSON

She's right. It's not fair, like so many other things that her husband and that son of a bitch up in the clouds can't fix.

PROSPER

Watch it.

CARSON

Die!

MME CLAY

What other things? Where?

CARSON

Everywhere. Under your nose. On your right, for example, walks a sack of shit that nothing but a bullet to his pea-brain could ever fix.

PROSPER

Carson!

CARSON

Prosper! Die, I said.

MME CLAY

I still don't see why... What's so special about the 4th of July?

PROSPER

It's Independence Day, mother, sort of our country's birthday.

Carson explodes in laughter so hearty that it's contagious and his mother has to join in.

CARSON

But of course, just like Christmas!

(MORE)

CARSON (cont'd)
 (struggles to catch his breath)
 Only with America laid out in swaddling
 clothes instead of the baby Jesus.

MME CLAY
 Well, that's fine today, but what about
 tomorrow? Such a pity to have to wait a
 whole... to wait a whole...

PROSPER
 Year.

MME CLAY
 Oh, no, I don't agree! That's just...
 That's small.

CARSON
 In any event, the sack-of-shit is
 right, Mother. It's the dance of
 freedom we're celebrating today,
 freedom to hang people who actually
 believe in the Constitution!

Shielded by the woman walking between the two boys she
 brought into the world, the older of the two dares once
 more to open his mouth.

PROSPER
 Carson...

MME CLAY
 A year is too much. If only there were
 some other occasion...

PROSPER
 There's my wedding, Mother.

MME CLAY
 Yes, of course! When is it?

PROSPER
 Why, August 15th!

MME CLAY
 And when is August 15th?

PROSPER
 Next month...

MME CLAY
 Oh, but that's wonderful! A dance
 next month!

CARSON

A dance and a hanging maybe, if old sack-of-shit and son get their way.

PROSPER

Carson...

MME CLAY

What's he talking about?

CARSON

Nothing, Mother, but there's another problem. The blushing bride and her mother cannot abide dancing - their church is against it.

MME CLAY

Stop that, Carson. There's no such church.

CARSON

Oh, but there is! And rumor has it that your older son is himself planning to become a...

PROSPER

By God, Carson!

CARSON

Prosper...

(dropping his mother's arm,
moving behind her to home in
on his brother's outside ear)

I don't want to hear you pronouncing...

STARK (OFF)

No no, Jay Jay. He can't drop his mother's arm there.

JEAN-JACQUES

OK, got it...

CARSON

(taking his mother's arm again)

And I don't want to hear another fucking word about your two-bit wedding. The only thing stopping me from ripping your throat out here is the presence of...

STARK (OFF)

*While you're saying that, while
you're trying to get to him, you have
to turn her as if she were a dance
partner or maybe even a compliant rag
doll, a marionnette...*

CUT TO:

2 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE

2

The *cinema* close-up of Carson in Prosper's ear in 1906 gives way to a theater close-up of Jean-Jacques in Boris's ear today.

STARK (OFF)

*It's a kind of ballet with the band
playing, know what I mean? And it's
fun, at least for Mrs Clay, light
fun in contrast to what Carson's
doing and saying, a literal death
threat. The whole scene should be
choreographed like a ballet. Can you
help him with that, Francine?*

Wider shot as Faudot turns questioning towards the seats almost completely in the dark.

JULIEN (OFF)

It needs to be, uh... fun, and also
a bit of a ballet, a choreography.

FAUDOT

(a tad piqued)

I gathered that, but what's he
asking me to do?

JULIEN

He wants you to help Jean-Jacques
find the right movement.

Faudot executes, works out the movements with Jean-Jacques as the band starts in on "When a Man's Blood Moves a Woman's Aside"... And she sings.

CREDITS

FAUDOT

We are surrounded by men
It's sad when boys become them
It's mind and body degeneration
When the woman gets driven out of them
(MORE)

FAUDOT (cont'd)

Swelling flesh collects under his chin
 Thick hair sprouts from his virgin skin
 His voice fattens feeding on smoke and gin
 When his father moves his mother out of him

As the belly bloats so does the pride
 When a man's blood pushes a woman's aside
 Having both would surely help him thrive
 But a man's blood moves a woman's aside

END CREDITS

DISSOLVE TO:

3 INT. MORNING - AUGUSTINE/BRIO'S BEDROOM, BED

3

Close-up of Augustine opening her eyes, getting out of bed, talking to Brio as if he weren't sleeping... Montage of morning rituals - a quick shower during which she brushes her teeth and pisses, getting dressed, doing her hair, coffee - as she gets ready to go to work. Her monologue - sometimes addressed to her lover, sometimes interior (off) - is somewhat disjointed...

AUGUSTINE

We finally got the good translation. It's fine, does the trick, but I'm haunted by that first version - I miss it, in fact, and with Anne-Marie we have a competition going to see who can come up with the best - or worst! - false friends: *don't take my head, that gives me a pretty leg, it's cowly good...* things like that, and we've ended up getting on everybody's nerves, especially Cécile who finds that idiotic, but really, she hardly knows three words in English! To be that unilingual, I mean, how's that even possible? I think she's sort of blocked, but, oh my God, what a voice! I mean what a speaking voice! It's honey, is what Stark says, smoke and honey and I swear it's a downright turn-on, an aphrodisiac.

(MORE)

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)

It's fine when she sings too, but she has absolutely no sense of rhythm and it drives Stark crazy - he said she was too white and she said she was too Jewish and he, he said she wasn't Jewish enough and... About that, I'm sorry, Poussin... Did I wake you up?

BRIO

What do you think?

AUGUSTINE

I wanted to say, about the other day... Well, the other week - I hardly know where I am anymore with the schedule we're on - I'm sorry I said that thing I said because...

BRIO

(opening his eyes)

It's OK, Poussin. It's not you, I know, but the banality with which that kind of crap gets repeated and repeated sort of makes me see red. It's toxic air I could do without having to breathe.

This is another Brio, less caustic, more affectionate than the usual one on the outside.

AUGUSTINE

I know.

BRIO

Let's say it's forgotten... If you buy me a coffee to make up for it.

AUGUSTINE

Will do.

BRIO

(climbing out of bed)

And a croissant, Poussin, for waking me up like that.

AUGUSTINE

(relieved)

Bastard!

4 INT. DAY. CAFÉ

4

At his usual table, Crash has an espresso in one hand and *Le Monde*, almost glued to his face, in the other. Opposite him: Delamuratine drinking the last drops of his *grande crème* while organizing the flakes fallen from a croissant into two parallel lines on the table, Delamuratine who can't see Crash's newspaper as anything but a purposeful barrier to communication, Delamuratine who is waiting... and who emits a sigh of relief when Brio and Augustine arrive.

DELAMURATINE

(to Augustine)

What? Not rehearsing today?

AUGUSTINE

No, rehearsing every day and every evening, but going so late last night, we get a break this morning.

DELAMURATINE

It's going to end badly with the crew.

AUGUSTINE

And not just them! It's insane. You'd think he was... I don't know how old he is.

DELAMURATINE

Fifty-four.

CRASH

(head still in newspaper)

Fifty-three.

DELAMURATINE

Fifty-four or fifty-three.

CRASH

Fifty-three.

DELAMURATINE

OK...

AUGUSTINE

Anyway, he's going to bury us all. There's no stopping him, and as soon as we're on stage, he's on fire.

DELAMURATINE

Because he thinks he's alone, no? Typical American.

(MORE)

DELAMURATINE (cont'd)

They can't see that the universe is inhabited by others than them. Next thing you know, he'll be on the short list for replacing Makaver.

BRIO

Might have to master the local language first.

AUGUSTINE

Sure, but with the energy he has...

DELAMURATINE

Oh come on! Energy is one thing, but what about results?

AUGUSTINE

We had our doubts, but now? Last night, there was a moment of grace on the stage.

DELAMURATINE

Really? A moment of *grace*?

AUGUSTINE

Yep. You might even say *magic*.

BRIO

Well well well.

(nodding at Delamuratine)

Wouldn't you like coming up with a little magic?

DELAMURATINE

Give me a... That's not the point.

BRIO

Yep, I saw that the other day.

DELAMURATINE

Yeah, I was surprised to see you there and I'd be curious to know... Well, to know what you thought of it.

BRIO

I was bored out of my mind, Arnaud. It's no tragedy - me and the theater? Hopeless. You know that.

DELAMURATINE

So... no magic.

BRIO
 (chuckles)
 What do you care? That's not what
 you're after.

DELAMURATINE
 Yeah... No... Guess not. No.

BRIO
 But it happens that this guy
 went for it, didn't you, Crash?

CRASH
 (finally lowering his
 newspaper)
 Indeed, I had a nice time.

DELAMURATINE
 And?

CRASH
 (back into *Le Monde*)
 A very nice time.

5 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, ANNE-MARIE'S OFFICE

5

Anne-Marie, seated at her desk having a coffee and
 dressed/made-up/coiffed to kill, provokes a big smile
 from Augustine when she comes through the door.

ANNE-MARIE
 What?

AUGUSTINE
 What?

ANNE-MARIE
 Why the smile?

AUGUSTINE
 Because you're beautiful.

ANNE-MARIE
 For a change?

AUGUSTINE
 No, silly goose. Because you're
 beautiful.

ANNE-MARIE
 And you, you're late today.

AUGUSTINE

No, he pushed the start back.

ANNE-MARIE

Ah...

AUGUSTINE

Because of last night.

ANNE-MARIE

It was pretty good last night,
what I saw.

AUGUSTINE

Agreed. I'm starting to really...

The arrival of Stark with Edward cuts her off in mid-sentence. Springing from her seat, Anne-Marie approaches the dog who takes a couple step backwards, scrutinizing her as she falls to her knees despite her tight skirt...

ANNE-MARIE

Hey... What's the problem, little
darling?

At the sound of her voice, Edward is on her in a flash and licks her cheek.

AUGUSTINE

Yuck!

ANNE-MARIE

What? He's kissing me!

AUGUSTINE

Precisely. And with tongue.
Double yuck!

STARK

What are you doing here, *Miss Caesar?* *It's rehearsal time!*

AUGUSTINE

I can ask you the same question.

STARK

Edward wanted to say hello to old Auntie M.

AUGUSTINE

Yeah, right...

STARK

And, uh... I wanted to ask if he could stay in your office, Anne-Marie. Now that we know dogs are actually allowed in theaters, I assume you can also have them in offices.

ANNE-MARIE

Of course, he's my baby.

STARK

*(handing her a little package)
And I got this for you, your own laser.*

ANNE-MARIE

*Well, thank you, sir. That's very...
Now I find myself perfectly equipped
for any eventuality.*

As this exchange of pleasantries continues, Augustine exits without anyone noticing...

6 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE

6

The band - the same one seen and heard in the first scene of this episode - is rehearsing the song, "I Envy the Snake (Rachel Donnelly's Lament)".

7 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, BACKSTAGE

7

With this music in the background... Back to the green room - in a great deal more disarray than the first time we saw it in the 3rd episode - where an impromptu meeting of the Voltaire crew is taking place: sound, lighting and video technicians, stagehands, builders... Eight or nine of them, several speaking at the same time as the tone becomes increasingly aggressive.

CREW

Three nights in a row and nobody tells us about the change this morning... Anne-Marie needs to get on his case ... Are you kidding? She's on his side... And Makaver, nobody tried to get him to... Okay, okay, I know, he's hopeless, doesn't care about anything anymore.... It's all a joke for him! Anyway, Brits always bust my balls... Stark's American!... Anyway, Americans always bust my...

CHARLÈNE (YOUNG SOUND TECH)

And to think the guy Jean-Jacques is playing gets arrested for siding with the miners' union!

PIERRE (MIDDLE AGED STAGEHAND)

(rolling a cigarette...
or a joint?)

Cool! Stark will understand when we go on strike.

CHARLÈNE

Yep, but we have to talk to him first. He's kind of on another planet, it could be that he doesn't even know that we're being...

MANU

I'll go talk to him. We're buds.

PIERRE

Fine, but... Who's the CGT delegate here?

LIGHTING TECH

Good question!

CHARLÈNE

Jesus Christ, guys, it's me! And I'm probably the only one in this place who's up to date on their dues...

Silence. No one contradicts her.

MANU

You speak English?

CHARLÈNE

Yeah, I... I can. I do.

MANU

OK then, we'll go see him together.

Assorted sounds of assent in the assembly.

CUT TO:

8 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, SEATS/STAGE

8

Stark seated in the first row with Julien. In front of them: a table set with lamps and a disorder of paper. Some desultory noise (tuning?) from the band at the back of the stage... Stark claps his hands.

STARK

(loud)

Everyone? I want to have another crack at the train scene now.

JULIEN

(louder)

Everybody, it's going to be Act 1, scene ii again! Jean-Jacques and the miners in the train.

Two musicians put their instruments down to join Bigot and Bouchard center stage and form a circle around Jean-Jacques whose head rises above theirs.

STARK

Take it away, chérie. Go!

FAUDOT

(to the imaginary audience)

Carson Clay. Sixteen years old. Fills his lungs with the heady air of workers' solidarity and joins the men climbing aboard the box car. He's removed his collar and tie, thrown them with his suit jacket into the bushes, and donned a floppy fishing hat, the better to fit in with...

BOUCHARD

(cutting her off)

So kid, you on strike or playing hooky?

JEAN-JACQUES

On strike. We have to... have to draw the line somewhere.

BOUCHARD

Well well, the kid's drawing a line! Against what, kid?

JEAN-JACQUES

Why... against tyranny!

BOUCHARD

Good news, fellas, if they're sending out green stuff like this to infiltrate, I gotta guess we're doing pretty good. This one...

(having some trouble articulating)

They must've scraped the barrel... the bottom of the barrel to get this one.

FAUDOT

Carson Clay. Doesn't like the man's insolent tone, but he hasn't understood enough of what the man has said to be able to formulate a proper riposte

BIGOT

Well, how you like that! Old...
Good old...

JULIEN

Good old Jack!

BIGOT

(under his breath)
Fuck off...
(louder)
Good old Jack's brung his wife along
for the ride!

Looking to his left, looking to his right, Carson doesn't see any women, doesn't realize he's the butt of this joke... and draws a couple laughs from the miners.

BIGOT (cont'd)

Hey Jack, you gonna share this girl with us? Hell, I ain't been to get myself sluiced since Molly B'Damn herself got put out to pasture.

BOUCHARD

Shut up, Hank, you, you...
You're drunk.

STARK

Simon! Just so there's no confusion here: he's the one who's drunk, not you! You know that, don't you?

BOUCHARD

Yeah yeah... I know.
(trying to speak more clearly)
Shut up, Hank. You are drunk.

It's hardly better. The man appears too drunk to play a man who isn't.

STARK

Jesus!

Jean-Jacques and Bigot look towards Stark.

STARK (cont'd)
 (smoldering)
*It's three in the afternoon, and he's
 already fucking...*

JULIEN
 (quietly)
*It's because of the lunch, the
 wine in the lunch.*

STARK
*Of course, we're in France, they can't
 consume food without boozing it up.*

JULIEN
*Maybe he can't... I don't know... So?
 (Stark says nothing)
 I translate? Three in the afternoon
 and he's fucking...*

STARK
*Yeah, translate...
 (a dry chuckle)
 Or don't, Bud, just fire the fuckhead.*

JULIEN
 (nodding towards the stage)
Fire the...?

STARK
 (caustic, rubbing his eyes)
*Dude! Can't you see I'm just having
 fun? We're all just having fun here,
 no? No fucking reason to fucking behave
 like professionals, or like this is
 anything fucking important like art!
 (making an effort to
 calm down)
 That's three fuckings in one shot, enough
 for now... Jay Jay? Can we do this? How
 'bout a nice big Carson Clay Yes...*

JEAN-JACQUES
 (nodding)
 Yes.

Stark starts clapping energetically.

STARK
*Fabulous! Bravo! One more time...
 Jay Jay? One more time, please, and
 we're off to the races!*

JEAN-JACQUES

(impassive)

Yes.

BIGOT

Yes? She said yes? She thinks I'm drunk?

STARK

OK, Flo, I do not want to have to say this again: you are drunk, he is sober, get it? Please let me hear that you get it!

BIGOT

(a tad lost)

I know, but I...

JULIEN

You're supposed to be drunk, but you don't seem like you are.

BIGOT

I got it, damn it! But the problem...

STARK

Let's go, everybody! Time to start acting. Flo drunk, Simon sober! Not the inverse and really not that complicated, guys. You can do it, I know you can do it... She said yes oui, Flo?

BIGOT

Yes? She said yes? She thinks I'm drunk?

JEAN-JACQUES

No, but... I... You... You can go to hell.

More laughter from the miners.

BIGOT

Hey! You wanna repeat that?

Silence. Faudot, who'd started looking at her phone when tensions began to rise, has missed her cue...

STARK

Holy fucking Jesus, this is not my day. Is she drunk too?

JULIEN

Francine, are you drunk too?

Stark bursts out laughing, truly amused.

STARK

Oh Bud... I didn't mean for you...

FAUDOT

(more irritated than sorry)

Sorry...

BOUCHARD

(in perfect English)

I'm not drunk, OK? I'm tired, just tired. With the hours we're working...

FAUDOT

(cutting him off)

And yet you gathered that he was referencing you when he said what he just said, didn't you?

BOUCHARD

But I... Why is she...

STARK

Enough, everybody! *Shut the fuck up!*

Silence.

STARK (cont'd)

Bud? Your turn.

JULIEN

Enough, everybody... Shut up!

STARK

Thank you... Madame? A drop of spittle?

FAUDOT

A minuscule drop of the man's spittle, launched with the word *that*, touches the boy's cheek. Carson fights off the impulsion to raise a finger to the place where his skin has been defiled, sees himself delivering a right hook to the drunks's jaw instead.

BOUCHARD

That's enough. Leave it, Jack.

JULIEN (OFF)

Hank!

BOUCHARD

(under his breath)

Asshole...

(louder)

Leave it, *Hank*. And kid, you can walk back to Wallace. This ain't not for... This... Ain't for you all this.

JEAN-JACQUES

No. I want to be there.

BOUCHARD

(trying harder not to slur)

That's... That's enough! You get off this train now like a big boy, you're gonna like it a lot more than gettin' yourself throw'd off.

With the violin like a train's whistle, the band picks up "I Envy The Snake".

ELLIPSE

9 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, SEATS

9

Stark listening, rapt, nodding slowly in time with the music as Manu et Charlène appear.

MANU

Cheers, mate!

Stark raises his index finger to say *wait, listen...* and the song closes with an exquisite bandoneon solo.

STARK

(moved)

*Wow... That was beautiful.
Wasn't that beautiful, guys?*

CHARLÈNE

(equally moved)

It really was, yes.

MANU

*We, like, need to talk to you
about the hours.*

STARK

The... howers?

MANU

The hours, the times for working.

CHARLÈNE

The overtime, James. There's overtime everyday now. It's not...

MANU

It's not fucking legal, you know?

STARK

Ah... So you want to work less...

CHARLÈNE

We want legal hours, overtime included.

STARK

And legal hours, what would they be?

CHARLÈNE

The hours in our contracts, you can ask Anne-Marie to know. She knows.

STARK

And what happens if those hours are not enough to get the job done?

MANU

Your problem, man.

STARK

Really? It doesn't matter if we can't get the job done?

MANU

This is France. We have syndicates for defending the workers, you know? Like the miners in your spectacle.

CHARLÈNE

We don't want to fight about this, we just want you to know that we can't accept it going this way every day.

STARK

So seriously, you want me to not finish the job?

CHARLÈNE

We want you to do the job and respect the people working here. You can't oblige them to sacrifice their lives...

MANU

*I tell you, mate, it's your problem,
not ours. We're working for the
salary, you know?*

CHARLÈNE

*And like Carson Clay we are not agreed
with the exploitation of the workers.*

STARK

(chuckles)

*Touché! You got me there, Chuck.
Bravo!*

CHARLÈNE

Bravo?

STARK

*Well yes, you make a very good point.
Check and mate, no?
(turning towards the stage)
All right... Madame? Let's hear you!*

JULIEN

*(loud, so loud it makes
Charlène jump)*

Cécile? We're ready for you now!

Charlène and Manu turn towards the stage, give each other a look, and leave.

10 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE

10

The band playing "I Envy the Snake" once again.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

*I freed him from the fetters for
which he now seems to be longing...*

STARK

*Hold on. Your mike, Madame... Hey
Chuck? How 'bout a mike for Madame!*

CHARLÈNE

Sorry! It's coming!

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

(tapping her lapel mike)

There it is, it works.

The hum of a lively conversation going on in the musicians' corner. One of them erupts in laughter, drawing a black look from de Saint-Frère.

JULIEN

SILENCE !

The one who laughed - the bassist - appears to reply, mouthing something like yeah, fuck off...

STARK

Musique, s'il vous plaît.

And the band picks up the tune once more.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

I got him out of a trap and now he wants to go back! Worse, he no longer confides in...

STARK

Madame, you're not meant to be talking to us, you're talking to yourself. Say it's a movie, darling, and let the mike do the job.

De Saint-Frère stares at her feet. A sign of incomprehension? Vexation? Hard to tell.

JULIEN

You're talking to yourself, not to us. As if it were a film, let the mike do the job.

STARK

The same thing for the song - *you're talking to yourself, and we're talking blues here, Rachel's blues, you know? - "The Lament of Rachel Donnelly."*

The band replays the intro...

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

I got him out of a trap and now he wants to go back. Worse, he no longer confides in me. I was once his best friend, now he can hardly bear to look me in the eye.

11 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, FOYER/THEATER

11

With the music and de Saint-Frère's voice in the background, Anne-Marie, done for the day, crosses the foyer with Edward on her laser-leash, goes into the theater - where the music's volume triples - smiles as Edward escapes her control and trots straight to his master who, eyes fixed on the scene playing out, doesn't even look up as the dog hops onto the seat next to him to watch and listen... as de Saint-Frère sings:

DE SAINT-FRÈRE (OFF)

To think I saw him born,
 this forlorn Adonis
 To be pricked by such a thorn
 would be... oh so delicious

As for Anne-Marie, she takes a seat just behind Stark and immediately ruffles his hair. It's a spontaneous, slightly daring, almost intimate gesture... Stark doesn't turn around, but his gaze drops for an instant as he passes his right hand over his left shoulder as if reaching for her... Anne-Marie raises a hand, seems about to take his in hers... then backs down, shaking her head slowly, annoyed with herself... as the music builds in intensity. Listening, moved, she decides to act, but just as she raises her hand again, Stark withdraws his.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE (OFF) (cont'd)

From tingles in the day to whispers at night
 I make my way longing, longing for his light
 With candles burning and counting sheep
 I curse the yearning that won't let me sleep

Never ever knew how to give in,
 Always hungry, I wanted it all
 But now I'd dance and bend for him,
 play a courtesan in his thrall

To savor any favor he gave me,
 I'd sign on with parson's squad
 For a single bite of his flesh,
 Oh, I'd sell my soul to God
 To enmesh him in my web, Lord...
 I'd sell my soul to God

DISSOLVE TO:

12 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE

12

The music transitions to triple time as the rest of the cast and several members of the crew, in costume, come on stage to dance a waltz.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Is it the curve of his arm
or only the moon burning above?
Is it the scent of his hair
or truly my heart churning with love?

He puts fire in my flesh,
shoots desire down my back
His voice tears at my soul
while his gaze draws me in

Oh my body betrays me
and my blood's running black
How I envy the snake that knows...
knows how to shed its skin

Then back to 4/4 and a brief instrumental with the beginning of CLOSING CREDITS...

DE SAINT-FRÈRE (cont'd)

To think I saw him born,
this forlorn Adonis
To be pricked by such a thorn
would be... oh so delicious

He's the wind that stokes the fires
of the pyres of my pain
He'll never dry my tears
or bring to me a cooling rain
Practiced in the art of arson,
despite himself, my Carson
is a soul slap of adversity
The shiver whispering... inside of me

I never knew how to crawl,
never ever could ever cow
but the snake that knows how to molt,
oh how I envy him now
Still I swear by all the gods
and my dead husband's memory
that if he gave in to this sin
Carson Clay would belong to me
Carson Clay would belong to me...
For all eternity.

EPISODE 6

- 1 INT. MORNING. ANNE-MARIE'S BEDROOM, BED 1
She's sleeping.
- 2 INT. MORNING. STARK'S BEDROOM, BED 2
He's sleeping... He opens his eyes, picks up his watch from the nightstand, puts it back just as quickly and grabs his phone, stares unfocused at the screen for a moment... then puts it back down.
- 3 INT. MORNING. ANNE-MARIE'S BEDROOM, BED 3
She's sleeping.
- 4 INT. MORNING. STARK'S BEDROOM, BED 4
He closes his eyes. Turns over. Pulls the covers up to his chin. Pushes the covers back down. Turns over again. Looks once more at his watch. Picks up once more his phone, scrolls, clicks on a number, holds the phone to his ear.
- 5 INT. MORNING. ANNE-MARIE'S BEDROOM, BED 5
She's sleeping.
- 6 INT. MORNING. STARK'S BEDROOM, BED 6
He puts his phone back down. Stares at the ceiling.
- 7 INT. MORNING. ANNE-MARIE'S BEDROOM, BED 7
Her telephone alarm sounds - "Roadrunner" by The Modern Lovers: *One, Two, Three, Four, Five, Six...* Without opening her eyes, she grabs it, hits *snooze* to cut the song off, disables airplane mode, wraps herself up in her covers, and... her telephone rings. Eyes still closed, she answers.

ANNE-MARIE

(husky)

Yes...

(clears her throat)

Yes, hello?

8 INT. MORNING. STARK'S BEDROOM, BED

8

STARK

(caught off guard, sits up
at once)

Oh... Auntie M, you're awake, I
didn't... Good morning, it's... me.

(silence)

Me, James. No, nothing's wrong,
I was just thinking I'd... Just
checking in, but maybe it's a
little too... Oh...

We hear a second round of *One, Two, Three, Four, Five, Six...*

STARK (cont'd)

(pulling his phone from
his ear)

*What's that? Sounds like Jonathan
Richman.*

ANNE-MARIE (OFF)

(telephone voice)

Yes... *The Modern Lovers.*

STARK

I love that song.

9 INT. MORNING. ANNE-MARIE'S BEDROOM, BED

9

ANNE-MARIE

(eyes half open)

Me, I hate it.

STARK (OFF)

(telephone voice)

You hate it?

ANNE-MARIE

It's my alarm. I hate to wake up.

STARK (OFF)
 (telephone voice)
*Oh, yeah, I thought... Shit, so
 I did wake you up!*

ANNE-MARIE
*No. Maybe. I don't know... It
 was time.*

STARK (OFF)
 (telephone voice)
Then you don't hate me?

ANNE-MARIE
No James. I only hate Jonathan Richman.

STARK (OFF)
 (telephone voice)
That's a relief.

ANNE-MARIE
Why you are calling? Nothing is wrong?

STARK (OFF)
 (chuckles, telephone voice)
*No, I just... I don't know. I guess I
 wanted to say good morning and that I
 was thinking... was thinking...*

ANNE-MARIE
Of me, James?

10 INT. MORNING. STARK'S BEDROOM, BED 10

STARK
 (a little taken aback)
Oh... Yes... Of you, Anne-Marie.

CREDITS MUSIC ("Roadrunner")

CREDITS

11 INT. MORNING. ANNE-MARIE'S APARTMENT 11

Anne-Marie, in the t-shirt that serves as nightie, tries with some difficulty to choose her clothes for the day under the watchful eye of Edward.

12 EXT. DAY. STREETS OF PARIS 12

Stark, deep in thought - hair nicely slicked back for a change and wearing his best white shirt and gray trousers) - is walking down a Parisian street.

13 INT. DAY. ANNE-MARIE'S APARTMENT 13

Baggy jeans, a dress, a skirt, skinny jeans... The winner! Then a black satin blouse... too wrinkled. Opting for the hot shower steam-with-vigorous-hand-smoothing method, she makes it more or less wearable.

14 EXT. DAY. STREETS OF PARIS 14

Stark takes his ringing telephone out of his pocket and answers... Features slightly darkening, he nods, speaks, attempts a smile, hangs up, looks down, continues on his way... Arrives at the Voltaire:

CREDITS END along with (abruptly) the MUSIC

15 THE VOLTAIRE 15

In front of the Voltaire, Stark see a woman and a little girl.

GIRL
(crying out)
Papa? *Papa!*

The girl (**Aida**) runs to Stark who bends down to take her in his arms and lift her up.

STARK
My little animal!

Without putting the girl down, he and the girl's mother - **Manon** - kiss each other on the cheeks.

MANON
She wanted to surprise you. Looks to me like she did.

STARK
(making a gender mistake)
Yes, I am **surprise**.

AIDA
 (laughing at his mistake)
Surprise... Are you a girl, Papa?

STARK
 (another gender mistake)
 And you, aren't you **un étudiant**?

AIDA
 (laughing again)
Un étudiant! Sure Papa.
 (doing a man's voice with a
 cliché American accent)
 I'm **un étudiant** at the university.

MANON
 Your daughter's in CM2 now, Jimmy.
 She's an **écolière**.

STARK
 OK, but... *Don't **écolières** have to go
 to **école**?*

MANON
*She wanted to see you. You've been
 in France for over a month already!*

STARK
It's been crazy here.

MANON
*Of course. You're working, Jimmy.
 When is working not crazy for you?*

STARK
*I was hoping you'd come for the
 rehearsals.*

MANON
*Well, I can't today, that's for
 sure and... I told you, I'll do all
 I can for the text, but I won't be
 part of the team, won't get caught
 up in the usual drama and bullshit.*

STARK
What bullshit? My bullshit?

MANON
*Your theater bullshit, yes. Never
 satisfied, always finding it
 impossible to be... happy. The
 drama... It's exhausting.*

STARK

OK, but you know what? I'm a bit happy at the moment. You might appreciate that.

MANON

There's a first time for everything, I guess...

(switches to French)

Keep it that way if your can, it would be better for you, better for everyone. But you might also think about coming to visit your daughter.

STARK

I was going to come down as soon as...

MANON

I know, I know... Anyway, I had this conference, and we thought you'd be...

STARK

I am, I am...

AIDA

Surprise, Papa ?

STARK

*Very happily **surprise**, my little animal.*

MANON

And don't worry, we have a nice hotel room.

AIDA

Super nice - two beds, a TV, and a little fridge!

MANON

But I can't just leave her there and she'd be bored to death if she comes with me to Jussieu. Here...

(nodding towards the theater)

She can see what you're doing.

STARK

(not really convinced)

Yeah... Yeah, so...

MANON

And then maybe we could have dinner together tonight.

STARK

Uh huh...

AIDA

Where's Edward, Papa? I want to see Edward!

STARK

Oh, he.. He's...

And at that very moment, Edward comes running up to them. First greeting his master, he pulls up in front of Aida, eyes her curiously as she falls to her knees with open arms... then jumps on her tail wagging.

AIDA

You see that, Papa? He knows me!

Shortly after the dog, it's Anne-Marie, laser in hand, who arrives to discover this little family now along with Makaver coming out of the theater to cheek-kiss Manon as if they were old friends.

MANON

(turning towards Anne-Marie)
Good morning.

ANNE-MARIE

Yes, good morning.

STARK

Anne-Marie.

MANON

I gathered that, Jimmy. Pleased to meet you. I'm Manon.

ANNE-MARIE

Manon, the famous co-author and phantom translator?

MANON

The same.

ANNE-MARIE

I'd seriously started to wonder if you were a real person.

They shake hands.

MANON

We're only here for a night, but I was hoping it would be OK if the little one stayed here for the day.

MAKAVER

But of course. Never enough youth in this joint full of fossils...

ANNE-MARIE

Said the oldest fossil.

MAKAVER

... and sorely lacking in pretty girls!

ANNE-MARIE

Yeah right...

(stern)

As for this pretty girl, well, we will allow her to stay the day, but on one condition: that she works. This is not a summer camp.

(handing the laser to Aida)

She'll have to take care of Edward.

AIDA

(raising a fist)

Yes!

16 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, FOYER AND THEATER

16

Anne-Marie and Stark walk through the foyer with Edward and Aida running ahead. Obvious tension between the two adults, dialogue in hushed tones...

ANNE-MARIE

Did you know she was coming?

STARK

Who?

ANNE-MARIE

Your wife.

STARK

Not my wife.

ANNE-MARIE

... And your daughter. Or is she too not your daughter.

STARK

*She... We said she was my daughter.
It was something we decided, so she
is my daughter, but in truth, it's...
It's a long story Anne-Marie.*

ANNE-MARIE

*You are a man with many long stories
I think.*

As Aida and Edward scamper into the theater, the two adults come to a halt at the entrance.

STARK

*Manon lives in Poitiers, professor of
dramaturgy at the university there.*

ANNE-MARIE

You have said she is a French friend.

STARK

She is.

ANNE-MARIE

*But you have not said she is your wife
or ex-wife or I don't know.*

STARK

None of the above. Friend.

ANNE-MARIE

And lover.

STARK

Briefly. Very briefly, yes.

ANNE-MARIE

She knows Makaver?

STARK

*She does, yes. She's how he contacted
me, the go-between. In fact, I think
it was her idea first. We wrote this
play together well before Aida was
born and until this connection with
Makaver was made, I thought I'd never
get to do it.*

ANNE-MARIE

Makaver... Your savior.

STARK

Oui, Auntie M, my savior. It does feel a little like a miracle now after so long, but I can't stop thinking of how it's happening too late, really, too late for Donny to ever see it.

ANNE-MARIE

Donny, the music guy.

STARK

Donald Jarvis. The idea for the play actually came from a couple of his songs - he had family involved in those Idaho mining wars, but also a thing for Stendhal. This was his baby, and he'll never... He was old, but it was Covid that got him. I'll be wanting to dedicate the show to him in the program if that's OK.

Entering the theater, they continue their discussion walking slowly down the aisle towards the stage where the band is in the middle of an intense improvisation.

ANNE-MARIE

All the same... It's bizarre that you never have told me about the little one. I mean, I have thought there is perhaps children in your life, but not so little and not so French!

STARK

It's not like I was hiding it, Anne-Marie. Why would I? There's much you don't yet know about me and much I don't know about you!

ANNE-MARIE

(softening a little)

Well... Yes, but...

(putting out feelers)

Do you want to know more about me?

Walking across the stage during the last part of this dialogue, the sounds of a boisterous gathering - laughter, cheers... and a dog barking - mix in with the music being played.

17 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, BACKSTAGE

17

In the green room, Edward is on the table, poised motionless between the coffee machine and a basket of madeleines before a little audience of actors and crew. On the dog's nose sits a half-madeleine. Next to the table, Aida, a hand raised as if to say *stop*, is directing this canine performance.

AIDA
(solemn)
Wait, boy... Wait...

The dog waits, concentrated.

AIDA (cont'd)
OK!

The dog flips the half-madeleine into the air, catches it, and gobbles it down in a single shot. Applause.

AIDA (cont'd)
Good boy!

STARK
(in the doorway, with a
big smile)
Good boy, but bad girl.

AIDA
Why bad girl?

STARK
*You can do that with his treats or a
bit of meat or bread, but Edward
doesn't eat sweet things. If he did,
he'd have made a meal of you a long
time ago.*

AIDA
But he loves madeleines, Papa!

STARK
*That's because he doesn't know that
sugar's bad for dogs, honey.*

AIDA
(for the gallery)
You're bad for dogs!

STARK
Very funny.

AIDA
 (with an American accent)
 You're very funny.

A smattering of uneasy laughter.

STARK
 I know, I know, so... *Off the table,*
Edward. Down!

Edward obeys.

AIDA
 (looking for a fight)
 You're mean.

STARK
 Not mean, *my little animal. Just*
someone who knows a table is no place
for a dog and Edward knows that too. No
 tables and no madeleines, agreed?

AIDA
 (under her breath)
 And no... Papas.

Anne-Marie, though still a little shook-up by the morning's revelations, steps around the aggravation Stark has caused her to come to his aid.

ANNE-MARIE
 Time for us to get to work, Aida, but
 later, I hope you'll show me more of
 Edward's tricks? I had no idea he was
 so clever!

AIDA
 I know, he doesn't look like it,
 but he's very intelligent.

STARK
 Very very intelligent. That's true.
 OK, let's go! Where's Julien? Bud?

JULIEN
 (just outside the door)
I am here.

STARK
What's he doing there?

DE SAINT-FRÈRE
 He's afraid of dogs.

Which gets a good laugh.

STARK
(nodding towards his dog)
Afraid of *that*, Bud?

JULIEN
No, it's the smoke.

STARK
Yeah, they smoke like chimneys here. Anyway, let's go... Act III, scene one - Madame's big song!

Stark, Julien, de Saint-Frère and several others go out. Charlène and the lights technician, **Brice**, tarry a moment in front of the coffee machine.

BRICE
Anyone happen to notice that he kind of seems to understand French?

CHARLÈNE
More than we thought, but he doesn't like speaking it because it puts him in an inferior position... He wants to control everything.

BRICE
Well, it kind of sucks.

CHARLÈNE
Why?

BRICE
Some of the stuff we've said when he's around? He might have understood.

CHARLÈNE
I don't know... He tunes out sometimes. I've already wondered if he has a selective ear or something.

BRICE
In the middle of work when he's super concentrated, yeah, but other times? When we mean him, we've been calling him stuff like *Burger King* or *Trumpette* as if he weren't there... Except that he was there, you know?

CHARLÈNE

Yeah, I do. Guess you'll have to go backslang when he's around.

18 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE/SEATS

18

Heading for her office, Anne-Marie crosses the stage where de Saint-Frère and the band are working on another song :

"Such a lot of devils,"
that's what the papers say -
"They've gone on strike for shorter hours
and some increase in pay.
They left the camps the lazy tramps,
they all walked out as one.
They say they'll win the strike
or put the bosses on the bum..."

She's just about to exit when Julien catches up with her.

JULIEN

Anne-Marie ?

ANNE-MARIE

(snaps)

What?

JULIEN

I wanted to ask you if...

(intimidated)

It was just to ask you if...

ANNE-MARIE

What? Something else I have to fix,
Julien? What a surprise! An emergency?

JULIEN

Non, it's just...

ANNE-MARIE

Maybe it's something that can wait. Is
that possible? I bet that's possible.

JULIEN

(lets it go - she's
clearly not in the mood)

It is, yeah.

ANNE-MARIE

(forcing a smile)

Wonderful. I'll see you later.

19 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, ANNE-MARIE'S OFFICE

19

Much later in the day... Anne-Marie stares into space, stares at her computer screen, stares into space, picks up her phone, writes an SMS that appears on the screen:

**SORRY ABOUT EARLIER, I WAS A BIT *&!^%\$*!...
TO MAKE UP FOR THAT AND ALSO ANSWER YOUR
QUESTION, HOW 'BOUT I BUY YOU A DRINK?**

She hits *send*. Waits. Does not like waiting. Does not like her life today. *Ding*... An SMS. She reads it.

ANNE-MARIE

(dumb doofus male voice)

OK. Cool.

(suave male voice)

Thank you, Anne-Marie, I'd like that.
where would you like us to meet?

She writes a second SMS that appears on the screen :

IN THAT CASE, LET'S SAY L'ARÉA AT 9... KISS!

She sends. Waits. *Ding*...

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)

(dumb doofus male voice)

GOT IT. SEE YOU THERE.

(normal voice)

Not even an exclamation point!

She sends a last SMS that appears on the screen:

**YOU ALONE, PLEASE. REALLY DON'T FEEL LIKE
SEEING PEOPLE TONIGHT.**

20 INT. EVENING. L'ARÉA RESTAURANT, BAR

20

Anne-Marie is starting on her third vodka martini and feeling much better, the disgruntled mien of the previous scene has given way to that of a relaxed, perhaps even happy, woman as she chats with the man behind the bar. At her feet, Edward appears to be sleeping... *Ding*... A text message on her phone.

ANNE-MARIE

Of course he's late.

BARMAN

Ah... That's the way it is with guys.

ANNE-MARIE

He's not a guy, I mean not *my* guy,
just a young assistant at the theater
with whom I... And the workaholic
director we're stuck with at the
moment has no respect for, you know...
It's like overtime city these days.

21 INT. EVENING. L'ARÉA RESTAURANT, BAR

21

Anne-Marie, well past tipsy now, is bent over her phone writing an SMS. Hits *send*. Waits. *Ding...* Reads. A smile further softens her features. She's starting to write a reply when Julien arrives.

ANNE-MARIE

Glad you could make it!

JULIEN

Make what?

ANNE-MARIE

Julie, really, your English... Not quite there yet. It's an expression, something like, thrilled that you could honor us with your presence... *jerk.*

JULIEN

It was James.

ANNE-MARIE

I know, I just...
(nodding at her telephone)
When is it not James? But didn't he have a family dinner?

JULIEN

He did, but that's not why we called it a day. What made that finally happen was Charlène and some others just saying *stop, that's enough, we're going home now.*

ANNE-MARIE

Ah, direct action. That's what you have to do with bastards like that, otherwise... One is *not coming out of the hotel.*

Julien can hardly miss the bitterness in her tone, but he can also see she's in a better mood now... which might reassure him, though, as usual, his face reveals little.

JULIEN

Tomorrow we're starting at noon.

ANNE-MARIE

Oh, you lazy asses!

JULIEN

But we're supposed to have lunch before.

ANNE-MARIE

And it'll be up to you to crack the whip. That's a bitch. Everybody's going to end up hating you, poor boy.

JULIEN

They already do, Anne-Marie.

ANNE-MARIE

Well, that's not fair. He's the one people should hate.

JULIEN

They make little remarks here and there, but for the actors...

ANNE-MARIE

He's got 'em all wrapped around his little finger, I know. Nothing but quislings at the Voltaire!

JULIEN

Actually, I think it's more... The work he's doing, it's, like, something and people are getting that.

ANNE-MARIE

Oh my god, you too, you drink ze Kool-Aid, Julie? Marry him, if you love him so much! Who cares? No me. Not anybody.

(looking down)

Isn't that right, Eddie? We don't fucking care anymore than the year forty!

(looking back at Julien)

What are you drinking?

JULIEN

Uh... I wouldn't mind eating something? Don't you want to eat something?

ANNE-MARIE

(big smile)

Oh là là, eat? Pfft! You are so uncool, Julie, it's... Did nobody ever tell you how uncool you are?

JULIEN

Yes. You.

22 INT. NIGHT. L'ARÉA RESTAURANT, TABLE

22

At a table now... Anne-Marie is sipping a glass of wine in front of the salad she's hardly touched while Julien polishes off a plate of pasta, mopping up the last bits of sauce with a piece of bread.

ANNE-MARIE

(attempting a Tarbes accent)

Well well, looks to me like someone has quite the appetite tonight!

JULIEN

I was hungry. Yes.

ANNE-MARIE

All good?

JULIEN

Yeah, all good. And you?

ANNE-MARIE

Pfft...

Pondering the question, she eyes herself in the mirror behind Julien, shakes her head... puts down her glass.

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)

You know what? I don't feel so...
Wouldn't you say I look a bit pale?

She stands up suddenly rocking the table and heads for the restrooms followed by Edward.

JULIEN

(without conviction)

Edward? Uh, Edward, wait!

The dog ignores him, staying on Anne-Marie's heels... Julien looks down at his empty plate, raises his eyes to Anne-Marie's glass, picks it up and finishes it off. For the Brouilly? To keep Anne-Marie from drinking it? Perhaps both.

23 INT. NIGHT. ANNE-MARIE'S BUILDING, STAIRS/APARTMENT

23

Slowly, the two climb the stairs with Anne-Marie half-carried by Julien and Edward on their tail, then in front of them, circling his charge shepherd-like.

ANNE-MARIE

You don't really have to, you know.

JULIEN

(out of breath)

I actually do.

ANNE-MARIE

I can walk, Julie. I know very well how to walk, been doing it for years.

JULIEN

OK.

ANNE-MARIE

My whole life, in fact. Never had any problems in that area.

JULIEN

What floor?

ANNE-MARIE

Fourth! *How many more ?*

JULIEN

One more.

ANNE-MARIE

Shit, it's long, don't you think?
Hey, don't you think it's long?
(tightening her grip on him)
You're nice. Too nice... You
didn't really have to...

They reach her floor.

JULIEN

Your keys, Anne-Marie.

ANNE-MARIE

Really now! My keys? Why you little...
little devil, you! Why don't you just
kiss me while you're at it?

She gives him her bag. He opens it and starts digging around. Meanwhile, Edward takes a seat. Watches.

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)

Hey, I hope you realize you're entering a private domain there, the... intimacy. A man's hand deep inside a woman's purse, that's... that's... intimacy, you little...

Raising her face to his, she plants a wet kiss on the corner of his mouth.

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)

Pretty little devil, why don't you...

Coming up with the key, Julien opens the door. Anne-Marie pushes him inside, follows, and slams the door shut behind her.

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)

Why don't you want to kiss me?

JULIEN

You've been drinking, Anne-Marie. I don't think that's what you really...

ANNE-MARIE

Well shit, Julie, at least come and give me a hug!

(kicks off her shoes, starts to undress, struggles with her too tight jeans)

And help me with these fucking jeans.

She falls back on the bed and raises her legs for him to pull off her pants. He complies. It's not easy but they finally come off.

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)

Thank you, big fella. Now come here!

(Julien doesn't move)

Come on, what's the matter?

JULIEN

I already told you. You've been drinking.

ANNE-MARIE

Yeah, I've been drinking. So what?

JULIEN

Drinking too much. Maybe another time, but right now, I can tell you, it's not what you need.

ANNE-MARIE

(imitating his accent again)
Well well, the pretty little princess of
the South thinks she's Jimmy Stewart,
thinks she's gotta respect me or
something just because I'm shitfaced!

JULIEN

(nearing the end of his rope)
Yeah... Not to mention the taste of
vomit when you kissed me, Anne-Marie.

She erupts in peals of laughter. It *is* funny... But in
next to no time, her laughter has turns to sobs, serious
end-of-the-world sobs, a veritable purge, and Julien,
alarmed, has to do something. Sitting down on the bed, he
touches her shoulder and tries to take her hand. She
pushes him away, then sits up suddenly, wraps him in her
arms and pulls him down next to her...

ANNE-MARIE

(whispering between sobs)
Sorry... I'm sorry, Julien.

CUT TO:

24 NIGHT. ANNE-MARIE'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM

24

Much later. In the dark.

ANNE-MARIE

I mean it... I'm sorry.

JULIEN

I know.

ANNE-MARIE

It's like I really didn't want to
sleep alone tonight.

JULIEN

Yeah, I saw that.

ANNE-MARIE

It's stupid. I'm stupid. I can't
stop being stupid. I need to stop
being stupid.

JULIEN

Yeah, I mean... I don't know.

ANNE-MARIE

To think I could have, that I was all set to... you know? But if we reverse the roles, it's crazy, don't you think? If I were a man and you a woman, I could have... Jesus... Men are doing that all the time, but a woman, even if she wants to - and you'd have to say I wanted to - can't necessarily get what she wants. I mean, you'd have to also want it.

JULIEN

It would have to be consensual, yes.

ANNE-MARIE

Sexual assault, as they say, it's really a one-way street.

JULIEN

It is.

ANNE-MARIE

That's too bad.

JULIEN

It is?

ANNE-MARIE

I was joking, Julie.

JULIEN

Ah, I get it. I'm laughing inside now.

ANNE-MARIE

Good one, princess. You too, you're being funny.

JULIEN

Yep.

ANNE-MARIE

Well, it's about time.

JULIEN

Yeah, but... About *time*, could we please try to get some sleep now?

ANNE-MARIE

Sorry, yes, of course... Just one thing: you wanted to ask me something at the theater and I sent you packing

JULIEN

Yes.

ANNE-MARIE

What was the question?

JULIEN

I can't remember.

ANNE-MARIE

Come on, don't be a pain. What did you want to know?

JULIEN

(truly at the end of his rope)
I swear I have no idea.

ANNE-MARIE

So... Nothing very important.

JULIEN

No, nothing... nothing important.

CLOSING CREDITS SONG: "Saint Louis Blues"

DISSOLVE TO:

25 INT. DAWN. ANNE MARIE'S BUILDING, LANDING 25

Edward, curled up in front of Anne-Marie's door, sleeps peacefully on the doormat.

CLOSING CREDITS

26 INT. MORNING. ANNE MARIE'S BUILDING, LANDING 26

Madame Jamet, emerging from her apartment with Monarque for their morning walk, comes upon Edward who raises his head then jumps to his feet wagging his tail.

MME JAMET

Well, look at you, already up and ready to go. I'll just pop back in and get your leash.

Edward and Monarque say a happy hello to each other while Madame Jamet goes back into her place, then comes back out and attaches the leash to Edward's collar.

MME JAMET (cont'd)

All right, you lovebirds, tickle
time is over. Move it along, we've
got business to do!

And they're off for the first walk of the day.

FADE TO BLACK.

EPISODE 7

1 INT. MORNING. ANNE-MARIE'S BEDROOM, BED

1

Anne-Marie, half naked, sleeps more or less under the covers. Julien, half dressed, sleeps more or less on the covers... The doorbell rings. Julien opens his eyes and sits up.

JULIEN

Anne-Marie...

MUSIC

The doorbell rings again and Julien is off the bed in a flash, running to the bathroom. Anne-Marie opens her eyes, sits up, listens for a moment, gets up wrapping the ungainly duvet around her, goes to the door straining to hear the conversation on the other side... English.

CREDITS

ANNE-MARIE

Why are they... Shit... Edward! Edward?

(whispering)

Julien? Julien! Is Edward here?

It's obvious the dog is not there... There's a third *dring-dong*, somehow louder now - an act of aggression.

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)

Oh shit! I...

(clearing her throat)

I'm coming!

Stumbling over the duvet, she opens the door.

END CREDITS AND MUSIC

2 INT. MORNING. ANNE-MARIE'S BUILDING, LANDING

2

Standing there: Stark and Aida...

STARK

Auntie M! Sorry... I called but you didn't answer.

ANNE-MARIE

Yes, but... Why are you here?

STARK

*Why? Because you weren't in the
café, I was starting to worry.*

ANNE-MARIE

The café?

STARK

*(waving his telephone to
indicate an SMS exchange)
La Manille, where you wanted us to meet!*

AIDA

Where's Edward?

STARK

*Yeah, she was afraid she wouldn't
see Edward before leaving. Anyway,
we waited almost an hour and I was
starting to...*

AIDA

I drank two hot chocolates!

STARK

Are you OK? I was starting to worry.

ANNE-MARIE

I was, uh...

AIDA

I have to pee!

STARK

Could she use your bathroom?

ANNE-MARIE

(loud)

She needs to go to the toilet?

(louder still)

OK, yes, she'll go to the toilet now.

A couple feet from the door sits Julien's backpack that Anne-Marie pushes away with her foot as she lets Aida slip by her. The toilet's in its own little room across from the bathroom.

STARK

Why are you...

AIDA

(giggling)

Aye yai yai, pee pee!

(MORE)

AIDA (cont'd)
 (inside the apartment)
 Edward! Edward?

STARK
*Where's my dog? And why are you
 yelling and acting all strange?*

ANNE-MARIE
*It's the face of wood, James, I've
 got it bad. Last night I... I just...*

STARK
*You just what, Auntie M? You just
 forgot we had a date this morning?
 It was your idea!*

ANNE-MARIE
*Yes yes, I'm sorry, but I have to
 get dressed now!*

STARK
*That's true you do, and you're not
 inviting me in, and seriously,
 where the fuck is Edward?*

ANNE-MARIE
*He's... Just give me two seconds,
 I have to...*

She turns around, swearing to herself - shit, fuck, shit, fuck... - tosses the duvet, picks up one of the dresses - a nice one - that she'd tried on the day before, puts it on in two seconds glancing towards the bathroom, then back at the door, she goes barefoot out on the landing. We hear Aida flushing then slamming the toilet door.

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)
 (turning to shout)
 You can wash your hands in the
 kitchen, honey, the bathroom...
 it's having work done.

STARK
 Auntie M...

The fear in Anne-Marie's - the sudden impression that she's about to start crying - stops him short. Almost.

STARK (cont'd)
Just tell me what happened...

ANNE-MARIE
 Oh James... Madame Jamet, she...

She runs to Mme Jamet's door, but rings Brio's doorbell en route for no apparent reason.

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)
 Oh, what an idiot... I meant to
 ring at Madame, *you know...*
Jamet's place, but...

Just as Aida is back with them on the landing, Augustine opens the door at Brio's place.

AUGUSTINE
 Anne-Marie... James!
 (intrigued, then worried)
 ¿*Que pasa?*

ANNE-MARIE
 (fake cheerful)
 Hello, you!
 (whispers in her ear
 during their cheek kiss)
 You seen Edward?

AUGUSTINE
 (with a discreet shake
 of the head)
 Tss...

ANNE-MARIE
 That's it, I'm going to die.

STARK
 What are you saying Auntie M?
 What's going on?

ANNE-MARIE
 I am saying I am going to die,
 James. You are going to kill me.

STARK
 Why?!?

AIDA
 Where's Edward, Papa?

ANNE-MARIE
 (giving up)
 That's a very good question, Aida.

STARK
 Tell me what's going on!

AUGUSTINE
Who wants a coffee?

The ground floor door slams.

STARK
 (raising his voice)
Nobody wants a fucking coffee.

AIDA
 (a reprimand)
 Papa!

STARK
What we want is is for you to...

Movement downstairs. Feet climbing the stairs. The voice of Mme Jamet... And Edward who arrives at top speed, who jumps on Stark, then jumps on Aida who's not about to let him go. Anne-Marie leans back towards Augustine, shoots her a wide-eyed glance - *phew* - and wraps her friend in her arms...

ANNE-MARIE
 (very low)
 Fuck... I am not going to die. The gods
 are still on my side.

... as Mme Jamet arrives with Monarque.

MME JAMET
 (out of breath)
 Why... Why, there's a party on our floor!

AIDA
 (discovering Monarque)
 Oh, look how cute he is!

MME JAMET
 How cute *she* is. It's a girl, my
 belle. A pretty girl like you.

AIDA
 What's her name?

MME JAMET
 Monarque. And you?

AIDA
 Me?

STARK

Aida. Bonjour, madame. It's my daughter, her name is Aida.

MME JAMET

Ah... pretty name. Say, do I know you?

STARK

No, I...

MME JAMET

(to Anne-Marie and Augustine)

Is this your American? Edward's American?

ANNE-MARIE

Bulls eye.

AIDA

Monarque! *Come here, come Monarque!*

MME JAMET

She doesn't speak English, my belle.

AIDA

Come here, Monarque!

Aida taps the floor. Monarque approaches, wary but curious. Edward wags his tail, comes over to Monarque, sniffs her neck and she nudges him with her nose.

AIDA (cont'd)

Oh, it looks like love!

MME JAMET

Love? No, my belle, more like *insanity*. Those little monsters, they're crazy about each other.

AIDA

She's really too cute, Monarque.

Stark's phone rings. He answers, goes down a few steps to talk - voice low, cold, in English - then comes back up and hands the phone to his daughter:

STARK

Your mother... *She wants to talk to you.*

AIDA

Mama? There's another dog here and it's too cute! Yeah... OK... No no, that's fine. Yes, later!

Stark takes his phone back, starts to say something, discovers that Manon has already hung up.

STARK

Well well, looks like we get to keep Aida a little longer. Manon's not free until 1:00 and their train's at 2:00, so... It's another day at the theater for you, little girl.

AIDA

Yuck!

ANNE-MARIE

Why *yuck*?

MME JAMET

Yes, why *yuck*?

AIDA

The theater's boring. I'd rather play with Edward and Monarque.

MME JAMET

Why doesn't she just stay with us then? Two dogs for two girls, it's perfect!

STARK

I don't know... Is sure you don't mind, madame?

MME JAMET

No no, I don't mind.

ANNE-MARIE

Is that OK for you Aida? Can you stay with this nice lady?

AIDA

And these two pals, yes!

ANNE-MARIE

Well then... James, I'm sorry about, you know, but I must go to change and... We can meet at the Manille in five minutes. Please oh please? Is that OK?

STARK

(wearily)
Yeah yeah.

MME JAMET

Very well, let's go my belle,
You take the boy or the girl?

AIDA

Both!

MME JAMET

(laughing)

Both? Really? Say, do you happen
to like hot chocolate?

CUT TO:

3 INT. MORNING. ANNE-MARIE'S BUILDING, LANDING

3

Mme Jamet, Aida go into Mme Jamet's place. Stark,
telephone in hand still, heads down the stairs, and Anne-
Marie turns once more to Augustine.

ANNE-MARIE

I swear... I was this close to the
guillotine and I totally would have
deserved it, but I'm still here!
Super woman, that's me!

AUGUSTINE

Because of the dog? You didn't do
anything. He went for a walk, that's all.

ANNE-MARIE

Except that I didn't know that. Last
night, I sort of, uh... forgot him.

AUGUSTINE

Forgot him...

ANNE-MARIE

Yep, sort of left him outside.

AUGUSTINE

Really... So you were drunk.

ANNE-MARIE

Yep and... Oh my God, Julien!

She dashes to her half-open door.

AUGUSTINE

Julien?

ANNE-MARIE

Yeah, last night I was... And now
he is...

(opening the door wider)

All clear, you can come out now.

4 INT. MORNING. CAFÉ

4

Anne-Marie happy - relieved of a burden, hastily made up/
coiffed/dressed - is eagerly tucking into another tartine
slathered in jam that she's dipping into her grand crème.
Stark, also in a better mood, is enjoying the sight as he
sips his draft beer.

STARK

So... Why was I going to kill you?

ANNE-MARIE

I forgot.

STARK

No you didn't.

ANNE-MARIE

No I didn't.

STARK

*But you would probably prefer
not to have to tell me.*

ANNE-MARIE

*But I would probably prefer to not
have to tell you... yes, to tell
the truth.*

STARK

To tell the truth.

The phrase stops her in mid-bite. She nods. Touché, says
her nod.

STARK (cont'd)

You're cute.

ANNE-MARIE

I can be. Sometimes. I know.

STARK

*Should I worry about Aida with
that woman?*

ANNE-MARIE

No... I mean, she is old, a little bit diminished and sometimes she is forgetting things, but I think Aida can take care of her if anything happens... It's only a few hours.

STARK

Do you think I'm cute?

ANNE-MARIE

*(nonchalant, but pleased with where this is going)
You can be. I'll tell for sure after, when the work is done.*

STARK

Well, anyway... You're cute.

ANNE-MARIE

Perhaps yes, as you say. Perhaps cute, but also hopeless. I can't take care of nothing, James. Not myself, not a little girl, not even a dog, really not a dog.

STARK

I love the way you say perhaps.

5 INT. NOON. CHEZ MME JAMET

5

Mme Jamet and Aida are getting ready to take the dogs out for another walk as, her curiosity piqued by the rows of photos in the hallway, the girl stops to ask questions.

AIDA

Who are all these people? Do you know them?

MME JAMET

I knew them, yes.

AIDA

*(pointing at one of the photos)
Are those your children?*

MME JAMET

No, my belle, that's me.

AIDA

That's you?

MME JAMET

Yes, with my two sisters Simone and Marie-Jeanne, and my brother François.

AIDA

And the dog?

MME JAMET

Phébus.

AIDA

I don't like it when they have too much hair like that.

MME JAMET

Oh really?

AIDA

You can't even see his eyes.

MME JAMET

Poor thing. My father shot him.

AIDA

Shot him?

MME JAMET

He was sick. Very sick.

AIDA

But why shoot him? Was it contagious?

MME JAMET

No, dear. It was so he wouldn't have to suffer any more... I think. That's what they told us anyway.

AIDA

(pointing at another photo)
And there, is that you?

MME JAMET

On the nose!

AIDA

And that man, is that your son?

MME JAMET

No, that's... That's Ali, my friend. He was my friend.

AIDA
Your boyfriend?
(pointing at another photo)
Look, he's holding your hand there!

MME JAMET
True, he's holding my hand.

AIDA
Did you love him?

MME JAMET
Well, you... What's your name?

AIDA
Aida!

MME JAMET
Ah, that's a beautiful name...
Well, you're a curious one, Aida!

AIDA
It's just to know.

MME JAMET
You really want to know, to know
everything?

AIDA
Yes!

MME JAMET
Well then, I do believe I loved him,
yes.

AIDA
Where is he now?

MME JAMET
Who?

AIDA
Ali!

MME JAMET
Now?
(searches)
Sometimes I think that... but I...
(can't find)
That's enough questions for today...
Come on, it's time for the walk, up
to the mountain we go!

AIDA
The mountain?

MME JAMET
Yes, we're going to be climbing!

CUT TO:

6 INT. DAY. ANNE-MARIE/MME JAMET'S BUILDING, STAIRS 6

The old woman and the young girl go down the stairs led by a pair of dogs evidently thrilled to already be going out for another walk.

CUT TO:

7 EXT. DAY. BUTTE MONTMARTRE, STAIRS 7

The old woman and the young girl work their way - increasingly slowly - up the 222 steps that lead to the Sacré Coeur basilica. Half way up, Mme Jamet stops to catch her breath.

MME JAMET
Oh, my God...

Aida can't help but see that the old woman is already exhausted.

AIDA
We could just sit down on the grass for a while if you like. Or maybe even go back down... Don't you think?

MME JAMET
It's OK. It's a... a... Just need to take a little break here.

AIDA
But you...

MME JAMET
The day I can no longer climb this mountain is the day I should stop living. Come on, off we go! We're going to see some other dogs, you'll see how the other... How Albert, he...

AIDA
Edward.

MME JAMET

Edward, yes. You'll see how he'll be making a scene when he sees how they're all crazy about Monarque.

8 EXT. DAY. BUTTE MONTMARTRE, STAIRS

8

The quartet pauses once more. Mme Jamet puts a hand on Aida's shoulder.

AIDA

Can I take the leash off Edward?

MME JAMET

Edward?

AIDA

My dog! He'll stay with us no problem.

MME JAMET

Yes, let the little guy live. Life is so short, especially for dogs.

AIDA

Short? Why do you say that?

MME JAMET

How old are you?

AIDA

I'm nine.

MME JAMET

Well, if you were a dog, you'd already be old like me. Nine for a dog? Pretty damn old.

AIDA

That's sad!

MME JAMET

Of course it's sad. The world is sad. *Life* is sad, but we never ever get enough of it.

AIDA

And you, how old are you?

MME JAMET

Oh me, I'm... I don't even know anymore. A hundred? Fifty?

AIDA

A hundred and fifty years old?!?

MME JAMET

(impatient)

I don't know, I told you. What difference does it make? Come on now, let's go see the dogs!

Meanwhile, Edward's vigorously sniffing the grass.

AIDA

Come Edward, we're going to see the dogs!

MME JAMET

Look at that, it's nuts - your dog has to stop every three minutes to sniff and piss!

AIDA

I know, I saw that. Monarque doesn't?

MME JAMET

No, my belle, she was raised properly. And sniff, piss, sniff... That's really just a male thing.

9 EXT. DAY. BUTTE MONTMARTRE, SUMMIT

9

At last, the quartet comes to a halt in the square at the base of the Sacré Coeur. Mme Jamet hesitates, concentrates her thoughts, shakes her head, looks up, notices a couple with a dog heading off to the left and starts following them.

10 EXT. DAY. BUTTE MONTMARTRE, SQUARE NADAR

10

The two dogs become more animated and so does Aida as they arrive at the railing surrounding a little "dog park" - an oval enclosure about fifty meters long whose grassless terrain now hosts a dozen or so pets with their masters and mistresses seated on park benches and staring at their phones. Leaning on the upper fence, a group of Asian tourists are enjoying this canine spectacle which brings to mind a kindergarten playground at recess. Anarchy in Montmartre, short attention span mutts running wild.

AIDA

Awesome!

CUT TO:

In the dog park, one comical and/or dramatic skit after another is playing out: there's a Jack Russell racing an adolescent French bulldog who keeps tripping and tumbling over himself as they zig-zag over the dirt, then that same Jack Russell turns into a predator and starts trying to hump a shaggy mongrel much bigger than he and too old to pay him much attention... leaving the Jack Russell's embarrassed master to step in and separate the two. There's a haughty Dalmatian with no taste for gallivanting and a Border Collie who does make a few rounds with the pack before remembering that he's really too smart and too good-looking for any such childish games. Edward, in heaven, is trying to get to know everyone - bipeds included - while Monarque loiters near the bench where Aida and Madame Jamet have taken a seat.

MME JAMET

(to Monarque)

Go play with the others, you silly
goose!

AIDA

Does she know them?

MME JAMET

A little, but it seems that with Phébus
at home now, she doesn't much need
other dogs. One's enough for her.

AIDA

Phébus?

MME JAMET

Yes, the little guy that girl across
the hall has.

AIDA

You mean Edward?

MME JAMET

(impatient)

Yes, him.

AIDA

Ah, he sure looks happy to be here.

MME JAMET

Of course he is. He's young and...
He's a boy. Even with 'em cut off,
they have to keep going after it.

AIDA

Cut off? Going after what?

MME JAMET

Oh nothing... Complications. They
always like that, complications.

Just then, a man of a certain age approaches their bench.
Alone. Well dressed in the way people used to dress, in
the way Mme Jamet dresses. Mediterranean, North African
origins perhaps...

MAN

Good morning, ladies.

AIDA

(seeing that Mme Jamet
is not replying)

Good morning.

MAN

Might I sit down here?

Mme Jamet, still not looking at the man, reaches for
Aida's shoulder to pull her closer, making room for the
man just as Edward comes running up to throw himself into
Aida's legs and she squeals with laughter.

MAN (cont'd)

Is that your dog?

AIDA

Yes.

MAN

I've seen him here before. Very
nice-looking.

MME JAMET

(still not looking at the man)
Say thank you, my belle.

AIDA

Why?

MME JAMET

Because the gentleman paid you a
compliment.

AIDA

Oh, no!

(laughing)

He was talking about Edward !

MAN

(also laughing)

Very true, I was talking about Edward. Say, I've heard he's American. Is that true?

AIDA

Yes, he's my father's.

MAN

So he's a long ways from home, isn't he.

AIDA

Yeah, he's from New York. And you, do you have a dog?

MAN

No.

AIDA

Why do you come here?

MAN

(chuckling again)

Why?

AIDA

(doesn't care for that chuckle, doesn't see how what she said was funny)

If you don't have a dog, why do you come here? Just to look at other people's dogs?

MAN

Yes, and to see Madame Jamet as well.

AIDA

You know her?

MAN

I do.

AIDA

And Monarque too?

MAN

Sure.

(pats his thigh)

Come here, Monarque.

Monarque obeys. With a snappy jump, she's on the bench between Aida and the man who gives her a quick scratch behind the ears... Edward, not all that pleased with the sudden elevation of his sweetheart, scampers off to play some more with the gang.

AIDA
He's jealous.

MAN
Likely so. What's your name?

AIDA
Aida.

MAN
Aida. That's a beautiful name.

AIDA
(turning to Mme Jamet)
I should say thank you?

MME JAMET
Yes.

AIDA
Thank you, but... It wasn't me who chose that name. It was my mother.

MAN
(chuckling yet again)
There too, you're right. It's your mother who should be thanking me.

AIDA
And you, what's your name?

MAN
Me, I'm Ali.

Mme Jamet finally turns towards the man, fixes her eyes on him and the man - **Ali** - holds her gaze with little reserve and even a certain... tenderness.

DISSOLVE TO:

11 EXT. DAY. BUTTE MONTMARTRE

11

Mme Jamet, Aida, Ali and the two dogs are walking across the place du Tertre.

Mme Jamet, in the lead, exits the square, continues for a moment then turns left onto a street going downhill and... finds herself having to tug on the leash to keep a resistant Monarque moving forward.

MME JAMET

What's the matter with her?

AIDA

She doesn't want to go home.

MME JAMET

No, she likes going home.

ALI

Louise?

Mme Jamet doesn't answer him, continues going down.

ALI (cont'd)

Where are we going?

MME JAMET

Home!

ALI

You know what... I'm beginning to wonder if we're on the right side.

MME JAMET

(clearly disoriented)

What are you saying?

ALI

Your place, I believe it's on the other side, the other side of the butte.

AIDA

Yes, that's it, on the other side of the church!

Mme Jamet stops, looks around, sees Monarque headed in the opposite direction and her face lights up.

MME JAMET

That's right, princess, nothing to worry about - we're going home now.

And she takes off in the opposite direction with Monarque in the lead. Aida glances up at Ali who gives her a little wink.

CUT TO:

12 EXT. DAY. ANNE-MARIE/MME JAMET'S NEIGHBORHOOD 12

Mme Jamet, Aida and the two dogs turn onto Mme Jamet's street while Ali heads off in another direction.

CUT TO:

13 EXT. DAY. ANNE-MARIE/MME JAMET'S BUILDING 13

In front of the building: Anne-Marie and Manon are waiting next to a taxi

MANON

(moving in an instant from maternal concern to outright anger)
Did you get lost or what?

MME JAMET

(confused)
But... What time is it?

MANON

Really, this is... This is really too much!

She takes it upon herself not to say more out of respect for an older woman she doesn't know, but still turns her back immediately and pushes her daughter into the cab, her daughter who doesn't understand, who is anything but happy about the abruptness of this departure.

MANON (cont'd)

We're going to miss the train, Aida!

AIDA

Good! I don't want to go...

MANON

(teeth clenched)
You know perfectly well you have to.

AIDA

(in tears now)
But... But... Edward, Mama!

MANON

(climbing in next to her daughter, slamming the door)
The dog, Aida? Seriously?

CUT TO:

14 EXT. DAY. TAXI

14

From inside the departing taxi, we see Anne-Marie and Mme Jamet waving goodbye.

AIDA

Yes, and Monarque, and that lady
and Anne-Marie!

MANON

And why not your father while
you're at it?

AIDA

(more tears)

Yes, Papa, Mama! He wasn't there...

MANON

But you were with him this morning,
Aida. That was the plan.

AIDA

I don't like the plan! It's a dumb
plan! Where is he now?

MANON

At the theater of course. Doing his
job... He said you didn't want to go
there today.

CUT TO:

15 EXT. DAY. ANNE-MARIE/MME JAMET'S BUILDING

15

Anne-Marie and Mme Jamet watch the cab roll away. Close-up on Anne-Marie - no more at ease with children than she had been with dogs, but, as with Stark's dog, she'd developed a kind of... feeling for the child who just took off. She's sad, and can't help seeing that she's somehow once again failed when entrusted by Stark with one of his loved ones.

ANNE-MARIE

(to Mme Jamet)

Zero for two.

MME JAMET

(unleashing Edward)

Pardon me?

ANNE-MARIE

Two mess-ups in the same day. First,
I almost lost the dog, and then found
nothing better to do than than leave
that kid...

She can't continue, can't say she'd entrusted Aida to a
woman who...

MME JAMET

The little American girl? She's fine.
I wouldn't worry about her.

ANNE-MARIE

I already miss her.

MME JAMET

Me too. There's big life in that
little thing. What's her name?

ANNE-MARIE

Aida.

MME JAMET

Ah... Pretty name, that.

MUSIC: "Hello In There" (John Prine)

Close-up of Mme Jamet still trying to make sense of what
just happened, looking in the direction of the now
vanished taxi...

CLOSING CREDITS

DISSOLVE TO:

Wide shot of Mme Jamet back at the square Nadar followed
by another montage of the assorted dogs in the little
park sitting, galloping, fighting, frolicking... And Mme
Jamet on her usual bench with Monarque at her side.

FADE TO BLACK.

EPISODE 8

1 INT. MORNING. MAKAVER'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM

1

Makaver opens his eyes... Perched on his bed a couple feet from his head: two black cats - **Gloomy** and **Sunday** - staring at him.

MAKAVER

What?

The cats remain frozen; it's as if they were stuffed.

MAKAVER (cont'd)

What is it?

GLOOMY (OFF)

It's time.

SUNDAY (OFF)

Time to get up.

MAKAVER

Give me a fucking break, the alarm hasn't even rung yet.

SUNDAY (OFF)

It's time.

GLOOMY (OFF)

Time to get up.

MAKAVER

Don't tell me you're hungry!

GLOOMY AND SUNDAY (OFF-IN HARMONY)

We're hungry.

Makaver, in his satin burgundy pajamas, gets out of bed, steps into a pair of black leather slippers, dons a robe that matches his pajamas, takes three steps towards the door and... his clock radio starts up.

YOUNG MAN'S VOICE (OFF)

...awesome good times in a world of unparalleled sensations. Kartingapolis, in Noyaude-sur-Seine, the largest indoor go-cart track in the Val-d'Oise, welcomes you for adventures of every kind - individual coaching, birthday parties, seminars...

Followed by the eyes of his two cats who otherwise don't move a muscle, Makaver spins around, falls back on his bed, reaches for his 70s era clock radio, and...

*...or simply come along for a nice time
in a warm, friendly setting.
Kartingapolis, only ten minutes from...*

... cuts the sound. Lies still for a moment, sees that Gloomy and Sunday haven't moved, sits up with a groan to launch a half-sung dialogue with his two nemeses:

CREDITS MUSIC

MAKAVER

You callous carnivores, you whores depraved,
you harpies, furies, and shrews...

GLOOMY (OFF)

Who from the Dark Angel will not be saved

SUNDAY (OFF)

if our morning meal you do us refuse!

GLOOMY (OFF)

Our bowls are empty, we're starving to death,

SUNDAY (OFF)

and our litter box is a sandy turd pie

GLOOMY (OFF)

so foul and fetid, it smells like your breath...

MAKAVER

But I'm old and indebted, you're sucking me dry!

GLOOMY AND SUNDAY (OFF-IN HARMONY)

Oh boo hoo, you pussy, we really don't care
Get a move on, you wuss, it's time we were fed!
Chicken with gravy, chop chop, Makaver!
Get the fuck up, or we'll piss on your bed!

CREDITS

Makaver gets up once more and exits his bedroom. The two cats look at each other, Gloomy give her paw a couple licks, Sunday yawns, stretches, and begins to amble towards the edge of the bed.

2 INT. MORNING. MAKAYER'S APARTMENT

2

Makaver walks into the living room and we discover his apartment: dusty old France class, walls plastered with framed pictures and shelves bowed by the weight of hundreds of books. Crossing the room, he enters his tiny kitchen, bends over a cardboard box to fish out a pair of cans that he opens and, mouth twisted in distaste, empties into two little bowls.

CREDITS END

3 EXT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, ENTRANCE

3

Arriving for work, Makaver runs into Delamuratine in front of the theater.

MAKAVER

Ah, Arnaud... What are you doing here?

DELAMURATINE

It's for the run-through.

MAKAVER

But... Why? Did Anne-Marie ask you to come?

DELAMURATINE

Stark invited me.

MAKAVER

Really? You have any idea why?

DELAMURATINE

There has to be a specific reason?

MAKAVER

No. I mean, yes... That is to say, it's still a little fragile.

DELAMURATINE

Precisely, he maybe just wanted my feedback before it's settled.

MAKAVER

Settled...

DELAMURATINE

Made fast, set, fixed...

MAKAVER

It'll never be *fixed*, old boy.
Stark's staging is a flow.

DELAMURATINE

A *flow*?

MAKAVER

A wellspring, a kind of infinite
river, if you like.

DELAMURATINE

A pretty poetic notion, that.

MAKAVER

Well, I'm a pretty poetic guy. After
all, I have two black cats!

CUT TO:

4 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, SEATS AND STAGE

4

Jean-Jacques in costume, stretched out on his clinic bed.
It's a technical run-through with the whole play being
performed, but allowing for stops to fine-tune the
lights, sound and such.

STARK

(impatient)

All clear? *Can we do the fucking song now?*

CHARLÈNE

(from the dark behind him)

Two seconds, James. Jean-Jacques?
Give me some more, please?

JEAN-JACQUES

One, two, three... One, two,
three... Uno, dos, tres, coño...

CUT TO:

5 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE

5

The band starts playing "Eau qui saoule".

FAUDOT

(also in costume)

Carson Clay. Takes Cecilia's hand in
his, touches her for the second time.
Encounters no...

STARK

Stop! Cecilia, she said, did she not?
 Anyone see what's wrong here? Bud, did
 you happen to notice that there's a
 Cecilia in this scene but no actress on
 stage to fucking play her?

JULIEN

Yes, I notice, but she's doing her
 costume.

STARK

I want her here now, Bud. It's a
 technical run-through, not a costume-
 fitting!

JULIEN

(running backstage and shouting)
 Augustine!

STARK

OK, let's try it without her. Chérie?
 One more time please. Music!

The band starts "Eau qui saoule" again.

FAUDOT

Takes Cecilia's hand in his, touches
 her for the second time. Feels no
 resistance. Sees her eyes shining.
 Reaches for her arm, her shoulder,
 the back of her neck, pulls her down
 to him and kisses her...

JEAN-JACQUES

Why are you crying?

FAUDOT

The years of tears she hasn't shed
 are too big for her eyes. Moaning
 like a wounded animal, she lays her
 head on the unwounded half of his
 chest and, sides heaving, cries
 herself a river. The grizzled old
 farmers in the two other beds listen
 with a confusion of sentiments.

JEAN-JACQUES

(singing)

Now it's all about something else
 Now it's all aqua-intoxication
 Now it's all about bodies that flow
 Now it's all water... water inebriation

(MORE)

JEAN-JACQUES (cont'd)

After a forever of stone hard ceilings
it's about seeding clouds in the skies
After a hail of dry dark feelings
it's rain coming down, wonder water...
come to save our lives

DISSOLVE TO:

6 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE

6

The definitive version. Everyone - band included - is in costume and make-up. Jean-Jacques no longer has his beard and Augustine, blonde, resplendent in her 1906 summer dress, is there next to him to perform some simple choreographed steps - both illustrative and abstract - throughout the song.

JEAN-JACQUES

Now it's all about thirst quenched
by the flesh of this girl filling me with her flow
Here I stand now joyously drenched
by a this hydrofuria drowning me whole

Her heart is a river entwining my bones
and her mouth is a blade cutting furrows o'er my soul
White of eye and light as champagne
she is is blue as night and right as rain,
... bright as any rainbow

Now it's about the very first breach
in the wall 'fore the sea of accumulation
Now it's all about two souls on fire,
a cascade of desire and a river... of exaltation

And the shock of this surge smashing the jam
will all our sins purge and shatter our chains
The mass of this flow pouring over the dam
will foil our fate and obliterate...
the last of our pains

Outro instrumental nicely graced with a violin solo played and "danced" by an old bearded man who seems himself to have just stepped out of the year 1906.

7 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, SEATS/STAGE

7

Stark, affected and clearly in a better mood, applauds.

STARK

Thank you, everyone! And Caesar, *not* sexy, not even... sensual here, OK ? *It's her heart that moves her, not her lower reaches...*

AUGUSTINE

Not her ass?

STARK

That's it! Not her ass. She's young, but *little does she know...* The ass business, that's for the aunt, *that's old Rachel's department.*

(to Julien who's next to him)
The violinist, what's his name again?

JULIEN

Samuel.

STARK

Samuel, magnificent! Just beautiful!

JULIEN

(in a murmur)
He speaks English. He's Irish.

STARK

(on edge again, shaking his head)
Oh... You could have...
(loud)
Beautiful, Samuel. You killed it!

Samuel looks towards the seats, searches, fails to see where this compliment came from. Nods vaguely.

SAMUEL

(almost to himself)
Grand if it makes you happy, pappy.

STARK

(to Julien, snapping)
OK, Bud, let's keep it going.

JULIEN

(shouting)
Everyone: let's keep going -
Acte Two, scene one!

8 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, BACKSTAGE

8

Much later... In the background, the band playing a high energy tune with Faudot and de Saint-Frère singing. In the green room: Makaver et Delamuratine, each having a beer. Anne-Marie enters, laser in hand, with Edward.

ANNE-MARIE

Jesus... I mean, hello Mister Piss!
He's gotta stop every three meters.

MAKAVER

Nothing dumber than a dog. And no
dog dumber than a male dog

ANNE-MARIE

(to Delamuratine)

What are you doing here? You're
missing one of the key bits.

DELAMURATINE

I really needed a beer.

ANNE-MARIE

Me too...

(she opens the fridge)

But me, I'm not expected to give notes
at the end of today's rehearsal.

MAKAVER

You mean you are on other days?

ANNE-MARIE

If that's what he wants, yes.

DELAMURATINE

Isn't he a little... in a foul mood
today?

ANNE-MARIE

You mean impatient? Sometimes he...

DELAMURATINE

No, I mean *in a foul mood*.

MAKAVER

For sure it wasn't nice the way he was
speaking to the little guy earlier.

ANNE-MARIE

Which little guy?

MAKAVER

Your little guy, Pestina, the one
you can't stop running after.

ANNE-MARIE

Well well, hello projection!

DELAMURATINE

Yeah, that's what I'm saying. He
went after him for nothing.

ANNE-MARIE

Really?

MAKAVER

It's as old as the hills: you've got
the weight of the world on your
shoulders and you want to slap
everyone, but you can't slap anyone
so you go after a scapegoat. For
Stark, looks like it's little Julien.

ANNE-MARIE

Bullshit, Serge. And Julien isn't little.

MAKAVER

I know very well what he is or isn't.

DELAMURATINE

Me, I never slapped anybody.

ANNE-MARIE

Noted... Aside from that, you keep
sitting here boozing it up and you're
going to miss the big scene between
Carson and his aunt.

MAKAVER

You mean the one where they finally...

He coughs.

ANNE-MARIE

Bingo! And it's now.

Makaver downs the rest of his beer and runs out.

9 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE/SEATS

9

The music rises to a crescendo... then stops dead.

CARSON

Rachel!

NARRATOR

... and he slips fast as fear through the crowds, the souses sprawling in the dust and the sweet smell of sage that favor's this frontier state capital once free of the sun... Carson runs to Idaho's grandest hotel. To the Idanha. To Rachel.

CARSON

Rachel ! I killed Danny Miller.

RACHEL

Carson, you're drunk.

CARSON

No, I'm... Yes, but...

RACHEL

Where?

CARSON

In a bar.

RACHEL

(dry chuckle)

In a bar...

CARSON

I... I couldn't say which one.

RACHEL

So... There were witnesses.

CARSON

It was full. He fired and missed me, I grabbed his other gun and...

RACHEL

Are you sure he's dead?

CARSON

(fighting off tears)

I got him point blank in the chest. It was... It was like nothing, or everything, yeah, much too much.

NARRATOR

Rachel comes close, kisses him on the cheek.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Tastes the alcohol and the sweat on his skin. Comes closer - steps around the memory of baby whose tears once kissed - and takes the man in her arms.

RACHEL

That's enough. I'm not here to kiss your tears!

NARRATOR

His will melting in her animal heat, he let's himself go, cries in her arms, cries until he's hers.

CARSON

I'm cold.

NARRATOR

She slips the elaborate, green-beaded straps from her shoulders and works her way out of the various layers of silk and tulle holding to her...

STARK

CUT! Madame?

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Yes?

STARK

The clothes... *You have to start taking them off now for real. We're opening in a week, we have get used to... you know.*

De Saint-Frère, arms around Jean-Jacques, looks into space, seems not to have understood... Then Jean-Jacques whispers something to her

STARK (cont'd)

Julien? What the are you waiting for?

Close-up of Anne-Marie who picks up on the director's tone, hardly respectful indeed.

JULIEN

But... Jean-Jacques *is telling her.*

STARK

*I don't want Jean-Jacques telling her.
(mocking his French accent)
I want me, you, us fucking telling her!*

Anne-Marie rises from her seat and eases over to Stark.

JEAN-JACQUES
She has understood, but...

STARK
But what?

ANNE-MARIE
James.

STARK
What!

ANNE-MARIE
It's OK, there's no need to...

STARK
(low voice, without meeting her gaze)
I didn't ask you. I didn't ask you and...
(loud)
*Could we start that scene over from
just after the music stops please?*

De Saint-Frère shakes her head slowly, pulls away from Jean-Jacques.

STARK (cont'd)
The problem is what, Madame?

DE SAINT-FRÈRE
Could we not wait? I would like it
if we could wait, James.

ANNE-MARIE
She wants to wait.

STARK
I know, I got that... Jesus!
Wait for what, Madame ?

JEAN-JACQUES
(no more comfortable with the
scene than his mother is)
For taking off the clothes.

STARK
(seething)
*Well then... When would Madame like to
do this scene as it's written? Hello?
Can anyone tell me? Jay Jay? Bud?*

Julien doesn't dare open his mouth as Jean-Jacques translates the director's question to his mother.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

When the audience is there to...

She waves towards the seats.

STARK

You're saying opening night? The premiere?

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Uh... Yes?

STARK

I love you, Madame, but Jesus fucking Christ! This is more than I... This is too...

(standing up)

I can't, really can't... Let me out of here!

He heads for the exit... Anne-Marie gets up and runs after him.

ANNE-MARIE

James! Wait!

CUT TO:

10 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, FOYER

10

Stark bangs through the swinging doors, goes into the foyer... Behind him Anne-Marie's heels resonate loudly in the empty space. He stops, doesn't need to turn to know who's behind him.

ANNE-MARIE

Mr Stark, come on, don't be ridiculous. Of course it's hard for her - hard for them - and you have to find a way, try to find a way to...

STARK

(loud, too loud, and exasperated)

The play is fucking written. The play needs to be played! There's no surprise here, it's not something I'm suddenly springing on them, for Christ's sake!

ANNE-MARIE

(equally loud and exasperated)
*So communicate, damn it, instead of
 behaving like a spoiled brat,
 instead of making a scene like a
 fucking diva that treats people
 like shit! It's no surprise that
 they are finding it hard to...*

CUT TO:

11 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE/SEATS

11

Several shots of the stage and seats where everyone - at once concerned and curious - remains frozen listening to the argument that the doors hardly muffle. Makaver, seated next to Augustine, is captivated.

AUGUSTINE

But this is terrible! What are they...

MAKAVER

Shhh!

AUGUSTINE

What *shhh!*

MAKAVER

I'm listening!

AUGUSTINE

You're a real sicko.

MAKAVER

(whispering)

You can't understand. These kinds of stories, they're my only... Hush up, you made me miss the...

STARK (OFF)

Yeah yeah yeah!

ANNE-MARIE (OFF)

Yeah yeah yeah!

STARK (OFF)

*Yeah yeah yeah, so now you want to say
 I told you so? Go ahead and say it!*

CUT TO:

12 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, FOYER

12

ANNE-MARIE
(lowering her voice a little)
Say it? Say what?

STARK
I told you so.

ANNE-MARIE
OK.
(beginning a smile)
I told you so.

STARK
Happy?

ANNE-MARIE
No, not happy. Why should I be happy?

STARK
Because you get to say "I told you so".

ANNE-MARIE
(smile grows)
Well, it's true... I told you so.

STARK
(less angry, weary)
See? Look at you, smiling like a real cretin. It makes you happy.

ANNE-MARIE
It does not, even if it's true, because I have known this incest thing will be a problem for them. People are not machines, you can't expect... OK... But I must say the difficulties you have today are no reason for behaving like a jerk with everyone. Why you are talking to Julien like that?

STARK
Like what?

ANNE-MARIE
Like you don't respect him, like he does his job bad, or... to say the truth, like you are angry for the other day.

STARK

What other day?

ANNE-MARIE

(lowering further her voice)

*The morning when he was at my...
when you came with Aida...*

STARK

*Wait! That's why you were so bizarre?
Julien was there?*

ANNE-MARIE

*I thought you knew and it's for that
you're being a jerk with him today.*

STARK

You were hiding him from me?

This tidbit is beginning to amuse him, along with the idea that Anne-Marie could even imagine he might be jealous, that there was any reason to be, that there could thus be something going on between the two of them.

STARK (cont'd)

*Seriously, you didn't want me to see
him? Why?*

ANNE-MARIE

*I have drank too much and he was
sleeping in my bed, but we were not,
you know...*

STARK

Sleeping together? No sex?

ANNE-MARIE

Yes, no sex.

STARK

It's possible you shouldn't drink so much.

ANNE-MARIE

Jerk.

STARK

*You brought the boy home because you
were drunk, right?*

ANNE-MARIE

Jerk.

STARK

(still a bit on edge)

*Then you don't have sex with him
because what? Too drunk to fuck?*

ANNE-MARIE

*Can we work now? And you can try to
not be a jerk in work please?*

STARK

Fine, Anne-Marie...

ANNE-MARIE

What? No more Auntie M?

STARK

*I'm tired, OK? Really fucking tired and
I could do without obstacles at this
stage, but for Rachel, what can I say?
Madame has to - they both have to...
It's the play, the moment where push
truly comes to shove and... you know?*

ANNE-MARIE

*Work with her, James. Come on, search!
Search for the solution, mister director.
How to do it without forcing mother and
son to make tac tac. It's possible.*

STARK

I see, like you and Bud?

ANNE-MARIE

What?

STARK

Not making tac tac.

ANNE-MARIE

Exactly... Jerk!

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

13 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE

13

Definitive lights, costumes and decor: a room in the Idanha hotel. Dark. Two silhouettes - Rachel and Carson - a bed onto which she now pushes him, and another reference to Delamuratine's staging in episode 2 - a choreographed conquest narrated by Faudot and de Saint-Frère.

NARRATOR

Rachel slips the elaborate, green-beaded straps off her naked shoulders and works her way out of the various layers of silk and tulle holding to her body. She has had several men in several ways, but never undressed before one, her late husband included.

With the band playing a variation of the play's main theme adagio, the scene is filmed like a movie with close-ups and panning shots.

RACHEL

He's hers as she sits on the edge of the bed to unbutton her shoes and roll down her stockings. Hers as she lays him down to undress him, her hands, then her lips, tasting every corner of him as she sets her mind aside and follows her flesh.

NARRATOR

Carson Clay. Teeth rattling, eyes dry now and itchy, beholds nothing but the moment. Finds solace in nothing but the woman who's once again come to his rescue, who's locking her body to his, burying the boy inside her.

RACHEL

I can...

NARRATOR

...she says to herself. In conquest, liberation. Having her cake and eating it too.

RACHEL

I am a man.

NARRATOR

...she says to herself looking him in the eye, her fingers wrapped tightly around his rigid member

RACHEL

You are mine.

NARRATOR

...she breathes into the boy's ear,
pronounces a word she's only heard, only
thought, never spoken.

The music stops.

RACHEL

Fuck.

Silence... on stage and in the rest of the theater. No change in the lights. Hard to say if there's a technical problem, if it's just the end of the scene, or... We see the woman pull away from the man and sit up covering herself in a sheet and sliding to the edge of the bed to face the audience. Behind her, the man, back to the audience, struggles to get dressed without actually standing up... Finally, there's movement at the control desk, the house lights come on and the spell is broken.

STARK

Yes!

In the seats: Anne-Marie and Augustine whose wide-eyed smiles would seem to betray their astonishment and, a few seats down, Jean-Jacques, whose placid visage gives away nothing as his eyes remain fixed on the stage where we now discover that the man in the bed is Julien.

CUT TO:

14 INT. EVENING. THE VOLTAIRE, BAR

14

The atmosphere is that of a football team's locker room after winning a big game. Dinner, a collection of Japanese take-out dishes, is chaotically spread in a buffet on the bar and de Saint-Frère is raising a flute of champagne to make a toast.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

To James Stark!

STARK

(also raising his glass)

Where there's a will, there's a way!

ANNE-MARIE

Hello?

STARK

Bud?

JULIEN
 (caught off guard)
 Uh... A will? A will?

AUGUSTINE
 When there's a will, there's a...

STARK
 A path!

ANNE-MARIE
 A means!

STARK
 A means! Always a means! Thank you
 Auntie M! That's our slogan, everyone
 is agreed?

AUGUSTINE
 Our motto.

STARK
Where there's a will there's a way!

MANU
 (solemnly)
*No no, mate.. When there's a
 mother-fucking will, there's a
 mother-fucking way!*

Laughter...

MAKAVER
 Losers, you're all hopeless...
 It's when "you want, you can!"

DE SAINT-FRÈRE
 (happily)
 And also "to want is to be able to!"

15 INT. EVENING. THE VOLTAIRE, BAR

15

In the middle of the party, Anne-Marie makes her way over
 to Julien who appears even more bewildered than usual.

ANNE-MARIE
 You OK?

JULIEN
 Yes.

ANNE-MARIE

Not sure about that. What's the matter? You don't want to be an actor?

JULIEN

No, not really.

ANNE-MARIE

OK, but what he's asking you to do there, it's not that much of a stretch, is it?

JULIEN

Do what? Whore myself?

ANNE-MARIE

Whore yourself? Come on! More like play the victim, the aunt's victim.

JULIEN

Sure... The victim.

ANNE-MARIE

Poor little thing, stuck in the sack with nympho again!

JULIEN

She... She touched me.

ANNE-MARIE

Of course she did. It's a hot...

JULIEN

It, Anne-Marie. She touched it.

ANNE-MARIE

No!

JULIEN

Yes.

ANNE-MARIE

Lucky lady!

Julien doesn't laugh, doesn't smile.

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)

And... You didn't like that.

JULIEN

Whether I liked it or not, that's not the point. It's...

(MORE)

JULIEN (cont'd)

It's not the kind of thing that we should have to do.

ANNE-MARIE

Got it, you're right... I'll talk to her.

JULIEN

No!

ANNE-MARIE

Don't worry, I won't say what you told me. I'll just talk about what we saw... But still, I'm telling you, that scene was something. Old mother Cécile sort of blew us away.

16 INT. EVENING. THE VOLTAIRE, BAR

16

Delamuratine and Augustine, elbows on the bar, are having a serious tête-à-tête.

AUGUSTINE

We don't care anymore than *of the year forty*.

DELAMURATINE

Well, I do.

AUGUSTINE

It's not like you invented the silhouette in the theater, Arnaud. Did you ever see a Claude Régy play? A ha! You're ripping *him* off!

DELAMURATINE

Everyone rips off Régy. Me, I'm saying it's a little weird that Stark sees our silhouettes and a few weeks later: *abracadabra*, he's got his own which, seriously, are really mine.

AUGUSTINE

So be flattered, it worked... Don't you think it worked?

DELAMURATINE

Worked, Augustine? Please, since when has getting something to *work* been the point in theater?

AUGUSTINE

Uh... Since forever?

DELAMURATINE

Precisely.

AUGUSTINE

Ah, OK, better for a proposition to *not* work today.

MAKAVER

(approaches the two, lured
by the sound of conflict)
Tut-tut, stop fighting, children. It's party time tonight!

AUGUSTINE

We're not fighting. We're talking.

MAKAVER

Stop talking, children. It's party time here!

DELAMURATINE

He stole my silhouettes, the yankee.

MAKAVER

That's true, I was thinking the same thing. It was great!

DELAMURATINE

Great...

MAKAVER

Well yes! Nobody *owns* art, my little Arnaud, and imitation *is the most high form of flattery*, isn't it?

AUGUSTINE

Anyway, I bet the silhouettes number was Anne-Marie's doing.

MAKAVER

Really?

AUGUSTINE

Could be. That's what I was thinking. But as for Julien as a stand-in? That *had* to be her.

MAKAVER

(clearly galled)
So La Pestina is actually intervening in the creative domaine as well?

AUGUSTINE

Hasn't she always? In any event, without her, James would be lost.

DELAMURATINE

For sure.

MAKAVER

(curt)

Better to hear that than to be deaf!

AUGUSTINE

After all this time, it's as if you didn't know her, Makaver. She can lose her way at times, sure, she can even get a little out of hand on occasion, but you have to understand that it's just her way of trying to feel a little less badly, like everybody else.

DELAMURATINE

Everybody else? Even you?

AUGUSTINE

Maybe not me, but almost everybody else, and that includes Makaver.

MAKAVER

(sincere for a change)

That's true... Yes.

AUGUSTINE

And without her, where would the Voltaire be today, huh? Kaput!

CUT TO:

17 EVENING. THE VOLTAIRE, BAR

17

Anne-Marie approaches de Saint-Frère who's talking, or trying to talk, with Manu.

MANU

A little shack on the banks of the Somme, that's what I'm working for. A cat, two or three dogs, a garden, cool man cool... Paris busts my balls.

De Saint-Frère is smiling, tipsy. Manu, on the contrary, is dead serious.

MANU (cont'd)

And you, aren't you fed up with this shithole? Fuck, too many assholes, too many cars, too many...

(shaking head)

Wouldn't you like a little place by the side of the river?

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Yes of course. In fact, I...

MANU

So what are you waiting for?

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

In fact, in Italy, I already have a...

Anne-Marie comes up from behind, wraps her arms around de Saint-Frère and turns her around

ANNE-MARIE

Excuse-me, Manu, just a couple minutes.

MANU

Yeah yeah, fuck off.

ANNE-MARIE

(in Saint-Frère's ear)

Needed to be rescued, didn't you?

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

No, not really. She's amusing.

ANNE-MARIE

He.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

No... Are you sure?

ANNE-MARIE

Actually I'm not.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Me, I say *she*.

ANNE-MARIE

And me, I say bravo for what just happened. We were all really...

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

(eyes lowered)

Thank you, Anne-Marie.

ANNE-MARIE

Really truly.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

It took us some time, but it's coming together now, yes.

ANNE-MARIE

And between you two? Wow, it was... It was hot.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Indeed.

ANNE-MARIE

To tell the truth, it seemed like it was really, like, happening for real there.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

(voice lowered, in Anne-Marie's ear)

Yes, maybe because it kind of was.

ANNE-MARIE

You don't mean that...

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

He was having a... He was hard.

ANNE-MARIE

No!

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Yes, like really, you know... Completely!

De Saint-Frère can't muffle a nervous chuckle. More than just tipsy, we see now she's verging on blotto. Anne-Marie, dumbfounded, looks around, verifies that Julien is not watching them.

ANNE-MARIE

Completely, you say? And you, what did you do?

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

I touched it.

ANNE-MARIE

No!

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Yes. It was hard not to. I was there, and I held it like... like a reflex.

ANNE-MARIE
 (intrigued and appalled)
 Yeah, but, seriously...

DE SAINT-FRÈRE
 As Rachel, as the part is written, I
 held it in my hand, but... My God, as
 me, I liked it, Anne-Marie, insane
 how much I liked it.

MUSIC - "The Girl That I Marry" (instrumental)

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

18 EVENING. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE

18

Same lights, costumes and decor - a room in the Idanha
 hotel - and "same man" stretched out under the covers.

NARRATOR
 Carson Clay. Waking with a cadaver
 in his gut, a vise on his head and
 a desert in his mouth. Hearing the
 sound of running water in the
 bathroom, then that of water
 stopping. The clink-clink on the
 marble surrounding the wash basin.
 A comb, a glass set down... And
 Rachel steps out of the bathroom
 in her night dress.

During this narration, dissolve from filmed theater to
 film of a real hotel in the Idaho of 1906.

CARSON (JEAN-JACQUES)
 Water! I am dying of thirst.

RACHEL
 (terse)
 You'd best get dressed now.

CARSON
 Get dressed? What for?

RACHEL
 For one thing, your snoring is keeping
 me awake. For another, well... What'll
 we look like here in the morning?

CARSON
 What did we look like last night?

RACHEL
 (even more terse)
 Nobody saw us last night.

CARSON
 Rachel! What's going on?

RACHEL
 Nothing. Nothing's going on at all,
 but... You need to think about
 stopping by the sheriff's to explain
 what happened last night.

CARSON
 I know, but us, we just were...

RACHEL
 Carson! I have to ask you to kindly
 remember that we're not alone in this
 hotel...

CARSON
 But... Who are you?

RACHEL
 ... and my position in Boise has to be
 respected. If anyone saw you coming out
 of my room...

CARSON
 Well, as far as your neighbors are
 concerned, I'd say it's already too
 late. I mean, the way you were crying
 out earlier... I swear, my ears are
 still ringing!

De Saint-Frère says nothing, looks out the window.

CARSON (cont'd)
 Rachel, please...

RACHEL
Rachel, please... How many times
 have I had to hear that in my life?
 Come on... Best that you leave
 before the sun rises.

"The Girl That I Marry" (with vocals)

CLOSING CREDITS

EPISODE 9

1 INT. MORNING - JEAN-JACQUES'S GARRET, BED 1

Close-up of Jean-Jacques sleeping peacefully... His telephone/alarm sounds: Tchaikovsky - *Violin Concerto in D*. Jean-Jacques opens his eyes and, in a matter of seconds, is on his feet. In a t-shirt - and nothing else - he scoops a pair of jeans off the floor, puts them on, grabs his phone without cutting the sound and executes, with his free hand, several conductor's baton swoops in time with the music while exiting this top floor room and taking off down the stairs.

2 INT. MORNING - DE SAINT-FRÈRE'S LOFT, BATHROOM 2

The Concerto continues... Jean-Jacques comes out of the shower wrapping himself in a towel and comes upon his mother bending towards the mirror that we know from episode 1 as she applies her lipstick...

JEAN-JACQUES

Good morning.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Good morning... How are you?

Jean-Jacques pauses, unsure of how to reply to a question his mother may have never asked him before.

JEAN-JACQUES

I'm... fine? I'm fine.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

I'm going now. I won't wait for you?

Another first-time question.

JEAN-JACQUES

Uh... No. Anyway, I'm going on the board.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Of course, yes. See you there...

(muffling a fake laugh)

Jay-Jay.

Jean-Jacques turns to her, smiles, unused to seeing his mother so obviously in a good mood...

JEAN-JACQUES
Right you are, until later... *Madame.*

CREDITS

3 INT. MORNING - SAINT-FRÈRE'S LOFT, KITCHEN 3

Jean-Jacques, dressed for the day now, chugs a glass of orange juice, wolfs down a croissant and exits the kitchen.

4 EXT. MORNING - STREETS OF PARIS 4

Jean-Jacques on his skateboard, the high-end headphones on his ears fed by the telephone in his pocket, and Tchaikovsky at maximum volume - for us and, we imagine, for him. What follows is a kind of video clip in which his urban slalom follows the rhythm and accents of the music. Jean-Jacques is good at this, natural; it's an athlete's performance and beautiful to see until... A bicyclist staring at his phone runs a stoplight and forces him, at full speed, to effect a violent swerve causing him to lose his balance and fall face first into the curb... A crash that coincides with the orgasmic culmination of the Concerto.

END MUSIC and CREDITS

He sits down on the curb, bent in two for a moment - the pain is extreme - then gets up slowly his left arm dangling loosely, his right hand feeling the sore area around his left shoulder, pale, clenching his teeth...

JEAN-JACQUES
(under his breath)
Fucking shit...

5 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE THEATER, FOYER 5

Some leftovers from the previous night's festivities. Several actors, including de Saint-Frère and Faudot, and crew members chatting over coffee. Five days from the premiere, the positive mood endures... Until Anne-Marie, phone glued to her ear, walks through the front door and stops dead.

ANNE-MARIE
No, Jean-Jacques, you can't... No!

Her *no* is worrisome. Everyone turns to look at her.

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)

When will you... OK. Yeah. I'm coming.
No no, I'm coming. No... Right now.

Before her now, a cluster of questioning faces: Well?
What happened?

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)

It's Jean-Jacques.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

(curt)

We gathered that!

ANNE-MARIE

He had an accident... On his skateboard.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Arghhh... I always hated that toy.

FAUDOT

And so?

ANNE-MARIE

And so... He's in emergency. They're
doing an x-ray, it's the collarbone.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Not the head? Not the face?

ANNE-MARIE

The collarbone... It might be broken.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

(a touch relieved)

The collarbone, that sort of takes
care of itself doesn't it?

ANNE-MARIE

With time, yeah... Hôpital Saint-Louis.
I'm going there now.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

So am I.

ANNE-MARIE

(surprised)

Really? OK, we'll take a taxi...
Julien, explain all that to Stark and
I'll call you as soon as I know more.

The two women turn around and they're out the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

6 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, MAKAVER'S OFFICE

6

Crowded into the office of the Voltaire's director: Stark, Anne-Marie, Julien, de Saint-Frère, Augustine, Manu... And Jean-Jacques, left arm in a sling, who doesn't appear terribly traumatized, but...

STARK

What an idiot...

JEAN-JACQUES

Yes.

STARK

Really, what an idiot!

ANNE-MARIE

We got it, James.

STARK

What is he? Fucking thirteen years old?

ANNE-MARIE

He's in pain, now... is what he is. But nobody died here, all right? He's OK, except for not being able to use that arm, so...

AUGUSTINE

Not at all? Jean-Jacques?

JEAN-JACQUES

Well, yeah... A little... The lower part.

He shows how, elbow pressed against waist, he can move his forearm a little, but can't help but wince in pain.

STARK

What an idiot...

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

(a tad theatrical)

Good heavens, my friends, are we lost?

AUGUSTINE

(to Saint-Frère,
equally theatrical)

Do not despair, Madame!

MANU

Fuck.

MAKAVER

Should we postpone?

ANNE-MARIE

The doctor said it was a clean break, no separation, but it's going to hurt for a time and the sling, he'll have to keep it on for at least ten days.

STARK

(livid and loud)

I'm afraid I understood that, but just to be sure: you're saying we're fucked, right? Carson Clay can't fight and fall down. Carson Clay can't grab a gun from a bad guy or even wrap his arms around Cecilia, is that it?

ANNE-MARIE

Yes...

Saying as much underlines a truth now obvious to all: they would indeed appear to be... *fucked*.

MAKAVER

So we postpone?

ANNE-MARIE

... And now I want to die.

JEAN-JACQUES

Me too, I want to die.

STARK

Great! Everyone wants to die. Me, not. I just want to kill Jay Jay...

ANNE-MARIE

James, please, give him a break!

STARK

I can't. He's already fucking broken and he's fucking breaking my play, but I... but I...

ANNE-MARIE

What? But I what?

STARK
 (raising his eyes,
 calmer all of a sudden)
If I... If we could... Son of a bitch!
 (chuckles)
Hey kids, I know what we have to do.
 (brightening)
*Nobody's going to die here, OK? Not
 me, not you, not Jay Jay, not even the
 play. There's a solution to this
 misery... Isn't that so, Bud?*

JULIEN
 (head elsewhere)
 What?

STARK
Earth to Bud, earth to Bu-ud!

JULIEN
 What?

STARK
 I said there's a...

Making a gender mistake (*un* instead of *une*) for the second time in a row, he is angrily corrected by Manu.

MANU
 A!

STARK
 OK, yeah... There's a solution for our misery. A *remedy, something that will save us, something that will save the show. It won't be easy, but...* Bud? *Tell the people what it is. Come on, dude, tell everyone the solution!*

ANNE-MARIE
 No, James.

MAKAVER
 Come now, Pestinette! Why not?

JULIEN
 (with all eyes upon him)
 What are you talking about?
 (starting to get it)
 No, James.

STARK

Yes, Bud.

JULIEN

No. Impossible.

STARK

Impossible is not French!

JULIEN

In this case it is. Impossible is very French.

ANNE-MARIE

James...

JULIEN

Jean-Jacques, he's... You know perfectly well that I wouldn't be able to replace someone who...

STARK

No! We do not know that!

ANNE-MARIE

James... If he doesn't wish... *If he doesn't want...*

STARK

Is that true? Truly true, Bud?

JULIEN

Yes.

STARK

Truly, you don't want to?

JULIEN

Yes..

STARK

Shit, Bud. Shit!

ANNE-MARIE

And even if he wanted to do it...

AUGUSTINE

Who's to say he could?

Julien turns towards her and, with a gesture of hands and face, says something to the effect of: *no kidding!*

JEAN-JACQUES

Seriously, Julien, it's not that hard and I'm pretty sure my costumes would fit you. At least give it a try.

JULIEN

You're all crazy.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

And what about all the lines he'd have to learn?

ANNE-MARIE

Are you joking? He knows them. He knows the whole play.

MAKAVER

All of it?

ANNE-MARIE

Just about, yeah. Nobody ever notice when he's prompting in rehearsal? A lot of the time, he doesn't even looking at the text.

MAKAVER

More impressive by the day, this little guy who's not all that little. What about the two songs?

STARK

Three songs!

Pénélope walks into the office.

PÉNÉLOPE

Oh, excuse me!

MAKAVER

(sitting up,
touching his hair)

Pénélope...

PÉNÉLOPE

It's just to empty the trash.

MAKAVER

No problem... Pestina, you're in the way!

ANNE-MARIE

Excuse me.

Seated on the desk, she hops off so Pénélope can reach the trash basket that was behind her legs.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Do you know those three songs?

JULIEN

No, and I never will.

ANNE-MARIE

Why *never*?

JULIEN

Because I can't sing.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

You can at least try.

JULIEN

(more severe)

No, I can't. And I won't.

ANNE-MARIE

But Julien, we could just...

STARK

Three songs, Bud.

JULIEN

I can't, OK? Say Jean-Jacques's lines? Anybody can do that. Say them well? That's another story... But *sing* Jean-Jacques's songs? A whole bunch of people can't do that and me, I'm one of those, OK?

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

7 INT. DAY. TOULOUSE, CHAPELLE DES CARMÉLITES

7

La Maîtrise (boys choir) *de Toulouse* walks single file into the Chapelle des Carmélites. In white shirts and navy blue trousers and sweaters, the boys seem to be having some trouble taking their position on the steps leading to the altar before an audience already settled into the chapel's pews for a musical performance - not the celebration of the Eucharist - today and it appears the trouble is being caused by a boy trying to get the attention of the director before moving forward and taking his place in the second row. With the others grumbling and whispering behind him - *Come on, go!* - the director finally looks at him.

THE DIRECTOR

(whispering)

What are you doing, Julien?
You're holding everyone up!

JULIEN

Monsieur, I... I...

One of the bigger boys gives Julien a hard shove in the back and he lurches forward despite himself and can do nothing more now than take his place on the steps. He's pale as a sheet, leaning slightly forward and holding his stomach, looking vaguely for a way out as the magnificent pipe organ sounds the first notes of Bartók's "Leanynezo" and the singing begins: powerful, intense, moving... Julien ends up opening his mouth with the others, but it's vomit that comes out of it instead of words, a literal fountain of breakfast liquefied splattering the boys in front of him before than can jump out of the way. As the organist continues to render his score, the young voices go silent while Julien lets fly a second volley provoking a murmur of repulsion in the pews.

FADE TO BLACK
THEN DISSOLVE TO:

8 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, MAKAVER'S OFFICE

8

With the chapel organ continuing to reverberate...

JULIEN

(raising his voice)

So stop being assholes and listen
to what I'm saying! I know enough
to know that I can't sing the songs
Jean-Jacques sings and because I
can't, there's no reason to try.
That's all there is to it.

It would seem he has convinced them... And the organ fades away.

ANNE-MARIE

So maybe just say the words?

Julien shakes his head no.

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)

What?

JULIEN

Just say them? No. That's crap.

AUGUSTINE

He's right. No point in that.

Pénélope, trash can in her hands, has stopped at the door to listen, intrigued by this new level of tension in the director's office.

MAKAVER

So we postpone?

STARK

Postpone... *Does that mean delay the opening?*

MAKAVER

Yes.

STARK

Then, no! *The show must go on. To want is to be able to, remember? We just have to figure out how to be able to.*

PÉNÉLOPE

Play-back.

Everyone turns towards her.

STARK

Play-back?

PÉNÉLOPE

(nodding towards Jean-Jacques)
The guy who can sing, he sings. The guy who can't sing pretend sings. Like they do on the television.

STARK

Lip-sync! Of course! Thank you...

PÉNÉLOPE

Pénélope.

STARK

Again?

PÉNÉLOPE

(American pronunciation)
Penelope.

STARK

Penelope... Thank you!
(fully back to life)
Manu! Get Charlène in here.

Manu sends and SMS.

STARK (cont'd)
*We can make it work, you guys. Real
 distanciation, you know? Brecht big time!*

In the faces: doubts, smiles, hope as Pénélope slips out.

STARK (cont'd)
Jay Jay? Bud? Can we try that?

JEAN-JACQUES
I sing on the side? Off the stage?

JULIEN
And I pretend to sing?

MANU
*Already, everyone is on the mike. For
 the public, sound's the same thing.*

STARK
Exactly! Jay Jay? Bud? Is that cool?

JEAN-JACQUES
 (breath cut short by
 the pain)
*Yeah, sure. Offstage... I can sing
 offstage.
 (looks at Julien)
 And you?*

JULIEN
 (giving in)
*An me, yes, I can act like I'm
 singing onstage.*

Charlène comes into Makaver's office.

CHARLÈNE
¿Que pasa?

ANNE-MARIE
*Julien is replacing Jean-Jacques, but
 for the songs, it'll be Jean-Jacques
 singing offstage and Julien miming.*

CHARLÈNE
 (bursts out laughing)
Yeah, just like Johnny used to do!

MANU
Johnny never did that!

ANNE-MARIE

Can you make that work?

CHARLÈNE

Yes, of course. If they could do it for Johnny, we can do it for Julien.

MANU

Bullshit, I'm telling you! He was a moron, but he never...

STARK

(cutting him off)

*So let's get on the case, everybody!
We got a shitload of work to do now,
and only four days to do it!*

CUT TO:

9 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE

9

De Saint-Frère and Faudot are running through a song with the band. It's casual, without amplification... and beautiful:

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

"Such a lot of devils,"

FAUDOT

That's what the papers say:

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

"They've gone on strike for shorter hours and some increase in pay.

FAUDOT AND DE SAINT-FRÈRE

They left the camps, the lazy tramps, they all walked out as one. They say they'll win the strike or put the bosses on the bum."

CUT TO:

10 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, BACKSTAGE

10

With that song in the background... Charlène is setting up Jean-Jacques's mike offstage. Looking in worse shape than before, he leans on the young woman adjusting the boom stand and setting the height of his mike .

JEAN-JACQUES

Sorry... It's because I...
 (having trouble articulating)
 It's because of the... the drugs,
 I think.

CHARLÈNE

(smiles)
 It's OK.

JEAN-JACQUES

I also had a beer. I shouldn't have
 had that beer.

CHARLÈNE

With pills for pain, no, they advise
 against it.

JEAN-JACQUES

I shouldn't have had that beer,
 and now... It's not so easy to...

He wraps his arms around her. It looks very much like a
 lovers' embrace.

JEAN-JACQUES (cont'd)

I'm sorry, I...
 (resting his head on her shoulder)
 Ah... That's so nice. What a
 beautiful shoulder you have! I'm
 not joking, it's just perfect!

CHARLÈNE

(still smiling, but...)
 Can you sing sitting down?

JEAN-JACQUES

Why not?

CHARLÈNE

I kind of think you should.

JEAN-JACQUES

Why not!

CHARLÈNE

Does it hurt right now?

JEAN-JACQUES

Why not! It only hurts when I look at
 you, Charlie...

CHARLÈNE

Charlène.

JEAN-JACQUES

Charlène... That's a different one.
Nobody is called *Charlène*. A nice name,
actually, goes well into the mouth...
Charlène. Where'd you find that?

CHARLÈNE

(at once amused and worried)
It wasn't me who found it!

JEAN-JACQUES

Really? That's a pity, but I love your
shoulders. They go well with you, go
well with you and your name.

CHARLÈNE

All right, we're going to sit
down now, OK?

JEAN-JACQUES

OK.

CHARLÈNE

Can you stand for a second without me?

JEAN-JACQUES

OK.

She's not fully convinced..

CHARLÈNE

(loud)
Could someone give me a hand? Manu?
Julien? Somebody please?

One of the musicians, the Irish violinist, puts down his
instrument and scampers over to help.

CHARLÈNE (cont'd)

Cool. Please, could you get me a
chair for this guy?

Julien also arrives, tries to help without actually
helping, exchanges knowing looks with Charlène.

JEAN-JACQUES

Well, my little Julien who's not little,
we aren't quite, aren't exactly...
(MORE)

JEAN-JACQUES (cont'd)
(he chuckles, it hurts, his
voice goes hoarse)
We are not out of the youth hostel!

11 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, BACKSTAGE

11

In a construction space backstage, Julien comes up to Anne-Marie who's talking with Manu.

JULIEN
Jean-Jacques is gonesville.

ANNE-MARIE
We know that, Julien.

JULIEN
No, I mean I just saw him and he
can hardly stand up.

MANU
It's the drugs. For sure it's the
drugs. And maybe he also had a drink.

JULIEN
Yep, he also had a beer... or two.
Really not sure he can work now.

MANU
So... We're up shit creek.

ANNE-MARIE
Can we get him to drink some coffee?

MANU
Pfft! Speed, yes. Coffee? Pfft!

ANNE-MARIE
Speed? Speed how? Where?

MANU
I mean, like, diet pills. For us, when
we really needed to, you know... He
might be a little buzzed, but at least
he could, you know, work.

ANNE-MARIE
I don't know...

MANU
I do know, but we'd have to find a doctor
or some fat lady who could help.

ANNE-MARIE

Some fat lady?

MANU

Yeah, a fat lady who doesn't wanna
be fat, you know?

DISSOLVE TO:

12 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE

12

Julien, on stage with Augustine at his side, is "singing"
"Eau qui saoule". Not so sure of himself, he takes a
moment to get the hang of it.

JULIEN

Now it's all about something else
Now it's all aqua-intoxication
Now it's all about bodies that flow
Now it's all water... water inebriation

After a forever of stone hard ceilings
it's about seeding clouds in the skies
After a hail of dry dark feelings
it's rain coming down, wonder water...
come to save our lives

On the other hand, the real voice starts laying into the
song with such intensity that the gap between the real
and fake singers grows as Julien struggles to keep up
with Jean-Jacques and the band...

13 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, BACKSTAGE

13

But as far as the music itself is concerned, it's...

JEAN-JACQUES

Now it's all about thirst quenched
by the flesh of this girl filling me with her flow
Here I stand now joyously drenched
by a this hydrofuria drowning me whole

... powerful, moving as Jean-Jacques attains a new level
of intensity.

JEAN-JACQUES (cont'd)

Her body lays me down in the bed of her swell
where her kisses are a sea of inebriation
This is love like a bottomless well
My ticket out of hell to her waters...
waters of intoxication

(MORE)

JEAN-JACQUES (cont'd)

Her heart is a river entwining my bones
and her mouth is a creek cutting furrows o'er my soul
White of eye and light as champagne
she is is blue as night and right as rain...
she's my water, my intoxicating flow

14 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE

14

The band finishes off the song with similarly greater fervency and Jean-Jacques, who's stumbled over during the last instrumental, grabs the old violinist and plants a kiss on each of his cheeks before the songs hardly done.

JEAN-JACQUES
(circling the band)
That was wonderful, guys! *Fucking*
fantastic! Thank you! Thank you so much!

He hops over to Julien.

JEAN-JACQUES (cont'd)
You OK, Bud? For me, it was great!

JULIEN
Yeah, I saw that.

AUGUSTINE
(to Jean-Jacques, concerned)
How do you feel?

JEAN-JACQUES
(bent over, hand on the
wounded zone)
Great! The music makes me want so
many things, makes me want to *live!*

15 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, SEATS

15

In the first row, Stark and Anne-Marie have been watching this performance with Manu.

STARK
(to Manu)
Dude, what did you give him?

MANU
You don't wanna know.

STARK

It did the trick, I guess, but maybe a little too well.

ANNE-MARIE

*I don't make you say it !
(serious)
What shall we do?*

STARK

This can work, but we need more time. Jay Jay needs to get some sleep and get off drugs, and we can cancel that invitational dress rehearsal thing we're supposed to do and have one more day to get it right.

ANNE-MARIE

Really?

STARK

Really. That and a little more overtime.

MANU

Don't know about the crew, man. They're fucking burned out already.

STARK

I know. I hear you. I've thought about this and... How about if I pay them a bonus. Direct. Cash.

MANU

You?

STARK

Yeah, baby, I'm rich.

ANNE-MARIE

*(doubtful)
Really?*

STARK

Well, I used to be and I swear, getting it right means a lot more to me than hanging on to my money.

ANNE-MARIE

But this is France.

MANU

Not the fucking wild west, mate.

STARK

Yeah yeah, long live the revolution and all that! Come on, time for another meeting, kids.

ANNE-MARIE

Oh no, James... Another meeting, really?

STARK

Yes. Really.

DISSOLVE TO:

16 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE/SEATS

16

Most of the crew, **Marlène** - the head of communications, and her young assistant **Billie** - Makaver, and the cast except for Jean-Jacques, settled in before the stage on which Stark has just stated his case with the help of Anne-Marie's translation.

CHARLÈNE

It can be done. The question is, can it be done well in four days? Likely impossible.

STARK

Impossible, is not...

ANNE-MARIE

James, impossible is all the countries in the world. Anyway... Technical questions are one thing - they've already been more or less worked out - but Julien's job is another.

CHARLÈNE

Then there's the fact that Jean-Jacques is not here because Jean-Jacques is stretched out on the floor of your office right now.

MARLÈNE

Cancel or postpone... either one makes me want to shoot myself.

ANNE-MARIE

And what if we dropped the dress thing, but not the premiere? Julien? Would that help? Would that work?

JULIEN

(weary)

Yes, Anne-Marie, that would work.

STARK

Yes!

ANNE-MARIE

Manu? Charlène?

CHARLÈNE

We'll do what has to be done. Those who can't, or don't want to do the overtime, won't. Me, I can.

MANU

Me, I don't want to, but... *The fucking show must fucking go on!*

ANNE-MARIE

And there will be some kind of bonus coming from the director for those extra hours, isn't that right, James?

STARK

Uh... Yes.

MARLÈNE

So what do I announce?

ANNE-MARIE

Dress cancelled. Premiere maintained.

STARK

But why not something like a little concert instead of the dress thing, a few songs for the *invitees who didn't get the memo and show up anyway?*

ANNE-MARIE

Really?

STARK

Really.

MANU

Fuck, they're really getting on my tits with their fucking *reallys!* Enough! Find a new word!

MAKAVER

Me, I vote for James's idea!

ANNE-MARIE

Something simple, like a break in the rehearsal, and no touching lights and decor... and without involving Julien.

JULIEN

Thank you.

FAUDOT

But with a few bits of text all the same, to sort of introduce the songs.

AUGUSTINE

And that way, Jean-Jacques will at least once sing for people who actually see him singing.

CHARLÈNE

Yeah, if he can stay on his feet!

17 INT. EVENING. THE VOLTAIRE, BAR

17

A few dozen invitees drinking - wine, beer, champagne - around the bar while chatting with members of the cast and crew that aren't involved in the little show about to begin. Among them, Delamuratine, Crash and a Brio not at all happy.

ANNE-MARIE

Pretty cool, huh? Free drinks.

Crash nods. He agrees.

BRIO

Like I give a shit.

ANNE-MARIE

Once upon a time, that was all you dreamed of.

BRIO

Never dreamed of free champagne, but I'll give you that: once upon a time I was dumb. And young. The two go together.

ANNE-MARIE

Speak for yourself.

BRIO

Whatever... She could have told me there was no show tonight!

ANNE-MARIE

And you, yesterday, you could have asked her how her day was. You know, something like: what's new, *Poussin*? That'll teach you.

CRASH

They say it's always better to take an interest in the life of your beloved.

ANNE-MARIE

In any event, you're getting paid, Brio.

BRIO

For one piece, yeah, but not for coming here *two fucking times*.

ANNE-MARIE

Oh you poor thing, your life is truly a long river of misery!

DISSOLVE TO:

18 INT. EVENING. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE

18

FAUDOT

Carson Clay. Sees Burke Canyon as a tight portal. A threshold. Beholds himself reaching, jamming his arms stiffened, his hands deep into each side of the canyon and rising. Sees himself working his way up to the threshold. And out.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Carson Clay. Beholds himself wrapped in a belt of powder-packed sausage links, dressed in a new black suit, standing before the Bunker Hill mine. Sees himself haranguing the forces of darkness while putting fire to the fuse...

AUGUSTINE

And in the face of profit, he sees the Wobbly's fist, and in the place of submission he sees the abolition of gods, lies and limits. He drinks three weeks of bourbon with no hangover retribution, drinks until it's 1899 again and tastes the revolution.

JEAN-JACQUES

(singing)

What path is left for you to tread
when hunger-wolves are slinking near?
Do you not know the West is dead
and freedom is not there nor here?

Your fathers, golden sunsets led
To virgin prairies wide and clear
What path is left for you to tread
Along the trails of yesteryear?

CLOSING CREDITS

19 INT. EVENING. THE VOLTAIRE, SEATS

19

Anne-Marie and Stark are seated next to each other in the very last row. He takes her hand as if they were an old couple. Not looking at each other, not saying anything, they watch and listen.

J-J, AUGUSTINE, PAOLA (OFF)

Your fathers' world, for which they bled,
is fenced and settled far and near
What path is left for you to tread
along the trails of yesteryear?

Do you not know the West is dead
And freedom is not there nor here?

EPISODE 10

1 BLACK 1

THE MODERN LOVERS
One, two, three, four, five six...

2 INT. MORNING. ANNE-MARIE'S APARTMENT, BED 2

Anne-Marie opens her eyes.

THE MODERN LOVERS
*Roadrunner roadrunner, going
faster by the hour...*

Anne-Marie closes her eyes and, without opening them again, grabs her phone, hits *snooze* to cut the music, deactivates airplane mode, wraps herself up in her covers... and then reaches again for her phone, squints, trying to see the time, fails... Too fuzzy.

ANNE-MARIE
Shit.

She forces herself to get up and, completely naked in the half-light, stumbles over to the chest of drawers, pulls one out and pulls a pair of underpants from it, but... it's men's underwear. Pulls out another pair - also for men. And another - same problem.

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)
(truly miffed)
Shit!

Giving up - she's in a hurry - she puts on the men's underpants... which don't fit her at all.

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)
Pain in the fucking...

She grabs a pair of jeans and starts putting them on. More complications - hard to get the too-tight jeans up to her waist over the bulky underwear...

THE MODERN LOVERS
(much louder than before)
One, two, three, four, five six...

ANNE-MARIE
(also louder)
Fuck. Shit. *Fuck!*

Trying to walk with the jeans barely up to her thighs, she trips and falls... and moans in frustration.

THE MODERN LOVERS
*Roadrunner roadrunner, going
 faster by the hour...*

ANNE-MARIE
 (crying out)
 Have pity on me!

On all fours now, she crawls over to her telephone, cuts the sound, and finally manages to see the time: 12:46.

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)
 No!

Staring at her phone to be sure, she sees the minutes quickly advancing, a new one every five seconds or so.

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)
 No! Fucking *fuuuuuuck*, Stop!

On her knees, at the end of her tether, she raises the offending object up high and clearly means to throw it as hard as she can at the wall...

CUT TO BLACK

DISSOLVE TO:

3 INT. MORNING. DE SAINT-FRÈRE'S LOFT, BED

3

Different music - the "opening theme" of the series - after mixing for a moment with that of *The Modern Lovers*, will now carry with varying levels of intensity the following scenes through the 10th.

The image is black and white now. The bedroom is more or less Greta Garbo's in "*Camille*". De Saint-Frère, in bed, opens her eyes, awakens without an alarm, glances at the time on her old wind-up clock: 8h45 - all is well. She gets up. Hair and make-up perfect, she's wearing a vintage negligee that she now covers with a matching nightgown and takes a seat at her vanity table for a look in the mirror...

CUT TO:

4 INT. EVENING. THE VOLTAIRE, BACKSTAGE/STAGE

4

Still in the negligee but without the robe, she finds herself in a kind of labyrinth of hallways similar to those of the Voltaire's backstage but endless and with lots of sharp angles. She is late, starts to run, but still getting nowhere. We hear the performance in progress, the band playing tunes we know, the audience laughing... It's "The Ballad of Carson Clay", of that there's no doubt, but she can't make her entrance, and...

CUT TO:

5 INT. EVENING. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE

5

There she is, finally and suddenly - who knows how! - in the middle of the stage. She can see that she was expected, but also that her colleagues are angry with her for having made them wait... except for Julien who, with a bigger smile than she's ever seen him smile, starts to undress... and disappears.

STARK (OFF)

Madame? So nice of you to join us!

De Saint-Frère turns towards what appears to be a full house, can't tell where this voice his coming from.

STARK

*Are you here to do the theater or
are you here to make lose the
time of everyone, me including?*

She opens her mouth, but nothing comes out.

STARK (cont'd)

*Come on, Madame, spit it out, I
pray thee.*

This, for no apparent reason, provokes and explosion of laughter in the audience.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

(starting to weep)

*I... I... I have not... I have not
my... my text.*

A second round of laughter when, all of a sudden, the theater begins to empty.

STARK

Ha ha ha! This is how is the life, Madame. This is how is always the life. Good God, how I do hate the theater!

CUT TO BLACK

DISSOLVE TO:

6 INT. MORNING. JEAN-JACQUES'S GARRET

6

Jean-Jacques, in bed, is woken up by the pain in his shoulder. Automatically, he reaches to his night table, picks up a bubble pack of pills, takes one, grimaces - it's bitter - and now has to get up to get water.

7 EXT. MATIN - PARIS, RUES

7

It's a remake of scene 4 in episode 9, but faster and dangerously faster to the point where he completely loses control of his runaway skateboard. With Tchaikovsky in his headphones at maximum volume - for us and, we imagine, for him - he actually begins to take flight and the scene begins to play out at normal speed. He's afraid, has no wish to fly, but can't do anything about it. At low altitude, he soars over Paris; it's beautiful, but he's suffering from his injury and the effort of maintaining balance. His only wish is to be back on the ground, and it's as he flies over the Voltaire that he finally comes down in a crash landing and, *boom*, shortly finds himself backstage where he runs into Manu.

MANU

(looking him up and down)

Hey, super class! That your new costume?

JEAN-JACQUES

Yeah, but...

(looks down at his legs -
no pants!)

Shit, my pants, I thought I'd...

Jesus, what a raving idiot!

MANU

You said it!

JEAN-JACQUES

Impossible I go on stage like this.

MANU

Impossible *is not French* !

JEAN-JACQUES

But it hurts!

MANU

It's showtime, mate - pull yourself together!

JEAN-JACQUES

But I don't even know my lines. And anyway, I'm not the one supposed to say them, it's Julien!

Charlène arrives with his stick-on mike.

CHARLÈNE

Listen, love bug, it's your text, so it's up to you to say it.

Once the little mike is taped to his chest, she, looking him in the eye, continues to walk her hands up and down his skin, searching for a place for the transmitter which usually goes in the pocket of his pants.

CHARLÈNE (cont'd)

Do you like that?

JEAN-JACQUES

Like what?

CHARLÈNE

That, it's... warm, isn't it?

JEAN-JACQUES

The transmitter?

CHARLÈNE

Ah, the transmitter! Asshole.

JEAN-JACQUES

But... But... Nobody's listening to me! I'm telling you those are no longer my lines so I didn't have to... Nobody told me to learn them!

MANU

Come on, they're waiting for you!

JEAN-JACQUES

But what can I do?

CHARLÈNE
 (pushing him onto the stage)
 Asshole, get to work!

JEAN-JACQUES
 (blinded by the light)
 Ouch! I told you, it hurts!

CUT TO BLACK

DISSOLVE TO:

8 INT. MORNING. STABLE

8

Augustine is brushing out a beautiful white horse before putting the saddle on.

AUGUSTINE
 (half sung)
 I love you. Oh I love Cigale.
 You're my king, you're my all.
How do I love thee, baby?
Let me count the ways, cheri.

The grooming completed, hooves scrapped out, saddle strapped on, stirrups adjusted and bit in place, she kisses the beast's neck, takes the reins in one hand, puts a left foot in the stirrups, pushes off with the right and... the horse lurches forward forcing her to halt the operation.

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)
 Oh, my darling, what is wrong?
 Is it my singing? Is it my song?

She tries to mount again. Same result.

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)
 Oh, baby baby, what going on here?
 Tell me what it is, what it is you fear!

Third try: same result, only this time Augustine hangs on with one foot in the stirrup but, with the horse clearly bent on shaking off its human, she fails to get her right leg over the saddle and ends up letting go and collapsing in a clump in the dust.

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)
 (standing back up and dusting off
 her behind)
 You almost broke my ass,
 you fucking piece of crap!
 (MORE)

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)
 Sorry about my language,
 but you're acting like a brat

Cigale keeps his distance, holds her gaze, nods his head,
 as the accompanying music becomes more structured.

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)
 You're making me fear the worst -
 Don't you love me anymore?
 Has the bubble finally burst?
 Are you walking out the stable door?

We hear a laugh, just one. Augustine turns around... No
 one there.

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)
 But I didn't do anything,
so don't take me for a toy!
 Come on, you pretty thing,
don't be a shitty boy!

Another laugh, then another, several... She spins around,
 furious, ready to riposte, and...

CUT TO:

... discovers the audience of the Voltaire convulsed in
 laughter.

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)
 But it's not even funny
 It's tragic Shakespeare
 Why are they all laughing
 when there's no comedy here?

The music comes to an abrupt halt. She looks around,
 finds herself in the middle of the "The Ballade of Carson
 Clay" decor.

STARK (OFF)
*Miss Caesar, you're late! We've got
 work to do. You're not ready. We're
 not ready. Nobody's fucking ready!*

AUGUSTINE
 (shifting in a flash into
 performance mode - grandiose)
 Oh gosh and golly! Has Cigale deserted me?
 I want back my baby, don't want a divorce!
 Give me one last chance, one last dance
 A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!

CUT TO BLACK

DISSOLVE TO:

9 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, STAGE

9

In the same decor, cast and crew appear stage left. In white shirts and navy blue trousers and sweaters, they begin filing on to the stage to line up in two rows facing a full house. Stark is backstage to oversee the operation. When it's Julien's turn to go, he hesitates, trying to get the American's attention. Whispers and grumbling behind him... *Come on! What are you waiting for?*

JULIEN

(teeth clenched)

James!

STARK

What are you doing, Bud? Go!

JULIEN

(whispering)

I don't... I don't feel very...

STARK

You're holding up the line, dude. Go!

With Boris giving him a hard shove in the back, Julien lurches forward despite himself and can do nothing more now than take his place in the second row. He's white as a sheet and holding his stomach, looking desperately for a way out as the band starts in on the play's main theme and the cast and crew, transformed into a choir, begin to sing: powerful, intense, moving... When Julien finally opens his mouth as well, it's vomit as opposed to Stark's lyrics that comes pouring out, a literal fountain of many colors splattering the colleagues in front of him before they can jump out of the way and, with the band heating up, the voices go silent as Julien lets fly a second volley of his unprocessed dinner that can't help but provoke an audible wave of repulsion in the house.

CUT TO BLACK

DISSOLVE TO:

CREDITS

10 EXT. DAY. BASEBALL FIELD

10

Nicely mowed grass. Nicely smoothed earth with a white line of chalk connecting the bases. On the mound: Stark. About to pitch, he has a look around the diamond and is less than thrilled by what he sees; while appropriately uniformed and gloved, his teammates are not at all positioned well and Faudot, at shortstop, is actually chatting away with Saint-Frère at second. They're not even looking, not even preparing for what might happen with the next pitch... which Stark now delivers. The batter (who has all the allure of an American major-leaguer) swings and, of course, sizzles a grounder between Faudot and de Saint-Frère who make no effort to catch it and, in the outfield, they take so long to come up with the ball that the batter makes it all the way to third. Anne-Marie, the catcher, is wild with anger.

END CREDITS

ANNE-MARIE

(shouting)

Hey, grannies! What the fuck was that? You think this is a game?

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Actually, yes, that's what it is.

FAUDOT

Granny yourself! Vile vixen...

And Saint-Frère bursts out laughing like we've never seen her laugh before.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Vile vixen!

FAUDOT

Yeah, dumb bitch.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

(cracking up)

Dumb bitch!

JEAN-JACQUES

(on first)

Easy girls. Pay attention now.

Makaver, the umpire, joins in:

MAKAVER

(in a mocking falsetto)
 Yes, calm down ladies. Oh là là, you
 must really pay attention!

Another round of gleeful cackling from de Saint-Frère. Stark, helpless, looks at her, barely dares to address, let alone direct, her. He attempts to do his job all the same.

STARK

(patient, pedantic)
*And if the ball comes to you, catch
 it and throw it to first, throw it to
 Jay Jay.*

CHARLÈNE

(at third)
 Yeah yeah, still babbling
 Yankee. A real sicko, this guy.

MANU

(in the outfield)
 Completely retarded, this game!

STARK

(pleading)
*I mean there's no reason for us
 not to get this right, no reason
 to lose the game. It's important
 to win, in fact, and we can do it.*

The other players, those that bother to listen, look at him as if he'd just spoken Chinese. Even Anne-Marie is shaking her head.

ANNE-MARIE

(dejected)
 Hopeless. It's all hopeless.

STARK

(almost sheepish)
*If you have any questions, just
 ask. I'll be happy to explain. I'm
 telling you, we can make this work.*

He winds up and throws another pitch. It's perfect, a fastball in the strike zone, but Makaver calls it a ball - ball four, in fact - and sends the batter to first base.

STARK (cont'd)
 (angry at last, the
 injustice is too great)
*Bullshit! That pitch was right
 over the plate!*

MAKAVER
 Yeah, right, old chap. Forgot your
 glasses in the States, did you?

Stark squints, calms down in a second... It's true, he's
 having trouble focusing. Looking around, he no longer
 recognizes his teammates who seem to be having themselves
 a good time together and don't hear, indeed don't even
 seem to see him now.

STARK
 (waving his arms)
Hello? Can anybody hear me?
 (muffling a sob)
Anne-Marie! Anne-Marie?

No reply. In the distance: a dog barking.

DISSOLVE TO:

11 INT. MORNING. STARK'S FURNISHED APARTMENT, BED

11

Stark sleeping. Edward - vertical, paws on the edge of
 the bed, worried - has his gaze fixed on his owner whose
 sleep is clearly troubled... Something needs to be done.

EDWARD
Woof, woof!

Stark opens his eyes, we see a tear escaping one of them.

STARK
*Ah... Thank you, boy. That was bad...
 But you could have come sooner.*
 (remembering, shaking his head)
*Jesus... One of the dumbest
 dreams of my life.*
 (takes a big breath)
*Of course, little Eddie. It's
 opening night. Never fucking fails!
 You knew that, didn't you boy.*

Reaches over, rubs Edward's neck.

CUT TO:

12 INT. MORNING. ANNE-MARIE'S APARTMENT, BED

12

THE MODERN LOVERS
*Roadrunner roadrunner, going
 faster by the hour...*

Without opening her eyes, Anne-Marie grabs her telephone, is on the verge of throwing it against the wall when she opens her eyes, sees the time, sees the real world, hits snooze to cut the song, deactivates airplane mode ... and sighs a big sigh.

ANNE-MARIE
 OK. All is well. Nobody died...
 not even the telephone.
 (stretching)
 Life is grand... I love life.

13 INT. MORNING. DE SAINT-FRÈRE'S LOFT, BEDROOM

13

The bedroom - seen with Jean-Jacques and Anne-Marie in episode 1 - while essentially old school, is a long way from Greta Garbo's in "Camille". De Saint-Frère, in bed, opens her eyes in a panic, sits up, squeezes her bedspread, touches her chest, touches her hair... and falls back on her bed with a sigh of relief.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE
 Good heavens... They're going to kill
 me one day, these dreams.

14 INT. MORNING. DE SAINT-FRÈRE'S LOFT, BEDROOM

14

In the same negligee and nightgown, she sits down at her vanity table to have a look at herself... while vocalizing to warm up her voice. Difficult at first with a certain amount of obstacles resisting the smoke and honey of her voice unfettered...

DE SAINT-FRÈRE
 La la la, li li li...
 (clears her throat)
 Ni ni ni, na na na, palompe, palompe,
 to think I saw him born...

She coughs a little, begins again, voice clearer.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE (cont'd)

To think I saw him born, this
forlorn Adonis, to be pricked by
such a thorn would be... oh sol
la la la, sol lu lu lu...

CUT TO:

15 INT. MORNING. JEAN-JACQUES'S GARRET, BED

15

Jean-Jacques is sleeping, and talking in his sleep.

JEAN-JACQUES

I told you, it hurts!

Jerking his arm up, attempting to indicate the area of
his wound, he triggers more pain... and wakes himself up.

JEAN-JACQUES (cont'd)

(mutters)

Fuck... What a dickhead.

Shaking his head as he goes over the insane dream he just
had, he's also relieved to be out of it

JEAN-JACQUES (cont'd)

No, really, what a dickhead!

Reaching with his good arm for the bubble pack of pills,
he takes one, grimaces - it's bitter - and now has to get
up to get water. Again.

JEAN-JACQUES (cont'd)

(rising gingerly from the bed)

And here we go... *Show fucking time.*

CUT TO:

16 INT. BRIO'S APARTMENT, BED

16

Augustine and Brio in bed.

AUGUSTINE

Shada dasha da da di di... you...

Brio opens his eyes and looks over at Augustine who seems
to be having trouble in her sleep. Tries to decipher the
excited gibberish coming out of her mouth...

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)
shitty boy, you you you, non,
bébé boué boy...

... He gathers that she's probably suffering, that he should intervene, but, fascinated, he holds off.

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)
 (suddenly clear, louder)
 Why, my love? Why?

BRIO
 Poussin?

AUGUSTINE
Da da shalada... I... I... A
horse, a horse!

BRIO
 (squeezing her shoulder)
 Augustine?

AUGUSTINE
 (opening her eyes)
 What? What?

BRIO
 You were dreaming, maybe a nightmare.

AUGUSTINE
 I know. It was horrible.

BRIO
 And that's why I...

AUGUSTINE
 Yes, thank you, but... I'm a little
 sorry you did.

BRIO
 Sorry? Why?

AUGUSTINE
 I'd have liked to have seen if...
 OK, it was horrible - pure hell, in
 fact - but also interesting, and
 I'd have liked to see if it had a
happy ending.

BRIO
 Were you on stage?

AUGUSTINE

No, but... Wait. Maybe... no. It was with Cigale, I think.

BRIO

Yes! In the weird noises you were making, there was *horse*. You said *horse*.

AUGUSTINE

Ah, of course, the usual *Richard the Third* thing. Maybe that's a good sign.

BRIO

Oh yeah?

AUGUSTINE

Yeah, that was when I really knew I could do this, that I was worthy of the role I'd been given... And I lost my virginity when I went out riding with the fellow who played Buckingham.

BRIO

How old were you?

AUGUSTINE

Not so young. Nineteen.

BRIO

And the guy?

AUGUSTINE

Old. Thirty something...

BRIO

It's sad.

AUGUSTINE

Why sad?

BRIO

I don't know, sad to think of you at that age...

AUGUSTINE

It wasn't that long ago, Poussin.

BRIO

... of you before. Still a girl.

AUGUSTINE

Because you love me.

BRIO

Not yet, Poussin. But you do move me.
Truly.

AUGUSTINE

That's already something. As for Cigale,
he doesn't love me anymore.

BRIO

No big deal. He's dead.

AUGUSTINE

(with a lump in her throat)
Yeah, no big deal, unless... unless
Cigale in my dream was you.

CUT TO:

17 INT. MORNING. JULIEN'S GARRET

17

Julien - in his little bed, face shining with
perspiration - opens his eyes. Sighs.

JULIEN

(mumbling)
Fucking hell... Totally insane.

Checks the time on his phone.

JULIEN (cont'd)

You really should get help, man.

The camera, Julien's POV, tours his tiny room. A desk, a
sink, a massive mirror set on the marble mantel above the
fireplace where there's also a pile of books...

JULIEN (cont'd)

Here we go!

In a t-shirt - and nothing else - he gets up and pulls
the curtain of his only window back to reveal the roofs
and top floors of the 19th century buildings across the
narrow street. And the sun shining hard.

JULIEN (cont'd)

Here I fucking go!

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

18 INT. DAY. MÉTRO

18

Anne-Marie and Augustine, standing, silent, lost in their thoughts. Anne-Marie in heels and a bottle green dress. Augustine in her usual uniform of tight jeans, loafers, shirt and vest, and carrying a canvas tote bag. Around them, everyone's looking at their cell phones. After a moment, the two women look at each other. A vague exchange of smiles. Anne-Marie shakes her head slowly.

AUGUSTINE

What?

ANNE-MARIE

I had another really dumb dream.

AUGUSTINE

Dumb how? You found yourself standing half-naked in Makaver's office?

ANNE-MARIE

Similar, but even dumber. I had a big pair of men's underwear that I couldn't get on, and I fell down trying... Crap like that - funny in a movie, not so much in life

AUGUSTINE

Me, it was Cigale.

ANNE-MARIE

Yikes...

AUGUSTINE

Still alive, as beautiful as ever, but he wouldn't let me get on.

ANNE-MARIE

Of course, it's opening night tonight.

AUGUSTINE

Yeah, but... No. I was thinking that Cigale was actually William there.

ANNE-MARIE

No way... Cigale was a Greek god and old William, he's just...

AUGUSTINE

The man who doesn't love me.

ANNE-MARIE

Bullshit.

AUGUSTINE

The man who doesn't want to say he loves me.

ANNE-MARIE

Come on... Dump him, and you'll see how much he doesn't want to say he loves you.

AUGUSTINE

Yeah. No... I don't know.

Un long silence. The métro comes to a stop. People exit and enter eyes fixed on their telephones.

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)

It's surely the premiere playing games with my mind, but by the time the show starts, I know I'll be fine. The problem is dreams and what in them I might find.

ANNE-MARIE

So... Still no stage fright?

AUGUSTINE

(chuckles)

No.

ANNE-MARIE

You never have stage fright.

AUGUSTINE

No, not for me.

ANNE-MARIE

For Julien then.

AUGUSTINE

A little, yes.

ANNE-MARIE

Me too, Jesus, and more than a little.

AUGUSTINE

But you're happy that's it's not another rich brat spoiled, another product of the machine so boringly oiled who's come to save the day by playing Carson Clay... No?

ANNE-MARIE
 (in rhyme as well,
 with a smile)
 I confess, my friend, confess that's true,
 but you, in the end, are one crazy cuckoo.

CUT TO:

19 EXT DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, ENTRANCE

19

Seen from behind, Anne-Marie et Augustine are walking up to the main entrance. Before opening the door, Augustine takes Anne-Marie's hand and pulls her into a hug.

CUT TO:

20 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, MAKAYER'S OFFICE

20

Anne-Marie, seated at Makaver's desk, pulls out a metal drawer, rummages for a moment through the files there before finally coming up with a bottle of Jack Daniels and pouring herself a hefty dose before putting it back. Then, just as she's putting the cup to her lips, Makaver walks in. Caught off guard, her first sip goes down the wrong pipe and she starts coughing as if she were choking to death.

MAKAVER
 Ha ha, that'll teach you.

ANNE-MARIE
 (hoarse whisper)
 Teach me what?

MAKAVER
 To steal from me.

ANNE-MARIE
 Who's stealing? What have I stolen?

MAKAVER
 Booze, Pestine!

ANNE-MARIE
 (nodding at her cup)
 That's coffee, pal.

MAKAVER
 Sure, and my ass is fried chicken.

ANNE-MARIE

Oh yeah? Learn something new every day.

MAKAVER

Yeah, and taking what doesn't belong to you is stealing. You could have asked.

ANNE-MARIE

How? By phone? You weren't here. Which begs the question: why are you here so early? It's a little fishy.

MAKAVER

What do you mean? Tonight is opening night!

ANNE-MARIE

In that case, we should raise a toast, even though everyone knows you never drink at work...

(taking the bottle back out)

... and that this bottle is only a leftover that just happened to...

MAKAVER

All right, Pestinita.

(extracting a proper shot glass from behind a framed photo on a bookshelf)

We know each other.

ANNE-MARIE

Yes, after all this time, I suppose we do, but I still can't tell if bringing Stark and Carson Clay to the Voltaire was a master stroke or nothing but a senile old man's capricious whim turning into a lucky break.

MAKAVER

Ah! Then that makes two of us!

ANNE-MARIE

(shaking her head, pouring the bourbon)

Unbelievable.

MAKAVER

Yes, and we don't care. It's only the result that matters, no?

(raising his glass)

To the result?

ANNE-MARIE
 (also raising her glass)
 Yes, and *fuck* the road that gets
 us there!

21 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, MEN'S DRESSING ROOM

21

Julien, seated alone in front of his mirror, is holding an antique pocket watch in his hand. Captivated by this object, he seems a tad shook up. Having a look around, he sees each station has its share of small gifts - a thin paperback, a rose, cards... Julien also has his cards, but it's the watch that commands his attention now and, in particular, the back of the watch to which his gaze keeps returning...

ANNE-MARIE (OFF)
 Hey, Julie!

Julien jumps, drops the watch on the table.

JULIEN
 Fuck...

ANNE-MARIE
 (imitating his accent)
 Yes, fuck...

JULIEN
 I didn't hear you were...

ANNE-MARIE
 (amused but not blind)
 What's the matter, Ju-Ju ? You OK?
 Not freaking out? Did you sleep well?

JULIEN
 No. Yes... And no.

ANNE-MARIE
 Neither did I, but it's not me who's
 going to have to... Hey, where'd that
 come from? That's a pretty watch.

JULIEN
 A present for the premiere.

ANNE-MARIE
 No! From whom?

JULIEN
 Cécile.

ANNE-MARIE

No!

JULIEN

Yes.

ANNE-MARIE

De Saint-Frère? A pocket watch? That's totally fucking...

(reins it in)

That's, you know... That's sweet.

JULIEN

(somber)

There's an inscription on the back.

ANNE-MARIE

So? That's no crime.

JULIEN

Something she had engraved for me, Anne-Marie.

ANNE-MARIE

No!

JULIEN

Yes. A line from Baudelaire.

ANNE-MARIE

Oh fuck... Baudelaire, you say?

JULIEN

Yes. What should I do?

ANNE-MARIE

Nothing! Just get ready for the run-through. Just think about tonight. And you can tell yourself that this woman, she's your partner here, a great actress that, I don't know, *likes* you and that that's a good thing... Isn't that a good thing?

JULIEN

Uh... Yes, it is.

His gloomy features would seem to be saying *no, it isn't*.

ANNE-MARIE

And the inscription, it's what?

JULIEN

(reads)

*No sorrows in family,
no grief in love.*

ANNE-MARIE

(anything to make him
feel better)

You see? It's because of what happens
with you two in the play, nothing else.

JULIEN

And me, I didn't think about presents,
didn't bring anything for anybody.

ANNE-MARIE

Who cares, you're saving the show for
us now. Forget the damn presents, you
have other cats to... to...

JULIEN

To whip...

(picks up the watch again)

Still... This is worth something.
It's silver.

ANNE-MARIE

It's to honor the moment, your first
real role when you didn't even know
you were an actor!

JULIEN

I've acted before, Anne-Marie.

ANNE-MARIE

Where?

JULIEN

In Tarbes, I took classes there. Then
here, at the Florent academy before
getting this job.

ANNE-MARIE

Well then, I guess that's why you...
you know...

JULIEN

And you, you smell like alcohol,
Anne-Marie.

ANNE-MARIE

Yes, my little Ju-Ju. I had a drink
with Makaver earlier.

(MORE)

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)

(lower)

But don't worry, I'm not going to try to jump you again.

JULIEN

You didn't try very hard.

ANNE-MARIE

Oh yeah? I thought I sort of...

JULIEN

You tried, yes, but I survived.

ANNE-MARIE

Well, I'm sorry. I don't think I ever apologized for having... You know? I should have.

JULIEN

It was actually kind of funny, except for end.

ANNE-MARIE

... When Stark showed up in the morning, Jesus! And little old Edward that I'd simply *forgotten*. Funny, yeah for sure, but only now.

Jean-Jacques comes in.

JEAN-JACQUES

What?

ANNE-MARIE

What what?

JEAN-JACQUES

Funny. What was *funny*?

ANNE-MARIE

Oh... The theater, Jay-Jay!

JEAN-JACQUES

Yeah, super funny... when you're not in pain.

ANNE-MARIE

Yeah... You OK?

JEAN-JACQUES

(deadpan)

No. I broke my collarbone.

ANNE-MARIE

At least you're not fucked up today -
you'll be able to sing.

JEAN-JACQUES

And you, you smell like whisky.

JULIEN

(hiding the watch)
Something I remarked as well...
She was drinking with Makaver.

JEAN-JACQUES

Well then, better be careful, Julien!
She gets you in her sights, she might
end up...

ANNE-MARIE

Shut the fuck up, you! Sorry...
Actually, Ju-Ju, Jay-Jay knows
something about that too. He and I,
we also sort of...

JEAN-JACQUES

Shhh!

ANNE-MARIE

And I never apologized.

JEAN-JACQUES

No reason to, Anne-Marie! Except for
the end, it was kind of...

JULIEN

Funny?

JEAN-JACQUES

Precisely. *Funny*. Alcohol makes her
funny.

ANNE-MARIE

Yeah yeah, but not now. Not here. Time
to let the kid concentrate, *he has*
other cats to... to...

JEAN-JACQUES

Whip.

ANNE-MARIE

Hey, who's all chatty today? Is it
the drugs still doing that, or...

JULIEN

(bitter)

... the fact that he doesn't have
to go on stage tonight.

JEAN-JACQUES

Both, in fact. It's kind of
nice. Free... *I feel light!*

AUGUSTINE (OFF)

Nobody naked here?

JEAN-JACQUES

Not yet.

AUGUSTINE

So much the better. No matter the
build or the size, a naked man is no
treat for the eyes... Isn't that
right, Anne-Marie?

ANNE-MARIE

Uh... Maybe? It's more like what you
can *do* with a naked man that's a treat.

AUGUSTINE

*Yes, for sure, but out of pants their
gams are never as pretty as madam's.*

Digging around in her tote bag, she comes up with a bulb
of garlic that she scrutinizes close-up, then places in
front of one of the mirrors.

AUGUSTINE (cont'd)

That one's for Boris.
(takes out another, places
it before Julien)
This one's for you

JULIEN

Thank you, Augustine. Me, I didn't
bring anything.

AUGUSTINE

That all right, I'd say you have, *you have
other cats to, to...*

JULIEN/ANNE-MARIE/JEAN-JACQUES

... *Whip!*

It's so sudden and loud that Augustine jumps.

AUGUSTINE

Hey, calm down, children.

Anne-Marie grabs Julien's clove, squints (the inscription in black ink is tiny).

ANNE-MARIE

(reads)

For my Julien *who saved the day,*
you are a wonderful Carson Clay.
 Break a leg!

JEAN-JACQUES

And me? No garlic for me?

AUGUSTINE

(giving him his bulb)

You got one you don't warrant after
 giving us such a fright, and just
 because you can't travel like a grown-
 up might. And you, what'll it be,
 another mix tape?

JEAN-JACQUES

(a little sheepish)

Yes.

AUGUSTINE

As is your wont.

JEAN-JACQUES

But not the same music! This time
 around, there's country, folk, and union
 organizing songs from the US.

ANNE-MARIE

(ironic)

Cool.

AUGUSTINE

Sure to give us all a pretty leg!

22 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, OFFICE HALLWAYS

22

Anne-Marie, exiting Makaver's office once again, comes upon Stark. Smiles. Each is pleased to see the other.

STARK

Hey!

ANNE-MARIE

Hey!

STARK

Is he there?

ANNE-MARIE

I don't know.

STARK

*(nodding towards the door)
But you just came out of...*

ANNE-MARIE

*Yes, I have short-term memory issues,
you know? Let's go see.*

She opens the door, takes his hand, and pulls him in.

ANNE-MARIE (cont'd)

*(fake surprise)
How about that, the director's
out of his office
(going straight to the drawer,
she pulls out the bottle)
Bingo! My dear James, it's time for
your opening night present.*

STARK

A half empty bottle of Jack Daniels?

ANNE-MARIE

No. This...

Locking her eyes on him, she comes closer, takes a big swig of bourbon and kisses him, gently injecting a goodly portion of alcohol into his mouth. Stark swallows. Likewise Anne-Marie. The kiss continues. She sets down the bottle, wraps him in her arms, then pulls away...

STARK

*(breathless, voice husky)
That's my present?*

ANNE-MARIE

Yes... Break a leg!

She takes another swig, screws the top back on, drops the bottle back into the drawer and she's gone. As for Stark, he lowers his eyes, feels his way alongside the desk as if blind, and falls backwards into Makaver's desk chair.

STARK

*(to himself)
Jesus... That was a present.*

23 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, WOMEN'S DRESSING ROOMS

23

Frenetic activity. The hair and costume people running back and forth from their workshop. The four actresses doing their own make-up, a pile of little things, including Augustine's garlic bulbs, in front of each.

STARK
(at the door)
Are you decent?

PAOLA
Never!

STARK
Can I come in?

DE SAINT-FRÈRE
Never!

STARK
*Well I'm coming anyway, and with my
assistant slash translator, Aida.*

A chorus of cheerful greetings to Aida who's carrying a big cardboard box with holes here and there and is soon followed by Julien, Jean-Jacques and Boris.

STARK (cont'd)
It's she who will... make the giving of
my presents.

AIDA
(corrects his French)
Distribute!

STARK
Distribute! *But all I really want to
say is thank you.*

AIDA
Merci.

STARK
Good job, honey!

AIDA
(displeased, gets that
he's mocking her)
It's what you said!

STARK

*But there's, there's something
else... I love you.*

AIDA

Mais il y a autre chose... Je
t'aime.... Je veux dire, je vous aime.

Little squeaky noises from the box. Meowing?

STARK

*I'd given my words up for dead and
you gave them life and now I lack
the words to tell you how grateful
I am for that.*

AIDA

J'avais donné mes mots... Ils
étaient morts, je pensais, et vous
les avez donné la vie et maintenant,
je... Quoi ?

STARK

And now I don't have the words to
say how much I am...

AIDA

Grateful!

More little noises from the box. Aida shakes it a little.

STARK

*That's it. And for my premiere
presents - I understand that's a
custom in France - Aida?*

Aida lifts the cover off the box and tosses it away.
Then, in a formal manner, she goes to each woman, reaches
into the the box and pulls out a kitten that she places
on the table. A chorus of oohs et aahs, giggles and
exclamations.

AIDA

Their names are Rachel, Mme
Clay, and Cecilia.

PAOLA

What? No Shelly?

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Only girls?

AIDA

We don't know, in fact. Up to you to figure that out.

AUGUSTINE

(doesn't dare touch it)
Mine, I'm giving it to Anne-Marie.

ANNE-MARIE

That's sweet but *no way, Jose! I only want dogs.*

FAUDOT

I already have one, but...

PAOLA

(serious, picking up a tiger striped kitten)
I want this one, but... I want it, that's all

STARK

Then it's for you, Paola.

PAOLA

Thank you, James.

STARK

Thank you Aida. The mother, it's her cat Minou.

Aida approaches the three men.

AIDA

There are two left, Carson and Prosper.

BORIS

(reaching out, laughing)
Give me, give me.

JEAN-JACQUES

Sorry, I'm allergic.

STARK

Bud?

JULIEN

Fucking sh... Sorry... In my room?
No, impossible.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

Makaver already has two and they're no spring chickens. Why can't he adopt a third for his retirement?

ANNE-MARIE

Sure, but he likes his cat black. I guess we'd just have to *paint it black!*
 (nobody gets her reference so she starts singing)
La la la la la laa-aa want it painted bla-ack... Come on!

STARK

(sings)
I see a white cat and I want it painted black...

ANNE-MARIE

Finally! *Thank you, Jimmy!*

AUGUSTINE

(same melody)
 You'll always have to do that to get a cat into his flat.

ANNE-MARIE

Yes! Nailed it, darling!

CUT TO:

24 INT. DAY. THE VOLTAIRE, MEN'S DRESSING ROOM

24

While Charlène is affixing his wireless mike, Julien is quietly running through his lines with Boris as Jean-Jacques observes.

JEAN-JACQUES

I'm jealous.

CHARLÈNE

Why is that?

JEAN-JACQUES

You don't do that for me anymore.

CHARLÈNE

I see. You've already had a drink or two.

JEAN-JACQUES

No.

CHARLÈNE

You're taking your drugs.

JEAN-JACQUES

Of course I am. I have a perfect right to take my drugs *and* to be jealous... No more little mikes for poor little me... and you don't touch me anymore.

CHARLÈNE

Well, you're a big boy now. You can get by without your pacifier.

JEAN-JACQUES

Yeah, but not without you.

Charlène rolls her eyes, finishes Julien's mike, turns to Jean-Jacques... and puts her hand on his chest.

CHARLÈNE

(sultry, serious, Lauren Bacall)
Is that better?

JEAN-JACQUES

A little, but it's not the same.

CHARLÈNE

(opening his shirt)
And now.

JEAN-JACQUES

Much better. Thank you.

CHARLÈNE

You're welcome.

Reaching for her shoulder with his free hand, Jean-Jacques kisses her quickly but forcefully on the lips.

CHARLÈNE (cont'd)

(not displeased)
Why you little rascal! Nobody ever tell you about *Me Too*?

JEAN-JACQUES

Yeah yeah, break a leg!

CHARLÈNE

You, break a leg!

25 INT. EVENING. THE VOLTAIRE, GREEN ROOM

25

Crammed together, cast and crew, for the last time before the premiere. With a very big knife, de Saint-Frère is about to *sabrer* a bottle of Veuve Clicquot.

ANNE-MARIE

No, Cécile. That's dangerous.
We've already lost Jean-Jacques!

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

I know what I'm doing.

JEAN-JACQUES

It's true. She knows what she's doing.

DE SAINT-FRÈRE

It's not to get you all drunk, just to seal this collaboration, this pleasure I could hardly have hoped for... No matter what happens now.

Attention. Tension... She applies the knife, nails it in one shot. Applause. The bottle decapitated, she starts filling the plastic flutes before her.

STARK

And me, I say... *Break a fucking leg, people!*

JEAN-JACQUES

(to Julien)

Long live poor old Carson Clay!

AUGUSTINE

Even if he's dumb as an ashtray!

MANU

Death to all clerical folderol!

Cries of "yeah yeah".

AUGUSTINE

And long live good old Stendhal!

More rowdy expressions of agreement. Kisses, formal handshakes - the rites before going on stage, with special attention to Julien, tense, pale, ready... The technicians leave to take up their posts. Sudden silence. Under his breath, Julien continues reciting his text. The light changes, the camera approaches the stage where the orchestra is already installed.

Billie's voice, on the other side of the curtain, welcomes the audience and asks them to turn off their cell phones. The lights go out and the orchestra begins to play, the curtain is drawn and we hear Augustine and Faudot singing - "La Ballade de Fabrice et Clélia" - as a kind of preface.

26 INT. EVENING. THE VOLTAIRE, THEATER ENTRANCE

26

With the music in the the background Anne-Marie exits as the show continues. Carefully closing the door behind here, she comes upon Stark just outside waiting for her as if it were a rendezvous they'd planned. She holds out her hand to him. He takes it, and she turns to go back into the theater.

STARK

No.

ANNE-MARIE

Yes.

STARK

I want to kiss you again, Anne-Marie.

ANNE-MARIE

Me too, I want to kiss you again, but... No, I'm sorry. Too soon, James.

STARK

Why too soon?

ANNE-MARIE

Because too important, really too important, and I'm not used to too important. I'll have to learn... I have to learn.

Still holding his hand, she pulls... and pulls. Stark gives in. They enter the theater and once again take seats in the very last row, back to the wall. Alone. Hand in hand, they watch the play while we only hear it - the music rising, the voice of Paola - focused as we are on Anne-Marie and Stark.

CLOSING CREDITS

PAOLA

He's dry as a bone so he comes here to moan
and with death in his breath, he begs for a loan
The silver spoon in his mouth could water his snout
but it's caught in his throat and he can't rip it out

There's guns in his lungs that won't let him walk
There's death in his breath and a dirge when he talks
Where there used to be a vision there's a wall of alcohol
And the only sound he's sure of is the sound of his fall

There's a hole inside him where nothing will grow
There's a sand-choked Mojave arroyo
He's waiting for life, he's praying for rain
For that desert inside him's all thirst and pain

I don't know that face; I don't know those eyes
But I can feel your flesh as it takes the knife
I don't know if it's you or the devil in disguise
You've lost the line between death and life

There's a place inside you where nothing will grow
There's an arid plot lying fallow
You're waiting for life, Lord, you're dying for rain
But the desert inside you's craving thirst and pain