

THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS

PROSPER DINAUX AND EUGENE SUE

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EText by Dagny

Translated and adapted by
Frank J. Morlock
c 2000

CHARACTERS:
Tortillard
Milkmaid
Rigolette
Fleur de Marie
Rudolph, the Grand Duke of Gerolstein
Sarah MacGregor

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Benoit
Francois
Germain
Le Chourineur
Tom Seyton
School Master
La Chouette
Jacques Ferrand
Madame Varner
Madame Anastasia Pipelet
Alfred Pipelet
Postman
Jerome Morel
Madeleine Morel
Morel children
Clermont
Bourdin
Malicorne
Police Superintendent
Madame Clemence D'Harville
Madame Dubreuil
Pierre
Piquevinaigre
Barbillon
Papa Roussel
Man

THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS

ACT I

THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS

SCENE I

A street in the Cite facing the audience. A Cabaret in the left corner with a small post. To the right a house under construction. Dark and raining. The street is lit by street lamps.

Tortillard (entering, holding a plank)

Here, Milkmaid. Here it is, The Cabaret of the White Rabbit that you were looking for.

Milkmaid

Thanks, Tortillard. I really have to find my man's watch there.

Tortillard

Your man! Ah! So, he's still drunk and beat up this morning.

Milkmaid

Yes, but they'll find out who they're talking to—

Tortillard (taking up his plank)

Good luck, Milkmaid. It was worth the trouble to bring this plank here, and go place it over the stream in the Rue Barillence, and to choke myself yelling for a whole hour. Pass—pay! Pass—pay. (shaking his money) A nasty shower! For all that in this Cite they really laugh at getting dirty, they pass behind my plank and splash me.

(Rigolette enters with an open umbrella, carrying a package.)

Rigolette (stopping at the back)

Go out in weather like this—after putting on white stockings and pretty lace boots—fortunately I have some good socks.

Tortillard (noticing her)

Heavens! Miss Rigolette, in this part of town.

Rigolette

It's you, Tortillard. You are then to be found everywhere?

Tortillard

Ah. Indeed, I know what brings you. It's because for the last three days the School Master and La Chouette haven't brought Fleur de Marie to sing in the court of your house in the Rue du Temple.

Rigolette

Yes, I am uneasy; is she sick?

Tortillard

She? No, it's La Chouette who has a whooping cough to humble the big bell of Notre Dame. Do you intend to go up to see her?

Rigolette

Amongst those villainous people—never—for goodness sake! Poor Fleur de Marie, so wise, so honest, so unhappy with them. I reproach myself if I am some days without seeing her and giving her courage.

Tortillard

Indeed, you'll do just as well not to go up, since she went out.

Rigolette

How do you know that?

Tortillard

She crossed over my plank just now, without paying, of course. She went to the corner market for flowers for La Chouette and to the herbalist's for leeches. She brought her little basket with her, the one you gave her. She takes it with her wherever she goes. Now there's a funny idea.

Rigolette

That's all she has in the world. It's easy to understand why she clings to it.

Tortillard (going to the back)

She hasn't wasted any time. There she is. You always gossip together, so I'll leave you. I'm going to go drink a glass of liquor to warm up my feet. (enters the Cabaret)

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Fleur de Marie (puts her basket on a milestone)

Rigolette, it's you! What luck!

Rigolette

Since you don't come, I have to come. I am bringing you the dress I fixed for you.

Fleur de Marie

Good Rigolette—after your day job and although I cannot pay you—you still worked—

Rigolette

Can't I enjoy myself? (Fleur de Marie starts) Well! What's the matter with you?

Fleur de Marie

My God! It's that I hardly dare to stop. La Chouette is waiting for me. If I don't return right away, perhaps they are going to beat me.

Rigolette

What! The School Master is still so brutal and this nasty La Chouette continues to mistreat you?

Fleur de Marie

Since she's been ill, she seems even nastier.

Rigolette

As for me, in your place, I wouldn't put up with that.

Fleur de Marie

What would you do?

Rigolette

I'd go away from there. Just because they found you in the street—whatever they say—and took you with them, doesn't mean they have the right to make your life so harsh. Again, as for me, I'd go away from there.

Fleur de Marie

Often, I've thought of that, but what would happen? I don't know how to work.

Rigolette

Come with me, I will teach you. It's tough, but in the evening when one has bravely earned one's pay, one is happy, a little proud, and sleeps contentedly. Is it agreed? Will you come stay with me?

Fleur de Marie

Stay with you! Oh, never, never, that would expose you to the rage of the School Master and La Chouette. (she shudders)

Rigolette

What's frightening you?

Fleur de Marie

I thought that La Chouette was calling me.

Rigolette

One more minute.

Fleur de Marie

No, no, I don't want to give them any pretext for their rage. Bye, bye.

Rigolette (escorting her)

Goodbye. Until tomorrow, right?

(Fleur de Marie enters the house. Rigolette leaves.)

Rudolph (entering)

I've been coming here to no purpose for the last three days, in the evenings, in the hopes of meeting that man who so boldly helped me.

(Sarah, dressed as a man, follows Rudolph and examines him.)

Rudolph

Here's the Cabaret that he pointed out to me. Come on, go on in—and if I don't meet him, at least we'll continue

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the bizarre observations which this strange part of town has already furnished me.

Sarah (at the moment he enters the Cabaret)

It's really him. I was not mistaken.

(Shouts are heard from inside the Cabaret. Sarah moves out of the way. Tortillard comes out of the Cabaret. Passers-by are attracted by the uproar.)

Tortillard

It's getting hot, getting hot in The Cabaret of the White Rabbit.

First passer-by What's going on in there?

Second passer-by Some fight, as usual.

Tortillard (rapping on the flagstones)

Hey, hey, hey! Bite them, old woman, bite them.

Third passer-by Is he naughty, this kid, Tortillard?

Tortillard

For what? For what? I'm encouraging the Milkmaid so she can hold her own.

First passer-by There's a Milkmaid in there?

(Noise of glass breaking inside.)

Tortillard

Score one for the glass maker. (imitating a glass maker) Hey, glass maker, are they a bad lot?

Sarah (withdrawing behind the planks)

This uproar, these people. Let's shun their gaze for a moment.

(Le Chourineur, the Milkmaid, Benoit, Francois and others come out of the Cabaret. Lots of shouting. The Milkmaid recoils before their shouts, but remains on the offensive.)

Milkmaid

Yes, you are a bunch of ragamuffins, and you don't frighten me.

Benoit

Will you shut up, merchant of diluted wheat?

Milkmaid

Ah, I recognize you. You're the one who picked a fight with my husband in the past.

Benoit

She's losing her head.

Milkmaid

And it's either you or him, (pointing to Francois) who took the watch.

Benoit (threateningly)

Say that a little louder, if you dare!

Le Chourineur (interposing)

As for me, I forbid you to touch her. She's a woman. When you want to give a blow to someone, you have to address yourself to one who can give one back. Here I am.

Francois

What's this to you, Chourineur?

Le Chourineur

It's to me, what it is to me. That's what it is to me.

(Murmurs in the crowd. Rudolph approaches.)

Milkmaid

Now, there's one who's not a good-for-nothing like you.

Tortillard

Hey, hey, Milkmaid, you'll get some help.

Milkmaid

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Do you think, that because I try to prevent my husband from coming around here, I don't know you? And the School Master, with his organ and his nasty Chouette, the Screech Owl, and this little Fleur de Marie who will become like them?

Le Chourineur

Stop there! On the School Master, with whom I have a score to settle. But not a word about Fleur de Marie. Do you hear? Or I leave you here, woman.

Benoit

Hey! Make her shut up.

Le Chourineur

Why should she shut up if they stole from her, man?

Benoit

Control yourself, Chourineur, don't be a wise guy, or if not—

Le Chourineur

If not, what?

Milkmaid (to Francois, who is looking to escape)

You want to escape, but it won't happen like that. I'll hang on to you, and I won't leave you until we're at the police station. (she puts her hand on his collar)

Francois (pushing her away brutally)

I'm leaving, for all that.

Le Chourineur (grabbing him)

Ah, you would?

Benoit (wanting to hit him)

It's you who would—take that!

Rudolph (grabbing his arm Three against one!)

Le Chourineur (recognizing him)

My gentleman from the seashore!

Benoit

And you are going to see—

Rudolph (pressing him to the milestone)

I told you to calm down.

Benoit

What an iron hand for such a small arm.

Le Chourineur (to Rudolph)

You said we'd meet again.

Francois

There's only two of them and a woman. Let's fall on them.

Tortillard (aside)

The bath's warming up for Le Chourineur.

Benoit and Francois Yes! Yes! Let's fall on them!

Le Chourineur (placing himself beside Rudolph)

Watch your heads!

Tortillard (shouting)

The cops. Watch yourselves! Watch yourselves.

Benoit

Beat it!

(Benoit and Francois disappear, along with all the other inhabitants of the White Rabbit.)

Rudolph (to Le Chourineur)

Get this woman out of here, before they return.

Le Chourineur

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That's what I intend. But, your name?

Rudolph

Rudolph.

Le Chourineur

When will I see you again?

Rudolph

Here—soon.

Tortillard

Don't be afraid, Chourineur. The cops—it was me.

Le Chourineur

What do you mean?

Tortillard

It was going bad, so I shouted: “Here come the cops.” They took to their heels.

Le Chourineur

Bravo, urchin, go. (kicks him in a friendly way)

Milkmaid

And to think, that without this kid—I will never forget it.

Tortillard

Well then, Milkmaid, since you baptize your milk, give it my name, that will help you to remember me.

Le Chourineur

Hold on, brat. (Tortillard escapes) Come on, Milkmaid, you are like a good war horse. (to Rudolph) And you, if you have a friend, he can say to himself, when speaking of you, I have a friend who boldly rains blows, especially those at the place where we began our acquaintance. Thunder! What hail!

Milkmaid

Let's go! Let's go. I'm afraid they'll come back.

Le Chourineur

Later, sir.

Rudolph

Later.

(The Milkmaid and Le Chourineur leave. Rudolph, in turn, starts to leave, but is blocked by Sarah.)

Sarah

Milord!

Rudolph

What do I see? The Countess MacGregor, in these clothes?

Sarah

I had to wear them, in the hope of meeting you here.

Rudolph

Madame.

Sarah

I didn't hesitate at anything to try to obtain an interview with you. You've refused me until now, despite the law.

Rudolph

The law! Well, Madame, since fate wants it to be here—in this sinister place—that I see you again, after long years of a separation that I thought to be eternal, know that the cause of the aversion you inspire in me—

Sarah

Ah, you are pitiless.

Rudolph

And I ought to be. Seventeen years ago, deluded by ambition, blinded by the predictions of a Scots fortune teller who promised you a crown, you came to my father's court with your brother. Deceived by your selfish seductions, I soon loved you with fidelity, with the noble devotion of my sixteen years. You wanted a secret marriage. The

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results of this mysterious union are going to accuse you in the eyes of the world. You wanted everything to be revealed to my father. Braving his wrath, his inflexible pride, his plans for a royal alliance, I informed him of our marriage. His anger was terrible. He wanted to force me to break this illegal union. I resisted. Put in prison, I persisted in my refusal. He wouldn't consent to set me free until I renounced my rights to the throne in favor of my brother. I renounced my rights. Was that enough love for you?

Sarah

Yes, yes! But as for me, didn't I suffer, too? And my love—

Rudolph

Your love? Do you dare even speak of it? After the letters you wrote to your brother, letters that I learned of much too late.

Sarah

What are you saying? Those letters—

Rudolph

Those letters were intercepted. In them, you treated me with a glacial disdain. I had been the plaything of your execrable ambition. It wasn't me you loved, but the Prince. So, when a year later I was disinherited, you accepted the breaking of our union, against which I protested from the depths of my prison, and you separated from our daughter, who had become an obstacle to your marriage with Count MacGregor. You abandoned our unfortunate child to the hands of mercenaries, and you left her to die far from you. Such was your conduct. But today, you are a widow, and today my brother's death restores the crown to me. That is the secret of your pursuits, madame!

Sarah

And the secret of your hate for me? I could find that in your love for the Marquise D'Harville.

Rudolph

Did you think that I would deny it? Clemence D'Harville, when I was an exile without a future, gave me the tender pity of a friend, the noble devotion of a sister. To offer her my hand, I left Germany and I will soon triumph over her scruples which still hold her back. Therefore, renounce all hope, Madame. In you I will always see the cause of the sin I committed. And I try to expiate that sin each day by rewarding the good, punishing evil, aiding noble unfortunates, snatching souls from perdition. Such is the task that I impose on myself—so as to deserve pardon for a fatal moment of distraction, the fruit of your implacable ambition and cruel egoism.

Sarah

Mercy, Rudolph.

Rudolph

No mercy for you. You armed a son against his father. No mercy for you, who instead of piously watching over our child—that I still weep for every day—abandoned her. No mercy for you, for the death of our daughter broke the last link that united us.

Sarah

Oh, pity. Listen, listen!

Rudolph

Woman without soul, spouse without faith, leave me.

Sarah

Rudolph, pity.

Rudolph (leaving)

Mother without compassion, be cursed. (goes out at the back)

Sarah

My God, is it enough to pay for the ambition that my brother inspired in me, and which extinguished all the feelings of my heart? No husband, no child, alone, forever alone! (she weeps)

(Tom enters from the rear and goes toward the right.)

Tom

I can hardly make out the number of the house that Mr. Ferrand told me to come at nine o'clock.

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Sarah

What to do? My God! What to do?

Tom

This is really the street. The house on the corner. It looks bad enough, it seems the men with whom I have to deal profit little from their dangerous profession.

Sarah

Let's go revive my courage on the quai aux fleurs. The cold—the fear—begin to come over me.

(Sarah starts to withdraw, then recognizing Tom, she utters a cry of fright.)

Tom

You, Sarah!

Sarah (controlling herself)

Brother!

Tom

What are you doing here? And in this outfit?

Sarah

I wanted to see the Prince.

Tom

The Prince—here!

Sarah

I knew that, in disguise—

Tom

But, what do I see? You're all in tears.

Sarah

I have no more hope. He said that the death of our daughter broke the last bond that united us.

Tom

No, you can still hope.

Sarah

What?

Tom

Hear me! When Count MacGregor offered you a fortune and a rank that your situation rendered unlooked for, you hesitated because you had a daughter by the Prince. His brother could die. All hope was not lost for you. That hope had to be destroyed forever. You were already separated from your daughter, who had been confided to the Varner woman without telling her who the child was. She had for her only sign of recognition a chain and a medallion, the last presents that the Prince sent you. At any price I wished to destroy the obstacle that prevented your marriage. I came back to Paris. The man on whom two hundred thousand francs had been placed for life—on the head of this child—consented, for half that sum to give me a false death certificate. The other half was reserved for your daughter, who must never reappear, and whose supposed death I announced to you.

Sarah

My daughter is still living! Where is she?

Tom

When the events which gave you new hope of marrying the Prince took place, I found my accomplice again.

Sarah

Who is that man?

Tom

Mr. Ferrand, a business man, Rue du Temple, number seventeen.

Sarah

What have you learned?

Tom

According to the information that Mr. Ferrand gave me, I ought to find her near here. But tomorrow, be at the same hour at his place and you will learn everything.

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Sarah

Find my daughter. Why the Prince will marry me then. Oh, that crown! What hope!

Tom

Hasten to leave this street to which I must return alone soon.

Sarah

Tomorrow morning, perhaps the Prince will know that our little girl still is alive—and Madame D'Harville shall be afraid in her turn.

(While Tom and Sarah move away, one sees Fleur de Marie emerge despairingly from a house further upstage.)

Fleur de Marie

Oh, I can't stand it any longer. I cannot support it any more. The violence of that woman is beyond measure. My God. If they had ever let me enter a church, I would have put myself on my knees before those paintings where they have virgins and saints whose looks console you. I would have asked their advice. But I have my sun, this portrait of a woman that I found, this portrait with such sweet eyes, with a look so loving. (considering it) Right? My good protectress, so I am not guilty if I flee from injuries, from blows that overwhelm me, if I prefer flight to this life, misery, starvation, perhaps? Protect me, my patroness, for I don't wish to draw the furies of these monsters on to my sole friend Rigolette. I am going to go away as far as I can go. I will beg for pity, I will ask for work and permission to live without being beaten. Sad suburb where I've been so wretched, where I've not known a single moment of joy or hope—goodbye! Goodbye! I prefer to die than to see you again. (she recoils) The School Master! (from the left one hears noisy songs) Those men frighten me. (she turns toward the house and stops) No, no, I won't go back. I prefer to wait in this alley until there's no longer anybody here.

(Fleur de Marie goes into the house that Tom Seyton recognized as the one he was seeking.)

School Master (placing his organ near his house)

Notre Dame just struck 8:30. It seems to me that the man with the red beard is loitering indeed. Who is the man with the red beard? When he comes, where's he coming from? When he goes, where's he going to? No one knows him. What does he want with me again? Ah, I no longer dare look behind me, and against the threats of the future I have no other resources than this pen-knife whose blade is poisoned. One scratch and death is certain. I can no longer escape myself through gross habits and passions. Rage has its intoxication. From cold blood, I tremble, because I find myself again.

(Ferrand enters disguised in his red beard. He touches the School Master on the arm while he is absorbed in deep reverie.)

Ferrand

Ah, It's you.

School Master

As you see, exact to the hour.

Ferrand

That's fine.

School Master

You are satisfied?

Ferrand

Almost.

School Master

Do you doubt my discretion?

Ferrand

No.

School Master

Who can give you offense? Would it be the Screech Owl?

Ferrand

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No—

School Master

Who can give you trouble?

Ferrand

That young girl who lives with you.

School Master

Fleur de Marie?

Ferrand

Yes.

School Master

On my life. She's unaware—

Ferrand

Who will answer to me that she will always remain so?

School Master

We cannot put her out the door.

Ferrand

Why don't you find her a situation?

School Master

That's easy to say.

Ferrand

I have what you need.

School Master (astonished)

Ah! (aside) The devil of a man thinks of everything.

Ferrand

You will escort her tomorrow to Mr. Ferrand's—a business man—Rue du Temple, number seventeen. Promise me!

School Master

So be it! Tomorrow. I will go find this Mr. Ferrand.

Ferrand

Fine.

School Master

You know him?

Ferrand

Yes, he's a grave, austere man. People say much good of him.

School Master

Is he rich?

Ferrand

Perhaps.

School Master

Is it in the hope of furthering some bold stroke that you want to place Fleur de Marie in his home?

Ferrand

Who lives, will see.

School Master

What do you want then, you whose word never betrays your thought?

Ferrand (giving him gold)

Count

School Master

Two hundred francs.

Ferrand

As much more after success.

School Master

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Four hundred francs! What's it about then? Processing papers?

Ferrand

A man!

School Master

Who has papers?

Ferrand

No. Who bothers me!

School Master (with something like terror)

Who bothers you? (brutally) Eh! Where do you want me to meet this man?

Ferrand (holding him by the arm)

He will come.

School Master

When?

Ferrand

Tonight.

School Master

Soon?

Ferrand

At nine.

School Master

Where?

Ferrand (pointing to the house facing the Cabaret of the White Rabbit)

There.

School Master

In that alley, dark, tortuous?

Ferrand

You will be there before him.

School Master

Me?

Ferrand

He won't leave.

School Master

There'll be an investigation.

Ferrand

No, not if they think that this man has killed himself.

School Master

Why will they believe that?

Ferrand

If a letter written by him, placed this evening in the post, wards off all suspicions—

School Master

If he wrote one in advance, or someone for him?

Ferrand

That's my lookout.

School Master

When will I see you again?

Ferrand

At 9:05.

(Ferrand leaves by the rear.)

School Master (alone)

That look—that voice—brief and cutting like a knife—it subjugates me. Do I dare? (the voice of Chourineur is

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heard) If I could propose to someone. Le Chourineur—he has it in for me—but he's already been condemned—let's try to appease him.

Le Chourineur

Ah—there you are. (grabs him) My boat? Where have you put my boat?

School Master

What do you expect me to have done with your boat?

Le Chourineur

It was next to the boats of the washerwomen. They saw you take it. I cannot get the idea out of my head that you used it to go steal from the Chateau on the shores of the river.

School Master

I don't know what you're trying to tell me.

Le Chourineur

You don't know any more about who it was that tried to drag a rider who was thrown from his horse into the river?

School Master

I am absolutely unaware of it.

Le Chourineur

Well, somebody was paid to know it. But, my boat?

School Master

Look, it was no great loss, you know it. To rake sand, to fish up logs, to spend the whole day with half your body in the water.

Le Chourineur

It's a tough profession, but honest. I earn my living. That's all I ask.

School Master

Well, as for me, I am more demanding than you. I have a good deal to propose to you.

Le Chourineur

You, a good deal?

School Master

Forty francs to be made.

Le Chourineur

In how much time?

School Master

In a quarter of an hour.

Le Chourineur

In broad daylight, before the whole world?

School Master

No, no one will know. Come on, I'll make it sixty francs.

Le Chourineur

Thanks, but I don't eat that kind of bread.

School Master

But—

Le Chourineur

I tell you, I don't eat that kind of bread. It corrodes.

School Master

You prefer your job, right?

Le Chourineur

My job? That is to say, no. When one wants to put me in a bad situation, my job is also to hunt down to their death those who would like to harm those I love—for when those I love need a good dog to defend them, they find me. And you know that I have good fangs.

School Master

Will you listen to me?

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Le Chourineur

Enough, damn! Enough! I forbid you ever to speak to me as you did. Go away.

School Master

At your ease.

(The School Master goes to enter the Cabaret as Le Chourineur remains motionless with anger. Fleur de Marie comes from the alley, and noticing him, goes back quickly.)

School Master (aside)

Let's go see La Chouette. She'll give me booze and I will try it alone. (goes into his home)

Le Chourineur (alone and raging)

If you lied to me, if you stole my boat, sooner or later I will catch you again.

Rudolph (entering from the rear)

Well, my lad, things not going well? You seem enraged.

Le Chourineur

Yes, so enraged, that I could beat even myself. I need to give it to somebody.

Rudolph

I came at a bad time. I want to request a service of you.

Le Chourineur

Then so much the better. That will set me straight. What is it that I can do for you?

Rudolph

The other evening, on the shore of the Seine near the Chateau D'Harville, you helped me get rid of some bandits who attacked me.

Le Chourineur

You or someone else—I don't know since it was night. I had just broken up a train of logs. Through the night I saw one man by himself against three. You thought I wanted to take it out on you and you rained a shower of blows on me. I was seeing stars. Anyway, it's all the same, we had it all out, had an explanation afterwards.

Rudolph

Poor lad, I am sorry for that.

Le Chourineur

Not I. I will keep those blows, they'll serve me for the School Master.

Rudolph

Now, tell me, I have reason to think that the bandits who attacked me were those who robbed the Chateau D'Harville.

Le Chourineur (aside)

The School Master and his gang. (aloud) That's indeed possible.

Rudolph

If you know them, try to learn what they did with a portrait studded with gems. They abandoned the gems to get back the portrait.

Le Chourineur (with rage)

Why do you think that the thieves take me into their business? Do you take me for—But, indeed, you are right. I know them. I am often with them. Birds of a feather, right?

Rudolph

But, why are you seen with them?

Le Chourineur

Because I cannot live otherwise.

Rudolph

What's your job?

Le Chourineur

Raker of sand and wharf porter at the Quai Saint Paul. Freeze in winter, roast in summer. Fifteen hours a day in the water. That's my job.

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Rudolph

Your family?

Le Chourineur

Orphan of the streets of Paris.

Rudolph

Why, who brought you up?

Le Chourineur

Those who raise lost dogs. I remember when I was a kid, I went to sleep at night in the plaster furnaces and when hunger wore down my defenses and I could no longer go there, I slept under the great stones of the Louvre, and in winter I had white sheets when the snow fell.

Rudolph

You were hungry and you didn't steal?

Le Chourineur

Never, and I often went a day or two without eating.

Rudolph

When you grew up, what did you do?

Le Chourineur

I made myself a trooper.

Rudolph

You served?

Le Chourineur

Three years. I was counting on them taking me to Algiers, but I had bad luck. Raised in the street like a brute, I had rages like a brute. One day my sergeant used me roughly and I answered back. He pushed me and he bit me. Damnation! Rage took me; I let him have it at random. I wounded the sergeant and three soldiers. Three months later they condemned me to swallow a dozen lead balls.

Rudolph

Condemned to death!

Le Chourineur

I was hoping for it. For when you've once shed blood—you see it's no use washing your hands—they are always red. But they commuted my punishment, as they said, because once in a fire I'd saved an old woman and another time I fished a young girl who couldn't swim out of the river. You see, I'm an amphibian of fire and water.

Rudolph

And what punishment did you undergo?

Le Chourineur (with a somber air)

I had the right to be shot like a soldier. They condemned me to five years in a chain gang. When I learned that, I wanted to strangle myself in prison, but they released me in time.

Rudolph

And after you left prison, you had the same aversion to theft as when you entered?

Le Chourineur

The same. And while waiting I burst out anew as if I were new born. I made myself a wharf porter. I earn my living without wronging anybody.

Rudolph

Well, my lad, you still have a heart and honor.

Le Chourineur

Heart, honor, me? That's funny, Mr. Rudolph. That's the first time anyone's said that to me, and that does me good. It warms me up a bit. (striking his heart and repeating with a pensive air) Heart and honor.

Rudolph

That astonishes you?

Le Chourineur

Yes and no. I feel, indeed I am never bad except to those who are stronger than me, while to the weak, on the contrary, I am good, but good in a stupid way. See, there's a poor girl called Fleur de Marie, you won't believe it,

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but she's sweet, wise, and honest. Sixteen, face like an angel—well, she's the drudge of a scoundrel called the School Master and his wife La Chouette (Screech Owl) who took her quite young out of a street where she was abandoned.

Rudolph

Poor child. And who protects her against these monsters?

Le Chourineur

Me—when I am there. But I cannot always be there, and then, for a yes or a no, they beat her to death.

Rudolph

Your protégé interests me. Where is she?

Le Chourineur (pointing to the Cabaret)

There, perhaps.

Rudolph

In that dive?

Le Chourineur

She really has to follow the School Master and the Screech Owl.

Rudolph

Poor wretch!

Le Chourineur

Will you also prevent them from doing her harm?

Rudolph

Perhaps.

Le Chourineur

Well, the School Master went in there just now, I believe. Come, if you dare!

Rudolph

Don't worry, I dare.

(Le Chourineur and Rudolph enter the Cabaret of the White Rabbit. Ferrand enters from the left and heads towards the house under construction.)

Ferrand

All's going well. The stormy weather is going to keep everyone away. There no longer exists against me any witness or evidence; the witness who dared to threaten me is soon going to perish. The proof, this chain and medallion given to the Varner woman—this woman, slow, an idiot, is in the home of her son-in-law, the jeweler, Morel. He dwells in my house. Is it then so difficult to force them, through misery, to rid themselves of this precious object? I shall have that chain and medallion. (going behind the planks) From here I can see everything.

School Master (entering, drunk)

I say, indeed, that brandy and the Screech Owl are deafening me and separating me from all scruples. And this little wretch who's fleeing, who dares to write "I am very unhappy here. You will never see me again." Oh! I'll catch you and you will pay dearly. Tomorrow I really must find you—and bad luck to you! This new rage serves me again and I hesitate no more.

(The School Master enters the alleyway where Fleur de Marie is hiding. A scream is heard. The School Master returns, dragging Fleur de Marie.)

School Master

Wretch! You, you!

Fleur de Marie

Yes, I wanted to flee.

School Master

You picked the wrong time.

Fleur de Marie

I prefer to die at once.

School Master (furious)

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Ah, you brave me!

(Le Chourineur and Rudolph leave the Cabaret. Le Chourineur grabs the arm of the School Master.)

Le Chourineur

Would you like to calm down? I forbid you to touch the little thing.

School Master

What is it you mean?

Rudolph

He means, as I do, that you will respect this child.

Fleur de Marie

Oh, thank you, sir.

School Master

Well, she can come back, she can go—

(Rudolph is looking at Fleur de Marie with interest.)

Le Chourineur (low to Rudolph)

It's she. (to the School Master) Why make her return—so you can mistreat her at your ease?

School Master

As for me, I'm going to the Faubourg Saint Antoine.

Le Chourineur

Why isn't she singing as she usually does?

Fleur de Marie

Oh, I couldn't. I feel too much like crying.

Rudolph

Poor child. Receive what I would have put in your bowl if you had sung.

(Rudolph gives Fleur de Marie a coin. Thunder is heard until the end of the scene.)

School Master

There's the storm. I have to get going. (to Fleur de Marie) You can go back. (to Le Chourineur) Don't worry.

Fleur de Marie (to Rudolph)

Sir, you have made a mistake. This is a gold piece.

Rudolph (aside)

Honest. (aloud) Keep it, my child.

Le Chourineur

Right, my little street singer, don't be afraid.

Rudolph (to Le Chourineur)

No, for now there are two of us to protect you.

(Fleur de Marie goes back in the alley. Rain falls. You can hear the chiming of a clock.)

School Master

Nine o'clock.

(The School Master goes in the alley. A man, enveloped in a cape, comes out of the darkness, looks at the house, recognises it, and raps. The School Master opens for him and lets him enter before him. Ferrand leaves his hiding place, listens a moment to hear what is happening in the alley with the house, then goes to put a letter in the box of the small post office.)

CURTAIN

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ACT II

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SCENE II

Maison Pipelet. The stage represents the courtyard of a house on the Rue du Temple, number 17. At the back, a building with three floors and garret windows. On the ground floor opposite, an alley at the back through which one can see the street. To the right of the alley, on the court, a window of Pipelet's lodging. Behind the lodging, a staircase leading to the upper stories. To the right of the lodge, in the court, a storeroom with a heavy door. To the left of the alley, the backroom of a gin shop. At a window on the second floor, a cage containing birds. The left of the stage is occupied by a small isolated building occupied by Ferrand. On the ground floor, a single door.

(Madame Pipelet comes to sweep the court. The Milkmaid brings out jugs of milk which she places in the storeroom. The Milkmaid comes and goes throughout the scene.)

Madame Pipelet

So, your day is over, Milkmaid?

Milkmaid (without stopping)

It's indeed time. I left this morning at two o'clock.

Madame Pipelet

Ah, indeed! Mine is not nearly finished yet. Since Mr. Ferrand sent his maid away, I am the one who does his housework. Yet, happily, he took Tortillard to run his errands.

Milkmaid

He's everywhere, that naughty kid. Yesterday, in the Cite, he helped all the ragamuffins who were beating my husband escape. But wherever I find one of them, I'll scream at him until they arrest him and lynch him.

Madame Pipelet

And you will be doing right, Milkmaid.

(The Milkmaid leaves. Morel comes out of the house and into the court.)

Madame Pipelet

Well! Mr. Morel, there you are, up and about already. How are things going at home?

Morel (gaily)

My wife's better, thank God. The doctor assures us that the country air will put her right. I am going on an errand and I'll go to the Rue Fontaine au Roi, to Papa Lefebvre's to ask him to rent me two little rooms he has in Belleville.

Madame Pipelet

Go away! House in the city, house in the country—easy to see you're a bigshot at the Savings Bank.

Morel

Yes, we would be completely happy if the mother of my wife—

Madame Pipelet

The poor old idiot? Ah, yes, that really annoys you.

Morel

After all, she's the wife's mother, and who would care for and pity her if not us?

Madame Pipelet

Heavens, Mr. Morel, you are the cream of honest men, like my old friend Alfred, the cream of porters.

Morel (laughing as he is leaving)

And you are the cream of gatekeepers, Madame Pipelet. Got to go. See you.

(Morel leaves through the alleyway. A postman enters.)

Postman

Madame Pipelet—three sous—a letter for Mr. Ferrand.

Madame Pipelet (paying him)

There's some real money. (looking at the stamp) First morning mail. It must have been posted last night.

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(The postman leaves. Germain enters with his head uncovered and papers under his arm.)

Madame Pipelet

Hello, Mr. Germain. A letter just came for Mr. Ferrand, your employer. It's three sous.

Germain (paying her and taking the letter)

Thank you, Madame Pipelet.

Madame Pipelet

Well, were you much amused yesterday at the show?

Germain

Much! But, while I'm thinking of it, here's your passkey that I am returning to you. Say, it seems you're not as strict with everybody as you are with me. You always repeat: "No one can come in after midnight. After midnight I won't pull the cord for anyone."

Madame Pipelet

It's always that way in strict houses.

Germain

All the same, last night there was no need to give me your passkey so I could go to the performance.

Madame Pipelet

Why's that?

Germain

Since, after I came in, you opened the door to someone.

Madame Pipelet

For heavens sake! The last person to return was Mr. Ferrand at 9:45. Because of the bad weather, he was wrapped up in his cloak, so I wouldn't have recognized him except by his voice and his glasses.

Germain

What! Towards midnight no one asked you for admittance.

Madame Pipelet

For what reason are you asking me that?

Germain

Because, as I came in, I passed by someone on the staircase who was coming down.

Madame Pipelet

Someone from the house?

Germain

No, someone I didn't know.

Madame Pipelet

Bah! You are dreaming.

Germain

I was dreaming so little that the light from my candle allowed me to see his face. I noticed he had a big red beard. You must have opened the door for him.

Madame Pipelet

Not at all. Well, you see, it's because you didn't lock it carefully.

Germain

I assure you that I did.

Madame Pipelet

Ah, I am stupid, it was my old darling that you opened to, and who didn't want to wake me.

Germain

Good, this was becoming—disturbing. I'm going to my office. I am a bit late and Mr. Ferrand must be waiting for me.

(Germain enters into Ferrand's lodging. Rudolph enters just at the last words and is examining the house.)

Rudolph

This must be it! Who can this Mr. Ferrand be, at whose house the Countess Sarah gives me a rendezvous for

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tonight? Is it some snare? Alas, the hope with which she attracted me is a senseless hope.

Madame Pipelet

Sir, where are you going?

Rudolph

Madame.

Madame Pipelet

Sir, to whose residence are you going? You don't go into houses that way.

Rudolph

Madame, I saw a notice on this door and I came to learn which apartment is for rent.

Madame Pipelet

The one on the first floor.

Rudolph (aside)

Try to get her talking. (aloud) If, as I hope, this apartment suits me, I beg you, Madame, to serve me in charging me for my modest bachelor household.

Madame Pipelet

Why, indeed sir—with delight, you'll be served like a prince for six francs a month. We won't be your porters but your friends.

Rudolph

Why, tell me Madame—

Madame Pipelet (with a curtsey)

Anastasia Pipelet.

Rudolph

Madame Pipelet, could I, without being indiscreet, ask you who lives in this house. You get the idea, when one lodges somewhere—

Madame Pipelet

Why, of course! Nothing could be more natural. The house is very well composed, sir, all the folks being very nice. We won't speak of the first, since that is vacant. All that I can say is the last inhabitant was a proud scoundrel who poisoned my life, and that of my old sweetie, Alfred, my spouse.

Rudolph

Ah! My God—who was this wretch?

Madame Pipelet

A painter named Cabrion, may God confound him. He did so much to Alfred that he is still stunned, the poor man. Pardon, sir. (calling to Rigolette) Don't pass so quickly, Miss Rigolette. (to Rudolph) A pearl of a young working girl who lives in a room on the second, rent always paid in advance.

Rigolette

What's the matter, Madame Pipelet?

Madame Pipelet

Where are you coming from like that?

Rigolette

From making provisions for my little birds and myself.

Madame Pipelet

Let's see—

Rudolph (aside)

Gracious little person.

Madame Pipelet (pointing to Rudolph)

This gentleman is going to become a tenant.

Rudolph

Pretty the way you are, you ought not to lack suitors.

Rigolette

Suitors! Ah, indeed! For goodness sake!

Madame Pipelet

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Ah, no need to say much. Mr. Germain—

Rigolette

Mr. Germain is a very good lad. He has a good heart, he's really sweet, very obliging, but not at all my suitor. Do I have time to think of such things? But, what did you want with me, Madame Pipelet?

Madame Pipelet

Papa Morel went out. As his wife hasn't gotten up yet, when you go back to your room, go give a look at the children.

Rigolette

You don't need to say any more. I am going to take my work to the Morels and as I work I will sing to the children the latest song given me by Fleur de Marie.

Rudolph

You know her?

Rigolette

And I love her a lot, a poor angel in the clutches of the devil. Goodbye, my future neighbor.

Rudolph

Goodbye, Miss Rigolette.

A man (calling from the alley)

Mr. Morel?

Madame Pipelet (from the court)

He went out.

Man

It's on behalf of the jeweler—

Madame Pipelet

Madame Morel will take care of you. Go up.

Man

What floor?

Rigolette (who has taken her cup of milk)

If you want to come with me, sir, I will show you to the door.

(Rigolette precedes the man and they both go upstairs.)

Rudolph

Charming child! (pointing to the left) That building, is it occupied?

Madame Pipelet

Yes, by Mr. Ferrand.

Rudolph (aside)

That's him.

Madame Pipelet

A worthy man, and honest, only receiving men of the best type and gentlemen from the Bureau of Charity.

Pipelet (in the back of the alley)

It's an indignity, an abomination!

Madame Pipelet

That's my old sweetie!

Pipelet

No, no, I won't pay them!

Madame Pipelet

What's wrong with you, Alfred? What is it that they want to make you pay?

Pipelet

Why, they send people to the scaffold who are sheep compared to this monstrous rogue.

Madame Pipelet

Who is it? What rogue?

Pipelet

SCENE II

THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS

Isn't it always the same? Do I have another enemy on the face of the globe?

Madame Pipelet

Then, you've seen him?

Pipelet

I was on the sidewalk, looking at the cartoons, at the library steps, when, insensibly at first, I felt myself touched on the back. I thought of my handkerchief placed in my pocket and turned abruptly. What do I see? Cabrion! Again Cabrion, who placing his two hands in the form of a funnel around his mouth, set himself to uttering a ferocious "Hurrah!" Fear seized me, and, in fear of an insult, I escaped. But then I hear behind me a dull noise—a noise of sensation and shouts. "Stop! Stop!" And soon a furious fellow, coming to me, demanded the price of a hundred chestnuts. Do you know why? Do you know why?

Madame Pipelet

Get to the end of it!

Pipelet

While I was looking at the cartoons, this scoundrel of a Cabrion had attached a thread to a button at the back of my vest. The other end of the thread he attached to the frying pan of a chestnut merchant. In my flight I pulled the frying pan like a dog who runs with a saucepan tied to his tail.

Madame Pipelet

Come, my Alfred, don't think of that—forget all that, old sweetie, forget all that.

Pipelet

Forget, Anastasia? When I even think of him, with his big hair and his pointed hat, I freeze up and I have only strength enough to close my eyes to try not to see his abhorred face.

Madame Piglet Say, Alfred, watch the house. I am going to show the vacant apartment to this gentleman.

Rudolph

I am with you, Madame. (aside) Let's try to learn more.

(Exit Rudolph and Madame Pipelet.)

Pipelet (installing himself on the bench)

I am tormented like a criminal. I have no inclination to do anything.

(A carriage stops at the exterior door. A liveried servant rings Mr. Ferrand's door, and half opening the door, speaks to someone inside.)

Servant

Madame D'Harville asks Mr. Ferrand if he can receive her.

(After a moment the servant leaves.)

Pipelet

It was a week ago that I began this wretched boot which I can't finish.

(Enter Madame D'Harville, preceded by her servant. They go into Ferrand's.)

Pipelet

Every moment it falls from my hands, my thread breaks, my wax breaks in my fingers. It seems to me I always see this evil genie. Last night I dreamt of him.

(At this moment Cabrion appears and advances silently and terribly on Pipelet who is motionless and fascinated. He raises Pipelet's hat, places it on the ground and performs a little pantomime around it. Gracefully and threateningly he then puts it back on Pipelet's head. With a sudden blow he flattens it over Pipelet's eyes and distances himself running.)

Pipelet (uttering mournful complaints)

Ouch! Ouch! Ouch! Help!

Madame Pipelet (rushing in)

What is this I hear? Alfred! Alfred, buried under his hat. Cabrion again. But, why don't you get rid of this

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wretched pointed hat?

Pipelet

Ouch! Ouch! Ouch! I'm choking!

Madame Pipelet (trying to help him)

Take care. Here, hold your nose straight so I don't push it back too hard. There, do you feel better?

Pipelet

Ah—a rabbit's skin is really worse to breath.

Madame Pipelet

But say, you don't know what's going on. You can hear loud talk at Morel's. A man who just entered—a jeweler—seems to be threatening and Madame Morel has the air of replying with tears. They're going, they're coming.

Pipelet

It's Cabrion.

Madame Pipelet

You would do well to go fetch Mr. Morel. He's at the house of Papa Lefebre of Rue Fontaine au Roi.

Pipelet

That ought to be Cabrion.

Madame Pipelet

Ah, Alfred, you are much too shocked. Cabrion worked you over.

Pipelet

It's true.

Rudolph (who's stopped a moment in the alley)

That carriage—I believe I recognize those people.

Pipelet (to whom Madame Pipelet has returned his pointed hat)

Come! I'm going. Just as well. I need air. If I see Cabrion I will appeal to the passers-by. I'll yell fire.

Madame Pipelet (walking him off)

Go, old sweetie.

(Madame Pipelet comes back to her lodge and sees Rudolph talking with Madame D'Harville as she comes out of Mr. Ferrand's.)

Rudolph

You here, Madame?

Madame D'Harville

I am coming from the home of my business manager.

Rudolph

Mr. Ferrand! And is that your traveling carriage?

Madame D'Harville

It's mine.

Rudolph

You're leaving?

Madame D'Harville

My father's health—

Rudolph

Why, yesterday you didn't tell me anything. Ordinarily I have a share in your confidence.

Madame D'Harville

Well, I will be frank, milord, this morning you wrote to tell me of your interview with the Countess Sarah MacGregor, but you didn't tell me everything—read this.

Rudolph (low, reading)

“Madame, the Prince is on the point of finding a daughter that he thought lost. You who are preventing him from remembering he's a husband—are you preventing him from being a father, too?” (aloud) An anonymous letter. A cowardly infamy! And you want to leave me?

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Madame D'Harville

Would you want me for a single moment to authorize such writings?

Rudolph

Now I see where the shot comes from and the trap that was set for me.

Madame D'Harville

What do you mean?

Rudolph

It's the agile wit and perfidy of Countess Sarah again.

Madame D'Harville

Milord, aren't you too prompt to accuse? If there is still some hope of finding this child—

Rudolph

And do you think that if I didn't have in my hand irrefutable and material proofs of her sad death—

Madame D'Harville

Milord, I will never doubt the noble passions of your soul. That's the reason I intend to leave.

Rudolph

What?

Madame D'Harville

If that child is still living you would have a great duty to fulfil towards her by legitimizing her. A union—

Rudolph

With Countess Sarah! Never!

Madame D'Harville

That union would be indispensable.

Rudolph

Don't tell me that.

Madame D'Harville

I tell you that because no one is more anxious than I am to see you accomplish your duties honestly and valiantly as you have always done.

Rudolph

Noble woman. But why dream of a desired but impossible event? So as to find reasons for torture?

Madame D'Harville

Reassure me despite myself.

Rudolph

You demand that? I promise it to you—if ever my daughter is returned to me—whatever ought to be done will be done. You shan't go.

Madame D'Harville

I won't go. But continue the investigation that brought you here.

Rudolph

I obey. (seeing Fleur de Marie and the School Master enter) Anyway, I see an opportunity to exercise here that spirit of adventurous charity that you love. You told me so.

Madame D'Harville

Yes, because it's to you I owe knowledge of the charm of generosity.

Rudolph

Will you accept my arm?

Madame D'Harville

Yes—to my carriage.

(Rudolph and Madame D'Harville leave by the alley. Fleur de Marie recognizes Rudolph and follows him with her eyes.)

Madame Pipelet (to School Master)

You can go into Mr. Ferrand's, brave man: oh, where it's a question of protecting honest folks, I don't make myself wait.

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School Master

Thanks, Madame Pipelet. (brutally to Fleur de Marie) Wait for me here. Don't budge. You know you cannot escape me.

(The School Master goes into Ferrand's.)

Rudolph (returning)

My honest child, I find you here?

Fleur de Marie (with a shout of joy)

You are coming back, sir?

Madame de Pipelet Heavens! You know my tenant, so much the better! I would want to keep your company, but I need to put a little order in my husband's shop. At your ease. (goes inside)

Rudolph (to Madame Pipelet as she leaves)

That's fine. (to Fleur de Marie) You recognized me, Fleur de Marie?

Fleur de Marie

I've known you a long time.

Rudolph

You're mistaken, I don't live in Paris.

Fleur de Marie

You've never been here?

Rudolph

Four or five years ago I spent a few days—

Fleur de Marie

I knew it quite well. Yesterday I didn't recognize you, but today—

Rudolph

Tell me, my dear child, who are you? And where did you meet me?

Fleur de Marie

Who am I? A poor child, picked up from the streets at the age of three or four by a woman who would have done better to let me die.

Rudolph

But this woman still had a good heart, since she sheltered you.

Fleur de Marie

That's what I often told myself, to encourage myself not to hate her when she beats me worse than usual.

Rudolph

Beat so young a child! And why?

Fleur de Marie

If I don't bring back ten sous in alms. One night—it was very cold—I remained for a long while pressed against a tree in the Champs Elysee to try to keep warm. It was already late and I hadn't gotten more than three sous. That night I didn't have any courage at all and I wept in fear of what was awaiting me. I saw a gentleman coming. I asked him for a sou and burst out weeping. He looked at me, looked at me again, as if I'd caused him a lot of pain, turned away and gave me one hundred sous. For two days I wasn't beaten. That gentleman was you.

Rudolph

Me, my child? It was five years—yes—it's possible.

Fleur de Marie

Oh, you spent a lot of time. I watched you and followed you about to see you, but without asking you for anything. The first time you had given me so much.

Rudolph

Poor little thing. And what became of you as you grew up?

Fleur de Marie

A few years later, the Screech Owl became associated with a man called the School Master, who plays the organ. He took me with him to the streets and made me sing.

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Rudolph

Were you happier?

Fleur de Marie

They both often mistreat me.

Rudolph

What! Still?

Fleur de Marie

Ah, I've sometimes had days of repose when they've amassed some money. Doubtless they don't work and they leave me in the house, forbidding me to leave.

Rudolph

But alone, always alone!

Fleur de Marie

No, no longer alone now.

Rudolph

Someone that you love?

Fleur de Marie

Four days ago the School Master and the Screech Owl went out in the morning and while I was cleaning the house I found in a corner on the floor—But, I don't dare tell you—it's childishness.

Rudolph

Tell me anyway.

Fleur de Marie

A piece of ivory—with a portrait of a woman, a young woman. It was so beautiful, so richly set, that at first I only admired it. The woman had a face so sweet that little by little I started talking to her. I asked her if she would be my friend. Her smile—she smiles looking at me. Her smile said yes, and since that day I've been happy. I place her before me to hear me sing. When I cry, I watch her and when I cry too much I kiss her.

Rudolph

Charming nature. So loving and so little loved. That portrait which did you so much good, I love it already.

Fleur de Marie

And if you saw it!

Rudolph

Let me look at it.

Fleur de Marie

Promise me to find her pretty.

Rudolph

I promise you. (looking at the portrait) What do I see! Clemence! Clemence D'Harville.

Fleur de Marie

You know her?

Rudolph

This portrait. Where did you find it?

Fleur de Marie

My God! You seem angry. I told you, thrown in a corner like a useless thing which they didn't want to do anything with. Perhaps I did wrong to take it—but it would have been lost.

Rudolph (aside, reflecting)

This stolen portrait, in her hands—Ah, I've got to clear this up. (aloud) My child, where do you live?

Fleur de Marie

In the house near which you saw me yesterday evening. Are you going away?

Rudolph

Fleur de Marie, what you've said has upset me and recalled memories. Whatever is in my power to change your fate, I will do.

Fleur de Marie

And my portrait?

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Rudolph

Entrust it to me, and courage, my child, have faith in your good angel.

Fleur de Marie

Will you come again to the Champs Elysee?

Rudolph

You won't have to go there any more to wait for me. (exits hurriedly)

Fleur de Marie (alone for a moment)

Ah, I ask nothing better than to believe those happy words. If God heard them and wants to accomplish them, from today he will pull me from the hands into which I fell.

Rigolette (coming into the court from the house)

My God, what an event! (calling) Mr. Germain! (noticing Fleur de Marie) Heaven's, it's you, Fleur de Marie. (going under Ferrand's window and calling) Mr. Germain. (to Fleur de Marie) Are things going better than yesterday?

Fleur de Marie

Ah! Better. For me I think there will soon be a happy change.

Rigolette

Ah, what luck. (calling) Mr. Germain!

Fleur de Marie

But what's the matter with you?

Rigolette (to Germain who enters)

Finally you get here!

Germain

What's the matter?

Rigolette

Quickly, quickly! Come up to the Morels.

Germain

Why do that?

Rigolette

I don't know about it, but there's a man screaming about a diamond. Mrs. Morel and her children are alone with the idiot. She doesn't understand. Go, go—

Germain

But, why is the man yelling?

Rigolette

He's talking about finding an officer. Don't leave the poor woman alone at such a moment. You will know when you get there. Go up, go up!

Germain (going)

I'm on my way, I'm on my way, Miss Rigolette. Have no fear!

Fleur de Marie

Why, what is it that frightens you like this, Rigolette?

Rigolette

Imagine. I heard some noise at my neighbor's. I went in. There was a jeweler there with a nasty brutal appearance who was demanding back a diamond of at least two thousand francs which he brought to Mr. Morel to cut.

Fleur de Marie

Well? This diamond?

Rigolette

Madame Morel went into the garret which serves as her husband's work shop. She looked in the work bench. It wasn't there. She came down and opened the chest and armoires. Nothing! Then this man became angry. He said he wanted his diamond and that he would not go without it.

Fleur de Marie

Ah, the poor woman.

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Madame Pipelet (coming hastily out of her lodge)
Who's coming down the stairs like to burn the house down?

Germain (returning)
It's me, Madame Pipelet.

Madame Pipelet (following him into the court)
Good God! Is it reasonable?

Rigolette (to Germain)
Well?

Germain
A diamond has been stolen.

All the women
By whom?

Germain
By whom? Perhaps, indeed, by the man I met yesterday evening—around midnight—and of whom I spoke to you, Madame Pipelet.

Rigolette
What man?

Madame Pipelet
The man with the red beard.

Germain
Mr. Morel finished cutting the diamond only last night.

Fleur de Marie
Ah, my God!

Madame Pipelet
A theft! In my house!

Rigolette
A theft! Do you know where Mr. Morel went this morning?

Madame Pipelet
Yes, he went to Papa Lefebre's, but first, he had to run an errand.

Rigolette
Perhaps he was going to bring the diamond!

Fleur de Marie
Yes, while the jeweler is here.

(Enter Pipelet and Morel.)

Pipelet (wiping his face)
Now, here's Mr. Morel whom I'm bringing.

Rigolette
We're going to find out.

Germain
Don't frighten him at first.

Morel (to Germain)
Hello, my neighbor. (to Rigolette) Hello, neighbor. You see a very happy man. My poor wife can now get herself together in the country. I've just taken two little rooms in Belleville. What has happened so that Mr. Pipelet came to find me at Papa Lefebre's? He couldn't explain to me.

Rigolette
Before going to Papa Lefebre's you ran an errand, Mr. Morel?

Morel
Yes, I withdrew three hundred francs from the bank.

Germain
Didn't you also go to your jeweler?

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Morel

No, what for?

Germain

To bring him the diamond you cut yesterday.

Morel

That diamond I placed in the drawer of my work bench. Well, why's everybody so quiet?

(The School Master comes out of Mr. Ferrand's jingling some money in his hand.)

Germain

Because that diamond is no longer there.

Morel

It's no longer there? Then, where is it?

Germain

I don't know how to tell you.

Morel

Speak! Come on, speak.

Germain

Well, know that the diamond has been stolen.

Morel

Stolen! That's not possible! A diamond worth five thousand francs— stolen. Why, my God, I am ruined! Ruined!

This morning, joy and happiness—and this evening, misery and tears. Oh, my children, my wife, my poor wife!

(falls down annihilated)

Madame Pipelet

Oh, if I knew the scoundrel who did this.

School Master

Fleur de Marie, you will enter the service of Mr. Ferrand.

BLACKOUT

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SCENE III

The office of Jacques Ferrand. The stage represents the business office of Jacques Ferrand. To the right, a desk on which is a lit lamp. To the left, Germain's desk. Entry door at the back. Two side doors. A window with a curtain and shutters. At the back and under a table with books, a hiding place in the wainscoting.

Germain (seated at the table stops working to reflect)

Poor Morel. I've never seen more somber and desperate sadness. This loss is terrible for him. What privations, what misery, if that jeweler is an intractable man as he told us. To perhaps have been in the presence of the author of all these ills and unable to find him again!

Clermont (coming from the interior)

Hello, Mr. Germain.

Germain (rising without leaving his desk)

Enchanted to see you, Mr. Clermont.

Clermont

Our excellent, Mr. Ferrand has charged me to beg you to inscribe in your cash book the sum of fifty francs that he just gave us for our charity office and the deposit of thirty thousand francs in gold that I just gave him in my name.

Germain

The boss accepted it?

Clermont

My word, it wasn't easy—it embarrassed him. It was a responsibility which he didn't care for. At last I had to beg him to do me this service in the name of friendship—to inform him that it was the fortune of an absent sister that I could not place in more faithful hands.

Germain

You know how strict and severe the boss is in business, Mr. Clermont.

Clermont

I know it very well, and that's what explains the limitless confidence he enjoys. And who deserves it better than he? Doesn't he busy himself with the interests of his clients more than his own? Witness the modesty of his fortune. I am leaving now. Goodbye, Mr. Germain.

(Germain escorts him to the door at the back and finds himself near Countess Sarah and Madame Pipelet.)

Sarah (to Madame Pipelet)

Would you tell Mr. Ferrand that the Countess Sarah MacGregor desires to speak to him.

(Madame Pipelet goes to the interior. Germain offers a seat to Sarah and returns to his desk.)

Sarah (seated, to herself)

My brother's absence is prolonged. He didn't return to his home last night. Now that his cupidity is doubly interested in his researches, perhaps for once, he'll be afraid to lose sight of her. No matter! I've come armed with revelations against the pretended honest men with whom I'm going to do business, of whom I shall have a good bargain.

Madame Pipelet (returning)

Here's Mr. Ferrand, Madame Countess.

(Enter Ferrand.)

Sarah

Sir, the discussion I am going to have with you interests you as much as me. Would you then shut your doors against all the world except His Highness, the Grand Duke of Gerolstein, who must soon come here?

Ferrand (bowing)

As you wish, Countess. Madame Pipelet, you heard, don't let anyone except the Grand Duke of Gerolstein enter.

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Mr. Germain, withdraw for a moment.

Madame Pipelet

A Highness! I'm going to put on my new jacket.

(Madame Pipelet leaves hastily. Germain assembles his papers and takes them to another room. Then, after they are gone, Ferrand remains impassive under the eye of Sarah, who watches him attentively.)

Ferrand

Take the trouble to be seated again Countess.

(Sarah, still watching him sits down. There is rapping at the door.)

Ferrand

Who is it?

Madame Pipelet

Pardon, Mr. Ferrand, a servant has just brought a letter for the Countess.

Sarah

From my brother, doubtless. Give it here.

(Madame Pipelet hands the letter and at a sign from Ferrand withdraws with a deep curtsy.)

Sarah

No, it's from the Prince. He won't come. That woman is taking him off again. Oh, I'll get even!

Ferrand

We won't be interrupted any further, Madame, and I am listening to you with a religious attention.

Sarah

Sir, (with bitter irony) people rate your probity as fully reliable; with your austerity, you inspire all with a confidence without bounds. (Ferrand bows with humility) I am persuaded, sir, that your reputation is actual and that all this virtue is not a mark of hypocrisy. Why, you are not responding?

Ferrand

To what, Countess?

Sarah

That's fine, sir. I will broach the facts succinctly. Around fifteen years ago, a little girl was brought to Paris and confided to the care of a woman named Varner of German origin. That is clear and positive, I think, sir? (Ferrand bows) The following will be less so. (Ferrand nods again) A sum of two hundred thousand francs was placed as an annuity on the head of the child, then aged only two. This continues to be clear, I suppose? (another nod from Ferrand, Sarah continues with growing impatience) Finally, sir, to be able one day to verify the identity of this child, if need be, a half of a necklace of old and precious workmanship and half of a medallion was entrusted to the Varner woman. You remain silent, sir?

Ferrand

I haven't lost a word. The Varner woman was entrusted with half a necklace of old and precious workmanship from which hung half a medallion.

Sarah

Is that all you have to say? It seems to me that in the presence of such evidence all denial is impossible. (Ferrand remains impassive) I ask you, sir, if you deny these facts are not completely true?

Ferrand

Madame, Countess—

Sarah (with growing impatience)

In short, sir, the child in question was five years old when her death was announced to her mother by sending her a death certificate. You hear, sir?

Ferrand

Quite well, Countess. That was perfectly in order.

Sarah

No, sir—it wasn't in order. The death certificate was false. The child wasn't dead. They had caused the Varner

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woman to disappear— whether by chance or through complicity, she's not to be found since. Did she keep, or was it stolen from her, the token that could provide information on the whereabouts of that child is what we don't know. But—

Ferrand

Oh! Oh! Why, then it's a very grave affair, Countess. It couldn't be more grave. I understand your emotion. If you are interested in it, there's been a forgery of things, a kidnapping of persons—those are real crimes.

Sarah (bursting out)

And you committed those crimes, sir! To secure the two hundred thousand francs! But these crimes will not remain unpunished. For I will tear your hypocritical mask away and fasten you to the pillory, if you don't return my daughter to me. Do you hear, Mr. Ferrand, the honest man? And don't hope to escape me. I have the confession of your accomplice, Sir Thomas Seyton.

(Ferrand greets this outburst with an air of total astonishment, but at the last words makes a motion towards Sarah.)

Ferrand

Pardon, Madame Countess—would you please repeat that name?

Sarah

You know it quite well—Sir Thomas Seyton.

(Ferrand rises from his seat, goes to the desk drawer, takes out a letter and looks at the signature with astonishment.)

Ferrand

That's indeed it.

Sarah

Explain yourself, sir.

Ferrand

Ah! This is terrible.

Sarah

But, sir—what is that letter?

Ferrand

No, no, Madame, I cannot. It would be too painful. Just now I was listening with stupor to your strange accusation and I was trying to explain the error of which you are the victim to myself, when suddenly I recalled this letter which I received only this morning.

Sarah

This morning?

Ferrand

And that I had taken for a sinister joke. But, what you've just told me, Madame, only too well proves the reality to me. Madame, I beg you —pardon my emotion.

Sarah

Sir, what does this letter contain? I want to read it instantly.

Ferrand

No, that would be too unexpected, too cruel.

Sarah

Sir, that letter, I tell you—

Ferrand

No—even to reject your outrageous error, I wouldn't have the courage.

Sarah

If I've accused you unjustly, I will admit my error.

Ferrand

You insist.

Sarah

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My brother's handwriting.

Ferrand (trying to take back the letter)

Your brother's handwriting! Ah, I won't suffer you to go any further.

Sarah

Leave me alone! Leave me alone! (reading) "In a few days, sir, it will have been fifteen years since I placed in your hands a sum of two hundred thousand francs. This unique circumstance which is a fatal date for me, recalls your name at a moment when I needed it to be thought I had an accomplice for the abduction, the theft, the falsehoods. I cast them all on you, but to no purpose. Today all my plans are forever overturned and, facing the presence of shame, I prefer to die." (she stops a moment)

Ferrand

You may believe, Countess, that I feel vividly—

Sarah

I am no longer allowed to blame my unfortunate brother—and yet, he alone, had provoked a quarrel.

Ferrand

Let's not speak of that, for mercy's sake. (seeing her make a movement to retire) All this must have agitated you. Don't withdraw at this moment. Do me the honor of remaining a few seconds in my home.

Sarah

Excuse me, I need to pull myself together.

Ferrand

Allow me at least to escort you to your carriage. If I can be useful to you, in any way whatever, dispose of me, I implore you.

Sarah

You are too good.

Ferrand

At this moment, my old experience can only offer you some advice: so as to avoid all disgust, publicity is always painful to the esteem of a family, it would be good, if you have the strength, to go to a magistrate. There, with as much reserve as possible, let him know—My God, I know, indeed, it's cruel—a portion of the truth which led to so sad an ending. In this way, you will avoid an annoying sensationalism and the affair will quietly burn out, choked off.

Sarah

You are right, sir, however cruel this may be and I will accomplish it at once. Sir, this interview began with accusations and violence, I terminate it with thanks and apologies.

Ferrand

In such a moment, it's too generous of you to think of me.

(Ferrand rings and offers his arm to Sarah. Madame Pipelet appears.)

Ferrand (to Madame Pipelet)

Light the way for us!

Madame Pipelet (turning to speak behind her)

Miss Fleur de Marie, will you light for the Countess?

Ferrand

Tell Mr. Germain, that he can go back to his work.

(Exit Ferrand and the Countess.)

Madame Pipelet

Countesses—Highnesses—here! That would be something for the house to be proud of if it hadn't been dishonored last night by a theft, if it weren't bad enough to have had a Cabrion, is a wrong ever wanting?

(Fleur de Marie enters, carrying a light.)

Fleur de Marie

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Oh, thanks, Madame Pipelet. You can't know how much all that I hear and see here makes me happy.

Madame Pipelet

The fact is, that for a young thing like you, you couldn't have a better house. You will be as in a convent here. Hush! There's the gentleman coming up. He doesn't like anyone chatting here. Come see your room. And there I was forgetting—Mr. Germain, you can return.

(Madame Pipelet goes in with Fleur de Marie. Germain returns to his desk. Ferrand enters, preceded by Morel.)

Ferrand

Come in, Mr. Morel. I was going to ask Madame Pipelet to beg you to come when I noticed you in her place. But, my God, what is it I learned? What has happened?

Morel

Alas! All they told you is only too true. Yesterday evening I didn't leave my studio until eleven p.m. It's in the garret above our lodging. I had just finished cutting a diamond. I put it in the drawer, and I simply locked the door with a key. How could I have foreseen?

Ferrand

Strictly speaking, certainly, it was an imprudence, but an imprudence of an honest man. How could one be on one's guard? The house is secure, so peaceful! But, have you really searched everywhere?

Morel

Oh, yes, sir. There is no longer any doubt. It's a theft!

Ferrand

But this must be a considerable loss for you?

Morel

The diamond is estimated at three thousand francs.

Ferrand

Fortunately, without doubt, the jeweler is a master for whom you've been working for a long time, and who will share this loss with you?

Morel

Alas, on the contrary, sir. He's a young man only established for a short time. He can't make sacrifices. He hardly knows me and he has, perhaps, some doubts about my probity and his demands are most pressing.

Ferrand

But then—what to do?

Morel

Since this morning, I have taken all the measures by which I was hoping to appease him. The money I had withdrawn from the savings bank to procure a little well being for my still languishing spouse; I've joined to it the price of my best furniture which I sold. That's all I can do for the moment. As to the future, I've left our lodging, which had two rooms, and we are going to move to my workshop in the garret. This way we will save two hundred francs in rent.

Ferrand

Oh! Heavens, that resignation makes me ill.

Morel

And all this still does not suffice—

Ferrand

What do you mean?

Morel

In selling all that I possess, I have only been able to pull together six hundred francs. The jeweler demands at least double that, and to my pleas, he's responded with threats so harsh and terrifying—

Ferrand

And these are all your resources?

Morel

Absolutely all!

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Ferrand

Still—two days ago, when I went up to your place to discuss some business which, unfortunately, didn't succeed, it seemed to me that the unfortunate woman—what do you call her? For it is distasteful to me to refer to her by the name they usually give her.

Morel

My mother-in-law, Madame Varner, who as the result of a cruel occurrence went mad, and whom we've taken in with us after the death of her husband—

Ferrand

Brave people! Well, it seems to me I saw around her neck a chain with half a medallion.

Morel

Yes, sir.

Ferrand

Why don't you sell that chain, too, since it appeared to me to be a sufficiently precious item?

Morel

For that poor woman, it's a solace. You cannot get it away from her by trick or by force. It would kill her.

Ferrand

Why, that's frightful! That she should be in the same house, right beside such a great misfortune, and that she must go on wearing what could be disposed of. Didn't I just now give fifty francs to the Charity Bureau? Why this is terrible! Fifty francs—they are not the five hundred francs you need, but still—fifty francs.

Morel

Ah, sir, it could be a gift from heaven.

Ferrand (low to himself)

Ah, indeed. Could heaven punish me, could men blame me for it? (to Morel) I have five hundred francs which are not mine. I could dispose of them for a few days. You are right, some days, it's not enough— let's say two months, three months. Mr. Germain, give us a stamped paper.

Morel (hesitating)

But, in three months—

Ferrand (making him sit down)

In three months, you won't be able to pay them. Nor can I. But I will have avoided a misfortune, aided the unfortunates who cannot wait three days. You will make payment, I will indeed have something also. (as Morel begins to write) Don't give yourself any trouble. Just give me a blank acceptance. (Morel signs and Ferrand takes the note and places it in a drawer) Ah, not to be rich! Not to be rich! Here's the five hundred francs.

Morel

My God! I can hardly bear it. So much money! So much joy!

Ferrand

Go, my brave Mr. Morel. After the storm, a ray of sunshine. That's the law of nature.

Morel

This evening my entire family will bless you. (leaves smiling)

Madame Pipelet (returning with Fleur de Marie)

Now she's moved in, this dear child.

Ferrand (looking at his watch)

Already so late! Mr. Germain, you may retire. Madame Pipelet, lock up outside.

(Germain and Madame Pipelet leave. Ferrand, now alone, locks the doors and the window shutters. He pulls the curtains closed.)

Ferrand

Here I am, alone! The day's over. A mask of austerity weighs on my face. A cloak of hypocrisy enchains all my actions. Off with the mask and the cloak—now I can be me! I am detached from the cadaver to which I am yoked during the day. As for me, robust, resolved, glued to this armchair. My energy is devouring me. How to appease the agitation of my blood? Gold! Gold! I want gold—to trample under my feet this herd of imbeciles that I

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deceive and that I scorn. Thomas Seyton dies by me and his sister apologizes and thanks me! This Morel, I want him to be in my power. I want him to deliver that chain, that medallion to me. The last traces of an existence which annoys me and that I am annihilating. I have only to make him a misleading loan, which fixes the term of his liberty and he calls me his benefactor. Stupid fools, stupid fools! Triply stupid fools. And this Clermont who absolutely insists on putting his gold on deposit in my hands. (opens a panel in the wainscoting and removes a box from a secret drawer) So much gold! So much gold! The rays of the sun are pale beside it. Ah, what charm. Gold is everything, gold can do everything, gold gives everything. (plunging his hands in the box) Oh, I love to handle gold! It releases I don't know what sort of electric energy which circulates in my veins and sets me ablaze with new cupidity. Bring me, ah, bring me more. Bring it till the day you say "Give it back." Give it back to you? Some infernal trick, some audacious curse will be your answer. Return it to you! I'd have to return to you my past joys, my joys to come. Fleur de Marie is beautiful! All the days she came to sing in the street I was there, behind that window, charmed by her voice, fascinated by her look. Then, at night, I saw her. I heard her again. Sometimes even during the days, in the midst of my most complicated plots, when I needed all my self-possession, her memory dominated me, despite myself, and lured away my thoughts. The violence of my passion for this child dismays me. Let's lock up my gold and call Fleur de Marie. (goes to ring) It's strange how my heart beats and my hand trembles. (ringing) She's going to come! Get once more this evening the mask on my face and honey in my words.

Fleur de Marie (entering)

You rang, sir?

Ferrand

Yes, my child. They're going to show you to your room?

Fleur de Marie

Yes, sir.

Ferrand

Come closer, child. Do I frighten you?

Fleur de Marie

Oh, no, sir. Didn't you agree to take me as a servant? Haven't you taken me out of the sad existence that I could no longer stand? With my zeal, I will try to deserve your interest.

Ferrand

My interest in you is already won over, dear little one! But it may still increase. For that it is necessary, not only to serve me with zeal, but to be persuaded that your fate depends on me. Let me be sure that you will satisfy me in everything and you won't have to envy any person.

Fleur de Marie

Doubtless, sir, I will not fail to do my duty.

Ferrand

That's what I mean. And then, carefully understand one thing, my child. A serving girl who has no family depends absolutely on her master. Suppose that, dissatisfied for one reason or another, I were not to keep you. Where would you go if I gave you a bad character? You couldn't get another situation anywhere, and you understand quite well that misery does not receive any pity.

Fleur de Marie

Ah, sir, don't think that I would ever be guilty. That would indeed be without intent. My God!

Ferrand

My child, what I really want to persuade you of is that under no circumstance, in no manner, must you ever displease me, because, being all powerful while you are weak, being well known while you are unheard of—you would be ruined.

Fleur de Marie

My God, sir!

Ferrand (in a softened tone)

What's wrong with you? One can see you are trembling. Well, well, little crazy one, I shouldn't say things that frighten you, but if you are wise and obedient—(wants to pull her to him)

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Fleur de Marie

Ah! Now I'm more frightened than before.

Ferrand (passionately)

Fleur de Marie! (ringing is heard outside) Curses! (to Fleur de Marie) Stay here! Don't open.

Fleur de Marie

But, sir—

Ferrand

Do you hear me?

Fleur de Marie

But, what are they going to think?

Ferrand

That I'm home, that I'm resting and that I don't hear them. (louder ringing) This is hell. (more ringing) Go open!

(Exit Fleur de Marie.)

Ferrand (alone)

Who can be coming at this hour? May a thunderbolt destroy the impertinent person.

(Madame Pipelet appears outside Ferrand's open door. Fleur de Marie is behind her and a man is coming behind them.)

Madame Pipelet (to Fleur de Marie)

Ah, indeed. If you are not more vigilant! (to Ferrand) Excuse me!

Ferrand

I thought I said before that my door was closed to the whole world.

Madame Pipelet

Except for His Highness, you told me.

Ferrand

The Prince?

Madame Pipelet

Himself! Even though the School Master, who hasn't left the gin shop since this morning, and who was carrying on like the devil down there, didn't want to let the carriage stop. Here's His Highness. (to His Highness) Heavens, my tenant from this morning!

Fleur de Marie

A Prince.

Rudolph (to Fleur de Marie)

I promised you to return.

Ferrand (aside)

What! He knows her!

Rudolph (to Ferrand)

Pardon, sir. Although it's still early, I fear I've disturbed you. Can I tell you a few things?

(At a sign from Ferrand, Fleur de Marie and Madame Pipelet move away.)

Rudolph

Sir, two matters bring me to you. I wish to set up a modest pension for a brave man who saved my life. I gave him a rendezvous here and I beg you to formalize this little contract.

Ferrand

At your orders, sir.

Rudolph

The second motive that brings me here is more delicate. You've observed that I know the young girl who just came to announce me and who for some hours has been in your service.

Ferrand

Yes, milord.

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Rudolph

Several circumstances have inspired me to take an interest in her which must not be fruitless. But I only knew just now into whose hands this poor girl has fallen.

Ferrand

I congratulate myself on having harbored her here.

Rudolph

Here, they can come to reclaim her, and perhaps you would be forced to let them take her away.

Ferrand (with a secret anxiety)

I am waiting, sir.

Rudolph

I want to support her in style.

Ferrand

Your Highness will permit me a few questions?

Rudolph

Speak, sir.

Ferrand

Your Highness proposes to take her away?

Rudolph

This evening.

Ferrand

And where does Your Highness have the intention of taking her?

Rudolph

To my home.

Ferrand

Pardon, milord, for my frankness. In coming to confide your plans in me, you haven't had the intention of turning me into an accomplice, even an indiscreet one, of some princely caprice?

Rudolph

You can't suspect it?

Ferrand

But, milord, persons who, like me, are unable to believe in the complete disinterest of your protection, will judge as the world judges—of which you know better than I the strict sentences. A street singer in the house of a Prince! Won't this poor child pay very dearly for the interest you take in her?

Rudolph

Your objection is that of a wise and prudent man. I would accept it—

Ferrand

And you don't wish to abandon your protégé?

Rudolph

At no price. If those wretches didn't know she was here, be sure I would not see any difficulty in letting her stay here.

Ferrand

But, can't we give them the slip?

Rudolph

How?

Ferrand

I have a house in the country at Saint Maude. I can take Fleur de Marie there, for a few days at least—tonight.

Rudolph

I wouldn't dare to beg it of you.

Ferrand

Then, permit me to do it without delay.

(Ferrand rings. Fleur de Marie and Madame Pipelet enter.)

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Rudolph (to Fleur de Marie)

Child, you have to leave this house tonight.

Fleur de Marie

Me, milord?

Ferrand (to Madame Pipelet)

Tell your husband to go find me a carriage.

Madame Pipelet (leaving)

Ah, indeed. Now this is strange.

Fleur de Marie

Milord, where must I go?

Rudolph

To the country—with Mr. Ferrand.

Fleur de Marie

With you, milord?

Rudolph

No, alone with this gentleman.

Ferrand (to Fleur de Marie)

You remember, my child, the advice I was giving you just now. (violent ringing is heard) What's going on?

Madame Pipelet (returning, terrified)

Why it would make nature tremble. Do you hear it? Do you hear it?

Ferrand

Why, what is it?

Madame Pipelet

He was there, tapping on the door, when he heard me say to Alfred to go find a carriage to take Fleur de Marie.

Then he screamed: "Take Fleur de Marie!"

Rudolph

But, of whom are you speaking?

Madame Pipelet

By God—look—the School Master.

(Fleur de Marie screams and seeks refuge behind Rudolph. The School Master enters, drunk but not staggering.)

Ferrand (to School Master)

What do you want?

School Master (in a rough voice, seeming to be feverish with rage)

I don't want anything, but I don't intend—do you hear me clearly?—all of you—I do not intend for Fleur de Marie to be taken from here.

Ferrand

Why, indeed, you will permit me to accompany her?

School Master (advancing on him)

She won't leave!

Ferrand (with a violet effort, aside)

Silence, my rage!

Rudolph (to School Master)

What, with her master?

School Master

If that's the way it is, return her to me. I want her.

(The School Master goes toward Fleur de Marie who is still seeking refuge behind Rudolph.)

Fleur de Marie (to Rudolph)

Save me from him.

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Rudolph

Get out, wretch!

School Master

We are going to see about wretches.

Rudolph (coming forward)

You shan't touch her.

School Master

I won't touch her!

(The School Master rushes Rudolph who repulses him, knocking him to his knees.)

School Master

Ah! So it's like that. You don't know who you're dealing with. Don't you know when I've been drinking that I'm worth six men?

Le Chourineur (entering)

And I'm worth seven when I am protecting my friends.

School Master

Chourineur—now you're going to let me go.

Le Chourineur

Mr. Rudolph. I know you would come out ahead in the end by boxing, but that would mean dirtying your hands.

Rudolph (to Chourineur)

Thanks, my friend. (to Ferrand) Flee—take her away. (to Fleur de Marie) Don't be afraid!

Ferrand (aside, as he takes Fleur de Marie away)

They're doing themselves harm to give her to me.

Fleur de Marie

Than you. I am saved.

School Master

Chourineur, I will avenge myself.

Le Chourineur

Sing the National Anthem if it amuses you, but don't budge.

CURTAIN

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ACT III

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SCENE IV

Rigolette's room. Everything is orderly, very proper. Charming with flowers. A little alcove with windows and curtains. To the right of the alcove, a room. A carrying case on a table. Door at the left, locked with a bolt. To the right, a door with a landing.

(Rigolette is alone, seated at a table, writing in a small notebook covered with parchment.)

Rigolette

We say—Rent, month of May, 12 francs—a pair of socks, two francs, fifty—two pots of flowers, six sous—those are the luxury expenditures.

Madame Pipelet (at the door)

Can one come in?

Rigolette

Hello, Madame Pipelet.

Madame Pipelet

Hello, Miss Rigolette. Here's your little bread.

Rigolette

Thanks, Madame Pipelet, you are really good.

Madame Pipelet

I am coming up for my work, and then I'm not sorry to see you like this in the mornings, fresh, neat and gay. That reminds me of what I used to be before becoming Alfred's Stasia.

Rigolette (finishing and straightening up)

Is there nothing new, Madame Pipelet?

Madame Pipelet (sitting down)

My God, no! For the last three months that poor Mr. Ferrand has been pining away. He's getting yellow like an orange with red eyes like a rabbit. I don't know what's happened to him. He's truly no longer the same man.

Would you believe it? The other day, I went into his room without his hearing me—he was on his knees, he was weeping—word of honor—and he said: “Come back! Come back! Come back!”

Rigolette

To whom was he saying, “Come back”?

Madame Pipelet

Ah, that's what I don't know. For sure it's not the School Master who comes every two or three days to cause a big scene, reproaching him for having carried off Fleur de Marie.

Rigolette

Poor Fleur de Marie. What's become of her? Where is she? What an extraordinary adventure.

Madame Pipelet

Yes, extraordinary—that's the word. I saw her again the day that Mr. Ferrand went to bring her to Saint Maude. She said two words, weeping in the ear of the Prince and boom! Instead of getting in the old carriage—off she went with the Prince in his beautiful carriage.

Rigolette

She was really most sweet, you must agree. You remember the face of your Mr. Ferrand, huh? (laughing) What a snoot.

Madame Pipelet

It's true he wasn't very gay. But still sadder are the poor Morels. Since the theft of that diamond, they've gone from bad to worse. They, once so happy, so calm, now they're all in the garret. Papa Morel, after having sold and pawned everything, has fallen ill. Now the jeweler takes half of his wages to finish the reimbursement for the diamond. The poor people lack everything, and the two children, barely dressed, don't have enough food.

(knocking is heard) Who is it knocking on the door?

Germain (outside)

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It's me.

Madame Pipelet

Eh, why, it's Mr. Germain who doesn't like to wait and who insists on entering through a condemned door. Should I open?

Rigolette

Open, open.

(Madame Pipelet opens the door and Germain enters.)

Germain

Hello, Miss Rigolette. I bring you the pins you asked me to sharpen for you.

Rigolette

This comes happily. I was by way of doing my accounts. Would you finish writing them? That will do honor to my books. Such a fine hand! I have only two articles left to inscribe.

Madame Pipelet

Well, I'm going down to be with Alfred. I've been upstairs more than an hour. I am sure he's worried about his Stasia. Goodbye, Miss Rigolette.

Rigolette

Goodbye, Madame Pipelet, goodbye.

(Exit Madame Pipelet.)

Germain

Finally, here we are alone!

Rigolette

Well, what's that do for us, being alone?

Germain

It makes things so I can talk to you.

Rigolette

Heavens. Then all the sweet things you say to me in company count for nothing?

Germain

On the contrary, it's that I don't say enough of them.

Rigolette

Ah, fine! Then this is going to be very agreeable and I'm going to resume my work and listen to you.

Germain

Ah! I beg you, Miss Rigolette, let's speak seriously.

Rigolette

Seriously? Decidedly that's not going to be amusing. (unwinding a ball of thread) Lend me your two hands, I'll return them later.

Germain

Miss Rigolette, I love you.

Rigolette

And I, also.

Germain

You love me?

Rigolette

Certainly. You are good, complaisant, sweet. How could I not love you?

Germain

But, tell me, for true, for true—in what way do you love me?

Rigolette

For true, for true—I love you like an excellent neighbor.

Germain

But, that's not it. I want to be loved like a lover.

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Rigolette

Like a lover! Ah, really, for heaven's sake. Now that's a crazy idea. Do I have time for that?

Germain

What's time got to do with it?

Rigolette

Time? Why it's everything for me. Ah, well! I have only to be jealous to give myself heart pains. Well, do I earn enough money to be able to waste two or three hours a day weeping in my desolation? And if you deceived me, the despair! By this time I would be terribly behind in my work.

Germain

But if I ask that you love me, it's to become your husband.

Rigolette

My husband! But you are poor like me.

Germain

I have an old uncle who's going to leave me at least one thousand shillings.

Rigolette

A thousand shillings! Yes, but while waiting, we have nothing. Look at the Morels, see where that leads.

Germain

But it wouldn't do you any good to work if you fell ill.

Rigolette (laughing)

Me, ill? Is he funny! Ah, indeed, for whom would you want me to fall ill? I eat when I am hungry, drink when I am thirsty. I sleep like a top, I sing like a lark. My heart's free, joyous. Does one fall ill like that?

Pipelet (coming in)

Ah, Miss Rigolette—a chair—for pity's sake—a chair—

Rigolette

Ah! My God! Mr. Pipelet, how pale you are.

Pipelet

Miss, the monster now threatens the peace of my household.

Rigolette

Cabrion, perhaps?

Pipelet

Do you know what he's doing now? He wants to make Anastasia believe that I have—Just now he went by in the street with a big blonde who had the impudence to blow me kisses up the steps to my lodge. It was very lewd. At the sight, my spouse treated me suspiciously. I swear to you, on my honor—(striking his face) Ah, my God! It's terrifying! Ah, the scoundrel!

Germain (looking around him)

What's wrong?

Pipelet

That monster infuriates me so much that he makes me lose my memory. I was bringing a letter to Miss Rigolette. Ah, that scalawag of a Cabrion.

Rigolette

A letter for me! Heavens, I've never received one.

Germain

With a nice seal, handsome arms.

Pipelet

As for me, I'd like to see one—a letter concerning the burial of Cabrion.

Rigolette

Ah! How lucky! News of Fleur de Marie.

Germain

Where is she? What's she doing?

Rigolette

Listen: "My dear Rigolette, Only today do they permit me to give you my news because they've taken precautions

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to prevent certain bad people from finding me again. I am really happy. I swear to you. I regret only one thing, it was not being able to write to you, to you who were the first to love me, but you're no longer alone."

Germain

There's good news to give to Chourineur who will come tomorrow to receive his pension.

Rigolette (continuing to read)

"Soon, I think, I will leave for far away, far away—but not without having seen you again. Someone with whom you spoke once, and who has been my providence, will go see you today or tomorrow. I love him even more since he promised me that my sweet Rigolette could yet once more embrace Fleur de Marie."

Germain

Her providence! Doubtless the Prince.

Pipelet (striking his face)

Ah! The bandit!

Rigolette

Ah, you're frightening me, Mr. Pipelet.

Pipelet

It will turn me into a moron. I was forgetting that I have another stamped paper for Mr. Morel.

Rigolette

What's this stamped paper?

Germain (taking the paper)

It's an official order.

Rigolette

An official order for what?

Germain

If they do not pay during the day, then tomorrow they will seize all he has.

Rigolette

And they have so little.

Germain

And put poor Mr. Morel in prison.

Rigolette

But Mr. Ferrand who loaned him money won't consent.

Germain

The bill is no longer in his hands. He has to pay it himself, and he says he hasn't the means.

Rigolette

And that nasty usher continues to pursue them, despite the explanation you gave them?

Germain

My God, yes!

Rigolette

Oh, if I still had economies, I would break all my money boxes.

(Germain goes quickly to take his hat.)

Rigolette

You are going to your office?

Germain

First, I have to run a little errand two steps from here.

Rigolette

What is it then?

Germain

You'll know later and you won't be angry. In a moment I will return and I will rap on this door. (points to the door at the back)

Rigolette

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And I will open for you. As for me, I am going up to the Morels with Mr. Pipelet. I will try to calm them a little. Goodbye, my neighbor.

Germain

Till later.

Pipelet (to Germain)

Mr. Germain, do me an enormous service. When you go down, look and see if Cabrion is still in the street.

Germain

Yes, Mr. Pipelet. I will let you know.

Rigolette

Come then, Mr. Pipelet.

Pipelet

Here I am. (going) So long as he's not there any more with his big blonde.

(All three leave by the right. After a pause there is a knocking at the door on the left.)

Ferrand

No one. I was unable to grasp their conversation. That letter that I saw just now below, bearing the arms of the Marquis D'Harville—and addressed to Rigolette—where can it be? That working girl cannot know the Marquise D'Harville, but the Prince knows her and during the three months he's had Fleur de Marie in his power—since that time—efforts, tricks, perseverances, explanations—all has been useless. But where'd she put it then? Ah! That letter! That letter! (searching) Nothing! Nothing! (falling into a seat) Me! Me! At my age, dominated in this way. The furies instead of remorse have chosen for me this terrible love. (with rage) But, take from my heart this lance of iron which destroys, this fire which consumes it. And my head, my head which can no longer think, which forgets reality and dreams, always dreams. (rising) If they come, must search quickly. (joyfully) Ah, here it is! Here it is! It's from her. She wrote that. (laughing) She's at the home of Madame D'Harville! Oh, now that I know your refuge, audacity and gold will do the rest. Yes, gold for her. I will sacrifice my gold, my blood, anything it may cost me, anything. I will brave all. (threateningly) Truly, absence, the obstacles, far from calming my passion have exasperated it into a frenzy.

Germain (knocking outside)

My neighbor, are you there? Can one come in?

Ferrand

Germain! Let him not find me here. Let's return this letter.

(Ferrand goes to the other door and stops abruptly.)

Rigolette (outside)

I will be back up soon.

Ferrand

I hear the voice of Rigolette. Ah, in this cabinet.

(Ferrand hides in cabinet. Rigolette enters, singing.)

Germain (outside)

My neighbor, answer me. Can I come in?

Rigolette

Coming! Coming! Heaven's, I'd not put the bolt—

Germain (entering)

You didn't hear me?

Rigolette

I just got back now. Well, your visit, can I know the purpose now?

Germain

Good news! I've been to a rich friend and I begged him to loan me one thousand francs.

Rigolette

One thousand francs! And what need have you for that sum?

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Germain

Don't you get it? That poor Morel. If they put him in prison—

Rigolette

You would pay his debt? Ah, Mr. Germain, that doesn't astonish me, but it has an effect on me all the same.

Germain

My friend is leaving tomorrow on a trip. But he has promised to do everything he can to send me that amount before he departs.

Rigolette

I want to go up right away to the Morels to tell them.

Germain

Wait, he really promised me, but I don't yet have the money. Better not give them a false hope.

Rigolette

Oh! My God, it's true. It's not certain.

Germain

Don't worry, I will go again today to press him.

Rigolette

Come on, that's it! Good hope. Go down to your office. As for me, I'm running to take my work to the Rue St. Denis. Give me my shawl, my neighbor and fasten it under my neck with a pin. Be careful not to prick me.

Germain (sighing)

Oh, Miss Rigolette.

Rigolette

Well, what?

Germain

I don't like to serve as your chambermaid.

Rigolette

Fine—complain! Come on, come on, let's go. I still haven't done a thing. I've got my key, my work—I haven't forgotten anything. You are going down? You are a brave lad, my neighbor.

(Germain and Rigolette go out. Ferrand comes out of the cabinet and writes in a notebook.)

Ferrand

A word to my usher and tomorrow, at daybreak, Morel is arrested and the chain is mine. I'll turn against this wretched Germain the loan he's going to make and he'll be thrown in prison like a thief and in an hour the School Master will know where Fleur de Marie is.

CURTAIN

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SCENE V

The Morels. The stage represents a garret. In the back, the children and Madame Varner. To the right, Madeleine Morel in a large armchair. To the left, a table with a grindstone. Several precious gems shine at the side. At the left, a door. The stage is weakly lit by a candle placed on the table. Morel, exhausted by fatigue and worry, has let his head fall on the grindstone and is sleeping. Madame Varner, whose bearing betrays idiocy, rises, walks about the room, then goes to the workbench.

Madeleine (low)

Mother, where are you going? Don't go there. Don't touch the diamonds. You know what it cost us.

(Madame Varner warms up her hands by the candle. Then, avidly watching the diamonds, she burns her hand and screams.)

Morel (waking up)

What's wrong with you, mother? Go back to bed and don't make noise. Madeleine and the children are sleeping.

The oldest child (raising its head)

I can't sleep.

Madeleine

I was afraid of waking you, Morel, or I would have asked you for something to drink.

Morel

Right away! Felix, go get something for your mother to drink. (to the idiot) Ah! Now, that's got to stop. We are getting annoyed. Go back to bed right away. To bed! To bed!

(The old woman goes to bed, grumbling.)

Felix (coming to his father, crying)

Papa! Papa!

Morel

What a life! What a life!

Madeleine (weeping)

Is it my fault my mother is an idiot?

Morel

Is it mine? What do I ask? Not to die at work for you. I don't complain. So long as I have the strength I will go on. But I can no longer do my work and be a guardian for a mad woman, a sick person and children.

Madeleine

My God, how thirsty I am.

Morel (to Felix)

Give it to me quick, Felix. (stepping, to Madeleine) But this is going to be too cold, it will make you ill.

Madeleine

So much the better. Everything will be over soon.

Morel

Madeleine, don't talk to me like that. I don't deserve it. Heavens, I beg you, don't make me shamed.

Madeleine

My God, I don't want to do it, but when I see how I use you, and how our children serve—

Morel

Our children! They serve to give me courage. Without them, I wouldn't kill myself working. Without them, discouragement and despair would have won long ago.

Madeleine

Yes, but these children, these children—

Morel

You see quite well that they are good for something.

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Madeleine (after drinking)

My shivering increases. I no longer have the strength to tremble.

Morel (taking off his vest, he places it over her knees)

Warm up.

Madeleine

Oh, you are good. I was wrong just now. You mustn't hold it against me. When I think that with those diamonds that are there—

Morel

They don't belong to us.

Madeleine

My God—how unfortunate we are.

Morel (sitting on an arm of the chair and holding her hand in his)

Everyone has his sorrows. The great like the small. For if that diamond hadn't been stolen, we wouldn't have to pay for it. We wouldn't be in misery. Work and direction: haven't they given us comfort and happiness?

Madeleine

Yes, but while waiting, the butcher will no longer give us credit. What are you going to do?

Morel

I don't know.

Madeleine

Day has come. Extinguish the candle that is burning needlessly. (Morel puts out the candle) What are you thinking? You don't say anything.

Morel

I am thinking of the note for which they are pressing us.

Madeleine

Let Mr. Ferrand pay it.

Morel

But it's not up to Mr. Ferrand to pay it since we are the ones who received the money.

Madeleine

Oh! The rich! The rich!

Morel

My God! The rich are no better off than we are, only they don't know it. They cannot believe there are people as unlucky as we are.

Madeleine

Oh, you are better than I, and perhaps more fair. My poor man, take back your vest. Try to rest, to sleep. You will forget.

Morel (going to his bench)

To sleep, to forget! No! No! I don't have the time. I have to work.

Bourdin (entering with Malicorne)

Mr. Morel?

Morel (astonished)

Two men.

The children (running to their mother)

Mama! We're scared.

Madeleine

My friend, take care!

Morel (coming forward)

What do you wish, gentlemen?

Bourdin

Jerome Morel.

Morel

That's me.

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Bourdin

Occupation lapidary?

Morel

That's me.

Bourdin

For certain?

Morel

One last time, it's me. What do you want? Explain yourselves and leave, or I'll call the police.

Bourdin

If anyone has need of the police, it's us, seeing that they will give us assistance in taking you to prison—if you resist.

Morel

To prison? Me?

Bourdin

Yes, at Clichy.

(Rigolette enters and watches in a trance, stupefied.)

Morel

Clichy!

Bourdin

In prison for debt. We are private police.

Madeleine

Ah! My God! It's Ferrand's note.

Bourdin

Here's the judgement. It is in order.

(General despair.)

Rigolette

Ah! I suspected it. I actually warned Mr. Germain.

Bourdin

Look, will you pay?

Madeleine

Morel, go find Mr. Ferrand. It's Mr. Petit–Jean who is pursuing this.

Rigolette

Gentlemen, you can see quite well he cannot pay.

Bourdin

In that case, let's go.

Morel

I will go to prison if you wish.

Madeleine

Morel! My friend!

Morel (in anguish)

But I cannot work in prison. They did not confide these gems to me. They'll think I am a bad character.

Madeleine (offering him her hand which he goes to take)

Ah, my poor man! My poor man!

Rigolette (aside)

And Mr. Germain hasn't come! His friend will depart without leaving him the money. (going to Bourdin) If I were to promise you eight francs, ten francs a month?

Bourdin

To pay five hundred francs and the expenses? No, no, hard cash.

Rigolette

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I will sell my wash stand.

Bourdin

Come on! One last time, follow me.

Morel

Well, do your job to the end. Tear me from my children who retain me. Remove from my neck the arm of my wife. Throw us all into ruin, to misery, but I cannot go voluntarily.

Bourdin

Damn! My brave man, you shall have your wish. We have to do our job.

Rigolette (screaming in joy)

Mr. Germain!

Bourdin and Malicorne Who's this?

Germain (entering)

Leave that man alone.

Bourdin (turning, in a defensive position)

Do you intend to resist the law?

Germain

No, I intend to pay you.

(General shout.)

Bourdin

I prefer that, indeed, but this is odd.

Morel (coming to Germain)

Mr. Germain, you hardly know me.

Germain

Does one have to be relatives or friends to help someone?

Morel (to Madeleine)

Didn't I tell you those who have something are good—if they know.

Le Chourineur (entering)

They said there was an uproar here. If you need a helping hand, I'm here.

Rigolette (pointing to Germain)

They don't need anything any more. He paid.

Le Chourineur (takes Germain's hand)

Damn! That's a fine thing, indeed!

Rigolette (to Bourdin)

Gentlemen, we don't wish to detain you. When you've given his change to this brave man, you will be free to go.
(Malicorne writes at the table and Bourdin takes the paper to Rigolette and gives her a coin.)

Bourdin

Here, Miss.

Rigolette

What! They owe you five hundred francs and out of a thousand you return five sous.

Bourdin

Five hundred francs capital, yes, then four hundred ninety-five francs expenses.

Le Chourineur

Oh, the villains! Oh, the misery mongers! (enter a Police Superintendent) Heavens! The Police Superintendent.

Morel (to the Police Superintendent, frightened)

Sir, what do you want?

Police Superintendent

I'm looking for Mr. Germain.

Rigolette

There he is, officer, there he is. He's the one who just paid a thousand francs for Mr. Morel.

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Bourdin

That's so, officer.

(Ferrand appears in the doorway.)

Police Superintendent

You are the clerk of Mr. Ferrand?

Germain

Yes, sir.

Police Superintendent

Sir, on a denunciation brought against you, I must arrest you.

All (except Ferrand)

There's a mistake!

You are accused of fraudulently extracting three notes of one thousand francs from the safe entrusted to you.

Germain

Who said that?

Ferrand

I, sir, who do not compromise with dishonesty.

Germain

This is an infamous slander.

Ferrand

Sir, a few days ago, you asked me to advance you five hundred francs in cash. You didn't possess the sum you've just paid and that necessarily proves the theft.

Germain

Indeed, that sum does not belong to me.

Police Superintendent

In that case, tell us the origin.

Germain

A friend just loaned it to me this morning.

Police Superintendent

Name this friend, sir. His testimony may be of great weight.

Germain

It's Mr. Herve d'Herben, who lives in the square of the Hotel de Ville, No. 10.

Police Superintendent

Well, sir, let's go to his place.

Germain

Unfortunately, he's just left.

Ferrand

I have nothing to say. It's up to the Police Superintendent to judge the worth of such a statement.

Rigolette

But, as for me, I know that it's true. Mr. Germain was at my place last night and he came to tell me that he hoped to have the sum today.

Police Superintendent

In the presence of an accusation brought by a man like Mr. Ferrand, despite all the vague allegations you oppose to it, I regret, sir, to be obliged to fulfill a rigorous duty. (to Germain) Sir, will you please return to me?

Morel

What! You did all this for me?

Le Chourineur

All the same, you are a famous fellow.

Germain

Oh, Mr. Police Superintendent, I will follow you without fear. The mistake of Mr. Ferrand, yes, it is an error, will be recognized. Be calm, Miss Rigolette.

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(The Police Superintendent signals Germain to follow him, and at that moment, Rigolette, who is following them, begins to cry.)

Le Chourineur (going to her and speaking in a low voice)
Don't cry, Miss. In prison he will need a friend. I'll try to get one for him. (leaves)

Bourdin (returning the money)
Ah, indeed. I won't let it end like this! Come, seize everything here, Malicorne.

Ferrand (to Bourdin)
Wait! (to Morel, who remains overwhelmed) Mr. Morel, look, be reasonable, you can see clearly that everyone shares your sorrow. I am going to offer you help, but I cannot do everything. Help me.

Morel
Sir, I have nothing.

Ferrand
You have that chain which has some value.

Morel
I told you that my mother-in-law—

Ferrand
Oh, my God! Do you have to listen to the scruples of a woman no longer in her right mind at such a moment? Look, profit by her sleep.

Morel
Well! You shall have it. The thought of leaving my family alone without support decides me.
(Rudolph enters, gives Bourdin a note and watches what is happening.)

Morel (in despair)
Ah, courage fails me. That necklace isn't mine. It isn't even Madame Varner's.

Ferrand (impatiently)
Mr. Morel—

Morel
I tell you that chain is a deposit which belongs to the parents of a child.

Rudolph (rushing towards Madame Varner)
Oh, my God! What's he say?

Ferrand (taking the chain from Madame Varner)
I have it!

Morel
It belongs to the parents of a young child kidnapped from Madame Varner.

Rudolph (tearing the chain from Ferrand's hands)
My daughter!

All
His daughter!

Rudolph
All that remains of my daughter, honest Morel, kidnapped, lost!

Morel
Oh, pardon us.

Madeleine
And he's just saved us! Milord, I and my children really want to thank you.

Ferrand (aside)
Fleur de Marie—daughter of the Countess Sarah. The Prince is her father and the chain escapes me. Oh, I'll indeed write the School Master tomorrow that Fleur de Marie will no longer be in his power.

CURTAIN

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SCENE VI

Madame D'Harville's Park. The stage represents a part of Madame D'Harville's Park. To the left, an enclosing wall, interrupted by an iron grill gate. A pavilion with a door leading into the house. In the back, a fountain with a balustrade. To the right, trees, arbors. At some distance to the right is a farm and farm house.

Madame D'Harville is seated; Fleur de Marie is arranging a bouquet she is bringing to her.

Fleur de Marie

Look at this pretty bouquet, Madame.

Madame D'Harville

It is charming.

Fleur de Marie

Deign to accept it, I beg you.

Madame D'Harville

With pleasure, my dear child. Well, are you happy here?

Fleur de Marie

Ah! If you knew how great my joy is, when each morning I wake up in the pretty room I live in. I, who was living before in the saddest abode.

Madame D'Harville

Come, come, you must put these sad memories out of your mind. No longer think of those times.

Fleur de Marie

No longer think of them, Madame? Isn't it from that time that my profound gratitude to you and milord dates? Scorned, totally abandoned as I was, didn't he deign to speak consoling words to me? Also, I prayed God each day, to shower you with his gifts. For, alas, the poor can only pray for their benefactors.

Madame D'Harville

Well, be satisfied my child. Your wishes are fulfilled. I can now confide in you that the signing of my marriage contract with the Prince is set for tomorrow evening, and soon thereafter, we will leave for Germany.

Fleur de Marie

It is true. Oh, thank you, my God. You heard me!

Madame D'Harville

Won't you regret leaving France?

Fleur de Marie

Except for Rigolette, to whom you allowed me to write yesterday, what would I regret more than you, more than milord, for whom I experience an almost religious gratitude.

Madame D'Harville

Oh, you are right. There's no soul greater, more beautiful than his. Why must his heart have been so cruelly wounded?

Fleur de Marie

Him, so good, he has sorrows?

Madame D'Harville

Very big ones. This very morning he recalled to me a fatal event that has just reawakened in his heart the saddest memories on the subject of a daughter that he idolized. It's for that that I am going to rejoin him in Paris.

Fleur de Marie

You won't be staying long?

Madame D'Harville

No, my child. In the afternoon we will return. Madame Dubreuil is presiding over the fishing in the pond and preparations for the marriage of farmer Bastien which takes place tomorrow, she will remain near you. If, during my absence, alms need to be given, you have full authority.

Fleur de Marie

Thank you, thank you, Madame. To console sorrows like those I've experienced is a double honor. Go, since you

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must, leave for several hours. Your presence will calm the sorrow of my benefactor. He had a daughter. Oh, how she would have loved him, adored him, for she would have heard it spoken of everywhere that her father helped the poor, relieved the weak, gave strength and courage to the abandoned, and although born a princess and close to the throne, she would have been more proud of her father's heart than of his sovereign birth.

Madame D'Harville

Marie! Marie! These words, this enthusiasm, are our most sweet, our most cherished reward.

Madame Dubreuil (entering)

The carriage has just arrived at the farm, Madame.

Madame D'Harville

Goodbye, dear child.

Fleur de Marie

Allow me to escort you.

(They leave. The School Master opens the door of the little pavilion and watches them go.)

School Master

Very nice; here I am perfectly up to date, thanks to the concierge's pavilion, the exterior door of which I've been able to open. I've found myself a convenient observatory. If we know how to pilot our ship, our future is made. They are fighting over Fleur de Marie. On the one side Red Beard—on the other side this Countess, who for some inheritance intrigue, without a doubt, requires a young girl without parents, without known origins. Which of the two will satisfy us—Mr. Ferrand or Countess MacGregor? We shan't disturb ourselves about that. Above all we must hasten to act. Since yesterday, nothing yet. (looking through the gate) That's strange, in the avenue, the big bloke with the small young man. They seem to be calling me. He's making gestures to me. It's Francois!

(Enter Francois and Sarah, disguised as a man.)

School Master

You here!

Francois (indicating the Countess)

The Screech Owl told me to bring—

School Master

The Countess in disguise! The Countess is impatient. (to Francois) See to it we are not interrupted.

Sarah

What have you done?

School Master

I've only been able to get information so far.

Sarah

You promised that yesterday evening.

School Master

The circumstances haven't allowed me—

Sarah

And last night?

School Master

Last night, nothing. It was in vain that I prowled around the Chateau, needless trouble, entirely impossible. Evidently they are sure of their guards. As soon as the young girl sets foot in the park, servants follow her. They push their precautions to the extent of making her wear a veil, doubtless to prevent her being recognized.

Sarah

If necessary, I will double the reward promised.

School Master

But, what do you want to do with the young girl?

Sarah

Oh, don't be fearful for her. If my hopes are realized, the most brilliant fate is assured for her. She is destined to replace a young girl whose death has been mourned more than ten years.

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School Master

Ah! I get it. It's a question of saying to the parents: "You thought your daughter was dead, but she isn't."

Sarah (aside)

If my plan succeeds, the Prince will think he's found his daughter. Our marriage will legitimize her birth and my dreams and ambitions will be satisfied. (aloud) You will affirm all the details that I will communicate to you about the child, so as to render the fable more complete.

School Master

Don't worry.

Sarah

Tomorrow, at ten in the morning, be at my place.

School Master

At ten. I'll be there.

Sarah

You will enter through the garden gate which will be left open.

School Master

Fine!

Sarah

I will be waiting for you above. We will agree about everything, but I must have this young girl.

School Master

My interest answers for my zeal.

Sarah

If need be, you will stay here a week, a month.

School Master

That will be unnecessary. We must leave tomorrow night, and bring the young girl.

Sarah

Well, until tomorrow. Can't this man second us?

Francois

I do not know if we will be able to remain here until tomorrow.

Sarah

What do you mean?

Francois (with a gesture)

There in the village, at the corner near the roadside inn, I just met the Milkmaid, you know. Well, she's in mourning for her husband.

School Master

The devil!

Francois

You see, we mustn't make old bones here.

School Master

Ah! The Milkmaid is in mourning. Pardon, Madame, but an obstacle can be turned into a tool. You have no reason for not appearing before this woman.

Sarah

Doubtless.

School Master

Deign to take the trouble to go to the country inn. Tell the Milkmaid that you are coming from the Chateau where they've learned about the death of her husband, the loss she sustained, and they are disposed to help her. Engage her to come here this morning.

Sarah

But to what good?

School Master

That's what I don't have the time to explain to you. Francois is going to point out the Milkmaid's house to you. As for me, I cannot go far.

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(The School Master escorts Sarah and Francois to the gate. Fleur de Marie reappears at the right.)

Fleur de Marie

I must have left my work box where I put the money Madame D'Harville gave me for that poor woman.
(Fleur de Marie goes to the bench; the School Master returns.)

School Master

“You will be the dispenser of the charity that we are going to do,” is what Madame D'Harville said to Fleur de Marie. That little phrase seems like nothing, but it will suffice.

Fleur de Marie

Oh, what do I see? My God! My God! Who will save me? What's that man come here to do?
(Fleur de Marie vanishes behind the wall.)

School Master

On that I am basing the success of my plan. It's true that I have within reach this enraged Milkmaid. (seeing Francois return) Already, what brings you back?

Francois

Fear.

School Master

What do you mean?

Francois

I was unable to speak before the Countess. Things are going bad. Benoit and Barbillon have been arrested and the Screech Owl charged me with a letter for you.

School Master

A letter? (takes the letter and reads) “They have suspicions. Yesterday they came to investigate at the moment Red Beard entered; he wanted to know if you had succeeded. Arrested, interrogated, he had to identify himself. Judge what was my surprise when I recognized in him Mr. Ferrand of Rue du Temple—” (interrupting himself) Jacques Ferrand! Here! Here in my power! I can dominate him in my turn. (continuing to read) “As they had nothing against him, they released him, too.” Jacques Ferrand, now you are my slave.

Francois

Well, what do you say?

School Master

I say as soon as we are masters of the little girl, we will take her to the home of La Martial, in L'île des Ravageurs, and the two of us will go to Paris to see our business up close.

Francois

Then, you are sure of success?

School Master

That's what you are going to see. Someone's coming—Let's make tracks.

(The School Master and Francois enter the pavilion and shut the gate. Fleur de Marie appears. The music indicates steps of many neighbors.)

Fleur de Marie

I can hardly bear up. It's not chance that brings those two men here. I heard everything. They are manufacturing some conspiracy against me, against the Marquise, against my benefactor. Before this evening, they will learn the peril that threatens them. People coming? Ah, I want to be alone. I want to be able to weep.

(Enter Madame Dubreuil, servants, peasants, fishermen and the Milkmaid.)

Madame Dubreuil

Come, bring the nets. You will cast them and everybody will pull them in. Women, bring the baskets. (to the Milkmaid who is in mourning) Don't be afraid, Miss is very good. (as Fleur de Marie is about to leave, Madame Dubreuil stops her) Miss, here's a poor widow that the Marquise told me to recommend to you.

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Fleur de Marie (without looking at her, gives her the purse given to her by Madame D'Harville)
Here my brave woman!

Milkmaid

Ah, Miss. Ah, my children and I, we really deserve your pity. After three months of illness that ruined us, my husband just died of wounds he received in the Cite.

Fleur de Marie

What do I hear? Is it you?

Milkmaid

You heard of it?

Fleur de Marie

Yes, yes. I will tell everything to Madame D'Harville. Be sure of her charity.

Milkmaid

Madame Dubreuil was right to say that you were truly good.

(The Milkmaid takes Fleur de Marie's hand to kiss it and then recognizes her and utters a scream.)

Milkmaid

Ah!

Madame Dubreuil

What's the matter?

Milkmaid

It's she! (holds tight to Fleur de Marie's hand) Why, look me in the face!

Madame Dubreuil (stopping her)

Why wretch! What are you doing?

Milkmaid

My friends, she's one of the gang that caused the death of my husband.

(Everyone mingles around in curiosity, saying: "What's wrong?" "What did she say?")

Madame Dubreuil

You are mad! Sorrow is distracting you, my good woman. You are mistaken. Tell them you are mistaken.

Milkmaid

I am not mistaken! Here. See how pale she is! Her teeth are chattering, the wretch.

Madame Dubreuil

Insolent! Get out of here. To dare to be lacking in respect to Miss.

Milkmaid

Miss! It's you who are crazy! Miss is a street singer that I saw loitering in all the streets.

(Murmurs amongst the peasants.)

Madame Dubreuil (exasperated)

Kick this woman out of here. (no one moves) Why, didn't you hear me? I am ordering you to kick this woman out of here.

(Voices, murmurs.)

Pierre

If she recognizes her, she is within her rights. They murdered her husband.

Milkmaid

You want to kick out a poor widow? But ask if she doesn't know me.

Madame Dubreuil

Do you hear her, Miss?

Milkmaid

Yes or no? Are you called La Goualeuse?

Fleur de Marie (in a low voice amidst a profound silence)

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Yes.

(Murmurs of: "She admits it." "She admits it.")

Madame Dubreuil

But what? What does she admit?

Milkmaid

Let her answer. She will admit at least that she lived in the midst of bandits—that she knows them.

Fleur de Marie (in a low voice)

I can know them without ever—

Madame Dubreuil (moving away)

Ah! The wretch!

(The group becomes noisy and more threatening and Fleur de Marie recoils.)

Pierre

She wants us to call her Miss! She insinuates herself with the master, the bold one.

Fleur de Marie (terrified)

My God! What harm have I done you gentlemen?

Pierre

Her husband is dead. You knew those who struck him down.

(Fleur de Marie has retreated to the balustrade of the pond. The School Master cracks the gate of the pavilion half open and observes.)

Milkmaid

There's justice in heaven. (advancing on Fleur de Marie) You don't see my black dress, miscreant! (advancing further) Brave folks have their turn, too! Ah, you thought you wouldn't be recognized!

Fleur de Marie (retreating)

Madame! Madame! You want to make me fall in the water?

Peasants That's right. That's right, in the water.

Madame Dubreuil (screaming in terror and rushing to Fleur de Marie)

What's this? What are you doing to her?

Peasants In the water! In the water!

Fleur de Marie

Mercy! Mercy!

Madame Dubreuil

Stop! If she is guilty, is it up to you to do justice? Lock her in there until the masters' return.

Peasants Yes, yes. That's fair. That's better.

Fleur de Marie (kissing Madame Dubreuil's hand)

Ah, you've saved me.

Peasants Yes, yes. In prison.

(Fleur de Marie, terrified, retreats towards the pavilion. The School Master seizes her by the arm without being seen and pulls her inside and locks the door. The peasants remain in a threatening attitude.)

Madame Dubreuil (with the key)

Now, I swear to you, I won't open this door except to Madame the Marquise.

(A scream from Fleur de Marie is heard from inside the pavilion.)

CURTAIN

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ACT IV

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SCENE VII

The Prison. The stage represents a warming room of a prison. At the back, a door giving on a court. To the right, a wicket gate through which one goes to the clerk. A stove around which several groups of prisoners are seated or standing. They are listening to Piquevinaigre (Sharp Vinegar) who is seated above them on a big block of wood. The School Master is at the door at the back and looking outside. Benoit with Barbillon is mid stage with the other prisoners.

While Piquevinaigre speaks through an opening of a flagstone raised in the midst of the stage, a hand pulls out little sacks of earth that the prisoners, obedient to Benoit, share amongst themselves. Some put the earth in their pockets, others throw it behind the planks of a camp bed placed in the back of the theatre.

Piquevinaigre

So, then the fairy said to the enchanter—

Benoit

Well? And so what? Finish your tale, Piquevinaigre.

Piquevinaigre

Noon is about to strike.

Benoit

What tells you it's noon?

Piquevinaigre

My stomach.

Benoit

Your stomach is ahead of time by a quarter of an hour.

Piquevinaigre

I'll continue in that case.

Benoit (to prisoners)

Form a wall around here—you know quite well—you cannot be sure of a poltroon like Piquevinaigre.

Francois (raising his head out of the trench)

There are no more shovels full of earth to take out. (goes back in the tunnel)

Piquevinaigre

Then the fairy said to the enchanter: You are protecting the old hump—back. I am protecting the young troubadour. But, it's all the same, he will marry the princess and all her treasures.

Benoit (in a low voice)

Nothing. School Master?

School Master

No, the guard is walking in the courtyard.

Benoit (to Barbillon who is listening at the wicket by the left)

And you? At your wicket?

Barbillon

The newcomer of yesterday is still being watched.

Benoit

Watch carefully, for this Germain, with his proud air and his despair, doesn't suit me at all. (turning toward the group by the stove) Well, are you yawning, Piquevinaigre?

Piquevinaigre

It's true. I am not in the mood to tell stories. It's appetite which is taking away my words, but another time I will tell you about the Gringalet and Cut-in-Two—Ah, now there you see is a story to make the birds come down from the trees to hear it.

Barbillon (in a low voice, coming in)

Here's that Germain.

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(Benoit utters a shout. Francois leaps out of the trench and intends to give a hand to another prisoner who's already raising his arm, but at the noise of the bolts in the door at the left, Benoit puts his foot on the flagstone which falls back. The groups, which have hidden from Piquevinaigre what is happening, disperse. Germain comes in from the left and goes to sit sadly in a corner. The prisoners keep away from him, except Piquevinaigre. The School Master comes back from the rear.)

Francois (low to Benoit)

How's the other going to get out of there now that the new one is here?

Benoit (low)

Hell, he's going to have to wait for the signal. (to School Master) Are you sure of him, still?

School Master

Like myself, he had some trouble to decide to flee this place, but it seems he's really put himself to it. He even broke a shutter and although he's only been here since this morning, you've seen he doesn't hesitate to work with us.

Benoit (to Francois)

All is ready?

Francois

There's only one more plank to raise and we are in the adjoining house. The comrade has only to enlarge the passage.

Piquevinaigre

Don't seem so sad like that. They are giving you the evil eye. You've got to take your part. Being neither courageous nor strong, I am a talker. (shouts in a half voice) The guard! The guard!

Papa Roussel (entering)

Everybody being good in here?

Benoit

Like angels—like little angels.

Papa Roussel

At noon, you will go into the covered courtyard. Because of the repairs being made to this building, this room is going to be used as a parlor.

(Papa Roussel goes to the back with some of the prisoners.)

School Master

Then I'm going to receive the business man here.

Benoit

You—a business man?

School Master

You recall an individual who had a red beard and who was seen sometimes in the Cite. He's going to come here to take my orders—but without his red beard and disguised as an honest man.

Germain

What a suspicion!

School Master

I wrote him yesterday when, along with Francois, we were arrested in the Cite. He's going to come. Whatever I want, he will want, and if one's friends have need of something, he will have to obey.

Papa Roussel

In the courtyard, in the courtyard. There are visitors coming.

A voice (outside at the wicket gate to the right)

Duresnil—called the School Master?

Germain

I am going to know if I am mistaken.

School Master (seeing Ferrand enter)

What was I telling you? There he is.

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Ferrand (to Germain)

You here!

(Germain stops near Ferrand while the other prisoners leave.)

Germain

Mr. Ferrand, I am no longer uneasy about the fate of the Morels.

Ferrand

What do you mean?

Germain

You will answer for their future.

Ferrand

Why's that?

Germain

Because it's you who stole the diamond. Because you've been found out at last!

Ferrand

Sir, I don't comprehend enigmas. None of this will prevent me from recommending your affair to the clerk. If you have something to say, you can speak when it pleases you.

Germain

Don't worry. I will speak.

Ferrand (low to the School Master)

Look closely at that young man.

Papa Roussel

In the courtyard! In the courtyard!

(Germain leaves with the guard.)

School Master

I know him. What have you against him?

Ferrand

Later. But why are you here? I thought you were at the Chateau of Madame D'Harville.

School Master I went there. I succeeded.

Ferrand

You found Fleur de Marie?

School Master

Your directions were excellent.

Ferrand

She's in your hands?

School Master

Not without a lot of trouble.

Ferrand

You will bring her to me.

School Master

One moment. There's a score to settle.

Ferrand

Let's see!

(The School Master and Ferrand sit down.)

School Master

After having taken Fleur de Marie to a safe place, and after having planted some of her clothes on the shore of the Seine to make it look like her death was voluntary, I had the unfortunate idea of returning to Paris. Arriving in the Cite I was arrested and brought here, but informed by the Screech Owl of your double identity, I though we were sufficiently joined in crime to count on your help—and wrote you.

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(Ferrand notices a box of earth on a bench that was forgotten by a prisoner.)

Ferrand (aside)

Dirt—that's strange.

School Master (with somber bitterness)

Do you know this is a great discovery made by the Screech Owl. Ah, you are a man with a double face. Ah, you are your own accomplice. The red beard confidant of the business man with green glasses! How you count on each other! What discretion, what obedience!

(The flagstone is raised a bit and one can see the top of someone's head, listening. Ferrand doesn't miss any of this.)

Ferrand (aside)

More dirt. (aloud) Enough! You can ruin me, but you are a man of sense. We can understand each other.

School Master

So be it! But I must tell you, frankly I am disposed to abuse the advantage I have over you.

Ferrand (going to the flagstone which he taps with his cane)

Your irony is bitter. Let's talk seriously. What price to you put on your silence? (rapping the flagstone again with his cane) That must be it.

School Master

If you were a rogue of no substance you would get off with twelve thousand francs. But the austerity you've paraded shows the high probity of your character, the limitless confidence which you've obtained necessarily increases my pretensions. Still, I will only ask you ten thousand francs per lie.

Ferrand

Thirty thousand francs.

School Master

And more later—we will see.

Ferrand (placing the end of his cane under the flagstone)

We will see.

School Master (grabbing his arm)

Great God!

Ferrand

Huh?

School Master

Nothing.

Ferrand

Indeed. It seems to me there's a current of air.

School Master

Ah, indeed, they really care about that air.

Ferrand

They're wrong. There's nothing so dangerous as currents of air. I'm going to inform the guard.

School Master

Mercy! They've been working on this tunnel for three months.

Ferrand (imperiously)

Where is Fleur de Marie?

(The flagstone raises and one can see the head of a man, listening.)

School Master

At the L'île des Ravageurs and La Martial will be expecting me there, with her tonight, at the Bridge of Asnieres at seven o'clock.

Ferrand

About time.

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School Master

But how did you know that this flagstone—?

Ferrand

That young man that I mentioned to you the moment that he left. (aside) Germain, my vengeance won't be a long while in coming.

School Master

It was him? The wretch! We were going to flee in two hours.

Ferrand

Nothing is desperate. To escape suspicion, he charged me with denouncing you. That will give you at least an hour.

School Master

An hour! We still have time to punish a traitor.

Ferrand

And now, until this evening, seven o'clock at the Asnieres Bridge.

School Master

But if the escape does not succeed?

Ferrand

That will be because you let Germain live.

School Master

Why, you who know—

Ferrand

Haven't I all means of knowing that my accomplice is outside the hands of justice?

School Master

You threatened me, still—

Ferrand

To frighten you. You must think before answering me.

School Master That's true. Come on—he's cleverer than I am—and I thought I was his master! Bow before him, wretch, and march where he directs.

Ferrand (to Roussel who has just entered)

Would you take me to the clerk, please?

Papa Roussel

Here, sir. (after having opened to Ferrand, speaking into the court) You can come back now.

School Master

Let's think about this Germain and find the way to punish his treason.

(All the prisoners, including Germain, return.)

Piquevinaigre

Until then—be on your guard.

School Master (excitedly to Piquevinaigre)

What did you say to him?

Piquevinaigre

Me? Nothing. I was going over the story of Gringalet and Cut-in-Two.

School Master

Right. (taking Benoit and Francois aside) Listen, you two, there's a traitor amongst us.

Francois

A traitor!

Benoit

Name him a bit so I can do justice. Look, speak. Where is he?

School Master (pointing to Germain who is at the left)

There.

(Piquevinaigre listens cautiously.)

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Benoit

That Germain? How do you know?

School Master

I have proof he's a snitch.

Benoit

Wait! You're making me think of something. Just now, the guard told him at any moment he would be called to the director's.

School Master

He mustn't go there.

Benoit (with a determined air)

He won't go. I'll take care of him.

Piquevinaigre (terrified)

He's lost.

School Master

I understand you, but when?

Benoit

When the guard leaves.

School Master

That will be the moment of slipping away.

Benoit

As the first go down, Germain will have to deal with me.

School Master

The other one is still there waiting, and when will the guard leave?

Benoit

As usual, to have soup when we are busy listening to Piquevinaigre.

School Master

Our friends have cash?

Benoit

Like you and me.

School Master

In that case, if the escape succeeds we must rendezvous tonight at the Asnieres Bridge.

Benoit (low)

Why?

School Master

Because the man who was just here will be there. He has something and can be forced to give it up.

Piquevinaigre (listening to bell)

There's less than a half hour. If I could save him by making the guard listen to me—

School Master (to Benoit)

Say, time is passing and I'm getting ants in my pants.

Benoit

Come on, look. Piquevinaigre, your story of Cut-in-Two—

Papa Roussel

That's nice. I wouldn't be sorry to see you well behaved so I can go have a word about lunch.

Piquevinaigre (aside)

Let's try to stretch things out. (aloud) That will work, gentlemen, but there's one condition: I have some comforts to beg. I ask the honorable company to provide me a capital of twenty sous. Twenty sous, gentlemen, to hear the fairy stories of Piquevinaigre.

Benoit

Get on with it. You'll get your twenty sous when you finish.

Piquevinaigre

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After? No, no, before.

Benoit

Ah, indeed! Say, do you think we are capable—

Piquevinaigre

Me—come on!

Benoit

I'll risk two sous. (meaningfully) Can one be stingy for such a pleasure?

Piquevinaigre (making his collection)

Nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen—it's a bad count, and still there's a lot of money lacking. Come on, gentlemen, you rich fellows, capitalists. A little more effort. All we lack is seven sous. Seven wretched sous! Ah, gentlemen, ah, gentlemen, you are making people believe you are unjustly put here, or that you've really got no talent.

Germain

Here's ten!

Piquevinaigre (aside)

He's a real jerk. He's putting them in himself. I would have gained ten minutes with my collection.

Benoit (low to the School Master)

He's going to go sit in his corner as usual. Without drawing attention, I am going to sit near him.

Piquevinaigre (taking Germain by the hand)

Gentlemen, the banker is a good kid. A place of honor near the story teller. (low to Germain) Watch yourself, your life's at stake.

Benoit (aside)

Fine! I won't have so far to go. (aloud) Oh, come on, start, Piquevinaigre.

Piquevinaigre (aside)

Come. We'll really have to talk good to keep Papa Roussel. (aloud) Jingle!

All

Jangle!

Piquevinaigre

Abra!

All

Abra!

All

Cadabra.

Piquevinaigre

So I begin. Once upon a time in Little Poland—(to Papa Roussel, who takes a step to the rear) That's your old quarter, I believe, guard?

Papa Roussel

No, I used to live in the Street of the Fishing Cat.

Piquevinaigre

A street with a very pretty stream in the middle of it, my word.

Benoit (impatiently)

Ah, come on. Are you ever going to tell the tale?

Piquevinaigre

Once upon a time in Little Poland, there was a man so evil they called him Cut-in-Two. He had the complexion of boot tops, red hair, green eyes and a black tongue. To these accomplishments Cut-in-Two joined the profession of having I don't know how many turtles, monkeys, pigs and foxes corresponding in number to little Savoyards or abandoned children. (the guard starts to leave) Do you want to see Gringalet? I am going to serve up Gringalet.

Papa Roussel

Let's see Gringalet. I can spare a minute.

Piquevinaigre

Gringalet, one of those children, and the most puny, was beaten by Cut-in-Two, by the monkeys, and all the little

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animal keepers.

Papa Roussel

Poor lad!

School Master (to Benoit)

The guard is not going away.

Benoit (low, enraged)

Damned slow poke. Will you finish?

Piquevinaigre

Gringalet was too weak and too cowardly to revenge himself. He wept and his sole consolation was to prevent the big beasts from eating the little ones.

Papa Roussel

Ah!

Piquevinaigre

Ah, now that should interest you, Papa Roussel. You understand quite well one doesn't meddle in the affairs of foxes and monkeys. But, when he saw a spider lying in ambush in its web to catch a poor fool of a fly, who wanted only God's sunshine, Gringalet beat down the web, delivered the fly and crushed the spider.

Benoit

You are not on the subject, Piquevinaigre.

Piquevinaigre

I am not on the subject! Guard, I ask you to be judge—hear a dream that Gringalet had one night.

Papa Roussel

Well, let's see. Tell it fast.

Piquevinaigre

Gringalet dreamed he was like one of those flies, like the ones he had saved so often, and that, in his turn, he was falling in a strong web, and he was struggling, struggling. Then he saw a sort of monster coming toward him, with a face like Cut-in-Two, on the body of a spider. The spider approached him, touched him. He felt the big cold legs of the monster seize him, wrap around him to devour him. He thought he was dead. Then suddenly he saw a pretty little midge of gold, which had a sort of pointed tongue like a diamond needle, fluttering around the web with a furious air.

Papa Roussel (sitting)

My word, this is amusing me.

Piquevinaigre (aside)

He's saved.

Benoit (low)

I feel like exterminating all three of them.

A voice (outside)

Papa Roussel, come to dinner. Only five minutes more.

Papa Roussel (rising)

The rest tomorrow.

(Piquevinaigre, seeing the movement among the prisoners, who follow Papa Roussel with their eyes, retreats towards the back, while the School Master moves the block from the flagstone.)

Piquevinaigre

Watch yourself, Mr. Germain.

Benoit (rushing Germain)

He's right—for here's your spider.

(Hardly has the block been moved when the prisoner who was in the trench raises the flagstone and rushes at Benoit.)

Le Chourineur

And here's his golden midge!

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Benoit (struggling and releasing Germain)

What's it to this brigand?

Le Chourineur (protecting Germain)

He's got it in for all those who would treacherously kill a lamb of God.

(As soon as the trench is open, the School Master rushes into it and is followed by several others.)

Benoit and several prisoners Death to both of them. Death!

Piquevinaigre

The Guard! The Guard!

(Benoit separates from the prisoners and rushes into the trench.)

Benoit (to Chourineur)

We will see each other again. I am in a real hurry at this time.

Le Chourineur

At your ease, good fellow!

(Chourineur puts his foot on the flagstone. Several soldiers have now come in and arranged themselves around the back.)

A Sergeant (to the soldier)

Fire on the first one who moves!

(Everyone remains motionless.)

CURTAIN

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SCENE VIII

The Bridge of Asnieres. The stage is cut by the Bridge of Asnieres. Through the arches one can see the islands. To the left, a flat-bottomed boat. To the right, a large boat is moored.

AT RISE, the School Master enters furtively from the canal and goes toward the first arch of the bridge.

School Master

Are you there?

Voice

Yes.

School Master

With Fleur de Marie?

Voice

Yes.

School Master

Keep her until I notify you. What can that music and torchlight be coming from this side?

(The School Master comes forward a bit to discover what is happening on the bridge, where the head of a wedding party begins to appear. Madame Dubreuil stops on the bridge at the head of a procession that can be seen by the audience.)

Madame Dubreuil

Ah, indeed! I am stopping here as I told you. The rest of you, go dance all night at the Golden Chariot.

Peasants (insistent)

Come with us, Madame Dubreuil, come on.

Madame Dubreuil

No, my friends. I am too saddened by the events of yesterday, when Madame D'Harville was shamed by the death of that poor little girl— that misfortunate. It would be wrong for me to go with you.

Peasants Let's go then, since you wish it. It's a shame.

Madame Dubreuil

Pierre, will you escort me back?

Pierre

Willingly, Madame Dubreuil.

(There are goodbyes. Madame Dubreuil turns on her heels, taking Pierre's arm while the wedding party continues on to the sound of music.)

School Master

They're moving off. I have no time to lose. At ten in the evening, I must be at the home of my Countess. To return to Paris! Is it really prudent? I shall take care to arm myself against all eventualities. But at the moment of my departure, I must lose no opportunity. Ferrand is going to come. (to the rear) Let's see, come forward, pick pocket.

Fleur de Marie

What do you want with me?

School Master

A small thing. I see clearly we can no longer work together. Consequently, I am going to simply place you back where you were—in the home of Mr. Ferrand. You will consent to that, won't you?

Fleur de Marie

You are strangely mistaken if you think that contact with honor and virtue hasn't inspired me with courage, with spirit. Understand plainly, to resist you now, I am as strong as you.

School Master

What do you mean?

Fleur de Marie

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I am not afraid of you, I tell you. I have courage to oppose your cowardly will to ruin me, kill me—I have the courage to die.

School Master

Words, that's all.

Fleur de Marie

It's you who gave me this courage.

School Master

Me?

Fleur de Marie

Yes, yesterday, through the horror you inspired in me when I learned you were a thief and murderer.

School Master

What's she saying?

Fleur de Marie

Yesterday, I heard your conversation with your accomplice.

School Master

Wretch!

Fleur de Marie

In the island where you took me, and from which I could not escape, I had to be silent. But you've brought me near a highway, near a bridge. I will stay here until someone comes by, until my screams bring someone to my aid. And twelve hours later, I will say who you are and what you have done. I don't want to be your accomplice, even through my silence. So flee! Flee before me, for if a living creature comes, on my life which I abandon to you, I swear it, I will speak!

School Master

The devil! This deserves some reflection—

Fleur de Marie

Do what you wish. You know what I will do.

School Master (aside)

I am ruined if she wishes it. The wretch is condemning herself. It's my liberty, my life, which must be saved. But if she perishes, then nothing from Ferrand, nothing from the Countess. Why nothing from her? I can still go there this evening, leaving her ignorant of whatever is going to happen—obtain money from her—or snatch from her, perhaps—the wherewithal to assure my flight. Fleur de Marie, yet another curse. Can I stop! The boat there belongs to the Plunderer, a valve that one raises in advance allows water to penetrate it, which submerges it.

Fleur de Marie

People on the bridge—

School Master (seizing her)

Not a word or you are dead.

(Chourineur come in from the right, Tortillard from the left.)

Le Chourineur

Well, kid?

Tortillard

What?

Le Chourineur

Have you seen something?

Tortillard

I've seen the wedding party and the moon.

Le Chourineur

And Mr. Germain?

Tortillard

He's searching down there—by the edge of the small woods.

Le Chourineur

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Still, it's here they have their rendezvous. I indeed heard them yesterday from the trench that I was shut in.

School Master (low)

It's Le Chourineur. (holding Fleur de Marie, who is struggling) Don't give yourself so much trouble. I am going to call him.

Fleur de Marie

You?

School Master

Hey there! Chourineur—over this way.

Le Chourineur (looking from the bridge)

The School Master.

School Master

Come on over here!

Le Chourineur

I am coming down.

Tortillard (stopping him)

Alone?

Le Chourineur

You don't want me to wait for the others? Try to find Germain and tell him we've done our business.

(Chourineur disappears for a moment to the left and Tortillard to the right.)

School Master (aside)

Yes, that's it. In that way I will rid myself of him, too. Two birds with one stone. (to Fleur de Marie) Well, you see, I surrender myself to your wishes. I've just called a friend.

Fleur de Marie (to herself)

I don't understand a thing.

School Master

You have no confidence?

Fleur de Marie

No.

Le Chourineur (coming onto the barge)

Not even in me, Fleur de Marie?

Fleur de Marie (seeking refuge with him)

In you, yes!

Le Chourineur (to School Master)

Now, decamp!

School Master

Decamp! And what for? Aren't you a prisoner like us? Didn't you escape like us?

Le Chourineur

Left through the front gate, do you hear? Ah, you thought I'd become a brigand? When the patrol arrested me in the street for breaking a window, it was the window to my room, and I chose my moment to be put with you and to protect Mr. Germain, who you would have killed but for me. But as it is lawful to break one's own window, provided you repair it, when I told my affair, my motives, and they learned what had happened, they cocked a snoot at me and put me out the door—which I wanted, because I knew where to find you—from my trench yesterday, I heard you with Ferrand.

School Master

Well! Here's the thing. Fleur de Marie, for reasons she's just told me, is no longer pleased with me. On the other hand, an excursion to a foreign land is necessary. You understand that she embarrasses us—we are returning her—her freedom—you can take her.

Fleur de Marie

Are you speaking the truth?

School Master

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This very moment.

Le Chourineur

Fleur de Marie, where do you want to go?

Fleur de Marie

To the Chateau of Madame D'Harville.

Le Chourineur

Come. School Master, there's still some good in you.

Fleur de Marie

Ah! Let's go! Let's go.

(Fleur de Marie and Chourineur get onto the barge.)

School Master (low)

Not yet.

Le Chourineur (stopping)

What are you doing there?

School Master

Didn't you hear it?

Le Chourineur

It's a signal.

School Master

You are very clever to figure that out.

Le Chourineur

Who is the signal for?

School Master

For the friends with whom I must leave.

Le Chourineur (coming forward)

That's true. They are in the neighborhood—and you are setting a trap for me.

School Master

A trap—me? Did I know you were coming? Did I know you would be going that way?

(The School Master goes on to the boat which he prepares.)

Le Chourineur

We won't go by the road, on which without a doubt they are waiting for this unfortunate child.

School Master

Go by whichever way you wish.

Le Chourineur (seizing him)

Get out of there.

School Master (struggling)

Why?

Le Chourineur

I want this boat.

School Master

It's not mine.

Le Chourineur

I know some one as good as you to give it to. (to Fleur de Marie) Get in, my child. I know about this.

School Master (wanting to retake the boat)

We need this boat to flee.

Le Chourineur (in the boat with Fleur de Marie)

So do we.

School Master (trying to keep the boat)

It's our last way to safety.

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Le Chourineur

Watch the boat hook.

School Master (giving a new signal)

Help me, my friends!

Le Chourineur

I was sure of it. (pushing the boat off) Now we are saved.

School Master

They are lost.

Fleur de Marie

My God, I thank you for having sent me a savior.

School Master

Let's go fast to the L'île des Ravageurs, first. And at ten, to the Countess Sarah. (disappears)

Fleur de Marie (on her knees in the boat while Chourineur rows)

Why, look—(rising) Water in the boat.

Le Chourineur (still rowing)

It's nothing, don't worry.

Fleur de Marie

It's rising, it's rising.

Le Chourineur (casting away the oars)

Sonofabitch! Treachery!

(Chourineur takes off his vest.)

Fleur de Marie

Don't abandon me!

Le Chourineur

I think so, indeed.

(The boat bumps into the pier of the bridge and collapses.)

Fleur de Marie

Help! Help! (faints)

(Chourineur grabs a ring on the bridge with his hand, and with the other supports Fleur de Marie, who has passed out.)

(Germain and Tortillard arrive on the bridge.)

Germain

A boat which has capsized. Help! To the house down there—help!

Tortillard (crossing the bridge, running)

Oh! Oh! This way.

Le Chourineur (to Fleur de Marie)

Hold on tight. I won't release you.

Germain

Courage! Hold on tight! Ropes! Ropes!

Le Chourineur

Find a boat. The little one is ill—and I am not well either.

Peasants (who have run in)

There's no boat around here.

Germain (jumping on to the bridge)

Oh, I don't have the courage to look at them like this.

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Peasants (trying to hold him back)
What are you doing?
(Germain jumps from the bridge into the river.)

Le Chourineur
He intends for all three of us to die.
Peasants There's a boat! There's a boat!
(A boat steered by a peasant pulls away from those moored on the shore at the right.)

Peasants Hurry. Once more, courage! Quick! Quick! They are coming, they are coming! (a peasant takes Fleur de Marie from Chourineur's arms) She's saved! Bravo! Bravo! Hurray!

Le Chourineur
First of all, take care of the little girl.
Peasants And you too, Chourineur.

Le Chourineur
Have no fear. I know the element. I live in it every day.
(The boat moves away from the bridge and Chourineur lets himself fall into the water. The peasant removes his hat and one recognizes Ferrand.)

Ferrand
This time she won't escape me!
CURTAIN

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ACT V

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SCENE IX

The stage represents the interior of La Martial's cottage on the L'île des Ravageurs. Nets and fishing instruments. To the right, a door leading to an entry room. At the back, a large window through which one perceives the shore.

AT RISE, the School Master, Benoit, Barbillon and two other escaped prisoners, clothes in disorder and covered with dust, are grouped on the ground around a pitiful table, in the posture of discouraged men.

Benoit

Here we are, really in luxury now! You couldn't wait until Ferrand came and write to him?

School Master

Wasn't the most pressing thing to find a way to get rid of that little spy? So much the worse for Chourineur if he finds himself with her.

Benoit

He swims like a fish. Where is Francois?

School Master

He's remaining on watch at the head of the island. Heavens! Here he is.

(Enter Francois.)

Benoit (to Francois)

What's the matter?

Francois

A boat is landing on the isle.

Benoit

Police?

Francois

No. There's a man in it, rowing, and at the prow, something in white.

Barbillon (at the window in the back)

They are landing.

Benoit (also at the window)

The white thing is an unconscious woman. He's carrying her this way.

School Master (at the door)

It's Ferrand, my friends. (to the wings) La Martial, receive her, and send him this way. (closes the door) Don't show yourselves. When he comes in, listen to what he says to La Martial.

Benoit (listening)

He told La Martial to light the fire and make the young girl come to.

School Master (looking through the key hole)

It's Fleur de Marie! (aside) In Ferrand's hands. Defeated, always defeated by him. If Satan offers me revenge, I'll take it, free and clear.

Benoit

Watch yourselves. Here he is.

(They retreat into the back and Ferrand enters without seeing them.)

Ferrand (thinking himself alone)

Once again fate favored me. I shall not flee alone; she will accompany me.

School Master

And there I was afraid I'd made you wait down at the Bridge of Asnieres.

Ferrand (surprised)

You here?

(The School Master points to the others, who come forward.)

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Ferrand

A trap?

School Master

Your discretion this morning rendered us a great service. It's necessary that your generosity complete a work so well begun.

Ferrand

What do you mean by that?

School Master

We are obliged to leave and we have nothing with which to pay the travel expenses.

Ferrand

The position is embarrassing.

School Master

Less so, now that you are here.

Ferrand

I prefer to have matters stated clearly.

School Master

Here's something that will leave nothing to be desired. You are going to give one of us a paper which will open big and small doors in the Rue du Temple. You will give him entry to clerks and secretaries, etc., and when he returns here, with a satisfying result, you will be able to go, like each of us into a country where eyes are less observant and prison doors less perfect.

Ferrand

And, if I refuse?

School Master (showing a stylus)

It's poisoned.

Benoit

And the river—

Ferrand

Now that's plain and I respond in a like manner, no less precise. I will give the paper that you dictate. I will give the keys, etc. Your envoy will visit all with care, and at his return I won't be surprised, but you will be really disappointed by the meager booty for which you will have risked his neck and yours.

School Master The treasure is disposed of, then?

Ferrand

Bad joke. Hasn't everything been seized at my home?

Benoit

We must have money, do you hear? More honest men than you have passed away for the same reason. So, money, lots of money. How? I laugh at that. Manage it, and quickly, but I intend to have it.

Ferrand

I am going to tell you also what I want. You are going to leave—even the woman that is here—and you are going to leave now, right away, on this boat with Fleur de Marie.

School Master

She has my secrets.

Ferrand

Don't worry, she won't betray them. How many boats are there here?

School Master

Ours, one down there at the point of the island, and the one you brought.

Ferrand

And the other end—the other side?

School Master

Not one.

Ferrand

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As you get off your boat, you will sink your boat so no one can come here.

Benoit (ready to explode)

Ah, indeed!

School Master

Hear him out.

Ferrand

And, from this moment, here in France anyway, I will have the right to kill whichever of you who, by a gesture, by saying a word, indicates he knows me.

School Master

The devil! The conditions are hard.

Ferrand

Because the prize is magnificent.

School Master

What is it?

Ferrand

A fortune.

All A fortune!

Benoit

If you hold to what you promise, I swear to you, in the name of all of us—and we'll take these oaths—I swear all that you wish. Now speak.

Ferrand (pointing to School Master)

It's for him to speak.

Benoit

What's this?

Ferrand (to the School Master)

Isn't it true that tonight the Prince of Gerolstein is marrying the Marquise D'Harville.

School Master

Yes.

Ferrand

And aren't they supposed to leave soon after the ceremony?

School Master

That's also true.

Ferrand

Isn't their route through the Forest of Garenne which surrounds the Chateau?

School Master

Perfectly correct.

Ferrand

How many determined men are needed to stop the carriage despite the postillions and the servants and to seize the Prince's strong-box containing three hundred thousand francs and the Marquise's diamonds which are worth doubt that?

School Master

Six men.

Ferrand

Are you counting?

School Master

He's right. He was the Marquise D'Harville's confidential business adviser. He must have returned them to her. He is our friend, our savior. I believe him, we must believe him.

All Yes! Yes!

Ferrand

How slow you are to understand!

Benoit (to Ferrand)

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Through the Forest of Garenne? You are not mistaken?

Ferrand

At five hundred paces from the Chateau, a million.

School Master

It is done.

Benoit

By dawn, all of us—rich!

School Master

Follow me, all of you. Come, come.

Ferrand (pointing to the window)

No, that way. (to Barbillon) You take La Martial.

(All but Ferrand leave through the window. Almost as soon as they're gone, La Martial is seen leaving with Barbillon.)

Ferrand (alone)

Leave, you who thought to victimize me and are all my tools. Virtue, weakness, vice, I've known how to make them useful to me, like those threats which growled around me since yesterday, I've known how to play them. My plan of flight with the pluckings from my dupes was a bit hasty, that's all. My two passions, my double life, my treasure, and Fleur de Marie—rare treasure—my strong-box buried where no human can find it. Fleur de Marie, Fleur de Marie will follow me. If necessary, my promises, my prayers, will decide her. I love her so much, I have so much gold. (going to the window) Ah, they went on board. If they fail to keep their promises. No, the boat has disappeared. I am alone. No one can come. (looking through the door which remained open) Fleur de Marie, still fainted. No, she made a gesture. She's getting up, she's coming. Now dreams! Now appeals in all the voices of a heart too long confined, hours of expansion, of liberty, you are finally here.

Fleur de Marie (running in, distracted)

Save me! Save me!

Ferrand (receiving her in his arms)

There is no danger.

Fleur de Marie (retreating with terror)

You! Great God!

Ferrand

You cringe from me, who snatched you from certain death?

Fleur de Marie

Well, be generous now, take me to the persons who sheltered me.

Ferrand

Don't think about them any more.

Fleur de Marie

Why, without them, what will become of me?

Ferrand

If you like, your fate will be as brilliant and as happy as it has been wretched up to now.

Fleur de Marie

I don't understand you.

Ferrand

Where you want to go, your position would be subordinate and precarious. With me, you will reign. We two, we will leave France.

Fleur de Marie

Me! Flee with you?

Ferrand

You are afraid I will condemn you to a sad and monotonous life such as I led in my miserable dwelling? Don't worry! I've lived in constraint long enough—with precautions and sordid avarice. Like anyone else, more than anyone else, I love luxury, pleasure, parties and now I have the wherewithal to satisfy this luxury—which you

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will share.

Fleur de Marie

Me! Me!

Ferrand

Yes, you. Oh! You don't know me. You've seen me careful and austere, overwhelmed, under the weight of business. But under my feigned humility, you thought I was old, sad and stout! No! No! I am young still in my energy and in my audacity.

Fleur de Marie

Oh, I'm afraid.

Ferrand

What must I do to assure you? Must I confess my weakness? Well, yes, I love you like a fool. After your departure from my home, you don't know what I suffered. Yes, suffered. Interests, duties, money, I forgot everything. I was unable to think of anything but you. I only wanted you. I found you. I saved you. And now they will kill me, rather than snatch you from my life. We will never part.

Fleur de Marie

You will never force me to follow you—never.

Ferrand

Why, you are forgetting that you are in my power?

Marie (wanting to flee)

Ah!

Ferrand (retaining her)

No, reassure yourself—I won't abuse that power. But, at least, know my preference to be at your feet, humble, submissive, imploring. You, be quiet, let me talk! Just listen to my prayers, just listen to the complaints of this unknown pitiless passion, this passion which tames when it conquers all other passions. Don't you feel even in my voice the tears which have choked me so many nights? Why, look at me, is there no tear of my sorrows in my features? I would like to have suffered more still, so that you could better read my sorrow in my face. Follow me, my will will submit to yours. I will no longer be the same; near you I will feel pity, near you I will be humane, charitable, I will do good works. What must I say? What must I do to soften you? Listen, you don't say anything. I have gold, I have lots of it. Do you want it? I will give it to you. We will share. Is that enough? Well, I will marry you. Yes, my fortune, my name, everything is yours.

Fleur de Marie

You! You charged with crimes!

Ferrand

Crimes?

Fleur de Marie

Three months ago in the Cite.

Ferrand

Who told you?

Fleur de Marie

Yesterday I heard your accomplices.

Ferrand

Fleur de Marie, you are wrong to tell me this.

Fleur de Marie

No, this way you won't doubt my hate. I won't always be here, far from help.

Ferrand

You are wrong again to tell me that. You are wrong.

Fleur de Marie

What do you care? Kill me! God be blessed! My life has been very bitter.

Ferrand

I can kill you. I am alone here with you.

Fleur de Marie

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Help!

Ferrand

Hear me! You can still do it.

Fleur de Marie

Murderer. Get away!

Ferrand

Have pity on yourself.

Fleur de Marie

Demon of evil, get away!

Ferrand (exploding)

You are lost.

Fleur de Marie

Death then. Death at last.

Ferrand

Not yet.

Fleur de Marie

Help! My God!

Ferrand

God is deaf.

(The window breaks and Germain rushes into the room as Chourineur rushes through the door. They are in shirt and pants and appear to have been soaked in water.)

Le Chourineur

No! God isn't deaf.

Ferrand (seizing a pistol from the table and firing it at Chourineur)

Invoke him for you, then.

Germain

Wounded?

(Fleur de Marie hides near Germain, who takes a step towards Chourineur.)

Germain

No, no! (holding Ferrand, to Fleur de Marie) Flee!

Fleur de Marie

But, you—

(Germain pushes her.)

Le Chourineur

The boat, quick!

(Germain drags Fleur de Marie out.)

Ferrand

Your blood is pouring out. Your strength is diminishing.

Le Chourineur

Not yet.

(Germain and Fleur de Marie can be seen rowing away at the back.)

Ferrand (with a last effort)

Curse on you!

Le Chourineur (falling exhausted)

It was in time.

Ferrand

SCENE IX

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A boat, a boat.

Le Chourineur

At the other end of the island. Go look for it.

Ferrand

Wretch, you won't see their joy.

Le Chourineur

You can no longer reach them.

Ferrand

He's taking her to Madame D'Harville's?

Le Chourineur

And to the Prince.

Ferrand (seizing him and tying his hands)

Well, I intend for you to die with rage in your heart.

Le Chourineur

Do with me what you will.

Ferrand

In four hours, your Prince and Madame D'Harville will be attacked in the woods by the comrades from prison yesterday.

Le Chourineur

What are you saying, brigand?

(Ferrand goes for a moment into the side room, then returns.)

Ferrand

In four hours, Fleur de Marie will be part of my booty. And you, you are going to die!

(Flames can be seen in the next room.)

Le Chourineur

Fire!

Ferrand

To spare you the sorrow of seeing what is going to happen to those you love.

Le Chourineur

Wretch!

(The flames spread. Ferrand is leaving by the window at the back.)

Le Chourineur

My God! I still want to live!

Ferrand

And, as for me, I intend you to die. (jumps out window)

CURTAIN

THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS

SCENE X

At Sarah's residence. Door at the back. Two others, right and left. Torches light the stage.

Sarah

In a few minutes that man is going to come, that man who holds my present, my future, in his hands. Let him make haste then. I have no more than an hour, perhaps, to overturn this odious marriage which is to be accomplished tonight, and which will cast me forever into nothingness. (she sings)

Impatience doubles the duration of time. (to a servant who enters) Did they return from the Prince's residence?

Servant

Yes, madame. His Highness had not yet returned.

Sarah

Did they leave my letter with the order to give it to him the very moment of his return?

Servant

Yes, Madame. (starts to leave)

Sarah (to herself)

Ah, if he believes that his daughter has returned, perhaps—could he hesitate to recognize her? To give me my rights? Let an intelligent man go wait for the Prince and let him not leave the residence without having seen him, without bringing him here.

Servant

It will be done, Madame.

Sarah

The little door giving on the street is open?

Servant

It has been for more than an hour.

Sarah

And the door to the room giving on the garden? (pointing to the right)

Servant

It's open also.

Sarah

That's fine. Don't let anyone in without my order. If the Prince comes, you will bring him.

(Exit servant.)

Sarah

If Rudolph isn't yet here when everything is settled with this man, I am going to find him myself. If necessary, I'll follow him. I'll rush into the midst of this marriage and I'll add to my joy the sight of my rival's despair. (she listens) Someone entered. At last. It's destiny and power which are coming to me. Never a more violent emotion. I cannot move.

School Master (opening the door to the right)

Can one enter?

Sarah

Yes, entrance and exit are equally free and no one will come to interrupt us.

School Master (aside)

That's good to know.

Sarah

And this young girl?

School Master

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Everything succeeded yesterday.

Sarah

When will you bring her to me?

School Master

Let's reach an agreement today and I will bring her to you tomorrow. (aside) If the other one really will give her up.

Sarah

The young girl mustn't be in the confidence of the role she will have to play. I reserve to myself instructing her in the circumstances to which she must impart belief. But, so that all will be in accord with this fable, I need to know all the details of her childhood that she herself might know.

School Master

That won't take long. All she knows is that she was abandoned.

Sarah

For how long?

School Master

Ten years.

Sarah

How old might she have been then?

School Master

Six years old.

Sarah

Why—don't you know more about it?

School Master

Perhaps.

Sarah

Do you know to whom she belonged?

School Master

They didn't tell me.

Sarah

They didn't tell you! But they abandoned her to you then?

School Master

I don't say no.

Sarah

Who?

School Master

Oh, as to that—that costs dear.

Sarah

Speak and you will have gold.

School Master

Well! One night, a woman brought us a little girl. They wanted to be rid of her and make her pass for dead.

Sarah

The name of this woman?

School Master

I didn't learn it until much later. Her name was Madame Seraphine.

Sarah

Madame Seraphine! What did she do?

School Master

She was in the service of Jacques Ferrand.

Sarah

Jacques Ferrand, you say? Jacques Ferrand of the Rue du Temple?

School Master

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Himself.

Sarah

A little blonde girl?

School Master

Blonde.

Sarah

With blue eyes?

School Master

Like cornflowers.

Sarah

And you carried her off from the Chateau yesterday?

School Master

You haven't paid us for that.

Sarah (falling to her knees)

Oh, my God, my God! She's my daughter. Your designs are impenetrable. Such good fortune!

School Master (looking around)

How many riches are here.

(Noise of a carriage is heard in the courtyard.)

Sarah (rising)

A carriage! It's him! (rushes to window)

School Master (aside)

And us pass this by without anything? Oh, no.

Sarah

Here! At such a moment, it's God who sends him. (to School Master) And you recall the features of the child?

School Master

I recall them.

Sarah

If I were to show you a portrait, would you recognize her?

School Master

Yes.

Sarah

Come.

School Master

Where?

Sarah (pointing to the right)

There, among the jewels.

(Sarah goes toward the chimney to ring.)

School Master (aside)

Jewels.

Sarah (preceding him into the room)

Come, come!

(Sarah and the School Master go out. Rudolph comes in, brought by a servant from the door at the back.)

Rudolph (alone)

No one! Yet her letter was so pressing that I still had the weakness to come. But I'm on guard against ruses and lies. (noise of a bolt at the door to the right) They slid a bolt into that door. That's strange. But today is the last day that the obsession of this woman can reach me. In a few hours, I'll be leaving with Clemence, far from this city where ten years ago, a crime ravished me of my daughter, where two days ago, wretches reduced to despair and

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suicide the poor child I had snatched from them. I would still doubt it, but Fleur de Marie's clothes were found on the banks of the river. Ah, I bring misfortune to children that I love. At least I am sure of the fate of all those I've known and loved. (screams are heard from the room to the right) What's happening in there? I heard a scream. (goes to the door and tries to open it) Open! Open! (goes to the door at the back) Some one!
(Sarah comes out of the room and stops the Prince.)

Sarah

Stop! Don't call! Don't call!

Rudolph (returning to her)

You, Madame? Injured, bloody?

Sarah

It's nothing. A wretch who wanted to steal from me. It's only a scratch.

Rudolph

A doctor!

Sarah

No one! It's nothing, I tell you. It's you, it's you alone, to whom I must speak.

Rudolph

Explain yourself. Despite this wound, the joy on your face—

Sarah (with exaltation)

Yes, my joy! My joy! Rudolph, Rudolph, our daughter!

Rudolph (astonished)

Our daughter?

Sarah

She exists, she exists!

Rudolph

What are you saying? No! No! It's impossible. You are deceiving me. It's a trick. It's an ignoble lie.

Sarah

Rudolph, hear me.

Rudolph

No, I know your ambition. I know what you are capable of.

Sarah

Well, yes, yes. I intended to abuse you, I wanted to find a young girl that I would have presented to you in place of our daughter.

Rudolph

Enough! Oh! Enough, Madame.

Sarah

After that admission, you won't believe me, perhaps? Oh, listen to me. I tell you that all this is fate—providential. Some months ago, you took a young girl out of misery and brought her to the country.

Rudolph

To the home of Madame D'Harville, yes.

Sarah

I just learned only now that you were her protector, that she was in the home of Madame D'Harville; but all that favored my plans—

Rudolph

And so what, Madame?

Sarah

I came to an agreement with people who were to have kidnapped her. I had her kidnapped yesterday. She is in their hands.

Rudolph (sadly)

She isn't any longer.

Sarah (with astonishment mixed with fear)

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She isn't any longer!

Rudolph

She gave in to despair, to terror. She killed herself.

Sarah

My child! My daughter!

Rudolph

What are you saying?

Sarah

Dead! My daughter! Dead!

Rudolph

Fleur de Marie! Your daughter? Oh, that can't be. Sarah, come to yourself. Calm down. Often there are appearances which deceive.

Sarah

Ah, this last blow overwhelms me. Read, read this declaration.

(Rudolph seizes it hurriedly.)

Sarah

I wrote it under the dictation of that man when he struck me.

Rudolph (rejecting the paper)

No—I don't believe it. I don't want to believe it. My God, you wouldn't do that!

Sarah (presenting him a portrait)

And this portrait?

(Rudolph seizes the portrait, looks at it, and kisses it.)

Rudolph

Marie! Marie! It's you. (falling into a chair) I've seen you. I've had you near me, and nothing told me that you were my daughter.

Sarah

Ah, all my blood is freezing. I will die without having seen her—and forsaken by her father.

Rudolph (rising)

Oh! It's not the death of your child that you are weeping for, it's the loss of rank that you have pursued with an inflexible obstinacy. Well, these infamous regrets are your punishment.

Sarah

Ah, yes, the last I believe.

Rudolph

But, you must know the tortures of your child. Yes, Countess, while in the midst of your opulence, you dreamt of a crown, while your daughter, small as she was and covered with rags, was going to beg in the streets, suffering from cold and hunger, during wintry nights she sheltered on a little straw in a garret.

Sarah

What is it I feel? My God!

Rudolph

And if a complaint escaped her lips, the insults of a shrew, the blows of a barbarian. Oh, your heart is hardened, your egoism pitiless. Why you ought to have wept to see her thus.

Sarah (beginning to faint)

That wound, it's death.

Rudolph

Oh, that's not all. You remember the evening when you followed me into the Cite? In that horrible quarter you heard of men who frightened you. Well, those bandits, Countess, those bandits were on a first name basis with your daughter.

Sarah

Ah, shut up, Rudolph.

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Rudolph

Curse on you, for it's your abandonment that caused all these horrors. Curse on you, for after withdrawing my daughter from that degradation, I had given her asylum and you had her snatched from me.

Sarah

Ah, in the name of heaven, shut up!

Rudolph

This kidnapping caused her death. Curse on you! Curse on you!

(A noise is heard at the back. A servant appears.)

Sarah

Wretch! Who called you?

Servant

Pardon, Madame. But there's a young man who absolutely insists on speaking to His Highness. As I had no orders, I refused to let him enter. He says his name is Germain and he brought this letter.

Rudolph

Give it to me! (servant leaves) What's happened? Who is this letter from? From Clemence! Despite myself, I am afraid.

(Rudolph opens the letter and hardly has he read a few words when he utters a cry of joy.)

Rudolph

Ah! She exists!

Sarah

Our daughter?

Rudolph (continuing to read)

She's there.

Sarah

Our daughter?

Rudolph

I am going to see her.

Sarah (grasping his arm)

Our daughter?

Rudolph

Leave me alone.

Sarah

How could I leave you alone? (solemnly) But, don't you see that something extraordinary is happening in me? That I am becoming—that I am shivering—Listen to me. I am gathering all my strength, all my energy, to resist this shock. Rudolph, let me see my daughter!

Rudolph

You!

Sarah

Oh, I know that I don't deserve it. But, I swear to you, I am experiencing a bitter repentance—deep and terrible—a new light is enlightening me. Ambition, pride is giving way; maternity is revealing itself.

Rudolph

No. For her happiness, she must never know.

Sarah

Well—she will never know.

Rudolph

What do you mean?

Sarah

Let me see her, see her one time—and for a long while—and, Rudolph, I swear an oath, I will not tell her I am her mother.

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Rudolph (who hesitates at first)

Bring the young girl who is below in the carriage.

Sarah (falling on her knees)

I thank you, on my knees.

Rudolph (raising her and leading her to the sofa)

Stand up, Madame, and think of the oath you've just made.

Sarah

I will keep it, and I won't tell her how I am suffering as I look at her. But you, Rudolph, won't you lift your curse?

Rudolph

Perhaps.

Sarah

Hurry, soon you won't be able to—in front of her it would reveal everything.

Rudolph

Ah, since it returns my daughter to me, heaven is more clement than men.

Sarah

Silence! She's here.

Rudolph (watching her)

Ah, I have trouble containing the beating of my heart.

(Fleur de Marie enters and goes straight to the Prince.)

Fleur de Marie

Milord, I see you again. (he contemplates her wordlessly) I wanted to see you so much. Forgive me for coming here.

Sarah

We were just talking of you, Marie.

(Fleur de Marie looks at Sarah with astonishment and embarrassment.)

Rudolph

You still seem very weak.

Fleur de Marie

Why, you yourself, milord, your eyes are wet. You've never before looked at me this way. (noticing signs between Sarah and Rudolph) What's happening?

Sarah

It's that, during your absence, Marie, many things have happened.

(Fleur de Marie looks from Sarah to the Prince and back)

Sarah

You don't know me. You can approach me without fear.

(The Prince gives Fleur de Marie a sign to approach.)

Sarah

They've learned that all your sorrows came from a woman who was very sinful.

Rudolph

Who was mistaken, also, without a doubt.

Sarah (low to Prince)

Ah, thanks. (to Fleur de Marie) But you are well avenged, Marie, and if all your wrongs were over, could you forget that this woman was the cause?

Fleur de Marie

I am very happy to forget.

Sarah

You pardon her?

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Fleur de Marie

I pardon her. May God be as indulgent to me as I am to her.

Sarah

Marie, this woman will bless you. Her last prayer will ask of heaven, not of clemency for her, but of happiness for you. And your happiness, you will have it. Yes, Marie, happiness greater than the greatest you could hope for.

Fleur de Marie

What do you mean, Madame?

Rudolph (in a low voice)

Be prudent.

Sarah

Marie, your family has been discovered.

Fleur de Marie

Oh, my God!

Rudolph (in a low voice)

Mercy.

Sarah (in a weak voice)

Oh, leave me alone in my singular joy. (aloud) They know who your father is.

Fleur de Marie

My father!

Sarah

How you will love him, when you know him.

Fleur de Marie

I don't know him and I owe everything to milord.

Sarah

A new life is going to begin for you.

Fleur de Marie

My new life began the day he took pity on me.

Sarah

And you love him?

Fleur de Marie

Because he rescued me, because he did for me what God alone could have done.

Sarah

Love him even more—he is your father.

Fleur de Marie

Him!

Rudolph

Come to my arms.

Sarah (in a weak voice)

For my part, your hand.

(The Prince, as he embraces Fleur de Marie, offers his hand to Sarah, who kisses it.)

Fleur de Marie

My father—you! And my mother?

Sarah

Dead.

Rudolph (turning)

What are you saying? Great God. Those altered features. Help!

Sarah

It's too late. There was doubtless poison in this wound. (seizing Fleur de Marie's hand) Yes, Marie, your mother.

Dead, really wretched, without having embraced you.

(Sarah expires, looking at her daughter.)

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SCENE XI

The Crossroads. A clearing in a forest, where several roads abut. To the right, a hillock under which one notices an opening surrounded by trees.

Tortillard kneels by Chourineur, who he is trying to revive.

Tortillard

Chourineur! Chourineur, answer me, will you? He doesn't hear me. Now here it is more than an hour since he fainted. It must be from his wound and exhaustion. We've come so far and so long since we left the L'île des Ravageurs! (noticing Benoit and Barbillon sliding through the trees) It seems to me something stirred in the leaves. If it was one of them, I would need help. Is there someone there? (Benoit and Barbillon retire) No one. It's the wind which agitated the leaves. What to do in the midst of this forest? It's indeed lucky that yesterday evening, as I coasted the banks of the river, I noticed the first gleam of fire. I arrived in time enough to prevent him from being grilled—poor Chourineur! (Chourineur sighs) I am not mistaken, he's coming to. Chourineur! Chourineur!

Le Chourineur

It's you, Tortillard!

Tortillard

You're feeling better?

Le Chourineur

Yes, the breeze is reviving me.

Tortillard

Your wound?

Le Chourineur

Never mind that! Where are we?

Tortillard

Still in the woods.

Le Chourineur

What? Already day! What time is it?

Tortillard

Hell! There's no clock here.

Le Chourineur

Damnation! It will be too late. The Prince will have fallen into their ambush. Quick, to the Chateau of Madame D'Harville.

Tortillard

But, we haven't been able to find the Chateau.

Le Chourineur

Well, we will meet some guard, some peasant. Come! Come!

Tortillard

But you cannot walk.

Le Chourineur

Come anyway. If I cannot walk, I will drag myself. If I fall, you will leave me there and you will remember there's no one left but you to save them. Come! Come!

(Tortillard and Chourineur leave.)

Benoit

Who were those two? Luckily they didn't see us. (to School Master, who comes forward) Who goes there?

School Master (in a low voice)

That you, Benoit?

Benoit (coming downstage)

Yes. Well, have you seen anything?

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School Master

Through the cross road, I was with Francois, right up to the small gate of the park—everything is calm and silent there. I climbed up a tree to see the Chateau. I saw lights coming and going. No doubt about it, they are going to leave.

Benoit

This delay is beginning to worry me. Ferrand told us that it might take place towards one in the morning, and day has already come.

School Master

Where are the others?

Benoit

All in ambush in the brushwood, the length of the road.

School Master

And Ferrand?

Benoit

He's going from one to the other, more impatient than any of us, since it's agreed to leave him Fleur de Marie for his share.

School Master

Come, let's rejoin our comrades, for Francois, by creeping along the wall of the Park, was able to slip under the gate and will give us the signal as soon as the carriage leaves the court.

Benoit

Let's go then.

School Master

One moment. We must foresee things. In the event the affair is not successful, don't lose sight of Ferrand. We have to talk with him.

Benoit

Why?

School Master

There's got to be some gold here somewhere. I've an idea—(several shots are heard) What's that? Are our boys on the attack or are they attacked? Come! Come!

Ferrand (rushing in, followed closely by the School Master and Benoit)

The attack failed—all that remains is for me to flee and to take my treasure. It's there. (goes to the trunk of a tree, moves some branches, and pulls out a box) Flee, yes. But I know the road the Prince, who stole Fleur de Marie from me, will take. I will follow him from a distance. I will attach myself to his steps like a tiger to his prey. The surveillance with which he surrounds his daughter will fail one day—and I will be avenged for the tortures of this execrable love. Yes, Fleur de Marie, your death alone can assuage a passion which is no longer anything but hate and ruin. (noticing a man crossing the road as he flees) They're coming. Curses!

(The School Master hides behind a tree and watches Ferrand with his eyes. At the moment he goes to get his treasure, the School Master bars his way.)

School Master (advancing slowly towards Ferrand)

I have to speak to you.

Ferrand

What do you want?

School Master (to Benoit, who has remained at the back)

Benoit, watch that way. (to Ferrand) Half of your gold?

Ferrand

I don't have any gold.

School Master

As you entered these woods you had a box in your hand. You hid it. Now we must have our share of it.

Ferrand

Do you think you can intimidate me? You are forgetting they are pursuing us.

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School Master

Saved together or lost together.

Ferrand

So be it!

School Master

All the evil I've done. What's the reward for it? Misery, fear. I've only purchased forgetfulness in an orgy. I don't want that life any more.

Ferrand

Change it if you can.

School Master

I want what you have kept; we were sharing—the power of evil—mine, the brutal energy—yours, trickery, lying, hypocrisy. We must share today the fruit of this infernal alliance.

Ferrand

My answer is: I don't wish it.

School Master

I am obliged to flee without resources. Will you do it?

Ferrand

No.

School Master

The two of us are alone. Will you do it?

Ferrand

No!

School Master

For a long while, you've conceived the crime and I executed it. If, at this time, pushed to the limit, I were to conceive and execute it— Take care, it will be terrible.

Ferrand

Kill me. I'm taking my secret with me.

School Master

I won't kill you, and you yourself will lead me to your treasure. Yet once more, it will be terrible.

Ferrand

Try it!

Benoit (coming forward rapidly)

They're coming! They're approaching!

Ferrand (to School Master)

We must flee. We must hide.

School Master

We'll bide together.

Ferrand

In this cave!

School Master (to Benoit)

You know what I told you. It has to be done.

(All three go down into the opening. Two guards and Tortillard come in.)

Tortillard

This way! This way! I saw them.

Le Chourineur

Carefully surround this clearing. Guard all the exits.

(Profound silence. Suddenly one hears a scream coming from the opening.)

Tortillard

That scream! Chourineur! There! There!

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Le Chourineur

Shut up.

(All hide behind the trees.)

School Master (coming out of the cave, pale)

His scream terrified me.

Benoit

Let's wait till he comes out.

(The guards surround them. Chourineur, who has heard them, points to the weapons pointing at them.)

Le Chourineur

If you say a word, you are dead.

Ferrand (leaving the cave in despair)

Blind! Blind! Where are you? Where are you then? I will avenge myself. No, no, I cannot.

(A movement of terror. On a signal from Chourineur, a complete silence is reestablished.)

Ferrand

Night! Night! Oh, this is frightful! Benoit, oh, I beg you. Don't abandon me. You ought to have pity on me. You are there, answer.

School Master (forced by the threats of a guard)

Yes.

Ferrand

Don't leave me. I am going to tell you where my treasure is. There at the left of the cave, at the foot of the first tree, under those leaves.

(Chourineur follows the directions.)

Le Chourineur

A box.

School Master

Curse!

Ferrand

Betrayed! (feeling himself seized) Arrested!

Shouts

There's the carriage! There's the carriage!

Le Chourineur

Surround these wretches so Fleur de Marie can pass without seeing them.

(All the women leave by the left and reenter with shouts of joy and go before the carriage which enters.

Rudolph is in the front and Fleur de Marie and Madame D'Harville are in the back seat.)

All

Long live Milord! Long live Mr. Rudolph!

Rudolph

Goodbye, my friends! Good luck to all of you, brave people.

Le Chourineur

Saved! Happy, that's all that I wanted. Goodbye, Fleur de Marie. (following the carriage out with his eyes)

Goodbye, Fleur de Marie.

Ferrand (who remains on stage with two guards watching him)

She's leaving! No more gold! Blind! I am vanquished. Oh, my God! My God! My God!

(Two guards approach to seize him.)

CURTAIN

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