

BEL AMI

Screenplay by John Collee

From the novel by Guy de Maupassant

C Fox Searchlight

1. EXT. THE DESERT. DAY

Two figures on horseback come racing towards us over the desert.

Georges is a dashing young French army officer in shirt sleeves and braces. His guide wears bedouin robes which billow in the wind.

They reach a high dune and stop there, panting, to watch the sunset.

Hold on Georges as the sun slowly disappears, the sky flaming pink and gold, merging with

2. INT. PAWN SHOP. DAY

Reflections on a highly-polished wooden counter. Clothes being stacked. A quill pen tallying the account.

PAWNBROKER

Pair of riding boots. Three hats.
Combat jacket, damaged. One dress
uniform in good condition. Two
tropical uniforms.

Georges adds his last precious possessions to the top of the pile. The pawnbroker sees nothing of value here

PAWNBROKER (CONT'D)

One service watch in working order.
Various Campaign medals. One belt.
One sabre

His moist lips move as he tallies up the total.

PAWNBROKER (CONT'D)

Might go as high as.... Forty-five
francs the lot.

Georges thinks this is a joke, then realises its not. He removes the boots from the pile.

PAWBROKER

Thirty-five.

The ring of the pawnbrokers till takes us to...

3. EXT. RAILWAY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING. DAY.

Rain is falling, pouring out of gutters, dripping down the frontage of a tall, featureless office block.

4. INT. RAILWAY ACCOUNTS OFFICE. DAY

The office supervisor breaks off from conversation with a company director, De Marelle, and carries a ledger down the long row of clerks.

They sit on high stools, all of them engaged in identical work: cranking the handles on their calculating machines and copying down the figures.

SUPERVISOR

This is wrong.

The clerk he's addressing looks up. It is Georges

SUPERVISOR (CONT'D)

Two thousand four hundred and thirty. You see. From up here. Less twenty-eight is two francs. Two.

In the background, the visiting director, M. De Marelle, registers Georges and then leaves

GEORGES

(To the supervisor)
Sorry sir.

SUPERVISOR

And here. Is that a five or a three?

GEORGE

It's an eight.

The supervisor tears out the whole page.

SUPERVISOR

You're not in the army now, Duroy. There's dozens of young men out there who'd gladly have that seat. Dozens.

Georges bites his lip, and starts laboriously re-copying the figures.

In the rain-drenched courtyard below George's window, the company director, Monsieur de Marelle ushers to his carriage his beautiful, younger wife, Clotilde.

Georges watches them leave from behind the double panes of his window, between which a fly is trapped, unable to get free.

5. INT. GEORGES LODGINGS. DAY.

A mean little room, minimally furnished. On the mirror above the wash-hand basin there's a faded postcard of Algeria.

Georges stands opposite, trying to scrub inky stains from his fingers.

There's a knock on the door. Georges opens it to find his unshaven landlord standing there in trousers and string vest.

GEORGES

You'll have it on Friday.

He tries to close the door. The landlord has his foot in the gap.

LANDLORD

I'll have it now. In advance

Georges takes some change from his pocket, counts it into the landlord's hand.

GEORGES

Fifty, seventy-five. One twenty five. That's all I possess

The landlord walks past Georges, takes the loaf of bread off the table and leaves the room.

LANDLORD

Fifty centimes you owe me.

Georges lets him go, amazed that anyone could be so petty.

6. EXT. PARIS BOULEVARD. NIGHT.

We follow Georges down the street, noticing (though Georges appears not to) how women's heads turn as he passes.

All around, he sees people spending money, laughing, guzzling food and swilling down beer.

7. EXT. CAFE DES ANGLAIS. NIGHT

Georges stops in front of a sophisticated outdoor cafe and pretends to study the prices on the board.

Inside the cafe, a brightly-dressed young woman Rachel, looks away from her obese, elderly partner and catches George's eye.

Georges smiles back, then a waiter shoos him away from the cafe entrance, trying to clear a path for an arriving guest.

WAITER

Come on now. Give people some space.

GEORGES

What? They own the pavement now?

He turns away crossly, and bumps into the new arrival

CHARLES

Steady old chap.

(Then)

Lieutenant?

GEORGES

Captain Forestier?

CHARLES

Georges Duroy! What is it - two, three years?! Coming in?

Georges hesitates, unable to admit he's penniless. The head waiter is smiling obsequiously at Charles, already ushering them inside.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Excellent. Fill me in on the regiment. After you....

8. INT. CAFE DES ANGLAIS. NIGHT.

Charles is already familiar with the menu.

CHARLES

The Dinard oysters, and a glass of the Moet '78

HEAD WAITER

Excellent choice as always. And
Monsieur...?

Georges sees huge steaming plates of food being ferried to the
neighbouring tables: lobster, chicken, leg of lamb.

GEORGES
... just this here.

Pointing to something near the bottom. The head waiter shoots
him a dubious glance and leaves.

CHARLES
(Over this)
So, you working now?

GEORGES
(Vaguely)
..if you'd call it work

CHARLES
You mean you're looking, or...?

GEORGES
Considering some options.
(improvising madly)
The Pelerin needs riding
instructors

Charles seems unimpressed.

GEORGES (CONT'D)
....Three thousand a year.

To Georges this is a fortune. To Charles it's a pittance.

GEORGES (CONT'D)
....Might get to meet an heiress.

CHARLES
Yes, but in what capacity? You're
in Paris, George: start off as
someone's lackey and that's what
you'll stay.

Georges changes the subject:

GEORGES
Anyway. You're looking prosperous.

CHARLES

You mean "soft"?

Laughing, coughing, handing Georges his card.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
Political journalism. It's the next
big thing. Keep the bastards
honest.

He can't stop coughing. As he fumbles for his handkerchief,
Georges looks away and catches another admiring glance from
the woman he noticed earlier.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
(Still coughing)
Touch of pleurisy... 'Scuse me...
Can't seem to shake the damn thing.

The waiter arrives with their food.

WAITER
The oysters. And...
(For Georges)
The ham sandwich.

Its barely a couple of mouthfuls.

CHARLES
You sure that's what you want.

Georges' momentary hesitation speaks volumes. Charles returns
the sandwich.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
Another dozen oysters. Then a steak
for the Lieutenant here. And leave
the bottle.

WAITER
Very good sir.

GEORGES
Really, Charles....

Charles dismisses his protests.

CHARLES
We're having some people to dinner
on Friday night. Here. Better hire
yourself some togs.

He takes something from his pocket and pushes it across the table: a gold sovereign. Georges is embarrassed

GEORGES
I can't accept that.

CHARLES
"Courage in adversity". Please.

9. EXT. PARIS BOULEVARD. NIGHT.

As Georges walks down the boulevard, a bit more spring in his step. The young woman from the restaurant falls in beside him.

RACHEL
Walk me to a cab, soldier.

GEORGES
You lost your escort?

Rachel snorts, latching onto Georges' arm.

RACHEL
"Escort." Sits there two hours with his foot on me fanny, bending me ear about his investments. Then he's off. Give me a young cavalry officer any day.

GEORGE
Was it the boots or the bandy legs?

RACHEL
The posture. Very erect.

Running her hand down his back. Georges smiles, disengaging himself

GEORGE
Well Its ex cavalry now. And I've spent all my severance.

RACHEL
Ah. Pity. So, it's been a while since you were last ..in the saddle.

10. INT. RACHEL'S ROOM. NIGHT

The sound of vigorous sex fills a squalid attic room. The brass bed-head bangs against the wall. The washbowl vibrates in its stand, the noise building to a climax as....

Georges rolls off Rachel, leaving her gasping and slightly stunned by the passionate intensity of the encounter.

GEORGES

You all right?

RACHEL

Sweet Jesus - I'll say. Fellow like you could make an honest woman of me.

She watches as Georges gets up and takes his trousers off the back of the chair. He reaches in the pocket, nervously fingering Charles gold sovereign, reluctant to part with it.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Don't worry about the money. You can pay me when you're rich.

GEORGES

Me? I'll never be rich.

RACHEL

You will. You've got that thing.

GEORGES

What thing?

Rachel smiles enigmatically.

11. INT. HIRE SHOP. DAY.

A sleazy outfitter hands Georges his suit.

OUTFITTER

Two francs fifty. Plus any cleaning. And back first thing Monday.

12. INT. CHARLES' APARTMENT BLOCK. HALLWAY. NIGHT

Georges walks up the last few steps of a grand staircase and knocks at the door.

As he waits he adjusts the unfamiliar suit, tugging at the waistband and the crutch.

A butler answers

BUTLER

Sir?

He's holding out a silver tray for something.

GEORGES

Ah.

He pats his pockets, finds a slightly crumpled invitation and puts it on the tray.

BUTLER

(Patronizing)

Your card sir.

Downstairs, two other guests have entered. Georges half-turns to the sound and catches his own reflection in a full length gilded mirror.

GEORGE

I don't have one.

To his surprise, a handsome, well dressed man looks back at him. Georges straightens his shoulders, turning back to the butler.

GEORGES

but the name is Georges Duroy.

13. INT. CHARLES' APARTMENT. RECEPTION ROOM. NIGHT

BUTLER

(Announces)

Mr Georges Duroy!

Heads turn towards the new arrival. Georges scans the faces, unable to see Charles among them. Then a vision in a blue dress steps forwards to greet him.

MADELEINE

Charles has been delayed. I'm his wife Madeleine.

GEORGES

You're not at all as I imagined

She takes this as a compliment, steering him towards a handsome woman of forty.

MADELEINE

This is Madame Walter, You'll have heard of her husband, the celebrated newspaper owner.

GEORGES

La Vie Francaise. Charles mentioned it

Madeleine moves on, introducing Madame walter's daughter - a shy debutante.

MADELEINE

(Introducing)

...their daughter Suzanne

Suzanne curtsies. Georges' eyes are already moving on to....

MADELEINE (CONT'D)

And my close friend, Madame de Marelle...

He's seen her before, from the office window, on the arm of her husband. Close up she is even more darkly delicious.

MADELEINE (CONT'D)

I've been coveting her ear-rings.

CLOTILDE

My husband bought them.

GEORGE

He has exquisite taste.

He could equally be referring to her or to the jewelry.

MADELEINE

You hear that Phillippe? .

Phillippe De Marelle turns from his conversation. The executive from George's work.

MADELEINE (CONT'D)

Monsieur de Marelle, of the SNCF. Georges Duroy. Charles served with him in Algeria.

De Marelle can't place the face.

DE MARELLE

So what do you think of it?

GEORGES

Of?

DE MARELLE

This blasted metal tower Monsieur
Eiffel is proposing.

GEORGES

Tower? Sorry. I've been out of the
country for a while

De Marelle addresses his question to a lanky aesthete

DE MARELLE

Monsieur Boisrenard?

BOISRENARD

Well obviously it's a tremendous
demonstration of

Conjuring in the air something towering and noble.

BOISRENARD (CONT'D)

....how would one say it?

CLOTILDE

Male insecurity?

Georges is impressed by her cheek. Madame Walter fans herself
vigorously. Clotilde's husband doesn't get the joke.

DE MARELLE

Economic insanity. Two months'
output of steel for something
they'll pull down in a few years
time.

Madeleine goes to welcome Charles, who has just arrived home,
leaving De Marelle to pontificate

DE MARELLE (CONT'D)

And any engineer worth his salt will
tell you its....

14. INT. CHARLES' APARTMENT, DINING ROOM. NIGHT

DE MARELLE

...Rubbish, rubbish!

The guests are seated round the table. Monsieur De Marelle still dominates the conversation but Georges isn't listening, He's looking across the table at the diamond earring, which trembles like a dew-drop, on Clotilde's left ear.

DE MARELLE (CONT'D)

Until we sort out the rebels the place is economically worthless.

Clotilde turns, catches Georges eye, and looks right back at him.

DE MARELLE (CONT'D)

I mean God knows why it's taken us eleven years to bring - what? - a couple of million camel drivers under control...

Its a dig at Charles, who ignores it. Madeleine turns to Georges, wondering if he too is going to take this lying down. She catches him looking at Clotilde

DE MARELLE (CONT'D)

.....but there you have it. The army's obviously incapable.

MADELEINE

You know Mr Duroy served in Algeria.

De Marelle turns to Georges for an argument

DE MARELLE

So what's it like? A bloody hell hole by all accounts?

Georges smiles disarmingly.

GEORGES

Actually, I had the time of my life there. I mean you're absolutely right, the occupation has achieved almost nothing at all. But as for the experience of being there....

To De Marelle this is irrelevant, but the women are fascinated

GEORGES (CONT'D)

You could ride for miles. Arrive with your guide in the evening at some tiny oasis, like a little green

raft in the rolling desert. Stars coming out, horizon to horizon....

DE MARELLE

Yes but does anything work.
Plantations, roads, railway network?

CHARLES

They don't have a railway network,
do they?

DE MARELLE

They'd better have. We paid for it.

GEORGES

There's a new line from Algiers to
Tunis, which keeps getting blown up,
not that anyone seems to miss it.

The women laugh

GEORGES (CONT'D)

Maybe that's the thing - we
shouldn't be trying so hard to
impose our own pattern. Maybe if we
understood them better.

De Marelle opens his mouth to dispute this. Madeleine interrupts.

MADELEINE

(To Georges)

Why don't you write about it?

GEORGES

I'm not a writer.

DE MARELLE

Hah! Show me a famous writer I'll
show you a pompous ass with a good
publicist. Isn't that right, Armand

BOISRENARD

Well obviously there's an element of
....

MADELEINE

(To Georges)

You could run it as a series of
features. I know - "memoirs of a
cavalry officer"

(To Madame Walter)
What do you think, Virginie?

MADAME WALTER
I'd read it.

MADELEINE
Charles?

CHARLES
Actually there's a space on Tuesday,
if that's not too soon.

GEORGES
(Self-effacing)
To be honest I

Madeleine catches his eye with a warning look 'You've done well, don't spoil it.'

GEORGES (CONT'D)
I accept. Thank You.

Clotilde smiles, pleased on his behalf.

15. EXT. PARK NIGHT

Georges sets out on foot across the park, leaving the illuminated row of houses behind him.

GEORGES
"Memoirs of a cavalry officer. By
Georges Duroy." Yeee - Hoo!

As...

16. EXT. PARIS SLUMS. DAWN

A factory whistle goes off outside an anonymous tenement building in the industrial suburbs.

17. INT. GEORGES' LODGINGS. MORNING

In his bare room, with its view of roofs and chimneys Georges sits with a bottle of ink and some paper. He has written the title to his article.

He considers this for a while then changes it.

18. INT. GEORGES' LODGINGS. TIME-LAPSE

Nothing more coming. He sits waiting for inspiration on the chair, then on the bed, then back by the window.

He gets up, paces the room, sits down again and starts writing.

19. INT. RAILWAY ACCOUNTS OFFICE. DAY.

A clock has just chimed ten. Georges strolls in, without his coat and tie. All work stops as he walks down the rows of clerks to his own desk by the window.

SUPERVISOR

Duroy!

He catches up with Duroy who is removing his few possessions from inside his desk.

SUPERVISOR (CONT'D)

What time do you call this?

GEORGES

Time you called in those dozens of others. I'm a journalist now. See you.

The supervisor is speechless, the other clerks open-mouthed. Georges lets his desk-top bang closed, then he leaves.

20. INT. 'LA VIE FRANCAISE'. ENTRANCE LOBBY. DAY

A crowded lobby. Georges comes through the revolving doors into a heady swirl of activity.

RECEPTION CLERK (V.O.)

Next!

At the end of the foyer there's a desk where the reception clerk is seated, despatching the uniformed message-boys who are lined up to one side.

RECEPTION CLERK (CONT'D)

Rue de la Seine. Next!

The reception clerk is doing three things at once: accepting a package, scribbling a message, handing it to the next lad in line.

RECEPTION CLERK (CONT'D)

To Monsieur Clavel - urgent. Next!

Behind and to the side, newspaper staff hurry up and down the wide staircase with their proofs and manuscripts and trays of type.

The place is buzzing. Everywhere Georges looks, people are shouting to each other, conferring, arguing.

RECEPTION CLERK (CONT'D)

(To Georges)

Yes? What do you want?

GEORGES

Georges Duroy. I've come for

RECEPTION CLERK

Wait in the waiting room

Turning to the dispatchers:

RECEPTION CLERK (CONT'D)

Next!

He puts the message in a brass slug and fires it up the pneumatic tube by his desk, like a gunner. Whoomp!

GEORGES

Look here, comrade...

The reception clerk is studiously ignoring him.

Through the open door of the waiting room, Georges can see a long queue of hopefuls waiting resignedly for access to the inner sanctum.

Boisrenard, the giggly aesthete from Charles' dinner party, hurries past.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

Ah! Monsieur Boisrenard!...

He latches onto Boisrenard.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

Enjoyed your last article

BOISRENARD

Oh. Which one was that?

They're already past the receptionist and up the stairs.

GEORGES
Witty. Informative. A treat. Now
remind me, Charles Forestier's
office is...?

BOISRENARD
(looking back)
Well you should really.....

Georges pats him on the back and peels off down a corridor,
looking for Charles Forestier's name on one of the glazed
doors.

21. INT. 'LA VIE FRANCAISE'. UPPER CORRIDOR. DAY.

Georges follows the sound of swordplay to a journalists'
common-room where a couple of bohemians, Norbert de Varennes
and Jacques Rival are fencing round the central table

GEORGES
Charles Forestier?

Jacques, leaps off a chair, takes off his fencing mask, shakes
out his long hair.

NORBERT
Is that the thing he's waiting for?

JACQUES
Follow the gnashing of teeth

NORBERT
With the boss. End of the corridor.
En grade!

We follow Georges to a big door at the end of the corridor.
He knocks and Charles himself opens the door, looking
flustered

CHARLES
Georges....

Behind him sits Walter's secretary in the antechamber to the
great man's office.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
...what happened? We said first
thing.

Stepping into the corridor, leaving the door half-open behind
him.

GEORGES

I know, sorry, it took a while to get the hang of it. Anyway, what do you think?

Charles reads the first couple of sentences, shaking his head

CHARLES

No. This isn't right.

GEORGES

Any particular....?

CHARLES

Too many facts. They want adventure, like you told it. Little oasis. Twinkly stars. This is no good at all.

Charles stuffs the article back into Georges' hands. The secretary is at his shoulder.

SECRETARY

He wants you

CHARLES

(To the secretary)

Yes. Coming.

He looks back to Georges, registers his disappointment

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Look. Go to my house. Mado might help you cobble something together.

WALTER (O.S.)

(Bawls)

Forestier!

Charles backs away leaving Georges still at a loss

CHARLES

I'll try and keep the slot open.
Just have it here by two.

Then he hurries after the secretary across the ante-room and into the newspaper owner's office.

22. INT. CHARLES' APARTMENT, RECEPTION ROOM. DAY

The big room where Charles' party was held now has potted palms on either side of the fireplace and a white cockatoo on a perch.

Georges goes to stroke the bird and it pecks his finger. He curses and drops his manuscript.

He's retrieving the pages from among the bird-droppings when, across the carpet, he sees a woman's naked ankle.

Madeleine has appeared in a white silk kimono. She's obviously just got out of bed but remains the picture of grace and poise. Her expression is coolly amused. Georges straightens.

GEORGES

Madame Forestier. No doubt you're wondering what I'm doing here. Charles said....

MADELEINE

...you needed an editor. May I?

She takes the papers, turning to the sour-faced butler who is hovering nearby.

MADELEINE (CONT'D)

Mr Duroy and I will take tea in the study.

She turns and leads off, the sinuous curves of her body moving under the silk.

23. INT. CHARLES' APARTMENT. STUDY. DAY

A colorful room, lined with books.

Georges sits writing at the desk while Madeleine paces up and down behind him, close enough for the long sleeves of her kimono to brush his chair, as she dictates with impressive fluency...

MADELEINE

By firelight the girls naked skin glowed like polished mahogany. Her eyes, painted back with antimony fell on my own. Still dancing she held me captive in her gaze.

A pause. Georges looks up. Madeleine catches his eye fleetingly in the mirror, then looks away again:

MADELEINE (CONT'D)

The drums beat, the fire blazed.
Through its flames I saw my enemy
Ain El Hajar, laughing at me over a
haunch of lamb, as I sat
cross-legged mesmerized by his
concubine. Was he my friend and
ally, or was I his prisoner? Time
alone would tell. ... Dot dot dot.
There. That must be about fifteen
hundred.

Georges considers their achievement - six pages of neat,
fluent script.

GEORGES

And some of it is even true.

MADELEINE

"In literature the only sin is to be
boring". You know Balzac?

GEORGES

Not personally.

MADELEINE

Of course not. He's dead.

GEORGES

Of course.

MADELEINE

You should go.

She gives him his jacket, he takes it, meets slight
resistance.

MADELEINE (CONT'D)

Clotilde de Marelle is most
displeased with you. You promised
you'd visit while her husband was
away, and he's already been gone two
days. You've behaved disgracefully.

GEORGES

Well, you know, us rough country
types...

She laughs at this, which pleases him.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

To be honest I wasn't sure if my
going round there would be deemed
...appropriate.

MADELEINE

And yet calling on me is.....

GEORGES

...work.

MADELEINE

I see.

Meaning what? Does she want him to kiss her? Georges leans
forwards. She steps back, wrong-footing him.

MADELEINE (CONT'D)

Don't forget this.

She means their article

There's a knock on the door. It's the butler, catching
Georges looking vaguely discomfitted as he announces:

BUTLER

The Count of Vaudrec, Madame.

24. INT. CHARLES' APARTMENT. RECEPTION ROOM. DAY.

Vaudrec, silver haired and patrician, removes his kid gloves
to take Madeleine's hand

MADELEINE

Count Vaudrec, this is Georges Duroy
who works for Charles.

(Of Georges)

He has a deadline, if you'll excuse
him.

Georges bows, dismissed.

MADELEINE (CONT'D)

(To the butler)

Oh and Jules. That will be all for
this afternoon.

BUTLER

(To Georges)

This way sir.

At the door, Georges turns to catch a final glance of Madeleine with Vaudrec, then the doors close, excluding him.

25. INT. WALTER'S OFFICE DAY. DAY

Walter sits smoking a cigar, with his back to the great arched window. There's a knock at the door. Charles enters with Georges, and the rewritten article.

CHARLES
Sir, you remember we discussed
Algeria...

WALTER
(Cutting him off)
Later. Have you seen this.

CHARLES
No, what is it?

Walter shoves a page of figures at him

WALTER
Eight Thousand and Five. What does
that tell you.

CHARLES
We're holding steady.

WALTER
Its called stagnating Charles. Move
forwards or die - first law of
Business.
(Turning to Georges)
Who's this?

Taking the article from Charles hands, scanning it briefly.

CHARLES
Duroy, sir. Its been rather quickly
re-written but I think...

WALTER
What is it? Feature. Short story?

CHARLES
Its a travelogue. Well more of an
impression.

WALTER

Too foreign. Put him with Saint Potin. That's the kind of thing we need more of.

CHARLES
Yes but this morning you said....

WALTER
(Shouts)
Boisrenard! In my office!

26. EXT. 'LA VIE FRANCAISE', UPPER CORRIDOR. DAY

Georges follows Charles out of Walter's office and back down the corridor.

CHARLES
He's like that all the time its a nightmare.

Boisrenard hurries past them, like the white rabbit.

GEORGE
So who's St Potin.

CHARLES
Our tame policeman. He tips us off on the crime stuff.

GEORGES
And what kind of crime is it, usually?

27. EXT. TERRACED HOUSE. AFTERNOON

A small, muscular policeman, St Potin, is bashing with his fist on someone's front door.

SAINT-POTIN
Open up.

MAID (O.S.)
There's no-one at home.

SAINT-POTIN
This is the police, so if I was you I'd...

The door opens. Saint-potin pushes past the maid, with a nod over his shoulder to Georges.

SAINT-POTIN (CONT'D)
...and he's a witness

Georges follows Saint Potin inside, flashing a brief smile of apology to the maid as he follows Saint Potin up the stairs.

28. INT. TERRACED HOUSE, FIRST FLOOR DAY.

On the first floor, Saint-Potin tries a couple of doors, finds a locked one and kicks it in. A woman screams.

SAINT-POTIN (O.S.)
Are you the Justice de la
Rochefauld?

JUDGE (O.S.)
What in hell's name! Get out of
here.

Georges squeezes into the cramped bedroom to find a portly older man in bed with a young woman.

SAINT-POTIN
(To the judge)
Answer the question. Are you or
aren't you?

JUDGE
(Outraged)
I'll give you fellows three seconds.
One, two, three.

In response, Saint-Potin whips off the bed-clothes. The judge yells and covers his genitals. The naked woman screams again, then starts to weep.

SAINT-POTIN
Look, behave. Are you his wife?

WOMAN
No! No! Why are you doing this?
You know perfectly well I'm not.

SAINT-POTIN
And he's la Rochefauld? Yes or no.

The woman is in tears. Georges feels ashamed to be part of this. He hands the woman her dress.

SAINT-POTIN (CONT'D)
(Exasperated)

Well is he or isn't he?

WOMAN

Yes - he's la Rochefauld!
Of course he is.

SAINT-POTIN

At bloody last. Thank you.

29. INT. 'LA VIE FRANCAISE'. JOURNALISTS' ROOM. NIGHT

The gas flares which illuminate the building's frontage are visible through the windows.

Norbert is writing a satirical verse, smiling at his own inventiveness.

Georges sits at the big communal table failing to make a start on his own short report.

Saint-Potin comes in with some envelopes, which he distributes

SAINT-POTIN

Norbert. Jacques. Hasn't he done it yet?

(TO Georges)

"Judge caught with pants off." Its not a bleeding novel.

Georges is suffering a crisis of conscience.

SAINT-POTIN (CONT'D)

He's a hanging judge if that makes it easier. And she's already married. Here.

He whacks Georges with an envelope. A sovereign rolls out on the table.

SAINT-POTIN (CONT'D)

Two weeks advance. That should get you started.

30. INT. CLOTILDE'S HOUSE, DRAWING ROOM. DAY

An oasis of peace and civilization. In the next room, a young girl is playing Chopin on the piano.

Georges sits opposite Clotilde de Marelle - Madeleine's dark and sensuous friend. They are sitting in stiff high-backed

chairs and separated by a tea-table, with its cargo of delicate china.

CLOTILDE

So what did he look like with no clothes on. Was he ridiculous?

GEORGES

It was embarrassing more than funny. I felt sorry for them

CLOTILDE

Did you feel sorry for the Arabs when you shot them.

GEORGES

You'd be surprised. Most days in the army you don't get to shoot anyone at all.

CLOTILDE

So what do you do, most days.

GEORGES

Try not to die of boredom. Wrack your brains for some excuse to leave the barracks.

CLOTILDE

A bit like being a wife?

GEORGES

I don't know. I've never been one.

She laughs, bending forwards to pour. He's noticing the way that her breasts strain against the cotton of her blouse, the creak and rustle of the fabric of her dress.

CLOTILDE

So how would you feel about escorting me from the barracks captain.

GEORGES

Where do you want to go

CLOTILDE

Oh. Somewhere there's life. Those places you write about. : "Murder in the Rue Menebres." "Fracas in the...wherever it was.

GEORGES
That's not "life", Clotilde. Its
existence. Honestly you're much
better off where you are.

CLOTILDE
Well. How would you know.

In the other room, the piano practise stops.

CLOTILDE (CONT'D)
(Shouts through)
Bravo Laurine
(Then to Georges)
So you won't take me there

GEORGES
I'd do everything to persuade you
against it.

CLOTILDE
And when that failed?

31. INT. DINING CUBICLE. NIGHT.

A bare wooden cubicle, illuminated by candle-light. A waiter
dumps a bottle of wine in front of them, followed by the food.

The place is full of noise, pipe smoke and shouted arguments.

People keep staring at Clotilde who is overdressed for such a
place. Georges is nervous. He doesn't really want to be
here.

WAITER
Cabbage and trotters?

GEORGES
For the lady.

The waiter rearranges the plates without ceremony, splashing
Clotildes dress.

GEORGES (CONT'D)
For goodness sakes!

CLOTILDE

Its nothing. It doesn't matter

GEORGES

(To the waiter)

Well are you going to do something about that.

WAITER

Like what? Lick it off?

Georges gets to his feet.

CLOTILDE

Georges really...

He looks ready to hit the guy. Clotilde restrains him. The waiter limps off on his withered leg.

CLOTILDE (CONT'D)

Its my fault.

GEORGES

Its not your fault. I should never have agreed

CLOTILDE

We'll go.

Georges looks at the food

GEORGES

Sit down. Its "life."

CLOTILDE

Oh my god. He's got a knife

The waiter smashes come cutlery on the table, then hands Georges a cloth

WAITER

Cloth

GEORGES

Thank You

Georges attacks his food

GEORGES (CONT'D)

I've not had this for ages. Try it.

She takes a sip of the gravy.

CLOTILDE
Is this what you had in the army?

GEORGE
(Shakes his head)
Back home in Normandy. My mother
didn't like anything going to waste.
We kids thought it was a luxury.
You have to use your fingers.

Clotilde eats. It tastes better than she expected

CLOTILDE
And in Algeria?

GEORGE
Cous-cous. Goat. And The livers of
our enemies.

She laughs. And suddenly all is well between them

32. INT. DANCE HALL. NIGHT

The band is playing Offenbach. Georges and Clotilde waltz round and round, the buffeting, drunken crowd that surrounds them reduced to a mad swirl of laughter and colour.

Turning and turning, their eyes never leaving each other's faces, in a wash of music and light.

The music stops. Clotilde is breathless and glowing. They stagger back to their table.

33. INT. CARRIAGE. NIGHT

They are sitting opposite each other, in the moving carriage. The effort of remaining up right keeps their bodies in constant tension.

CLOTILDE
I told you we'd survive it

He smiles, watching her.

CLOTILDE (CONT'D)
"The livers of our enemy."

The carriage stops.

CLOTILDE (CONT'D)

You've gone all serious. Not going to try and kiss me are you.

He leans forwards. She parts her lips as...

The carriage door opens. Clotilde's butler is standing there with a lamp. Clotilde pulls back, flashes Georges a warm look of farewell, then she's gone.

34. INT. PAWN SHOP. DAY

The pawnbroker examines George's beloved army boots.

PAWNBROKER

Eight francs fifty. Last price..

The till rings out.

35. INT. 'LA VIE FRANCAISE', CHARLES' OFFICE. DAY

Charles scans Georges' most recent article and puts it to one side. His cough has developed a fruitier sound.

CHARLES

Good. Good. Accepted.

GEORGES

No changes?

CHARLES

No. I think you've got the hang of it. What's on today?

GEORGES

There's an execution but...

CHARLES

Yes?

GEORGES

...the thing is. On a police reporter's salary its not really possible to ...entertain as one would like.

Charles doses himself with medicine, grimacing at the foul taste of the drug

GEORGES (CONT'D)

I was wondering if you thought I was ready to tackle something a bit more

demanding. A day at the races. A theater review. Justsomething a bit less sordid.

CHARLES

It's all sordid. You'll learn

A frightening certainty in his eyes, as he screws the top back on the medicine bottle, like a man growing accustomed to the possibility of his own death.

36. EXT. PARIS ZOO. DAY

The elegant men and women of Paris society stroll at their leisure between the enclosures. Seen through the bars of the cages, it seems as though they themselves are the exotic creatures on display.

Clotilde's daughter Laurine is running from cage to cage, followed by Clotilde, who walks alongside Georges, ignoring the animals and commenting instead on the couples who pass.

CLOTILDE

(Sotto)

Rose Marquentin from the opera, pretending not to be a lesbian, with Baron de Tanquelet, the pederast and card shark.

Georges nods. The elegant couple return Clotilde's polite smile of greeting. When they have passed they start whispering about Clotilde.

Another couple approaches.

CLOTILDE (CONT'D)

Louise Michot, the famous "horizontale" with a foreign customer. And behind her we should see.... ah yes ...Latour-Guerrand, who lives off her earnings.

GEORGES

Latour-Guerrand the impressario.

CLOTILDE

(Sweetly)

Impressario and pimp.

The impressario passes, raising his top hat, the very picture of affluent respectability.

Georges and Clotilde have reached the flamingo enclosure.

CLOTILDE (CONT'D)

And then there's those two.

She's looking down at the two of them, reflected side by side in the surface of the water.

GEORGES

Oh yes.

(Cheerfully)

That muckraker Duroy who calls himself a journalist.

CLOTILDE

"Man of letters" surely.

(beat)

And the floozy?

GEORGES

Clotilde de Marelle. Faithful wife, loving mother. What can I say?

CLOTILDE

You're sure she's not his mistress?

GEORGES

Impossible.

She smiles. He looks at her, trying to read her meaning. Then her daughter shouts excitedly from outside one of the cages.

LAURINE

Mummy, Mummy! Come and see!

CLOTILDE

Here I am darling.

She presses George's hand as she leaves.

Georges opens his hand to find a silver door-key, with an address tag on it.

37. INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE LOVE-NEST. DAY

The key slides into a keyhole. Georges begins to turn it. A man approaches from behind.

CONCIERGE

Anything I can do sir?

GEORGES

(Turns)

Ah. Yes. I'm a friend of....

The concierge frowns.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

I mean when I say a 'friend'. I'm here to meet...

Clotilde appears at the end of the hallway, walks up to Georges and, to his horror, embraces him.

CLOTILDE

Georges! You got here ahead of me.

CONCIERGE

Ah. Madam Duroy.

CLOTILDE

(To the Concierge)

You've not met my husband.

(To Georges)

This is Gerard our concierge.

Georges quickly assumes the role, adopting a suitably haughty expression. The Concierge is immediately reduced to servility.

CONCIERGE

Sorry, sir. I just thought....

GEORGES

Not at all. Quite understandable.

38. INT. THE LOVE-NEST. DAY

Georges and Clotilde close the door behind them. She's amused. He's a nervous wreck.

CLOTILDE

My fault. I'm late. Do you like it?

GEORGES

This is madness.

CLOTILDE

The apartment.

GEORGES

Who does it belong to?

She parts the curtain, turns.

CLOTILDE

You. It's rented in your name.

GEORGES

(Shocked)

What! Clotilde...

CLOTILDE

Six months paid in advance.

She produces some papers from her bag.

CLOTILDE (CONT'D)

Your lease.

GEORGES

No.

He won't take it lease. She pouts.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

How can I Clotilde, I mean quite
aside from your reputation...?

CLOTILDE

I know. You don't want me to own
you

She puts the papers on the bed, then begins taking out her
hair-pins.

GEORGES

Its not that. You own me already.
Its...

CLOTILDE

And Marelle owns me. And the
railway owns him. It's nobody's
money if you think about it.

Georges isn't convinced. She crosses to him, loosens his tie
and kisses him properly.

GEORGES

This is wrong.

CLOTILDE

Yes.

Kissing and being kissed. Undressing her and being undressed by her.

GEORGES

Its far too risky

As her bodice slips off her shoulders

CLOTILDE

But worth it

39. INT. THE LOVE-NEST. LATE AFTERNOON

A breeze stirs the lace curtains, tinkles the glass beads on the lampshade.

The light has turned golden, faint sounds of street life are filtering in from outside.

Georges looks down at Clotilde, shocked to find she has tears in her eyes

GEORGES

Clotilde?

She dries her eyes with the sheet.

CLOTILDE

I'm not sad.

She smiles. They kiss, stare at each other, kiss some more.

CLOTILDE (CONT'D)

How do you know women so well?

GEORGES

Well, you know, five years in the army, all these female prisoners. Camp followers. Officers wives. One naturally

...then falling serious.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

I don't pretend to know anything.

CLOTILDE

Maybe that's the secret

GEORGES

And you? Men?

CLOTILDE

A mystery. I used to be frightened of them. Got married for security. Big mistake, in retrospect. I mean Marelle's very good. He doesn't force himself on me, though I do try for Laurines sake to give him at least the impression that...well... You don't want to know my problems.

GEORGES

I do actually. And usually I don't.

CLOTILDE

With who?
(smiles)
The camp followers?
(then)
I have to go soon.

GEORGES

Can I see you tomorrow?

She shakes her head

CLOTILDE

Six weeks.

She's serious.

CLOTILDE (CONT'D)

Phillippe arrives back this evening. He's got no other trips till November.

This hits Georges like a blow.

CLOTILDE (CONT'D)

It was selfish. I didn't expect to...

She's going to say "...to care so much"

CLOTILDE (CONT'D)

I should have waited. .

He dries her tears

GEORGES
Our motto was "courage in adversity"

CLOTILDE
On the farm?

GEORGES
There too.

40. EXT. PARIS PARK. DAY

Autumn leaves are blowing off the trees.

Monsieur de Marelle sits on a park bench reading an article in La Vie Francaise.

Clotilde and is playing French cricket with her daughter Laurine.

Georges watches secretly from a distance as Laurine hits the ball. Clotilde runs after it towards the trees.

As she retrieves the ball she sees Georges and stops. Their eyes meet for a moment, then she drags herself away.

Hold on Georges

JACQUES (V.O.)
Poor bugger...

41. INT. 'LA VIE FRANCAISE', JOURNALISTS' ROOM. DAY

Georges is staring distractedly out of the window, lost in some reverie. The others are discussing Charles, whom we can hear, coughing, in his office across the corridor

JACQUES
...I remember my aunt died of consumption. Just coughed up a great wad of blood and died on the spot.

BOISRENARD
Oh, no. It's not consumption.

He's normally a man of no opinions. When the others look at him he immediately becomes uncertain

BOISRENARD (CONT'D)

I mean his doctors said not.

NORBERT

Course they did. That's what one pays them for.

SAINT-POTIN

I give him till February.

The others all look at him. As a member of the working classes Saint-Potin has a certain authority on matters of death.

SAINT-POTIN (CONT'D)

Very infectious as well, when you're coughing like that.

JACQUES

It'll be hard on his wife. I can't imagine Walter paying a pension.

NORBERT

She's still got her career.

Jacques smiles at this risque remark. Boisrenard doesn't get it. Georges isn't listening. Jacques tickles him with the point of his fencing sword.

JACQUES

Duroy. Smile. On guard!

Georges, irritated, pushes the sword tip away.

JACQUES (CONT'D)

What's your theory about the new chap, Norbert? Not in love is he?

Georges keeps trying to deflect the sword, Jacques keeps poking at him.

NORBERT

Or something worse: a husband on the horizon?

GEORGES

(Snaps)

Jacques! Can you put that bloody thing away!

Monsieur Walter, passing, hears the raised voices and looks in. Everyone is immediately on their best behaviour.

WALTER
What's going on here?

Georges glowers at Jacques. Norbert papers over the cracks:

NORBERT
Nothing, sir.

WALTER
I'm not paying you for 'Nothing'

Walter leaves. Georges sets himself to trying to write. Jacques puts the sword away, obviously cross about Georges' lack of fellowship. Norbert tries to heal the rift.

NORBERT
I'd like to make a suggestion,
gentlemen. A night at the Folies.

The very mention of the place sets off Boisrenard's girlish giggle. Saint-Potin shoots him a pitying look.

NORBERT (CONT'D)
What do you say, Georges?

42. INT. FOLIES BERGERES. MAIN FOYER, NIGHT

Gaslight and mirrors. Prostitutes swim like exotic fish against a current of men dressed in black.

There's a crush around the bar, from where a barmaid, dispenses foaming tankards.

Jacques fights out of this scrum and distributes four beers.

JACQUES
Georges. Armand. Norbert. Where's
Saint-Potin?

NORBERT
Recruiting
(To Georges)
Your health.

GEORGES
Thank You. And listen: thanks for
looking after me.

JACQUES

We're not looking after you. Might find someone who will though.

He glances at a passing whore and Georges finally understands: they're planning to get him laid. He's about to protest when someone shouts his name.

RACHEL

Georges!

Rachel, the prostitute, emerges from the crowd,

JACQUES

Ha! The dog!
(To Norbert)
He's been here before!

RACHEL

(To Georges)
It's me, Rachel. Remember?

All bosoms and lipstick. Georges is embarrassed. Norbert is delighted.

NORBERT

Remember you? Why do you think we're here? The poor lad's been pinning! See how pale he is?

Jacques and Norbert are loving it, welcoming Rachel like a long-lost friend, forcing her together with Georges.

Flushed and happy, Rachel takes Georges arm and plants a big red kiss on his cheek.

RACHEL

(to Georges)
Introduce me to your friends, then.

GEORGES

Um. Rachel this is...

Saint-Potin interrupts, emerging from the mob with another whore in tow and a big smile on his face.

His face falls.

SAINT-POTIN

Oh. You got one already.

GEORGES

My friends Jacques Rival, Norbert de
Varenes...

Jacques is looking the other way. He nudges Norbert.

JACQUES
Off the port bow

NORBERT
(Shakes his head)
Married. See how bored she looks.

Georges follows their gaze to: Clotilde! Walking on the arm
of her husband!

Georges looks around wildly for an escape route but its too
late, Monsieur de Marelle had already seen him.

MONSEUR DE MARELLE
Ah! Duroy!

Clotilde sees Georges too, with Rachel hanging on his arm, and
Rachel's lipstick on his cheek.

Clotilde hangs back, but Monsieur de Marelle is already
forging towards them

MONSIEUR DE MARELLE
(Prompts)
Pierre de Marelle.

GEORGES
Of course.

MONSIEUR DE MARELLE
(Of Rachel)
And this is.....?

Rachel doesn't like the way Clotilde is looking at Georges.
She snuggles closer, clinging to him like a limpet.

Georges can't speak. Silently imploring Clotilde to
understand.

Clotilde understands only too clearly. The silence is
becoming embarrassing. Jacques picks up the introductions.

JACQUES
...why this is the lovely Rachel.
I'm Jacques Rival. Armand

Boisrenard, Norbert de Varennes,
Constable Saint-Potin...

MONSEUR DE MARELLE

(TO Georges)

Been meaning to thank you, for
chaperoning Madame in my absence.

Norbert suddenly understands the whole story.

CLOTILDE

(To her husband)

Can we go Pierre.

De Marelle ignores her, still rambling on to Georges

DE MARELLE

Blasted rural branch lines are
costing us a fortune. Had to go and
wield the big stick.

CLOTILDE

Please. Can we go. Now.

DE MARELLE

I thought you wanted to see the
performance.

NORBERT

Yes. Stay. It's fascinating.

Unable to bear another moment, Clotilde heads off alone into
the crowd. Confused, Monsieur de Marelle follows her.

Rachel is happy to have seen off the competition.

Georges is dying inside.

43. EXT. CLOTILDE'S HOUSE. NIGHT

Georges stands alone, looking up at the lighted window of his
lover's house.

She comes to the window, sees him standing there and closes
the curtains.

44. EXT. CLOTILDE'S HOUSE. DAY

Clotilde emerges from the house with Laurine in her school
uniform. Georges is approaching with flowers.

Clotilde sees him and hustles Laurine into the waiting carriage. They clatter off.

Georges lets the flowers droop limply in his hand. He's done all he can.

45. INT. CHARLES' APARTMENT, RECEPTION ROOM. DAY

Charles' wife Madeleine is arranging the same flowers in a vase of her own, inhaling their perfume in a way that is at once blatantly sexual and apparently unintentional

MADELEINE

....Actually I think she's being unrealistic. You can't expect a man such as yourself not to have other admirers.

GEORGES

"A man such as myself."

MADELEINE

Looks, intelligence, and an adventurous spirit to boot. That's quite a rare combination.

GEORGES

You make me sound like an exotic breed of dog.

MADELEINE

Dog? You undervalue yourself. Have you asked Walter for a promotion?

GEORGES

I've mentioned it to Charles, but..

MADELEINE

...but in his condition what can he do? You know he won't be with us much longer.

GEORGES

Oh. I didn't realize. You mean its ...

MADELEINE

Apparently a matter of months.

Turning her face away from him

GEORGES

Look, If there's anything I can do.
I mean as a friend.

She doesn't turn.

Georges approaches and tentatively puts a hand on her
shoulder.

MADELEINE

Thank-you

Then she moves away, becoming businesslike again.

MADELEINE (CONT'D)

In return, let me give you some
advice that I once received from a
dear friend of my own: 'Decide where
you should be then look two steps
beyond.'

'A dear friend.' Georges wonders...

MADELEINE (CONT'D)

Boisrenard for example. You have to
ask yourself: how does an ape like
that come to be editing the society
page.

GEORGES

(Laughs, dismissive)
Well society pages are

MADELEINE

Are read only by women. You think
that makes them unimportant?

GEORGES

On the contrary.

MADELEINE

They're our stock exchange: who's
rising who's falling.

For Georges its a moment of dazzling insight

MADELEINE (CONT'D)

Boisrenard's so dim, he entirely
misses the point of it. How do you
think he landed the job?

GEORGES

Through Monsieur Walter?

MADELEINE

And Monsieur Walter? Who came here as a refugee with nothing. To whom does *he* owe his position..?

GEORGES

To force of character. I don't know.

MADELEINE

....in society.

GEORGES

Ah.

MADELEINE

You know she talks of you quite often.

GEORGES

Madame Walter? I only met her once.

MADELEINE

Well. I'd call that rather encouraging, wouldn't you?

46. EXT. STREET STALL. DAY

Georges watches as a fruit-seller packs up some pears in a basket for him.

47. INT. WALTER'S HOUSE, BOUDOIR. DAY

Young Suzanne Walter is reading aloud the note that accompanied the basket of fruit, as a maid dresses her mother.

SUZANNE (V.O.)

(Reads)

'Dear Madam, these pears arrived from my parents in Normandy. Please accept them with my compliments. Georges Duroy'.

On the name "Duroy" Madame Walter's ears prick up.

MADAM WALTER

How charming.

The sound of laughter and piano music transports us to:

48. INT. WALTER'S HOUSE, DRAWING ROOM. DAY.

Madame Walter's weekly salon is in progress. Among the various guests we find Madame Walter with a bevy of society ladies in their forties.

They're all listening to Georges who is cutting a dash with the vigour and novelty of his views.

POLITICIAN'S WIFE (O.S.)

Oh come on now monsieur, you've gone too far. Are we to have a lady deputy.

(Laughter)

...a lady lawyer, a lady doctor!

The very thought!

GEORGES (O.S.)

All I'm saying is, never underestimate the importance of women. You're the brokers, the bargainers, the experts on character. And what are men? We're rather simple creatures with the same basic needs as... well as apes

The laughter stops. Madame Walter is looking at him anxiously, wondering how he's going to explain this statement.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

Food. Shelter and

Everyone waits nervously for the last item. Surely he's not going to mention sex? Young Suzanne looks up from her needlework, intrigued.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

.... loving affection.

A yelp of laughter and much energetic fanning from the ladies. Madame Walter is amused.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

...and who provides these?

MADAME WALTER

(Dryly) The other apes?

GEORGES

...our womenfolk. So who's advice
is most important to a man...?

One of the ladies scoffs at this.

MADAME WALTER

Why not?

POLITICIAN'S WIFE

I wouldn't dream of advising Albert,
for a start I know nothing of
politics.

GEORGES

"Politics". It's words.

The politician's wife is offended. Madame Walter supports
Georges.

MADAME WALTER

Absolutely. How many years have we
been agonizing over North Africa?
"Troops in," "troops out". And so
on ad infinitum, to what purpose
Where are their actions?

GEORGES

Oh, they're very active. If you
read the society columns...

Laughter

MADAME WALTER

I do, sir. And tedious fare it is
too.

More laughter, even from the politicians wife. Georges and
Madame Walter are becoming a good double-act.

GEORGES

Well that's because they are written
by tedious men. I'm sure if those
pages were edited by any one of you
here.

He's looking at Madame Walter in particular.

MADAME WALTER

Or by yourself, Monsieur Duroy?

GEORGES

Oh, I'm a country boy, not a society person.

Everyone protests at his modesty. Madame Walter is watching him acutely.

49. INT. 'LA VIE FRANCAISE', MAIN STAIRCASE. DAY.

In the hive of activity, the staff all stop what they're doing in order to listen to Walter blowing up at someone.

WALTER (O.S.)

...because, you moron, they are paying us to mention it so frankly I don't give a fart what his opera is about, the brief was to mention Imperial soap!

50. INT. 'LA VIE FRANCAISE', JOURNALISTS' ROOM. DAY

The door of Boisrenard's office is thrown open, Walter shouts.

WALTER (O.S.)

Duroy!

Georges steps through from the journalists' room, leaving the door open behind him.

51. INT. 'LA VIE FRANCAISE', BOISRENARD'S OFFICE. DAY.

Walter stands clutching the offending article, as Boisrenard cowers in a corner.

GEORGES

Yes sir.

WALTER

This is your office now.

GEORGES

Well I think Mr Boisrenard...

WALTER

Boisrenard's fired. He's just clearing his desk.

This is news to Georges. It's even bigger news to Boisrenard.

GEORGES

Well, I'm not sure I can really...

WALTER

You can start by rewriting this.

He thrusts the article at Georges and storms out.

52. INT. THE OPERA, MAIN STAGE. NIGHT

Thunderous applause as the stars of the ballet file through the curtain to take their bow.

Yells of '*Bravo!*' '*Encore!*' Floral tributes shower the stage.

53. INT. THE OPERA, GREEN ROOM. NIGHT

Champagne is poured. Ballet dancers, still in costume, circulate among selected gentlemen of the audience who have been invited backstage.

Georges looks very smooth and polished in a sharp new suit. The courtesan we saw at the zoo slips him an invitation.

COURTESAN

(Murmurs)

...just a select group of friends.
I'd be delighted if you could
feature it in your column.

GEORGES

I'll see what I can do, Louise.

She moves on. Georges turns and is accosted by her pimp, the impresario plugging his new production of Faust.

IMPRESARIO

Duroy. My dear sir. I'll send a
boy round to your office with the
libretto but I just wanted to say,
what people have to understand about
this piece is....

Georges blocks out the rest, expertly giving the appearance of listening while remaining ever-watchful for new contacts.

A tall thin man, Langremont, is standing with his back to us, talking to a man called Confrere.

CONFRERE

...with blasted Charles Forestier
criticising your government at every
turn

The impresario continues to rabbit on, assuming he still has
Georges' attention. Georges is tuning in to:

LANGREMONT (O.S.)

Well, he's not long for this world
anyway. Doctor Leboeuf said one or
two months. I hear that shameless
wife of his is already soliciting
offers of marriage.

Georges darkens.

CONFRERE

Who's the favourite Vaudrec?

LANGREMONT

To marry her? Of course not. What
would he get that he doesn't get
already?

The two men laugh. Georges taps Langremont on the shoulder.

GEORGES

Excuse me....

Langremont rounds on him.

LANGREMONT

Yes?

GEORGES

....I believe you're discussing a
friend of mine.

LANGREMONT

And you are?

Georges straightens. He's not going to let this beanpole talk
down to him.

GEORGES

Georges Duroy.

LANGREMONT

Ah. The gossip columnist.

GEORGES

The 'society editor' of la Vie
Francaise.

LANGREMONT

And this job of yours entails
eavesdropping on the conversations
of your betters?

This was overheard. Unable to let it pass, Georges hits
Langremont with his gloves. All other conversation stops
dead.

GEORGES

I will have satisfaction sir.

He cuts quite a dash when he says it. Even the ballet dancers
are impressed by his performance.

Langremont's eyes narrow. The slightly foppish face takes on
a different character: deadly as a snake. He slaps Georges
right back, making Georges' eyes water.

LANGREMONT

... I guarantee it.

54. INT. 'LA VIE FRANCAISE', JOURNALISTS' ROOM. DAY

Everyone is electrified by the news of the duel. Georges,
still dressed for the opera, is sitting on the big writing
table fielding questions from every side. Charles is there,
looking more unwell than ever.

JACQUES

This was Langremont the foreign
minister?

GEORGES

How should I know who he was.

NORBERT

You know he's a friend of Walter's.

Georges groans. It just gets worse and worse

CHARLES

But Georges what did he say?

GEORGES

He didn't say anything. It was just
an implication.

CHARLES

Well what did he imply?

NORBERT

Charles, one can imagine..

CHARLES

No, I can't imagine.

(To Georges)

I mean if you say it concerned
Madeleine then by rights it should
be me who....

GEORGES

I said indirectly. Honestly
Charles, he was talking about me.

JACQUES

I'm bloody glad it's not me. Four
duels in two years. Two dead, one
paralyzed....

Then the door slams open and Walter marches in. Georges
springs from the table.

GEORGE

Mr Walter. I didn't realize. If
you want me to apologize...

WALTER

Apologize! Are you mad? Just make
certain the bastard doesn't kill you

Clapping Georges on the shoulder, turning to the others:.

WALTER (CONT'D)

See this, you pen-pushers. A real
man. A man of principle. A man of
integrity. The whole time bloody
Boisrenard was on the job we barely
mustered a letter of complaint. And
now, soon as Duroy takes the reins:

Tousling Georges' hair, thumping him on the chest

WALTER (CONT'D)

A duel with Langremont! The "black
snake" himself! This'll really put
us on the map. Who's sending out
for champagne?

55. INT. CELLAR. DAY.

Bang! A heavy door closes

We're in a long vaulted cellar, used as a practice range. Shafts of daylight from above are supplemented by gas flares on the walls.

The target, twenty-five yards away is a tattered dressmakers dummy.

JAQUES

These are the training pistols.
Single shot breech loader. You'll
know about cleaning and priming from
your army days.

Georges examines the pistol without enthusiasm.

GEORGES

I was always a terrible shot.
That's one of the reasons I left.

He's looking for closeness and empathy, but these aren't in Jacques' repertoire.

JAQUES

Well. Practice makes perfect. Arm
straight. Both eyes open. Its all
in the breathing. Pip pip.

He leaves. Georges raises the pistol, takes aim at the dummy and fires. The echo is deafening. The dummy remains unscathed.

Georges reloads and fires. Reloads and fires again, each time moving closer to the dummy.

Load and fire, load and fire. The more annoyed he becomes the wider his aim

And now he is....

56. EXT. HILLSIDE DAY

Climbing a hillside in the desert. Sweat pours off him, making rivulets in the fine, pale dust which covers his face, his uniform, his pack.

Legionnaires climb alongside him, scrabbling desperately at the crumbling biscuit-coloured rock. One is hit in the neck, another in the head.

Then - oh shit, here they come - the tribesmen leaving their positions, running downhill at them, screaming like dervishes.

Georges is too scared to fire. A tribesman aims at him. He sees the puff of smoke and hears the sound of the gun being fired at him

As....

57. INT. LOVE-NEST. NIGHT

Georges sits bolt upright in bed, sweating and terrified. He looks around to see what woke him.

A noise in the corridor outside.

GEORGES

Hello?

58. INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE LOVE-NEST. NIGHT.

Georges flings open the door. There's no-one there - just an icy wind blowing down the hallway from the door which leads onto the street.

Georges closes the main door and goes back to his apartment.

59. INT. LOVE-NEST. NIGHT

He lies there, watching the glass beads of the lampshade moving in the half-light while he waits for sleep.

60. EXT. PARIS STREET. JUST BEFORE DAWN

The sky is grey and full of snow. A horse stands champing on the cobbles, snorting steam. Saint-Potin is driving.

As Georges emerges from his apartment building, Jacques hands him a pair of gloves.

JACQUES

To keep your fingers warm. Get in.

Georges climbs into the Landau. He sits down beside Norbert, and opposite a stranger (The surgeon) who looks like death personified.

JACQUES (CONT'D)

(Joining them)

No. That's wrong: principal with the surgeon at the back. Seconds at the front.

GEORGES

I don't know what you're talking about.

JACQUES

You're the principal. This is the surgeon. You sit here. Wait. Not on the pistols.

He moves the sealed box from under Georges. Saint Potin cracks his whip and they're off

61. EXT. THE LANDAU. DAWN

.... at break-neck speed, clattering through the city and out into the snow-bound country-side beyond, with Georges wondering how he ever got into this.

He looks up and sees the surgeon's doom-laden face. He looks down and sees the surgeons leather bag, with metal instruments rattling inside it. He closes his eyes.

62. EXT. BOIS DE VESINET. MORNING

A snow-bound clearing in the forest.

Confrere and Norbert pace out a distance of twenty-five yards. Jacques has opened the box of pistols.

JACQUES

(To Georges)

These are from Gastine-Renette, loaded and sealed. They're very accurate.

Langremont chooses his weapon and strides off.

Georges negotiates the frozen tussocks, snow sliding treacherously from under his boots. Jacques is at his shoulder keeping up a steady stream of instructions.

JACQUES (CONT'D)

When they say "Are you ready" you shout "Yes". When they say "fire" you raise your arm and fire.

GEORGES

So wait for the count of three
and....

JACQUES

Wait? God no. Fire on "Fire". On
"Fire". You understand that?

Jacques walks quickly away. Georges takes his position
opposite Langremont then realises he still has his gloves on.
He starts to take them off, holding the loaded pistol between
his knees.

REFEREE

Gentlemen are you ready?

LANGREMONT

Yes!

REFEREE

Mr Duroy?

The gloves are stuck. The gun slips, pointing upwards at him.
Georges swears under his breath:

GEORGES

Fuck. Fuck. ..Yes!

The gloves come off. His teeth are chattering like castanets.

REFEREE

Fire!

Langremont raises his gun and fires. Georges fires a second
later, yelling out as ...

The world tips on its side, the ground rushes to meet him.

Georges lies on his back, watching a flock of crows rising
from the trees. Black coated figures run towards him.

JACQUES

Georges?

SURGEON

Where's he hit?

The bag of surgical instruments crashes down next to his head.
Saint Potin bends over him, genuinely concerned.

SAINT-POTIN

Georges? Tell us where you're hit!

People are rummaging through his clothes, feeling for the entry-wound, looking for blood

GEORGES

I'm all right. Must have slipped.

He gets to his feet, shaking himself to check that he's whole, then suddenly laughing in relief.

GEORGE

He didn't get me.

Jacques and Norbert look mildly disappointed. Langremont is furious. Georges feels light as air.

SAINT-POTIN

(Shouts)

Not injured. He slipped!

Georges inhales great lungfuls of air, his hand shaking as the nerves catch up with him.

63. INT. LOVE-NEST. DAY

Georges is shaving. His hand is still not steady. As he contemplates his reflection, there is a knock at the door, which swings open to reveal.

....Clotilde.

LATER: they are in bed, laughing and wrestling in a great tumble of clothes and sheets.

CLOTILDE

I don't believe it

GEORGES

I was terrified.

CLOTILDE

You're supposed to be a soldier.

GEORGES

I hate all that hairy-chested stuff.

"I got these from Gaston blah-de-blah, they're very accurate." As though I'm meant to be reassured by that.

CLOTILDE

I don't know what you were thinking of..

GEORGES

(Falls serious)

I was thinking about you. All the way there in the carriage. Seeing you across the table at Charles'. Taking tea with you, worrying I was going to drop the cup. The pigs trotters, "He's got a knife" and That fool of a waiter. Its true, your life does flash before you. You think: "Damn . That was what I should have held onto. That was the only important thing.

CLOTILDE

You know I came to visit. The night before.

GEORGES

That was you? I thought it was the angel of death

CLOTILDE

I'd told Phillippe I had a sick friend. Just stood there for about an hour, wondering whether to knock. Then decided you needed sleep more than me. So I went home and got into bed with Laurine and lay awake all night praying. Which is mad because I don't believe in God. But obviously he believes in us.

GEORGES

Marry me? Just joking.

64. INT. JOURNALISTS' ROOM, 'LA VIE FRANCAISE' DAY

The staff are rowdily toasting his success in the duel.

NORBERT

To Saint Georges. Guardian of the paper's good name!

JACQUES

Wait! The presentation! Ta-ra!

A box is handed across the table. Georges takes out... a dueling pistol.

GEORGES
God's sake. Is it loaded?

Georges points at the ceiling, pulls the trigger: Click. He drops it back in the box.

GEORGES (CONT'D)
Bloody thing.

JACQUES
It's yours. For the next time.

GEORGES
There's not going to be a next time.
I want a job you don't have to die
for.

NORBERT
Poetry's out then.

JACQUES
Political editor?

This is a bit near the bone.

GEORGES
Where is poor old Charles?

NORBERT
He had a sudden relapse. Madeleine
took him off to their place down in
Cannes.

GEORGE
Is someone going to see them?

65. INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT. DAY.

Georges sits alone in the compartment. Through the window we glimpse cypress trees and bare vineyards.

66. EXT. MEDITERRANEAN VILLA. DAY

A horse-drawn carriage turns into the driveway of an attractive villa, overlooking olive groves and, beyond that, the sea.

67. INT. THE VILLA. MAIN BEDROOM. LATE AFTERNOON.

A big bare room.

Some sort of respirator contraption is wheezing away beside Charles' bed, issuing puffs of steam into the low rays of the sun.

Madeleine is with a nurse, trying to hold a mask on Charles face as he struggles for air.

She looks up and sees Georges in the doorway.

MADELEINE

Georges. Help us.

(To Charles)

Breathe, breathe.

(To Georges)

He keeps slipping down.

Georges helps the nurse to boost Charles up the bed.

GEORGES

One two three.

Charles is like a sack of potatoes. The mask falls off. His skin is pale and sweaty, his lips are stained with blood. It's a while before he's able to speak.

CHARLES

Who's this? Georges. The only one.

The only bloody one.

Panting with exertion as he summons the energy to say something else:

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Sit down.

Madeleine looks exhausted, hair unraveling, close to tears.

GEORGES

I never imagined..

MADELEINE

I'll leave you for a moment.

The nurse bundles up a sheet soaked in sweat and spotted with blood. She moves a bucket next to the bedside then she leaves too. Charles paws gratefully at Georges' sleeve.

CHARLES

Should have fought that duel myself.
Let Langremont shoot me. Wouldn't
want an animal to die like this.

GEORGES

You're not dying Charles.

CHARLES

Course I'm dying. It's not even
blood I'm coughing now it's...
rotting flesh.

GEORGES

Is there no medication....?

Charles leans sideways and retches into the bucket, wiping
clots from his chin. Georges helps him back onto the pillows.

CHARLES

Oh God.

Falling back, exhausted.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

You think you're safe. Thirty
thousand a year. Coach and four.
Look at me.

GEORGES

But you have a beautiful house.
Dozens of friends. The ear of every
statesman and politician. A
wonderful wife...

Charles scoffs, pausing to get his breath back.

CHARLES

Has Walter taken my name off the
door yet?

GEORGES

Of course not. He says you're
irreplaceable.

CHARLES

Hypocrite.

GEORGES

He has his good side.

CHARLES

I meant you. I know what I'm worth.
I can see it in that bucket there.

68. INT. THE VILLA, DINING ROOM. NIGHT

Most of the furniture is under drapes. A wind kicks at the french windows, disturbing the fragile flames of the candles on the dinner table. A servant stacks olive-wood logs in the big open fireplace then retires.

MADELEINE

He's the same with me. Anything he thinks will hurt. Its his way of proving he's alive.

GEORGE

It wasn't malicious. He's a fine man.

MADELEINE

Maybe it's just me.

GEORGE

You mean everything to him

MADELEINE

He keeps obsessing about the duel. As you can imagine we've hardly seen a soul since then.

GEORGE

There's nothing to say.

MADELEINE

Or nothing you can tell me?

GEORGE

Just a vulgar comment. About you and Vaudrec.

MADELEINE

Ah.

They eat in silence

MADELEINE (CONT'D)

The count was a friend of my father....

GEORGES

It doesn't concern me.

MADELEINE

After my parents died he took charge of me. Rescued me from the convent in Nimes where I was supposedly being "educated" and introduced me to Paris society. To wealth, wit, refinement. A world I'd somehow sensed the existence of without ever experiencing. He threw parties for me. Introduced me to eligible men.

One of whom was Charles, just out of the army. Vaudrec fixed him up with Monsieur Walter, arranged the dowry, set us up in that house.

He's my dearest friend and supporter.

She puts her hand on his.

MADELEINE (CONT'D)

As you are.

Georges looks at the hand, then at her

MADELEINE (CONT'D)

Will you sit up with me tonight, Georges?

GEORGES

Of course.

69. INT. THE VILLA, MAIN BEDROOM. NIGHT

In the candle-lit room, Charles lies asleep propped up on pillows. The only sounds are the tick-tock of a clock and the painful, guttering sound of his breathing.

Georges and Madeleine are sitting in armchairs on either side of the bed. Georges has nodded off. He wakes to see Madeleine, asleep in the armchair opposite.

Georges is captured by her sleeping face, the curves of her body beneath her gown. He watches her for a long, illicit moment, then something makes him turn.

Charles is awake too, looking at Georges who is looking at his wife.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

Charles.

A guilty smile.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

You all right?

Charles doesn't reply. For some reason he can't reply.

Georges gets up and walks towards him, beginning to notice the terrible agitation inside Charles: eyes wide and staring, jaw muscles working. Each breath requires a grunting effort of will.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

You want something? Water.

He's leaning close as Charles suddenly forces his arms to work, managing as a drowning man might do, to seize Georges by the lapels and drag him towards him.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

Charles.

Charles' eyes are bulging, his neck muscles working. As though he desperately needs to say one last thing, some terrible warning.

Georges tries to prize the hands free, but they won't let go.

Those eyes keep boring into him, even though the man behind them is dying. The weight of his body dragging Georges down.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

Charles!

Frightened now, scrabbling ineffectively at Charles fingers. Feeling himself being dragged into the vortex: down, down into the darkness of the grave.

MADELEINE

Charles!

Her voice seems to break the spell. Charles exhales his last breath, like a balloon slowly deflating. His grip loosens. Gently Madeleine removes his hands from Georges jacket and lets her husband sink back into the pillows - dead.

Georges straightens, breathing hard, as Madeleine folds Charles' hands across his chest and gently passes a hand over her husband's face, closing the eyelids forever.

70. EXT. THE VILLA. DAY

A bright, clear morning. From the verandah, Georges sees Madeleine down by the shore.

71. EXT. THE SHORE. DAY.

He finds her testing her eyes against the glare off the sea.

GEORGES

So what will you do now?

MADELEINE

The undertakers won't arrive until tomorrow. His papers are all in Paris.

GEORGES

Last night, he tried to speak. I think he was asking me to help you.

She smiles at this.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

I should let you be alone for a while. I just wanted to say: I feel honoured to have been here with you.

Then Madeleine turns to him:

MADELEINE

I feel honoured that you came.

She takes his hand. Her eyes hold him. Hair all blown about by the wind.

GEORGE

When you return to Paris. I know how hard it is for a woman on her own. I just want you to know....

MADELEINE

(Interrupts)

But I won't be alone. Dear Georges. Will I?

72. INT. 'LA VIE FRANCAISE', SOCIETY EDITOR'S OFFICE. DAY.

Georges sits working in what was Boisrenard's and now is his own office. Walter comes in without knocking.

WALTER

Duroy. News travels fast. Let me be the first to congratulate you.

Georges rises, not entirely sure what this is about

WALTER (CONT'D)

On your engagement.

GEORGE

Ah. Yes. I only just asked her.

As Walter pumps his hand.

WALTER

Excellent. Superb. Virginie is delighted.

He turns to go, then turns back.

WALTER (CONT'D)

And while you're at it, you may as well have his desk as well.

Georges is slightly stunned by the speed of events.

GEORGES

You mean... Political editor?

WALTER

Big changes on the horizon. Langremont's finished. Young fellows coming up behind. Need someone who can catch the mood of the times, what do you say?

73. EXT. PARIS PARK, CAROUSEL. DAY

It is springtime in the park and a new craze - the bicycle - has just hit Paris.

On a carousel, children whirl around on painted horses. The music from the barrel-organ is a wheezy rendition of the tune Georges and Clotilde once waltzed to.

CLOTILDE

I donm't know, what do you want me to say?

GEORGES

You know if you weren't married
yourself....

CLOTILDE

(Tight lipped)

Of course. And you've got your new
position to think of. And
Madeleine's so very good at all
that. You'll be very happy if you
can live without love

Georges feels offended, thinking she is questioning the
sincerity of his feelings for Madeleine.

GEORGES

You know I've always admired her. I
never made any secret of the fact.
I just never imagined

CLOTILDE

What? That you were good enough for
her? Georges. You're too good for
her. You think I'm just jealous but
it's not that: I know what she'll
do to you.

GEORGES

She'll make me happy

CLOTILDE

You think so? You think Charles
looked like a happy man - wandering
round Montmartre every night,
looking for love? He was her
glove-puppet, this stupid
instrument she used to have an
effect on the world. Is that how
you want to be?

GEORGE

I'm different from Charles.

CLOTILDE

He was different too, before she
married him.

GEORGES

It's my choice.

CLOTILDE

It wasn't even that. It was hers.

She walks off. Georges lets her go, feeling nostalgic for her affection as she helps Laurine off the carousel, kissing and hugging her daughter.

The carousel cranks up again as....

74. EXT. STEAM TRAIN. DAY

A huge steam engine starts up. Belching steam and clanking ironware.

75. INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT. DAY

Georges sits in one of the compartments. He turns and looks across at...

Madeleine, who is sitting opposite, still with confetti in her hair.

She smiles, so radiantly beautiful that it's impossible to think ill of her. Georges smiles back at her.

76. EXT. STEAM TRAIN. DAY

Gaining speed now. The wheels moving faster, then faster still. The pistons becoming a black shining blur. The chimney belching white smoke, the whistle sounding: peeee-hoooo!

As....

The train bursts from a tunnel, really tearing along now. Ripping through the endless green countryside, while...

77. INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT. DAY

Madeleine looks out of the window, and Georges sits back contentedly, undressing her with his eyes.

MADELEINE

What are you looking at?

GEORGES

At my wife.

MADELEINE

(Smiling)

You'll embarrass me.

Georges turns away to look out of the window, watching her perfect reflection now in secret anticipation as the train careers westwards.

78. EXT. COUNTRY PLATFORM. LATE AFTERNOON

The train has stopped at a tiny provincial railway station, its platform open to the elements.

A stocky peasant stands looking for someone among the disembarking passengers.

GEORGES (V.O.)

Father!

The peasant turns to see Georges coming towards him.

FATHER

Georges!

They embrace.

FATHER (CONT'D)

Hardly recognized you. Where's the little woman?

He's looking at a factory girl who is approaching along the platform.

GEORGES

That's her by the bags.

The old man turns to see: Madeleine - a vision of beauty and sophistication.

FATHER

That's your *wife*?

GEORGES

She's called Madeleine.

FATHER

Jesus and Mary, How did you get *her*?

Swelling with pride, Georges moves to introduce them.

LATER: The bags are loaded. Georges swings happily on board the pony and trap, wedging Madeleine between him and his father.

FATHER (CONT'D)

Yah! Move on!

He jerks the reins and the horse heads off, almost pitching Madeleine backwards. Georges and his father steady her between them, laughing.

FATHER (CONT'D)

Oops! Not like this in the city eh?

Georges loves the old man and finds him amusing. Madeleine is visibly ill-at-ease.

79. EXT. ROUGH TRACK THROUGH FIELDS. DAY

Bump bump bump over ruts and boulders. Georges is in his element, standing up recklessly on the seat, waving to old friends who are working in the fields.

GEORGES

Julien! Paul! Its me! Georges you idiots!

The rustic friends down tools and come bounding down the hill towards them.

80. EXT. THE VILLAGE. DAY

The cart arrives with Georges, his father, the two rustics and Madeleine on board.

They stop in front of an attractive, thatched cottage with Georges' mother standing at the door.

GEORGES

Mother!

He jumps down to embrace her.

MOTHER

Wait. Let me look at you. You've put on weight. She must be feeding you.

Madeleine is trying to stop her underskirts from showing as Georges' friends scuffle over which will be the one to help her down.

81. INT. FARMHOUSE, KITCHEN. NIGHT

In the kitchen, Georges' mother is serving soup. Outside, tousled village urchins keep pressing their noses against the window panes and running away.

Madeleine is fanning herself, trying to clear the air of country smells.

MOTHER

I'll open the door

MADELEINE

No I'm fine. Really.

Georges' mother opens it anyway, shooing away the gawpers outside. Then she sits and says grace.

MOTHER

For what we are about to receive.
May the lord make us thankful.

Georges' father shoots a meaningful look at Georges and gets a kick under the table from George's mother.

Georges grins back, loving the old guy's earthy sense of humour.

Madeleine inspects her soup.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

It's chicken.

82. INT. FARMHOUSE, MAIN BEDROOM. NIGHT

This is normally Georges' parents room, full of over-sized provincial furniture, with an icon on the wall above the bed.

Georges and Madeleine are making love, at least Georges is making love while Madeleine lies rather immobile underneath him in the big creaking bed

GEORGE

Oh Madeleine. Madeleine

MADELEINE

Just ... Quietly

GEORGES

(In ecstasy)
God. Ah!

MADELEINE

(In pain)
Ow. I'm sorry. My hair.

GEORGES
Sorry.

Getting back into his stride

MADELEINE
Just not so rough

GEORGE
(Barely conscious)
Oh. Bliss. Ecstasy.

MADELEINE
Can I ask you something. Dear
Georges.

He pauses, mid-stroke.

GEORGES
Uh?

MADELEINE
Do you mind if we leave early?

Georges' ardour diminishes, finally accepting that she's not really into it.

GEORGES
You sure?
(raising his head)
I mean there's places I'd like to
show you, friends and relatives you
could meet.

MADELEINE
I just I prefer it in Paris. If
that's all right.

Georges looks crestfallen. She begins to move underneath him.

MADELEINE (CONT'D)
Dear Georges. Just for Mado.

83. INT. 'LA VIE FRANCAISE', LOBBY. DAY

Georges arrives for work, checking his fob watch. He passes Norbert and Jacques on the stairs

JACQUES
Georges. Back early.

GEORGES
The, um, weather wasn't up to much.

Jacques smiles at this.

NORBERT
Saw your latest: "Rudderless ship of
state" Brilliant.

GEORGES
Thank You

NORBERT
...Vintage Forestier

Georges hurries on past them. In the background he hears
Jacques say:

JACQUES
(O.S)
A least he doesn't have the cough.

84. INT. 'LA VIE FRANCAISE'. UPPER CORRIDOR. DAY

Continuing along the corridor, Georges crosses paths with
Saint-Potin

SAINT POTIN
Hello sir. How was it?

GEORGES
Very pleasant.

Trying to maintain a dignified distance, which the narrow
corridor won't allow.

SAINT POTIN
Country air. Home cooking. I
remember me own honeymoon, brought
the blooming ceiling down on top of
them. God it was worth it!

His crudity is oddly reassuring. At least someone takes the
honeymoon at face value. Georges knocks on the door of
Walter's office and enters.

85. INT. 'LA VIE FRANCAISE', WALTER'S OFFICE. DAY.

Walter is at his desk. There's a handsome man in his thirties, Roche-Matthieu, sitting in one of the leather armchairs.

WALTER

Duroy!

GEORGE

Sorry I'm late.

WALTER

(Introducing the stranger)

Henri de la Roche-Matthieu, foreign secretary to the opposition.

GEORGES

Of course. I admire your writings.

They shake hands.

ROCHE-MATTHIEU

Likewise

GEORGE

Well I've barely...

WALTER

Henri reckons the government are close to collapse. One big push should see them over the edge.

ROCHE-MATTHIEU

Our mutual "friend" Monsieur Langremont has gone right out on a limb: wants us to double the garrison in Algeria and secure it by invading Morocco.

Georges shakes his head

GEORGE

Idiot

ROCHE-MATTHIEU

Everyone know its nonsense, it just takes someone with the authority to say so: someone outside politics, who knows North Africa, a patriot, whose bravery is a matter of public record...

GEORGE

Look, I'm just...

ROCHE-MATTHIEU

You'd be our standard-bearer. The
unofficial voice of the new regime.
Generating consent, defining
policy. That's real power.

(A beat)

Maybe you'd like to think about it.

Georges smiles in disbelief. Walter takes this as a "yes".

WALTER

Done! What did I tell you?
Unstoppable!

86. EXT. CHARLES' APARTMENT. LATE AFTERNOON

Georges' home is now the grand apartment block where Charles once lived.

Georges disembarks from a hansom cab, almost forgetting to pay the coachman in his excitement. He lets himself in and dashes inside.

87. INT. STAIRWELL. DAY

George races to the top of the stairs, shouting excitedly

GEORGES (O.S.)

Madeleine! Madeleine!

The door is opened by the butler, who obviously regards Georges exuberance as a sign of ill-breeding.

BUTLER

I'll take your coat.

88. INT. CHARLES' APARTMENT, STUDY. DAY.

Georges writes. Visibly filling out into his new role of king-maker. Madeleine walks up and down behind him, in a dressing gown

MADELEINE

...In the mad financial gamble of
colonial expansion, Mr langremont
now demands we double the stakes,
while meanwhile extending the

horrors of conflict to thousands more innocent civilians. This cannot be allowed to happen.

GEORGE
...and it will not happen.

MADELEINE
....And if honest Frenchmen have a voice, it will not happen.

A perfect start to the campaign. Georges raises his head to kiss her.

MADELEINE (CONT'D)
Signed....

GEORGES
(signs)
Georges Duroy.

MADELEINE
Or Maybe Du Roy.

Georges tries out the signature, she leans over him to look at it

GEORGES
It does have a certain...

MADELEINE
Small d large R.

He signs himself du Roy.

GEORGES
You don't think it's a bit..?

MADELEINE
Not in the least. For the architect of government policy. Or even: Du Roy de Cantel.

Georges writes: Georges du Roy de Cantel.

MADELEINE (CONT'D)
Impressive.

GEORGES
So long as they never visit Cantel.

MADELEINE

And who would?

Laughing, Georges slips a hand between the folds of her gown.
She removes it

MADELEINE (CONT'D)

It's eleven in the morning.

89. INT. WALTER'S HOUSE, DRAWING ROOM. DAY

At Madame Walter's weekly salon. Georges is fielding compliments from all sides. "Very Bold", "Penetrating", "Time someone took a stand".

GEORGES

Thank you. You're too kind.

Poised and smiling like the celebrity he has become. He sees Monsieur de Marelle approaching. Clotilde hangs back, avoiding him

DE MARELLE

Duroy. Wanted to congratulate you on that last piece - I couldn't have put it better myself.

Following Clotilde with his eyes, Georges notices Madeleine, who is standing on the other side of the room in intimate conversation with Vaudrec.

DE MARELLE (CONT'D)

Algeria's been a lost cause from start to finish. The board have finally seen the light: cut our losses and be done with it.

Georges is not really concentrating, now trying to figure out what's going on between Vaudrec and Madeleine

GEORGES

You think so?

DE MARELLE

It's plain as day. Always has been. Just needed someone with guts to stand up and say it.

Madame Walter cuts in

MADAME WALTER

(To Georges)
Ah there you are
(To De Marelle)
Can I steal him before he gets too
big-headed?

She steers him away, pressing his hand. Their relationship is more equal than before, and more flirtatious.

GEORGES
Virginie. You look lovelier than
ever.

Its true. She's done her hair differently, and lowered her neckline. She taps him playfully with her fan, guiding him towards her teenage daughter, who is now being groomed for marriage.

MADAME WALTER
You remember Suzanne. She's been
pestering me to talk to you.

SUZANNE
(Embarrassed)
Mummy.

MADAME WALTER
She has a worrying weakness for left
wing intellectuals.

GEORGES
Please. I'm a writer.

MADAME WALTER
The very pinnacle of her ambition.

Then she turns away, briefly, to welcome someone else.

MADAME WALTER (CONT'D)
Contessa!

Suzanne scowls after her mother, mortified in front of the Georges, whom she secretly admires.

GEORGE
My mother was like that too

SUZANNE
No she wasn't.

She walks away, petulantly

Georges own eyes return to: Madeleine, still deep in conversation with Vaudrec, the pair of them now joined by Walter and Roche-Matthieu.

There's something conspiratorial about that group of four which makes Georges uneasy.

Madame Walter returns, follows his line of sight.

MADAME WALTER

Laroche matthieu. Our future prime minister if your campaign succeeds.

GEORGES

What campaign's that?

MADAME WALTER

They're right you know: You're very good, for a man who said politics was all hot air.

GEORGES

My wife helps.

Madame Walter laughs. In the background, monsieur Walter has summoned Suzanne and is introducing her to some feckless toff. Clotilde glances up at George and away, pretending to have no interest in him.

MADAME WALTER

(Over this)

I said to Walter I want a man like you for each of my daughters.

GEORGES

What did he say?

MADAME WALTER

He's such a snob. He'll settle for nothing less than a duke.

She leads off.

MADAME WALTER (CONT'D)

But come, you're neglecting your true constituency.

Georges follows her towards a group of admiring women.

90. INT. CHARLES' APARTMENT. MAIN BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Georges sits in bed, reading some government documents, occasionally glancing up at Madeleine who crosses and recrosses the room in her night-gown, preparing for bed.

GEORGES

The count seemed on good form.

MADELEINE

He's been unwell. Getting old I suppose.

GEORGES

You hardly left his side.

MADELEINE

I enjoy his company.

She powders between her breasts, dabs perfume behind her ears.

GEORGES

So how does he rate Roche-Matthieu?

MADELEINE

Roche matthieu's his nephew.

GEORGES

Ah. So that's the connection.

MADELEINE

Were you watching me all the time.

GEORGES

Just. Taking an interest

MADELEINE

I just think there might be more productive uses for your time.

GEORGES

And we must be 'productive'.

She gets into bed. Georges begins to stroke her

MADELEINE

Should I invite Clotilde for dinner.
Or are you and she still not talking.

GEORGES

We talk. We're the best of friends.

MADELEINE

Good.

Georges puts his papers aside. He wants to make love.

MADELEINE (CONT'D)

If you want to read I can do next door.

GEORGE

No

MADELEINE

I might do that anyway, for a bit if you don't mind. This bed's a bit hard for me.

GEORGE

Whatever you like darling.

91. INT. JOURNALISTS ROOM.

Norbert sits alone, composing some satirical verses.

GEORGES

Norbert. You're a man of the world.

Norbert looks up.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

How often would regard as normal for a man and wife to have conjugal relations? Just out of interest

NORBERT

Once a week. Then twice with his mistress. Why?

GEORGES

Just.... Researching

92. INT. GEORGE'S BEDROOM. NIGHT

George takes off his dressing gown, hangs it in the wardrobe, which is half-empty.

He goes through the communicating door into the adjoining bedroom which Madeleine has made her own.

GEORGE

You moved your clothes.

MADELEINE

I thought it was simpler. I can always come through if you need me.

GEORGE

Would you like to come through now.

MADELEINE

Time of the month.

GEORGE

Ah.

He closes the door, not entirely convinced by this excuse.

As takes off his dressing gown he notices something lying half concealed under the bed.

Georges stoops to pick it up: a white glove with the monogrammed V on the cuff.

93. INT. CHARLES' APARTMENT, STUDY. MORNING

Georges sits at the desk, writing, Madeleine walks up and down behind him, dictating.

MADELEINE

In short, with each passing week, poor Mr Langremont is increasingly reminiscent of ...

GEORGES

....An unwelcome suitor

MADELEINE

... An estate agent, for a property no-one wants, still trying to sell us his notion of a greater north African protectorate which everyone realises

GEORGES

....is a castle built on sand.

MADELEINE

Yes. That's rather good.

A glance at the clock

GEORGES
You're expecting?

MADELEINE
No.

Her face is a picture of innocence

GEORGES
Tell me something. Did Charles have
lovers?

MADELEINE
I didn't ask him.

GEORGES
And you? While you were married to
him.

MADELEINE
He didn't ask me.

Georges blots his article and puts it in his briefcase.

94. EXT. PARIS STREET. DAY

Georges walks to work, tension in his face and in his stride.

A carriage passes. Georges looks up and catches a glimpse of
Vaudrec traveling in the opposite direction.

Georges continues on his way for a bit then stops in his
tracks.

GEORGES
(To himself)
No. Damn the fellow.

He turns sharply on his heel and goes back the way he came.

95. INT. CHARLES' APARTMENT, ENTRANCE HALL. DAY

Georges lets himself in.

BUTLER
Back already, sir? Is there
something I can....

Georges sweeps him roughly aside.

96. INT. CHARLES' APARTMENT, DRAWING ROOM. DAY

The housemaid is doing some cleaning.

HOUSEMAID

Monsieur?

GEORGES

I'm looking for Madame.

The housemaid shoots a panicky look at the butler who has followed Georges through.

HOUSEMAID

She's...

GEORGES

Bedroom or study?

HOUSEMAID

....gone out I think.

Georges carries on past her to....

97. INT. CHARLES' APARTMENT, HALLWAY. DAY

The study is empty. Georges continues along the hall and opens the door to the spare bedroom.

It's empty too. Georges closes the door and looks down the long corridor to the door at its far end: the master bedroom.

Blood pounding, he begins walking down the corridor. It seems that the walls are closing in on him. The door receding as he approaches.

Georges finally reaches it and steadies himself against it.

At the other end of the corridor the household staff have gathered, watching breathlessly as...

Georges puts his hand on the door knob.

He begins to turn the handle. Then hesitates. Thinks.

Georges releases the handle, stands back from the door, composes himself, then turns and walks back the way he came.

The servants part to let him through. Georges doesn't even look at them - traitors every one. He carries on through the drawing room and away.

98. EXT. STREET. DAY

Georges walks down the street, brain churning.

99. EXT. CLOTILDE'S HOUSE. DAY

The sky is darkening

He arrives outside Clotilde's house and looks up. The first floor curtains are drawn: no sign of life there. Georges turns away and heads back off down the street.

100. INT. 'LA VIE FRANCAISE'. WASH ROOM. DAY.

A growl of thunder outside

Georges looks like he's run a race. He douses his face in the sink and tries unsuccessfully to comb his hair flat. Walter comes in

WALTER

There you are. Roche-Matthieu's been going mad. No sign of you, no word from Madeleine....

GEORGES

Its nothing to do with Madeleine, its me who's writing the speech for him.

WALTER

Well where the hell is it, Charles?

Georges gives a bitter smile. Walter doesn't get it

GEORGES

Its Georges, Georges Duroy

WALTER

Whatever your blasted name is. I don't care who writes the stuff or who's screwing who to get it. All I'm interested in is words on paper. We understand each other?

GEORGES

Absolutely.

As the door swings shut we catch Georges expression in the mirror behind it, looking after Walter with an expression of cold hatred.

101. INT. WALTER'S HOUSE. DRAWING ROOM. DAY

Georges paces around, waiting to be received, regarding a portrait of Monsieur and Madame Walter.

Painted fifteen years previously it shows Madame Walter as a luscious society beauty, her husband as a self-satisfied young man of Georges' age.

Madame Walter appears, delighted to see Georges

MADAME WALTER

Georges. Good news from the chamber. I hear the opposition is positively...

Then she breaks off, disconcerted by his dark expression.

MADAME WALTER (CONT'D)

What is it?

GEORGES

I need to talk to you. In confidence.

On his glance, the servant who accompanied Madame Walter, curtsies and leaves the room.

MADAME WALTER

Nothing bad I hope.

No reply.

MADAME WALTER (CONT'D)

Georges?

Georges turns and starts pacing the room.

GEORGES

Maybe I shouldn't have come.

MADAME WALTER

No. Tell me.

He has stopped opposite the window, his back to her.

MADAME WALTER (CONT'D)

Whatever it is. I would rather know than not know. Is it about your marriage.

Georges laughs without humour. Does everyone know his marital problems?

GEORGES

Its more about yours. The unfortunate fact is... I find myself in love with you.

Madame Walter is caught between incredulity and horror, unsure whether to be flattered or offended.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

It's ridiculous I know, but there you have it.

Nothing self-pitying in his tone, rather anger at the injustice of these things.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

I can't work. Can't focus. I stand outside your house at night, sit at work all day day-dreaming about you.

MADAME WALTER

You don't know what you're saying.

GEORGES

I know this isn't what you want to hear, nor what you deserve to hear. Your kindness and guidance have....

Madame Walter interrupts, finally finding her bearings:

MADAME WALTER

No. Stop! Am I a girl? Am I a debutante? I'm a married woman. My husband is your friend, your employer.

GEORGES

I know.

MADAME WALTER

Well, how could you imagine....

GEORGES

I didn't. I don't. The unhappy fact is that these feelings are so strong...

MADAME WALTER

Enough! Stop it!

Georges turns away again, his expression calculating, though his voice remains that of a lovelorn suitor

GEORGES

I should resign from the newspaper.
I should leave the country.

MADAME WALTER

You're mad, Georges. Please -
tell me you're unwell.

GEORGES

Yes. It's a kind of illness. These
last few months I've felt weak every
time I've seen you. Of course this
isn't the solution.

She reaches for the servants' bell.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

Don't. You don't need to. I'm
leaving now.

102. INT. WALTER'S HOUSE. DRAWING ROOM. LATER

Madame Walter stands by the window, looking down as Georges leaves her house and heads off towards the park.

103. EXT. WALTER'S HOUSE. CONTINUOUS

On the far side of the street Georges turns to look back up at the window, catching Madame Walter as she steps back from the window and out of sight.

Georges smiles, knowing he's got her. There's a new firmness to his step as he sets out across the park, striding forwards into....

104. INT. ROCHE-MATTHIEU'S APARTMENT, RECEPTION ROOM. NIGHT

SERVANT

(Announces)

Monsieur and Madame Georges Du Roy
de Cantel.

Cynicism has given Georges' appearance a certain gravitas. Madeleine is ravishing as ever. They look like the perfect couple.

Roche-Matthieu leaves off talking with Clotilde to greet them.

ROCHE-MATTHIEU

Georges, Madeleine, you honour me.

Smiling automatically, Georges scans the invited guests, taking in Madame Walter, who looks pleasingly terrified to see him.

MADELEINE

(Over this)

Clotilde. So good to see you again.

Clotilde doesn't return the compliment, turning instead to Georges

CLOTILDE

Georges. Married life seems to agree with you.

GEORGES

Exactly as you predicted.

Madeleine senses that there's an edge to this comment. She takes Roche Matthieu's arm and goes off with him. Clotilde stays with Georges, amused.

CLOTILDE

That bad?

GEORGES

And yours?

CLOTILDE

(Smiling)

My what?

GEORGE

Your husband, he's ...?

CLOTILDE

Away.

105. INT. ROCHE-MATTHIEU'S APARTMENT, DINING ROOM. NIGHT

Dinner is ending. Georges is sitting beside Clotilde, feeling pleasantly stimulated by her proximity.

Across the table, Madeleine sits between Walter and Roche-Matthieu who now gets to his feet, tapping his glass:

ROCHE-MATTHIEU
Ladies and gentlemen. We find ourselves at the threshold of a new era. And with luck... A new government?

Agreement, applause.

ROCHE-MATTHIEU (CONT'D)
I'd like just to offer a toast to the man who made it all possible..

Georges assumes he means Walter

ROCHE-MATTHIEU (CONT'D)
...Monsieur Georges du Roy de Cantel.

More applause. Monsieur Walter claps the loudest.

ROCHE-MATTHIEU (CONT'D)
Though a relative newcomer his recent editorials have done more damage to the Liberals in a few weeks than my party has inflicted in almost three years.

WALTER
Well said!

ROCHE-MATTHIEU
In his articles and in the speeches he's written for me recently...

On Madeleine, who co-wrote most of these

ROCHE-MATTHIEU (CONT'D)
...one can't help but be impressed by his manifest intelligence, his generosity of spirit....

Madame Walter sneaks an admiring glance at Georges, which is registered by Clotilde.

ROCHE-MATTHIEU (CONT'D)

...His principled stance against the immorality of war. His championship of the common man.

A servant whispers something to Madeleine

ROCHE-MATTHIEU (CONT'D)
I give you Georges du Roy. Our country is richer for his contribution!

Georges gets to his feet to reply.

Everyone is looking up at him except for Madeleine, who is reading a note she's been handed by the servant.

GEORGES
I'd like to point out that Henri wrote that particular speech *himself*.

Laughter, Georges falls serious

GEORGES (CONT'D)
As many of you know I came here with nothing. These attributes you flatter me with, Henri ... well the truth is, everything I've become, I owe to the people at this table.

He seems sincere about this. Both Clotilde and Madame Walter are moved by his generosity.

GEORGES (CONT'D)
Ladies and Gentlemen my principles are your principles, my success is your success. I salute you, and I salute our host...

Raising his glass to Roche Matthieu.

GEORGES (CONT'D)
...our future foreign minister..

More applause. The speech is a huge success with everyone although Madeleine seems to have other things on her mind.

As Georges sits down he sees her whispering to Roche-Matthieu.

Roche-Matthieu nods and escorts her from her place. They come round to Georges' side of the table

MADELEINE

(Sotto)

If you'll excuse me, I've had a note from our friend Vaudrec. He needs me.

GEORGES

(Acidly)

We're having dinner. Can't he wait.

MADELEINE

I'm afraid not.

Under the table. Clotilde takes Georges hand and squeezes it. Bolstered by this, Georges rises from his seat to excuse his wife.

GEORGES

Well, you must do what you feel right.

Walter stands as well.

WALTER

Have to leave early myself I'm afraid. Duroy: would you be so kind as to take my wife home?

Georges was looking forwards to enjoying Clotilde's company. Now he turns to Madame Walter, who looks trapped, silently pleading for him to refuse.

GEORGES

My pleasure.

He stoops to kiss Clotildes hand.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

Madame de Marelle. I trust we'll meet again, very soon indeed.

106. INT. CARRIAGE, MOVING. NIGHT

Georges and Madame Walter sit opposite each other, as the carriage rattles towards its destination. Nervousness makes Madame Walter over-talkative.

MADAME WALTER

Roche-Matthieu was right. He owes you everything.

Georges sits in darkness, allowing her to prattle on.

MADAME WALTER (CONT'D)

I hear Algerian stocks have gone into terminal decline. No-one thinks we should still be in there. Langremont may still have the army on his side but without the money men he's.....

GEORGES

(Interrupts)

Virginie. I know you're not interested in stocks and shares. And God knows I have no interest in Monsieur Langremont

Madame Walter looks chastened.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

The other day, you were dignified as always, in the face of unpardonable rudeness.

MADAME WALTER

(Hoarse)

It wasn't rudeness.

With passing the street-lights Georges' face keeps appearing and disappearing in the darkness, making it difficult for her to read his reaction.

MADAME WALTER (CONT'D)

I know you're unhappy Georges. I know how it is at home.

GEORGES

That doesn't excuse me.

MADAME WALTER

When you declared yourself to me....

It was just that.... At the time it seemed like farce. At my age, to be admired by a man like yourself is ...unexpected to say the least.

What's she saying? Georges keeps quiet, letting her forge on blindly.

MADAME WALTER (CONT'D)

But then, as you know, what a woman expects and what she wants are ... quite different things.

She's lost sight of him in the darkness again.

MADAME WALTER (CONT'D)

Will you kiss me Georges?

Georges smiles secretly to himself, then throws himself across the carriage and devours her.

She was expecting something more chaste. His sudden passion panics her and she ends up fighting him off.

MADAME WALTER (CONT'D)

Georges, Georges!

They separate, sitting together on the double seat, staring at each other in the darkness.

GEORGES

I am yours to command

MADAME WALTER

(Breathless)

Our Lady of Liberty. Tuesday at three.

107. INT. LOVE-NEST. NIGHT.

Georges enters.

The little apartment has been unused for some time. There are dust covers over the furniture. The lights are off, but the curtains are slightly parted allowing moonlight to fall on the figure of a woman. Georges inhales her scent.

GEORGES

Ah. Madame de Marelle.

No reply. He crosses the room towards her.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

This is very strange behaviour you know, returning to the same ungrateful wretch who left you to marry your friend. I really don't understand it.

CLOTILDE

I have soft spot.

GEORGE

I know it well

Smothering each other in kisses

CLOTILDE

You know Madame Walter's in love
with you.

GEORGES

(Laughs
dismissively)
Madame Walter?

CLOTILDE

I was watching her. Trying not to
look at you, then finding herself
unable to resist.

Allowing him to undress her. The rustle of silk, and the
sound of their breathing in the darkness.

GEORGES

I know that feeling

CLOTILDE

Why do we do this to each other.
All these weeks we should be
together.

GEORGES

God. That feels good.

CLOTILDE

It is Good. However bad it is. Its
not bad, its good. Tell me to be
quiet.

Moonlight on bare skin. The white of her camisole as they
descend to the carpet, pulling at each others clothes.

GEORGES

I like you talking

CLOTILDE

I do nothing else. All day. Words
words words. I'm only at peace with
you, Georges.

GEORGES
Like this

CLOTILDE
Like this

GEORGES
Oh Christ.

CLOTILDE
Yes.

GEORGES
You know I've not made love properly
...for about a year.

CLOTILDE
(laughing)
Well I hope that teaches you....
Not to go getting married... At the
drop of a.... Oh.. Oh Yes.

108. INT. CHARLES' APARTMENT. MAIN BEDROOM. DAWN

Madeleine comes in, looking fragile from lack of sleep,
heading for her own adjoining bed-chamber.

George steps out of the bathroom en suite, putting in his
cufflinks, with a look of someone who commands the moral
high-ground

MADELEINE
Oh. You're here

GEORGES
The count get over his crisis?

MADELEINE
He'd collapsed at home. They think
it's his heart.

GEORGES
Well I'm sure you managed to restore
his circulation. Anyway...

He flings open the curtain, catching Madeleine in the harsh
glare of daylight

GEORGES (CONT'D)

Henri's brought forwards his vote of no confidence. I'll need your help with the speech.

She's too tired even to think.

MADELEINE

We'll see. I need to be with Vaudrec again.

GEORGES

Amazing appetite, for a man in his condition.

She doesn't rise to this.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

Very well. I'll write it myself.

109. INT. LOVE-NEST. AFTERNOON.

Georges sits in his shirt-sleeves at the writing desk, testing out phrases on himself as he pens Roche-Matthieu's speech.

GEORGES

"Langremont. The odious Langremont? The 'honorable' monsieur Langremont. For all his talk of empire, must now realize. No. Must be forced to accept that he...

Clotilde kisses the back of his neck

GEORGES (CONT'D)

In a minute. Ah yes. Brilliant.

He writes, chuckling to himself. Success has given him a kind of reckless mania. Amused, Clotilde comes to read over his shoulder.

CLOTILDE

Will Roche-Matthieu really say that.

GEORGES

I write it. He says it.

CLOTILDE

So you're running the country now.

GEORGES
As from Friday

She's massaging his shoulders.

CLOTILDE
And to think when I met you. My
poor lonely soldier.

GEORGES
That's not actually helping Clo.

She begins unbuttoning his shirt, as Georges races to the end
of his article

GEORGES (CONT'D)
"No! And again no! Because....

CLOTILDE
Its like when we started. I canm't
get enough of you

GEORGES
"No ideas. No principles, no...

She presses against his back, runs her hands over his chest.

GEORGES (CONT'D)
"Mandate. No mandate! And so. And
so..

Almost finished writing..

GEORGES (CONT'D)
U--huh. Mmm-hmm "...That it is
....timeto go!

110. INT. 'LA VIE FRANCAISE', WALTER'S OFFICE. DAY.

From outside, through the open window, comes the sound of
political demonstrators chanting.

Walter reads the speech, which has many deletions and smudges.

Georges, paces the office floor, impatiently awaiting
Walter's approval.

WALTER
Hmm. Not quite.

GEORGES
Not quite what?

WALTER

Not quite good enough. Better do it again.

GEORGES

Well, what do you want different?

WALTER

You're the writer. That's why I pay you.

He hands the article back. Georges doesn't take it.

GEORGES

You pay me, you don't own me. I do have other commitments.

WALTER

Your commitment, Georges Duroy, is to write what I tell you to write...

GEORGES

My commitment 'sir' is to write as my conscience dictates. That is what my reputation and indeed the whole reputation on this newspaper is founded.

WALTER

I don't give a rat's arse for your famous conscience. I'm telling you, as my employee to come here and....

Georges walks out, leaving him to rant.

111. EXT. CATHEDRAL SQUARE. DAY

The great bell tolling, pigeons scattering as Georges strides across the deserted square, past students pasting anti-government posters: *Troops out of Algeria*

He carries on to the cathedral....

112. INT. CATHEDRAL, ENTRANCE. DAY

A vast and cavernous interior.

Georges stands in the doorway, a dark silhouette.

High above the altar, the organist is practising a fugue. Rolling arpeggios, neurotic and insistent, come bowling out of the darkness.

Georges lets the door slam behind him.

113. INT. THE CATHEDRAL. DAY

The music continues.

Madame Walter hears the door close and looks up from lighting a candle. A draught disturbs the flames. Then footsteps.

INTERCUT: Georges walking through the shadows, his boots clicking on the engraved flagstones. He stops by the confessional, and looks under the curtain: it's empty.

114. INT. THE CATHEDRAL. SIDE CHAPEL. DAY

The alcove is dominated by a painted figure of Christ. Madame Walter crosses herself and kneels, a hunted look in her eyes.

INTERCUT: Georges has lost her. Rows of pillars extend to either side, vanishing into the gloom. The fugue continues, louder here, more frenetic.

Madame Walter prays silently for divine guidance. When she looks up at the face of Christ she sees in it an uncanny resemblance to Georges.

It *is* Georges. His face reflected in the glass. The music stops.

GEORGES

There you are.

She turns as if stung.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

Come with me.

MADAME WALTER

I can't Georges.

GEORGES

Just to talk.

He holds out a hand. She's shaking her head, her eyes imploring, but at the same time, her hand slips into his and with that....

115. INT. LOVE NEST. LATE AFTERNOON

A door closes.

Madame Walter turns and turns again, looking round the small mirrored apartment: A fire burning in the grate. Fresh flowers on the table. The large bed.

Her gaze whirls back to Georges, who has hung up his coat and is taking off his cufflinks. He's not here to talk.

MADAME WALTER

You promised.

She heads for the door. Georges doesn't try to stop her.

GEORGES

Go on then, if you think it will make you feel better. I can tell you now that it won't.

MADAME WALTER

I'm a married woman

GEORGES

Huh! You think what you and Walter have is a marriage? Its a business arrangement: your social contacts for his money.

Taking her in his arms

GEORGES (CONT'D)

This is a marriage...

She tries weakly to pull free. He holds her fiercely.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

This.

MADAME WALTER

Its a sin.

GEORGES

No. The sin was when we sold ourselves to someone incapable of love. Now we're undoing that.

He pulls a bow at her collar. It comes undone. He begins undoing the buttons below it, parting the material to reveal

her throat, then her collar bones, then the tops of her breasts.

There are tears in her eyes. She's looking at him, dumbly imploring him to stop, but somehow unable to lift a finger as he moves down her body, unbuttoning and unlacing her clothes.

116. INT. LOVE NEST. LATE AFTERNOON

Georges straightens, buttoning up his own shirt.

He puts on his jacket, hearing, faintly, from outside, the sound of yet another political street demonstration.

He looks down, to where Madame Walter lies naked under the coverlet, in a contented post-coital doze.

MADAME WALTER

You're leaving me.

GEORGES

Roche-Matthieu is speaking at four.

I need to be at the office when
then announce the fall of the
government.

She watches him, smiling, as he checks his appearance in the mirror.

MADAME WALTER

Say you love me.

He smiles, kisses her, whispers

GEORGES

Time to go.

117. EXT. CATHEDRAL SQUARE. NIGHT.

We are borne upwards on the echoing chants of a large, noisy crowd, the slogan becoming louder, more coherent and audible now:

CROWD (O.S.)

Time to go! Time to Go!

As fireworks explode in sky above Paris.

118. EXT. STREET STALL. NIGHT.

A newspaper boy is dispensing newspapers, which are snatched away as quickly as he can pocket the money.

NEWSPAPER BOY

Vote of no confidence! Get your paper! New coalition! Langremont resigns.

Georges grabs a paper and carries on to....

119. EXT. CAFE DES ANGLAIS. NIGHT

Outside the cafe where Georges first met Charles, there's a great press of revelers. Waiters push them aside so that Georges can enter.

WAITER

Come on please, let Mr Du Roy through.

A voice shouts from inside

DE MARELLE

Georges! Over here.

As Georges makes his way to De Marelle's table, total strangers recognize him and stand up to applaud.

120. INT. CAFE DES ANGLAIS. NIGHT.

Against a background of boisterous celebration. Georges leans back in his chair, smoking a large cigar and enjoying his new celebrity.

DE MARELLE

So who'll be chancellor?

GEORGES

Clemenceau of course.

DE MARELLE

You think so?

GEORGES

I know so.

The waiter brings a bottle of champagne.

WAITER

From table twelve sir.

Jacques and Norbert are there. They wave in greeting.

BUSINESSMAN
...and minister of information?

DE MARELLE
They don't need a minister, they've
got George.
(Laughter)
Defence will be Boulanger?

GEORGES
No. Gaumont's our man now.

DE MARELLE
And we're definitely out of
Algeria.

GEORGES
Do keep up, Phillippe. That's the
very issue we won on.

Laughter. De Marelle takes it all in good humour, calling for
more champagne.

DE MARELLE
Waiter!

121. EXT. PARIS PARK. DAY.

A summers day. Georges and Clotilde promenade in the sunshine
together, keeping a chaste distance apart, passing other
couples on the walk-way.

Its a reprise of their earlier scene in the zoo except that
Georges is now the main focus of everyone they pass, the
object of admiration and comment.

CLOTILDE
Walter's pleased?

GEORGES
Of course. "Voice of the new
regime" Circulation's doubled,
advertising's trebled.

CLOTILDE
And all thanks to you.

Georges shrugs, casually acknowledging some aristocrat in a
passing landau.

CLOTILDE (CONT'D)

Phillippe thinks you're the fountain of all knowledge. He cuts out your editorials and sends them to his friends. I think he's more in love with you than I am.

GEORGES

Or at least more than Madeleine is.

CLOTILDE

That bothers you.

GEORGES

She can do what she likes now.

Although Clotilde knows she has touched a raw nerve

122. INT. CHARLES' APARTMENT. BREAKFAST ROOM. MORNING.

Georges is eating breakfast, a picture of relaxed affluence in his silk dressing gown, reading his own leader in the newspaper:

He looks up as Madeleine comes in her evening clothes.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

Ah. My wife the whore has been out all night again.

(To the servant)

Will you set another place for the whore?

Madeleine ignores this, crossing the room to the far door.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

Vaudrec still rising to the occasion?

MADELEINE

He's dead.

She leaves. Georges sits there for a while, digesting this information.

123. INT. MADELEINE'S BEDROOM. MORNING.

Georges comes in to find Madeleine sitting on the bed

GEORGES

I'm sorry.

MADELEINE

The funeral's on Saturday. Will you come?

Georges laughs despite himself.

MADELEINE (CONT'D)

Did I say something amusing

GEORGES

No. Its absurd. You really expect me to mourn my wife's lover.

MADELEINE

Maybe this will change your mind.

She hands him a legal document

MADELEINE (CONT'D)

He left me some money. Of course as your wife I require your legal permission to accept it.

Georges hands back the letter

GEORGES

And of course I refuse.

MADELEINE

..regardless of the amount.

He'snot interested in the amount

MADELEINE (CONT'D)

Four hundred thousand. I'll settle for half if you will. Providing you attend his funeral.

GEORGES

And this is designed to do what, Madeleine - demonstrate to the world I'm as mercenary as you are?

MADELEINE

I'm asking for my husband's support, George, for half a day. And I'm offering to pay him two hundred thousand for it. Or is your damned

self-importance worth more than
that?

She crumples the letter and leaves the room. When she's gone, Georges picks it up and reads it.

124. INT. CATHEDRAL. DAY

A funeral cortege makes its way slowly down the aisle. The count's vast and shiny coffin leading the way, followed by Roche matthieu and other members of the count's family, then Madeleine.

...with Georges at her side

Madeleine's face is covered by a veil. Georges has no such defence. His mouth is set, eyes fixed straight ahead, trying to ignore the wagging tongues.

He can tell they're all whispering about him, to the front, behind and to either side.

The procession continues at a snail's pace. The dark and booming requiem reflecting Georges own dark mood.

The coffin is set down in front of the altar Madeleine lays a floral tribute.

ARCHBISHOP

Let us now give thanks for the life
of Auguste, twelfth count of
Vaudrec.

125. EXT. CATHEDRAL SQUARE. DAY

The ceremony is over. In pouring rain, Georges and Madeleine raise their umbrellas and leave the cathedral. Madeleine goes to talk to Roche-Matthieu.

Left alone in the crowd of departing mourners Georges looks around for a supportive friend. Everyone seems to be avoiding him.

Then he sees Monsieur de Marelle coming back towards him. Georges brightens, then he notices that, oddly, Clotilde is trying to pull her husband back. De marelle shakes her off. He's furious.

GEORGES

Phillippe?

DE MARELLE

Du Roy. I'm surprised you dare show
your face here.

Others have joined him - a hostile crowd of male mourners,
their umbrellas closing around him. Georges looks for
Clotilde

GEORGES

What are you talking about?

DE MARELLE

They've done a complete back-flip.
We stay in Algeria and secure it by
invading Morocco. General Gaumont
got the go-ahead this morning from
your friend Roche-Matthieu.

GEORGES

No. He's totally against all that.
His whole platform was....

DE MARELLE

.... was balderdash, designed to get
him elected! The moment he's in
power he thinks he's Napoleon
Bonaparte.

Georges whirls looking for Roche-Matthieu, and sees him
heading round the corner of the church sheltering madeleine
under his umbrella. Georges makes to follow. De marelle
blocks his way:

GEORGES

But I acted in good faith, Surely
you can't hold me responsible
for....

DE MARELLE

What you're responsible for, sir, is
the fact my company sold every last
holding it possessed in Algeria.

Clotilde tries to draw her husband away.

CLOTILDE

Please, Phillippe...

He shakes her off again

DE MARELLE

....shares that as from this morning
are worth a hundred times what we
sold them for.

GEORGE
Well buy them back!

DE MARELLE
They've been bought, you numbskull.
Vaudrec bought half of them and
your boss Walter got the rest, minus
your own cut of the spoils.

GEORGES
What cut?! I didn't get anything!

DE MARELLE
Then you're worse than a crook,
you're a fool.

He storms off, taking Clotilde with him. The others disperse,
their umbrellas separating to reveal: Monsieur and Madame
Walter getting into their coach on the far side of the square.

GEORGES
(SHOUTS)
Monsieur Walter.

Georges races towards him, lowering his umbrella to pass
through the crowd who are still emerging from church.

GEORGES (CONT'D)
WALTER!

He's soaked before he catches up. Walter looks down from
inside his coach.

GEORGES (CONT'D)
You realize you've ruined me, my
whole reputation as a journalist...

WALTER
Reputation. Ha! You were
unemployed when I met you. Now
you're unemployed again.
(To the coachman)
Palais Carlsbourg.

The coach speeds off leaving Georges standing in the rain. He
turns to see a poster ('Army out of Algeria') being washed
off the cathedral wall.

Georges crosses the square and heads off round the other side of the cathedral, through a gate that has been left open, following the route taken by Laroche and Madeleine

126. EXT CATHEDRAL COLONNADE. DAY

A deserted colonnade runs down one wall of the cathedral. In each of its arches there is another locked gate, the entrance to some family tomb.

Georges is about to leave when he hears a sound

GEORGES
Madeleine?

He walks along the colonnade

GEORGES (CONT'D)
Madeleine!

On the ground, just inside one of the alcoves there's a white glove. In the gloom beyond he can see Madeleine, braced against the stone sepulchre, smiling

GEORGES (CONT'D)
Open this gate. What are you doing there.

A man's hand is inside her bodice, a man's head buried in her neck

MADELEINE
Go away.

Georges grips the bars, peering into the gloom he sees: Roche Matthieu fucking his wife.

GEORGES
Open this gate!

MADELEINE
What are you going to do. Wave your duelling pistol at us.

Roche matthieu laughs. Georges rattles the bars. The gate is locked fast.

GEORGES

You cheated me.

MADELEINE

You cheated yourself, Georges.
Imagining your stupid provincial
opinions ...were actually worth
something ...Go back to the farm
...you're out of your league here.

127. INT. LOVE-NEST. AFTERNOON.

Georges has been drying himself. He's naked to the waist, his hair wildly disheveled from toweling himself down.

There's a knock on the door. It's Madame Walter, a mother hen, full of clucking disapproval..

MADAME WALTER

Georges Georges, They've treated you
appallingly. I won't let them get
away with it.

Georges doesn't smile

MADAME WALTER (CONT'D)

Come ...

As she moves to embrace him, he grips her outstretched arms, a dangerous look on his face.

GEORGES

You knew, and you never thought to
warn me

MADAME WALTER

How could I know.

GEORGES

You live with Walter for Gods sake.
You didn't catch one comment, one
overheard conversation?

MADAME WALTER

Georges, I came to comfort you....

She rummages in her handbag and produces an invitation

MADAME WALTER (CONT'D)

...I'll insist he invites you to the ball and that way...

GEORGES

Turn around.

MADAME WALTER

Why.

She turns away. Georges pins her there, then reaches under her skirt and rips her linen undergarments.

MADAME WALTER (CONT'D)

What are you doing? Georges?

128. INT. LOVE-NEST. LATE AFTERNOON

Hold on Madame Walter as she finishes dressing herself, trying to repair her tattered dignity.

As she lets herself out she turns to Georges.

MADAME WALTER

When you're feeling better...

GEORGES

Get out of here. Go!

She hurries out. Georges sits there for a while darkly contemplating the carpet. Then he notices the time, picks up the invitation she dropped, and starts hurriedly tidying the place up.

129. INT. LOVE NEST. EVENING.

The flat is back in order. Georges sits smoking a cigarette, his anger turning to hopelessness

A knock comes at the door

GEORGES

Who is it.

CLOTILDE

Me

He opens the door.

Clotilde enters and takes him in her arms. No words are needed.

CLOTILDE (CONT'D)

I know. They're hateful

She nuzzles his neck, smells his skin.

CLOTILDE (CONT'D)

Its all about money. They vent their anger on you, then go toadying to Walter. No matter that he's a proven criminal, as well a boor. You hear he's buying that dreadful pile the Palais Carlsbourg? Complete with furniture and fittings. All the bad taste money can buy. I know you're innocent

GEORGES

(Shakes his head)

I was an idiot. I can't believe I let him fool me. One day you're the toast of Paris. Then Wham! An unemployed cuckold. The laughing stock of the world.

CLOTILDE

The world. Come on. Who are we talking about? Madeleine was a child prostitute, it's still the only job she knows. Walter made some money from a paper-mill, then married the daughter of a penniless aristocrat. I fell pregnant to some law-student, then married in panic to an ageing scrap-metal merchant who's not even the father of his daughter. Are these the people you look up to?

GEORGES

You are.

130. INT. LOVE NEST, NIGHT

LATER: They lie in naked in bed together like the old familiar lovers they have become: Georges on his back, thinking, Clotilde with her head on his chest.

CLOTILDE

We could leave.

GEORGE

This flat?

CLOTILDE

Leave Paris. Go to America. I could give piano lessons. You could pan for Gold. Ride in a wild west show.

GEORGES

You'd really give it all up?

CLOTILDE

All what? Of course I would

GEORGES

Clotilde...

He's about to tell her he loves her when she sees something glinting on the carpet

CLOTILDE

Who's ear-ring is that?

GEORGE

I've never seen it before.

Clotilde gets out of bed, picks it off the carpet and examines it.

CLOTILDE

Its Madame Walter's.

She turns, her blood running cold at the thought

CLOTILDE (CONT'D)

That was her scent on your skin. She wore this at the funeral. You had her here, just before me.

Georges can't disguise his guilt.

GEORGE

(Feebly)

Its not like you and me.

CLOTILDE

Well what is it like, Georges. God in these very sheets.

GEORGES

No, actually.

She's not listening, rampaging around the room, snatching up her clothes

CLOTILDE

Why? For what? To get back at Walter. Then bedding me to get back at Phillippe. It's not about love at all is it? You're just doing what Madeliene does.

GEORGE

Clotilde you're over-reacting.

CLOTILDE

Well tell me the correct reaction George, to the fact that you're sleeping with three women, none of whom you love and one of whom is old enough to be your mother.

She smashes a picture. He gets up and tries to restrain her. She's struggling free, swiping at him.

GEORGES

Clotilde. I do love you

CLOTILDE

You don't know what love is. You're not a man you're a horrible bug. You deserve to be squashed.

She manages to slap him on the face. Georges loses patience and whacks her back, harder than he intended, knocking her to the floor.

He immediately regrets it and reaches to help her. S He recoils like a wounded animal.

GEORGES

I didn't mean to. I'm sorry.

He knows he's done the unforgivable.

CLOTILDE

No. Thank You. It makes it easier.

131. INT. CHARLES' HOUSE. RECEPTION ROOM. NIGHT.

A clock ticks. The wind howls in the chimney

Georges sits in front of a roaring fire, turning something over and over in his hands.

Its the dueling pistol, given to him after his victory.

He pockets it, and takes from the table the invitation from Madame Walter

132. EXT. PALAIS CARLSBOURG NIGHT

Carriages are arriving outside the Walter's' new house, which is all lit up like a Christmas tree.

Georges disembarks alone. Heads turn as he approaches. Georges pointedly ignores them as he climbs the great entrance staircase.

133. INT. PALAIS CARLSBOURG. RECEPTION-HALL. NIGHT

Like Clotilde said: all the bad taste money can buy. The place is crammed with the loot of the world: chandeliers, statues, works of art.

Georges barely has time to hand in his cloak before he is spotted by Madame Walter.

MADAME WALTER

Georges.

She leaves the guests she is talking to and hurries to his side.

MADAME WALTER (CONT'D)

Dance with me.

GEORGES

No.

MADAME WALTER

(Clinging)

Just one waltz.

GEORGES

You're making a fool of yourself.

He disengages from her as Monsieur Walter comes up, looking for his daughter, seeing his wife, and Georges.

WALTER

Who invited him?

GEORGES

Your wife did.

Monsieur Walter addresses his wife, pointedly turning his back on Georges.

WALTER

Where's Suzanne? The Marquis de Beauchamps wants to meet her.

Madame Walter is too upset to talk, Georges leaves them both and pushes on through the crowd to see....

Clotilde, looking beautiful and bruised. She sees Georges and turns away.

Georges grabs a glass of champagne from a passing waiter forges on through the gossiping socialites.

Everywhere he looks, people either stare disapprovingly, or whisper, or turn away

He arrives at the ballroom where....

134. INT. PALAIS CARLSBOURG, BALLROOM. DAY

Madeleine is waltzing with Roche-Matthieu, laughing as they whirl around the dance floor. Even at a distance the chemistry between them is obvious.

Georges controls his anger, gulping his drink, convinced now that everyone is talking about him, mocking and insulting him on every side.

He heads for the nearest door, shoving a couple of people out of the way.

135. EXT. PALAIS CARLSBOURG. GARDEN BALCONY. NIGHT

He's reached the balcony. A staircase runs down into the garden below, where Chinese lanterns hang among the trees. Beyond that rises the glass dome of a palm house - sanctuary.

136. INT. PALAIS CARLSBOURG. PALM HOUSE. NIGHT

There's a marble fishpond at its centre. Light reflecting upwards onto the exotic trees. It's peaceful here: just the sound of the little fountain and distant music from the party.

Georges sits in the shadows, turning a bullet between his fingers

He is distracted by the rustle of a silk gown. He turns to see Suzanne enter, another refugee from the ball.

She hears a low whistle and turns

SUZANNE

Who's there?

Georges stands up, a shadowy figure among the dark green shadows.

GEORGES

Hello Suzanne.

SUZANNE

Oh. Its you. I thought I saw you dancing.

GEORGES

No. That was my wife and her lover.
Or rather my ex-wife to be.

Suzanne is looks confused, but interested, drawn to him.

Georges steps forwards, flipping the bullet into the pond. He's had a better idea

137. INT. ROCHE-MATTHIEU'S APARTMENT. HALLWAY. DAY

Loud knocking. A maid opens the door.

MAID

Yes. What is it?

No reply. The maid raises the latch and, in the same instant, the door flies open, crushing her against the wall.

GEORGES

Police.

Saint-Potin comes in behind him.

138. INT. ROCHE-MATTHIEU'S APARTMENT. STAIRCASE. DAY

Saint-Potin follows Georges up two flights of stairs....

139. INT. ROCHE MATTHIEU'S APARTMENT, UPPER HALLWAY. DAY

...and along the second-floor hallway.

140. INT. ROCHE-MATTHIEU'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM. DAY

Roche-Matthieu is making love to Madeleine when Georges kicks in the bedroom door.

ROCHE-MATTHIEU

What the hell!

Georges stands back. Saint-Potin comes forwards.

SAINT-POTIN

You are Monsieur Roche-Matthieu
of...

ROCHE-MATTHIEU

This is outrageous. Who the hell
let you people in here?

SAINT-POTIN

.... of 185 Rue des ..

ROCHE-MATTHIEU

Yes. Now shut up and....

SAINT-POTIN

(Patiently)

....of 185 rue des Cappuchines?

ROCHE-MATTHIEU

I'm immune from prosecution you
moron,

(To Georges)

So take your pet monkey and get the
hell out of my bedroom.

Saint-Potin is unfazed.

SAINT POTIN

And is this your wife?

Madeleine has been looking daggers at Georges. Now she shifts her gaze to Saint Potin.

SAINT-POTIN

Simple question, minister, wife or tart.

ROCHE-MATTHIEU

Out!

SAINT-POTIN

We'll say tart then.

Madeleine gets out of bed, not the least abashed by her nakedness.

ROCHE-MATTHIEU

Madeleine.

She ignores him, walks straight up to Georges, raises a hand, as if to strike him and...

Takes her dressing gown off the hook behind his head.

Then, turning to Saint-Potin:

MADELEINE

I'm not his wife. Now please leave.
You've caused enough damage here.

SAINT-POTIN

I'll still need your name, Madame.

MADELEINE

Duroy. Big D small r. All one word.

141. INT. 'LA VIE FRANCAISE', WALTER'S OFFICE. DAY

Walter is with Jacques, Norbert and a couple of senior editors, all standing round his desk in front of the huge arched window, regarding some architects' plans for a vast new Victorian office block with the logo 'La Vie Francaise' carved into the facade.

MONSIEUR WALTER

So.... Printing presses in the basement. First and second floors: juniors and accountants. My own suite here. Board room. Senior Journalists. Editor in chief....

The door slams open and Georges breezes in with a fistful of galley-proofs. Even Walter is momentarily dumbstruck.

GEORGES

Just a couple of articles for
tomorrow's edition.

MONSIEUR WALTER

You don't work here Duroy. You're
fired.

Georges hands him the first article.

GEORGES

To run in the legal announcements:
Divorce proceedings by Georges Du
Roy de Cantel against his wife
Madeleine.

WALTER

No-one's interested in your marital
problems.

Georges gives Walter the next article.

GEORGES

Then a lead article on her lover
Roche-Matthieu: History of
extramarital affairs, deception of
parliament over the Moroccan
invasion. Vast illegal profits
through proxy share ownership.
Etcetera etcetera.

Monsieur Walter tears it up. Georges hands him another sheet
of paper.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

This one - just a few lines.
Georges Du Roy de Cantel the
celebrated political commentator
installed as editor-in-chief of the
re-launched Vie Francaise.

MONSIEUR WALTER

(To Jacques)

He's insane. Get him of here.

Jacques shrugs apologetically and moves towards Georges.
Georges produces his trump card.

GEORGES

...and this for the society pages:
"Monsieur and Madame Walter proudly
announce the engagement of Du Roy de

Cantel to their daughter
Suzanne....."

WALTER

What!

142. INT. PALAIS CARLSBOURG, ENTRANCE LOBBY. DAY

The main door bursts open.

FOOTMAN

Sir?!

As Walter walks straight through him, yelling at the top of his voice.

MONSIEUR WALTER

Suzanne!

143. INT. PALAIS CARLSBOURG, BALLROOM. DAY.

Walter's voice can be heard echoing through the vast empty ballroom....

WALTER (O.S.)

Suzanne!

144. EXT. PALAIS CARLSBOURG, GARDEN. DAY

....startling the gardeners.

WALTER (O.S.)

Suzanne!

145. INT. PALAIS CARLSBOURG, BOUDOIR. DAY

....audible in boudoir where Madame Walter is getting dressed.

WALTER (O.S.)

SUZANNE!

He barges in.

WALTER (CONT'D)

Where is she?

MADAME WALTER

You were meeting her in town. A cab arrived. Said he was sent by.....

MONSIEUR WALTER

What would I send a cab for?! We've got three perfectly good carriages right here! Bastard! Bastard!

MADAME WALTER

Who, dear?

MONSIEUR WALTER

Scheming traitorous

MADAME WALTER

What are you talking about?

146. INT. PALAIS CARLSBOURG. VARIOUS. DAY

Through the halls and lobbies of the vast building comes the terrifying sound of Madame Walter screaming overlaps with...

147. EXT. COUNTRY INN. MORNING

A cockerel crowing outside a picturesque country inn. Georges crosses the lawn.

148. INT. COUNTRY INN, BEDROOM. MORNING

He comes in to find Suzanne in their four-poster bed, just waking up.

GEORGES

Suzanne.

SUZANNE

Are you coming to bed now?

Georges crosses to the writing desk.

GEORGES

First, you write a letter...

149. INT. PALAIS CARLSBOURG, RECEIVING ROOM. DAY

Whack! Madame Walter, the letter in one hand, fetches Georges a terrific slap across the cheek.

Georges sits there on an ornate gilded chair. He blinks twice then continues with what he was saying.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

...confirming that she is safe and that I have treated her, as you'd expect....

Madame Walter expects the worst. She slaps him again, even harder than before, then dissolves into bitter tears. Georges continues...

GEORGES (CONT'D)
...as you'd expect, with the utmost
courtesy; but....

The glint in his eye reminds Madame Walter of her own last sexual encounter with him.

MADAME WALTER
Liar!

MONSIEUR WALTER
Virginie!

GEORGES
...but that nonetheless she is
determined to marry me. If we
are....

MADAME WALTER
(Overlapping)
Never!

MONSIEUR WALTER
Will you listen to what he's saying

GEORGES
...If we are married promptly and
publicly....

MADAME WALTER
I know exactly what he's saying!

GEORGES
...we can avoid the kind of
unpleasant rumours that can
jeopardize a young woman's.....

MADAME WALTER
He's ruined her! Get him out! Out!

GEORGES
...reputation.

Georges stands, picking up his white kid gloves. The kind Vaudrec used to wear.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

You understand that if you turn down
my offer, your daughter will no
longer be presentable in society.

Madame Walter leaves the room in floods of tears. Georges
turns to Monsieur Walter.

GEORGES (CONT'D)

I'll also make it my life's work to
have you prosecuted for fraud.
Unlike her mother, Suzanne has an
excellent memory for business
conversations, in addition to her
other ... divers talents.

150. INT. CATHEDRAL. DAY

Church bells. Organ music booming through the Cathedral.

Georges stands alone facing the altar. Behind him sits...

...Madame Walter, a tragic figure - her eyes red-rimmed from
crying and hollow from lack of sleep. Her powdered hair looks
grey. Her face is etched with worry and self-recrimination.

On the other side of the aisle: Georges' rustic parents are
looking pleased as all hell, cheeks scrubbed red as apples,
all dressed up for the occasion in their Sunday best.

Behind them sit Jacques, Norbert and the senior staff from the
newspaper.

Behind them, rank upon rank of the great and the good of
Paris, whispering, murmuring. A great festering sea of
rumours and backbiting. Their conversation suddenly cut dead
by:

A distant fanfare of trumpets as the blushing bride enters the
church.

The choir starts singing Gloria! Gloria! As Monsieur Walter,
smiling fixedly, leads his daughter down the aisle past the
gossips and scandal-mongers.

LATER: The archbishop hears their vows:

ARCHBISHOP

Do you Georges Alphonse du Roy de
Cantel take this woman to be your
lawful wedded wife, to have and to

hold, to love and to honour till
death do you part?

'Honour.' To Monsieur Walter the word has a hollow ring.

GEORGES

I do.

ARCHBISHOP

Do you Suzanne Annelise Walter take
this man, to be your lawful husband,
to honour and obey till death do you
part?

SUZANNE

I do.

An involuntary sob of anguish escapes Madame Walter. Her
female friends comfort her.

The archbishop glances up briefly at the disturbance.
Monsieur Walter waves him on.

ARCHBISHOP

Then I pronounce you man and wife.

Madame Walter weeps openly. The organ starts up. Georges
steers Suzanne past the broken figure of her mother and back
down the aisle.

A distinguished guest shakes Monsieur Walter by the hand.

DISTINGUISHED GUEST

Well, you've got yourself a fine
son-in-law.

WALTER

He's a bastard of the first order.
At least he's my bastard now.

He goes to sort out his wife as Georges and Suzanne continue
towards the cathedral doors. A fairytale couple, smiling to
the grand people on either side.

Madeleine is with a new young lover, her replacement for Roche
Matthieu. She shoots Georges a look of grudging admiration as
he passes. Georges ignores her. Everyone is beaming at him,
keen to be on his side now he's part of the Walter dynasty.

In front of Georges the great doors open. Sunlight is
flooding in from outside where:

151. EXT. CATHEDRAL SQUARE. DAY

A crowd of common people press against the barriers on either side of the red carpet. Rachel the prostitute is in there somewhere, fighting with the others to get the best view

RACHEL

Let me see! I know him! I know
him! Georges!!

He doesn't hear.

In a blizzard of confetti Georges helps Suzanne into the open coach. He's about to climb in after her when he sees Clotilde standing nearby.

CLOTILDE

Better than America?

GEORGE

I didn't think you'd be here.

CLOTILDE

I didn't think so either.

Incredibly she still loves him and the truth is he loves her. So much to say. But there's no time. The coach is waiting. His bride is already on board

Georges gets in beside Suzanne and the coach pulls off, nudging through the great throng of spectators and well-wishers.

Clotilde keeps watching, until the crowd closes in front of her

152. INT. THE COACH. DAY

Georges casts a final glance backwards in the direction of Clotilde. Then settles back, thoughtfully, the sound of riotous cheering all around as....

153. EXT. THE COACH. DAY

The Cinderella coach carries them off together, away from the Cathedral square and down the sunlit, tree-lined boulevard between the elegant restaurants and the zoo, as flags crack in the wind and the church-bells ring out merrily all over Paris.

THE END