

Get To Bed!

written by

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CURTAIN UP:

ACT 1

Setting.

ARTISTS STUDIO

Portraits of women decorate the studio. An easel down centre, and a green chaise lies perpendicular. A fluorescent light hangs precariously overhead.

There is a sink unit along the back wall, next to a clothes rail where garments hang, and a door that leads off.

A door stage left, leads off.

A drinks trolley right of stage houses a carafe of red wine and two wine glasses.

Actor/Life model- DORIS 50s is a brunette with long hair and thin facial features; a sharp pointy nose, small round mouth, thin lips.

She lies upright upon the chaise, her peignoir hangs loosely around her slim frame to reveal pert breasts.

Down centre - Handsome Parisian artist- MAURICE 30s, stands with paint brush in hand. He wears a blue chequered shirt and a black beret.

Protracted silence as he paints.

The fluorescent light begins to flicker.

He throws up his hands in despair.

MAURICE

Oh, this is hopeless, Doris! I am very sorry, but I cannot continue to work under this light going on and off. I'm seeing double.

She shifts uncomfortably and sighs her frustration.

DORIS

Would you prefer it if I go, then, Maurice? I'll come back later if you like?

MAURICE

Just give me a moment to sort myself out.

He downs the brush, then marches over to the sink unit and washes his hands.

DORIS

Well, if you're sure? I really don't mind.

MAURICE

If you leave now, Doris, my inspiration will go with you.

She climbs off the chaise and buttons her peignoir.

DORIS

Well, to be honest, you knew I was coming today, didn't you? So you've had all week to change the bulb, Maurice.

He turns to face her before he sips a glass of water.

MAURICE

I know. I know that, Doris. But I have enough to think about... what with the exhibition around the corner.

DORIS

Well, I don't mean to be rude, but don'tcha think you're overstretching it a bit?

MAURICE

Actually, it's practically finished.

DORIS

Can I see it, then?

MAURICE

Of course.

DORIS

(excitedly)
Awesome!

He joins her at the easel.

MAURICE

I just have to put the finishing touches to it, you do understand, I hope?

She nods continuously in bemused agreement as she studies her portrait closely.

DORIS

Hmm. I see.

MAURICE

I almost lost my vision completely.

DORIS

Hmm, I bet.

MAURICE

Hmm.

DORIS

(dismayed)

I see.

MAURICE

You have the most amazing definition for a woman of your age, Doris. I applaud you for keeping in shape.

She looks deeply in to his eyes.

DORIS

(bashfully)

D' you really think so?

MAURICE

Yes, I do. You are my muse, non?

DORIS

Oh, am I, Maurice? Am I really?

MAURICE

Oui, madam. I am a very lucky man to have you as my muse.

DORIS

Oh, you don't really mean that. You're just being nice to me, that's all.

MAURICE

No, no, Doris. I do, sincerely.

She turns her attention back to the portrait and scratches her head in wonder.

DORIS

She looks nothing like me,
though, does she?

MAURICE

(aback)

What do you mean, Doris? She is
every inch of you.

DORIS

Well she's not what I expected,
that's all.

MAURICE

That is because you are standing
too close. Move back and you will
see her more clearly.

DORIS

Oh. OK then.

MAURICE

Here.

He gently moves her back a couple of steps.

MAURICE /

Is that better?

She sighs her disappointment.

DORIS

(fractured)

Oh, Maurice, my eyes are not that
shape, are they?

MAURICE

(chuckles)

Of course not, Doris. What do you
think? It is not a portrait of
you. It is an illusion.

DORIS

Is that why my noses are so
pointed?

MAURICE

Illusion is the first of all pleasures. Art is the lie, based on truth.

DORIS

(dispassionately)

Oh. Is it?

MAURICE

Well, it is most definitely you. Just look at the left nipple... not to mention the twisted right ear lobe.

She takes a closer look.

DORIS

Hmm. Yeah.

MAURICE

It's the same form of art Picasso adopted during one of his periods.

DORIS

Is that why you painted me yellow and green?

MAURICE

(chuckles)

Try looking at it from a different angle, Doris.

DORIS

OK.

She shifts to her left, and then her right.

MAURICE

What do you see now?

DORIS

A mirror image.

MAURICE

Eureka!

DORIS

Oh! Now I know what you must've meant when you said you were seeing double. Silly me.

MAURICE

Doris, you are so unearthed-
Really. You need to get out more.

She looks at him dolefully.

MAURICE /

Visit some art galleries. It will
widen your knowledge.

A protracted silence as she just gazes at him.

DORIS

So, is this painting how you
really see me, then, Maurice?

MAURICE

Doris, I see you in many, many
different lights. This is just
one of those fascinating lights
that I am exploring with at the
moment.

DORIS

Oh.

MAURICE

I can paint a portrait of you if
it makes you feel happier. But
then you will have to pay me for
it. And I do not come cheap at
the price.

Short pause.

DORIS

Well, she looks to me like she's
had cosmetic surgery.

MAURICE

(disappointedly)

Now you are being ridiculous.

DORIS

Well she hasn't got any of my
features. You could've hired
anyone to lie on that flipping
chaise for you. You didn't need
me at all really, did you?

MAURICE

Not true, Doris. In fact...

DORIS

...You could've gotten some old bag lady. It wouldn't have made a blind bit of difference, would it?

MAURICE

Now you are just being silly.

DORIS

My face isn't round, either. Everyone says I've got a long face. In fact, there isn't one single aspect of her, apart from the nipple and ear thingymigid that resembles me in the slightest, is there?

MAURICE

Well, I couldn't paint a witch now, could I?

DORIS

Well, if that's what you wanted, Maurice, all you had to do was ask and I would've brought my flipping broomstick.

MAURICE

(imploringly)

Oh, Doris, but I am reinventing the past. Please do not take it personally. This painting has been particularly crafted for my exhibition.

DORIS

(sardonically)

If only Horace could see me in one of those fascinating lights of yours. He would feast in flipping fervour, I'm sure.

He follows her to the clothes rail.

She slips off the peignoir, then slides into a pair of denim hot pants and a black vest.

MAURICE

Doris, remember I see you through the eyes of an artist.

She looks imploringly at his big blue eyes.

DORIS

Oh do you, Maurice?

MAURICE

Oui. So what if I had chosen another way, eh? It would incite a temptation between us, eh? And then what would your Horace say? That Maurice is an unscrupulous artist who went to far with his adorable wife? An artist not worthy of his time?

She cackles.

DORIS

Oh, you're so funny, Maurice. But Horace sees me through the eyes of a pig.

She mimics the sound of a pig.

DORIS /

Ha! 'ark at me. That's the effect he has on me.

MAURICE

(unamused)

Clearly.

DORIS

Oh, I'm sorry, Maurice. I didn't mean to have a go at you... but I'm just so frustrated with everything at the moment.

MAURICE

It's absolutely fine, Doris.

DORIS

So when is this exhibition of yours, then?

MAURICE

Next week.

She walks around the studio and engages with his artwork.

DORIS

So, are all these paintings going to be exhibited?

MAURICE

They are.

DORIS

So, are we invited to this exhibition of yours? Horace says without art the world would be a dull place.

MAURICE

And he is absolutely right, of course. Anyway, what do you think... I would not invite my muse and her pig to my exhibition?

She cackles.

DORIS

But what if someone recognises me? What shall I say to them?

MAURICE

Engage with them, Doris. You never know who you might meet at an art exhibition.

DORIS

OK. I will.

A protracted silence as he washes his brushes in the sink.

MAURICE

Will you have time to pop back quickly in the morning?

DORIS

Only if you fix that poxy light bulb.

MAURICE

I will.

DORIS

And as long as you pay me, I don't mind at all. I've only got to pop out in the morning. I'll come here first if you like, is that cool? Is there really much more to do then?

MAURICE

Not much. About half-an-hour is all I should need.

DORIS

OK.

She bursts into unrecognisable operatic melody as she sits down and slips on her knee length boots.

MAURICE

Tell me, Doris, how does Horace keep up with that constant energy of yours?

She cackles.

DORIS

I put up with him more like. Oh, I wish he found me as interesting as you, Maurice. He doesn't even look at me these days, unless I've got my tits shoved in his face.

She cackles.

DORIS /

Oh 'ark at me.

MAURICE

Oh, I'm sure deep down somewhere there is a man bursting with love, and an incisive passion for muscle tone... and animal noises, let us not forget.

She cackles.

DORIS

Which reminds me, I've not had one flipping call from my agent in months. They've got this new girl answering the phones now.

She mimics the girl's pathetic voice.

DORIS /
He's busy at the moment. Sorry,
can you call back later?
(grimaces)
Piss off!

MAURICE
I can see where you get your
acting skills from, Doris.

DORIS
I need to have a word with him,
actually. If she tells me once
more that he's too busy, I'm
going to go down there and knock
her flipping block off!
(pauses)
Old trollop!

She cackles.

MAURICE
Can you not change your agent?

DORIS
Nah. He's usually all right. But
with that tart on the phones, I
can't even get a sniff.

MAURICE
What about Horace? Can he not
help you with your career? He is
a dramaturg, so you tell me.

DORIS
You must be flipping joking. The
only thing he responds to is his
ego boosted.
(pauses)
Twerp!

She cackles.

He rolls a cigarette and lights up, then picks up the carafe
of wine and carries it towards her.

MAURICE
A quick one before you pop off?

DORIS

Aw. Yeah. Just a small one though. I don't want to get pissed before I even get home.

She gets to her feet. He fills her glass with wine.

MAURICE

Enjoy.

She takes a sip.

DORIS

Hmm. Nice. Where's it from?

MAURICE

Tesco.

She cackles.

DORIS

Which region? Silly.

MAURICE

Loire Valley.

Short silence.

DORIS

No. You're right. I really should talk to him. I mean, we're just not getting anywhere at the moment. He comes home and hardly says two flipping words to me all night. He just sits there tapping away on that flipping laptop as if I wasn't even there. I don't know why I even bother. And he wonders why I sit glued to the television all night.

MAURICE

Let us raise a toast.

DORIS

OK. What to?

MAURICE

My exhibition. What else?

DORIS

Alright.

They toast.

MAURICE
My exhibition.

DORIS
Your exhibition.

He hands her an envelope from his back pocket.

DORIS
Thanks, Maurice. I could really do with this extra cash at the moment. I've had nothing at all in months. And he doesn't give me anything. I have to support myself, you know. I don't know what I would do if I didn't have this model-thing shit.

She cackles.

MAURICE
You are incomparable, Doris.

DORIS
Ha! Get to bed! I bet you say that to all your muses.

MAURICE
I only have one muse, Doris, and that is you.

DORIS
D' you really mean that?

MAURICE
Oui, madam.

She steps forward and puts her hand lightly upon his chest as she looks wantonly in his eyes.

She goes to kiss him on the lips. He steps back and leaves her perplexed.

DORIS
Oh. I'm sorry. It's the wine. It's gone straight to me flipping head, I think.

MAURICE
No it's fine, Doris. It's absolutely fine. Forget it.

DORIS

No, I'm really sorry. I don't know what came over me.

MAURICE

It's fine.

She hands him her empty glass.

DORIS

I better go.

MAURICE

Thank you, Doris.

DORIS

Do you really mean what you said about me being your muse and all that?

MAURICE

Oui.

DORIS

Then kiss me, and I'll believe you.

MAURICE

But you are a married woman, non?

She ignores the remark, instead throws her arms around his neck and kisses him passionately on the lips.

He stands frozen on the spot.

DORIS

Now I've got to go home and listen to that boring old fuck pig all night.

she cackles.

MAURICE

Oh dear.

DORIS

(chirpily)

Bye...

She blows him a kiss before she exits stage left.

He sighs his relief.

LIGHTS DOWN:

LIGHTS UP:

THE APARTMENT

A split stage consists of a winding staircase that leads up to a bedroom.

DOWN: Open plan living space consists of a four seater dining table situated up against the back wall. A two seater sofa and armchair down centre, along with a small coffee table and a TV set on a stand.

Stage left: A door leads off. A drinks cabinet situated along the wall.

Stage right- a door leads off.

SCENE TWO

UP: Overweight and bespectacled HORACE 50s lies stretched out upon the bed, his laptop beside him. He sports a red cravat and navy paisley dressing gown, and clutches a glass of brandy in his right hand. He holds his iPhone to ear in his free hand.

HORACE

(on phone)

Ha,ha,ha,ha,ha... Now that would
be just my luck, wouldn't it...?
I should reach Paris Nord around
nine-thirtyish, I guess... Will
you pick me up, or shall I jump
in a cab like I did last time...?
I'll do whatever you want, my
luv... I'll leave it up to you...
Hahahahaha...

DOWN: DORIS enters through door stage left. She clutches a shopping bag.

She hears the bellow of his laughing and shakes her head in annoyance as she looks up at the bedroom.

HORACE /
(knowingly)
Rightyo then, Stephen. Just let
him know that I rang him, will
you.....? That'll be fine- Ciao
for now, buddy.

He quickly ends the call, then picks up his laptop, before he
climbs off the bed and checks himself in the mirrored
wardrobe.

She exits stage right.

He descends the stairs with brandy glass in hand and laptop
secured under his arm.

DORIS *
You're in, then.

He slumps down in the armchair.

HORACE
(casually)
Either that, or it's another
figment of your imagination,
Doris. You decide.

DORIS *
So who was that I heard you
speaking to upstairs?

HORACE
Stephen. I rang Gordon, but I
just missed him. He's popped out.

DORIS *
Liar.

HORACE
Who, me or Gordon? You decide.

DORIS *
You! Who else?

HORACE
Gordon, maybe?

He gets up and stomps over to the drinks cabinet and pours
himself another brandy, before he slumps back down in the
armchair.

HORACE /
Anyway, what's got into you this evening? Had another bad day lying on your back for Eugene Delacroix?

Doris enters and shows him the finger.

DORIS
Get to bed!

He roars with laughter.

DORIS /
Just tell me something?

HORACE
Fire away, if you must.

DORIS
How come, every time I walk in the sodding door you're on the phone to Stephen? I'm not stupid, Horace, so don't take me for a fool.

HORACE -
(quietly)
Debatable.
(knowing pause)
So you think Stephen doesn't really exist, then, is that it?

DORIS
Probably not.

HORACE
Well, I'll prove it if you like? I'll ring him back and tell him that my wife thinks he doesn't exist.

He opens his laptop and switches it on.

DORIS
Do what you like. I don't really care.

HORACE

Fine. I won't then.

(enlightened pause)

You might be interested to know
that I was offered a part in a
play this afternoon.

She sows her interest and sits down on the sofa. He begins to
tap away on his computer.

DORIS

Oh really? And...? And...?

HORACE

Yes. They're doing a production
of War and Peace over at the
Globe.

DORIS

Well, never mind that. What did
you say to them?

He looks at her suspiciously.

HORACE

I turned it down, naturally.

DORIS

(animatedly)

You did what?

HORACE

I turned it down. I'm far too
busy with my own projects at the
moment.

DORIS

You turned it down! You turned it
down! You big nincompoop!

HORACE

That's right, Doris, carry on.

DORIS

But why for heaven's sake?

HORACE

Because it wasn't big enough, if
you really must know.

DORIS

You twerp!

HORACE

It wasn't worth my while. It was only a small part.

DORIS -

Twerp!

HORACE

For your information, Gordon and I have been putting our heads together. We've come up with an idea to stage a play of our own. I haven't told you this, but we've been running a competition to find a resident writer. And it seems we've found someone already. And we're really quite excited about it.

DORIS

(sighs)

I need a flipping drink.

She gets to her feet and exits stage right. He taps away on his laptop.

A protracted silence.

She returns with a glass of Chardonnay and a look of utter contempt.

HORACE

I mean, well... if they would have offered me the part as Nikolai Rostov, or Pierre Bezukhov I might've reconsidered it. At least with Rostov you get to marry the beautiful Maria Bolkonskaya. Hmm. Now that would have been a worthwhile challenge, I'd say.

He knocks back a mouthful of brandy, then continues to tap away on his laptop.

DORIS

Oh, I wish I could get a flipping audition. I haven't had anything in months. D' you know if they're still auditioning? Didn't you ask for me?

HORACE

No. They have someone for
Napoleon, I'm afraid, Doris.

She snarls and turns away in disgust.

DORIS

Oh, get to bed! You big twerp!

He roars with laughter as she slumps down on the sofa.

HORACE

Well you know what I mean, Doris.
You're no Helen Mirren, are you?

DORIS

(fractured)

Cantcha see I'm flipping
desperate, Horace? I can't go on
like this. I need to flipping
work!

HORACE

(sighs)

I've told you a dozen times to
change your agent.

DORIS

But I can't. I've been with him
flipping years. Are you sure
they're not auditioning for other
parts?

HORACE

You're not what they're looking
for, Doris... unless you can grow
another beard in the next two
weeks.

DORIS

Get to bed!

HORACE

Find another career. You're not
cut out for theatre. And anyway,
you're too old to play Maria.
They're looking for someone with
a fresh face.

DORIS

Oh, but you're always saying things like that. I don't know what you mean. What'd you mean, a fresh face? I look young under the lights. And they can do wonders nowadays. Maurice says I look twenty years younger than my age.

HORACE

He's talking about your tits, Doris. He wants to get inside your knickers... if you're wearing any.

DORIS

You're just selfish. You don't care about me. I might as well not even be here.

She gets up and exits stage right.

HORACE -

I rest my case.

Sound of a flushing toilet.

DORIS *

I'm classically trained, you know.

HORACE -

Hysterically trained, more like.

She reenters with a face like thunder, and another glass of Chardonnay. She takes her seat on the sofa.

DORIS

Shove it up your arse!

HORACE

I'll have a go if you like. But I'm not sure if it'll fit.

DORIS

Get to bed!

HORACE

Look, haven't you got anything better to do? Change the sheets or something. Polish the tables for once. This place is gathering dust faster than your knicker drawer.

DORIS

No! Why should I? You do it? I'm not your flipping slave!

HORACE

I work, Doris.

She begins to channel surf the TV.

DORIS

So do I.

HORACE

Lying on your back is not work, Doris. It's what most people would call resting.

DORIS

Resting? Is that what you think I do all day?

HORACE

One of 'em.

DORIS

You think I'm cheap, don'tcha?

HORACE

No. I don't think anything, Doris.

DORIS

Just because you can't get it up any more, you think I'm getting it elsewhere, don'tcha?

HORACE

(irked)

Oh give me a break, Doris!

DORIS

You started it.

HORACE

Then let me finish it.

A long silence as he continues to stare at his computer.

HORACE /

Besides, we're changing our perspective, Gordon and I. Gordon wants to present new work that matters to our audiences from now on. Contemporary plays that mark out new territory in performance and subject matter. We have plans for the future, Doris... you could well be a part of them if you get off my back and give me some space.

DORIS

I don't want anything from you.

HORACE

You know your trouble?

DORIS

Enlighten me.

HORACE

You're ungrateful.

DORIS

Ha! I'm ungrateful?

HORACE

I don't know why you have to be so bloody bitter.

DORIS

I'm not bitter. I'm angry.

HORACE

Get better, not bitter, Doris.

DORIS

Bollocks!

HORACE

Well, for your information, I'm going to be directing this new production of ours. So if you want to come along and have a sneak preview, please do.

DORIS

Is there a part in it for me?

HORACE

There might well be.

DORIS

Then I will.

HORACE

No, I'm serious, Doris. There's all sorts happening in this one we're going to put on. We've got witches, whores, murderers, gipsies, tramps and thieves, the bloody lot. I'm sure we can find you something before we have to start scraping the barrel.

DORIS

Stuff it! Stick it! I don't want anything from you!

She gets up and exits in a fury.

DORIS * /

Are you ashamed of me?

She returns with another glass of Chardonnay.

HORACE

Only slightly... nothing to worry about.

She grabs a cushion from the sofa and lobs it at him.

DORIS

Bastard!

He spills the brandy over his laptop, then jumps to his feet in a fury.

HORACE

BLOODY CHRIST SAKE! WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU WOMAN?! YOU BLOODY STUPID COW!

He quickly exits stage right.

DORIS

Serves you right.

HORACE *
WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOUR BLOODY
SENSE OF HUMOUR?!

DORIS
Nothing. I still have mine.

She turns up the volume on the television.

He reenters and pours himself another brandy.

HORACE
AND TURN THAT BLOODY THING DOWN!

DORIS
Oh, get to bed!

HORACE
I-SAID-TURN-IT-DOWN!

He snatches the remote from her hand and switches off the TV.

DORIS
Give that back, you twerp!

HORACE
No!

DORIS
Fine!

A protracted silence as he slumps back down.

HORACE
While we're at it, there's
something you should know.

DORIS
What's that?

HORACE
I'm going to Paris in the
morning. Gordon has asked me to
check out a play festival in
Montmartre.

She consumes his statement with a suspicious frown.

DORIS
It's a bit short notice, isn't
it?

HORACE

Yep. So I'll be leaving in the morning.

DORIS

Can I come?

HORACE

No. You'll just get in the way.

DORIS

No I won't.

HORACE

Take no for an answer, will you?

DORIS

(pleadingly)

Oh, please let me come. I can visit Sacre Coeur while you're doing whatever it is you've been asked to do.

HORACE

I'll be too busy talking to people. You'll just get bored. Stay here. Give Maurice a ring. See what side he wants you on this time.

DORIS

But I don't want to ring Maurice. I'd rather come to Paris with you.

HORACE

(tormented)

Take no for a bloody answer, will you?!

She turns away disappointedly.

HORACE /

I'll be back Thursday. I'll take you out for dinner then. I know a nice little vegan restaurant that's just opened next to the local farm.

DORIS

I'll believe that when I see it.
I hardly see you these days. We
might as well be flipping
divorced.

HORACE

Well, maybe if you didn't spend
so much time lying on your back
things might be different.

DORIS

He pays me for my time. I don't
sit for free you know.

HORACE

If you say so.

DORIS

At least he's not a pig.

HORACE

Why do you have to boost his
bloody ego every time I mention
his name?

DORIS

For your information, he doesn't
have one. And if it wasn't for my
model thing-shit, I'd probably
have to work in some shitty pub
somewhere. I'm not going to have
this figure for ever, am I?

HORACE

Which figure?

DORIS

Oh, get to bed!

She exits stage left. The land line rings. He picks up the
receiver and listens.

HORACE

9112...? Look, she doesn't want
anything... Just fuck off and
leave us alone...!

He slams the receiver down as she reenters with her mascara
smudged.

DORIS

Who was that?

HORACE

Who'd you think?

DORIS

How dare you speak to my friends
like that.

HORACE

Then tell him not to ring here
and I won't have to, will I?

DORIS

But he's just a friend.

HORACE

Then tell him to get lost!

DORIS

You horrible, horrible man.

HORACE

Look, just tell him to leave us
alone!

DORIS

Take me with you, then.

A long silence as he knocks back his brandy.

She stares at him scornfully.

HORACE

Oh, I almost forgot to tell you.

DORIS

What's that?

HORACE

What I discovered today.

DORIS

What?

HORACE

You are married to the fifth most
important person in British
theatre.

DORIS

Whoopy do.

HORACE

Seriously, Doris. It's official.

DORIS

So who are the other four?

HORACE

Alan Mckenzie. Scott Richardson.
Timothy Shaw. Gordon, and then
moi. I'm in the ascendancy,
Doris.

DORIS

Good for you.

HORACE

It's all the way up from here on,
Doris. My endeavours haven't gone
unnoticed. And it's about time.
I've given my life to theatre.
All these years of blood, sweat
and tears. I deserve a little bit
of gratitude, don'tcha think?

(waits for answer)

Well, aren't you going to
congratulate me?

DORIS

Why should I?

HORACE

Your time will come, Doris,
you'll see. You just have to be
patient. Stick at it like I have.

DORIS

I'll believe that when I sodding
see it.

(scathing pause)

Actually, before you get angry, I
have to tell you that Maurice has
written a play. He asked me if
you could read it for him. He
wants it critiqued. He said that
he'll pay for it.

HORACE

Is there a twenty pound note
stuck to every page?

DORIS

Oh, don't be so ridiculous!

HORACE

What'd you expect? He fucks my wife.

DORIS

No he does not! You complete imbecile!

HORACE

Well, you've practically spent every day with him over the last two weeks. If he hasn't yet, it won't be long before he's sticking his tongue down your throat, will it?

DORIS

He's an artist!

HORACE -

Fantasist, you mean.

(angry pause)

I want you to stay away from him.

DORIS

Take me to Paris and I will.

HORACE

I can't. I'll take you with me next time.

DORIS

As you were, then.

HORACE

I wouldn't be surprised if he was having you at every opportunity.

DORIS

Oh, get to bed!

HORACE

Still, I'd rather have my brain power.

DORIS

You just cannot cope with the fact that I get my kit off for him, can you?

He throws his brandy glass at the wall in torment.

HORACE
THEN WHY DON'T YOU FUCK HIM
THEN?!

DORIS
YOU BASTARD!

She unleashes her wine into his face, then exits in tears.

HORACE
I BET HE'S HAD YOU IN EVERY
POSITION KNOWN TO MAN.

LIGHTS DOWN:

LIGHTS UP.

ARTISTS STUDIO

MAURICE twiddles the strings on a guitar as he sits upon a stall beneath a brighter fluorescent light.

DORIS appears stage left wearing a fake fur coat, fully unbuttoned to reveal a shapely thigh, black French knickers, black stockings and suspenders.

His eyes light up when he spots her, and he jumps off the stall, puts down the guitar, then quickly rushes towards her with an outstretched hand.

MAURICE
(aback)
Ohmondieu! Doris! But what is
going on? Why are you dressed
like a showgirl?

He checks his watch.

MAURICE /
And on time too. Come in, come
in, before you catch a cold, Mon
Cherie.

DORIS
(provocatively)
Oh do I, Maurice? Do I, really?

MAURICE
(bemused)
Do you what, Doris?

DORIS

(in fervour)

Just say I do, Maurice. Just say
I do.

MAURICE

OK. You do, Doris. You do.

She falls into his arms and cackles, before he takes her in
his arms like Cupid & Psyche.

DORIS

Do you like it, Maurice? Tell me
you love it.

MAURICE

I simply adore it. But you do
mean the coat, non?

He lifts her back to her feet, then guides her towards the
chaise.

DORIS

Yes of course, silly. What else
is to like?

MAURICE

Everything, Doris, everything.
(excitedly) Quickly. Park
yourself down on the chaise.

Her fur coat falls to the floor beneath her feet, before she
lies on the chaise in a sensual pose.

He kneels down beside her and begins to stroke the fur coat.
She looks at him and cackles.

DORIS

(perplexed)

Oh, what are you doing now,
Maurice?

MAURICE

(smitten)

Does it bite?

DORIS

No, silly. I couldn't afford to
buy real fur. It's imitation
beaver actually. Anyway, I
wouldn't be seen dead wearing
real fur, would I?

MAURICE

May I stroke it? It feels so soft
and warm.

DORIS

Yes, but be careful, it's
moulting.

MAURICE

Moulting? But I thought you said
it was...

DORIS

Yes moulting, Maurice. So be
careful with it, please.

MAURICE

You mean, losing hair, Doris?

Doris cackles.

DORIS

(bashfully)

Oh, yes, Maurice! You know what I
mean, silly.

MAURICE

Are you sure, Doris?

Doris cackles.

DORIS

Yes! Oh, what are you like,
Maurice?

MAURICE

But it feels so soft and warm. I
can barely keep my hands from
stroking it.

Doris cackles.

DORIS

'ark at you! Oh, come on now,
Maurice, stop it, you're making
me feel all hot. And I haven't
got all day. I've got to be at
the chiropodist in half-an-hour
flat.

MAURICE

Oh well.

He climbs to his feet and steps over to the easel. A protracted silence as he paints.

DORIS

You will finish me this morning,
won't you, Maurice?

MAURICE

Oui Madam.

DORIS

Good.
(exaggerated pose)
Like this?

MAURICE

Exactly.

DORIS

Apologies for Horace being so
rude to you on the phone last
night.

MAURICE

Ah, forget about it.

DORIS

He's gone to Paris today. He can
go and fuck himself while he's at
it, for all I care.

MAURICE

What is he doing in Paris?

DORIS

Checking out new talent,
apparently.

MAURICE

Really?

DORIS

Yeah, but I don't give a shit. He
can do whatever he flipping well
likes for all I care. I've had
enough of his bullshit to last a
lifetime.

MAURICE

Oh.

DORIS

Yeah, well, he didn't want to take me with him, did he? I begged him as well. Pig.

MAURICE

Why not?

DORIS

Because he doesn't like taking me anywhere, Maurice. I embarrass him.

MAURICE

(aback)

He said that?

DORIS

No, he just said I'd get bored... which proves he doesn't even know his own flipping wife.

MAURICE

Oh dear.

DORIS

Yeah I know. I don't believe a word of it, though.

MAURICE

So what will you do while he is in Paris today?

DORIS

Let my hair down. I'm not just going to sit around waiting for him to come home like some flipping puppy dog waiting for its owner to come back.

MAURICE

Well, I am not doing anything else today.

DORIS

D' you want to meet up for a drink, later, then?

MAURICE

Why not? I will wear my outrageous suit.

DORIS

Ha! In that case I'll put on my outrageous frock... and just for you, Maurice. I haven't worn it in years.

MAURICE

It is not too outrageous, I hope, is it? I mean... it will have some material, non?

DORIS

Ha! Yes of course, silly. I'm only undressing for you these days. I don't even get undressed in front of him anymore. I can't even remember the last time we had flipping sex.

MAURICE

But what would he say if he knew we were out together?

DORIS

Well he's not here, is he? And I don't give a flying fuck anyway. (angry pause) And d' you know he had the flipping temerity to tell me that he was offered a part in a play. But when I asked if they were still auditioning, he just belittled me.

Short silence.

MAURICE

So when the cat's away...

DORIS

...the mice definitely come out to play tonight, Maurice, so be prepared to get your rocks off.

She cackles.

DORIS /

'ark at me. I sound like I'm gagging for it. Ha!

Short silence.

DORIS /

You know, I think he's having an affair with some slut in Paris.

He shows her a look of concern.

DORIS /

Yeah, I went through his pockets this morning. I found a telephone number on a napkin. It was written in red lipstick. (scowls) So I eavesdropped on a phone call he made to Gordon - He's a work colleague. They were laughing about some tart he was going to meet up with when he gets there. (fractured pause) I mean, what can I say to him... who's that flipping tart you're shagging over in Paris? (sighs) And what if I'm wrong? What if she is just a work colleague, and they were just being little boys?

MAURICE

Ask him. You should.

DORIS

Maybe I should just flipping knife him to death in his sleep when he gets back.

She cackles.

DORIS /

I've seen this sort of thing happening to other people I know. I just can't believe it's actually happening to me.

MAURICE

Confront him. You must

DORIS

He's got this flipping old pistol his great uncle left him when he passed away. I was gonna take it out of the cupboard and shoot him while he was snoring. I was going to stick it right up his flipping nose and pull the trigger.

She cackles.

MAURICE

Ohmôndieu! Now this is far too extreme, Doris.

DORIS

Oh, I know. But I can't believe he would do this to me... especially as he's so jealous of you.

MAURICE

(aback)

Me?!

DORIS

Oh yeah...

MAURICE

But why? He is the one having the affair, non?

DORIS

I know, Maurice, I know.

Long silence.

DORIS /

I see you've got yourself a new light bulb, finally.

MAURICE

Hmm.

DORIS

You're so funny, Maurice. Nothing seems to bother you, does it?

MAURICE

You must joking! It takes me forever to do anything.

DORIS

Aww, my neck is bleeding killing me. Are we almost done, Maurice?

MAURICE

It is finished.

She climbs off the chaise and glides over towards the easel.

DORIS

Oh, that's much better.

MAURICE

I am happy it is finally finished.

DORIS

I love it.

MAURICE

Thank you, Doris. It means a lot.

DORIS

Well, if you ever get bored of looking at it, you know where to find me.

MAURICE

If it fails to find a buyer at my exhibition, it is yours.

She notices the time on the wall clock and quickly slips on her coat.

DORIS

Shit! Look at the time. I better go, or I'll be late for the chiropodist.

MAURICE

But it is only a quarter past.

DORIS

I know, but I have to be there fifteen minutes before my appointment. D'you think I'll make it?

MAURICE

Dressed like this... you'll be arrested first, Doris.

DORIS

No, silly. I've got to go home and change first.

MAURICE

Well, hurry then, or you will be late.

DORIS
Will I see you later?

MAURICE
Oui.

DORIS
Fantastic!

MAURICE
I will call you.

She bursts into non-operatic melody upon her exit stage left.
He takes his brushes to the sink and begins to wash them.

HORACE enters stage left. He is dressed in a black overcoat
and French beret. He pulls a black trolley case behind him.

MAURICE turns his head to see him standing there with a vexed
frown upon his face.

MAURICE
(aback)
Horace! What are you doing
forcing your way into my studio
like this?

HORACE
Where is she?

MAURICE
She has gone home to change her
clothes. You have just missed her
actually. She left just one
minute ago.

HORACE
I thought I'd better see for
myself exactly what goes on in
here.

MAURICE
Par-don?

HORACE parks his trolley case, then begins to search the
studio for his wife.

HORACE
Well, don't look so surprised to
see me, Maurice. Where is she?
Washing herself in the bathroom,
is she?

HORACE /
Doris! Doris, come out wherever
you are!

MAURICE
(chuckles)
Ha! You will not find her here,
Horace.

He stomps towards right and up stage.

HORACE
(snarls)
Doris! Doris, I know you're in
there! I've come to take you
home! I'm not angry with you any
more.

MAURICE guffaws as he rolls a cigarette.

MAURICE
She is not here.

HORACE stands dementedly.

HORACE
Just what are you sniggering at?

MAURICE
What are you doing, Horace? I
could have you arrested for
forcing your way into my studio
like this.

HORACE
Call the police, and I shall tell
them you've got hashish stashed
away in here.

MAURICE
Hashish?

HORACE
What's that wretched smell then?

MAURICE shows him the burning cigarette.

MAURICE
I smoke these.

HORACE
Smells like hashish to me.

MAURICE

Would you like me to roll one for you?

HORACE

No. I don't smoke.

MAURICE

Are you sure it's not your cologne that you can smell?

HORACE

Are you trying to be funny, matey?

MAURICE sniffs the air and shows his distaste.

MAURICE

Phew! Fly killer! Disgusting!

HORACE

Yeah alright, matey. Did Doris tell you I would be in Paris today?

MAURICE

Actually, she did mention it.

HORACE

Well, my flight was cancelled, due to the fog. I could have taken the Eurostar out from St. Pancras if it wasn't for the blockade on your side of the channel.

MAURICE

I apologies for my country.

HORACE

I'm just saying.

MAURICE

Actually, she is on her way to see the chiropodist. If you leave now you might catch her.

Short silence as they make eye contact with one another.

HORACE

You look quite excited about something. Has she told you something about us?

MAURICE

Non.

HORACE marches around the studio where he eyes the scattered artwork.

HORACE

I wonder who's running your country sometimes. It certainly isn't your Government, is it?

MAURICE punches the air triumphantly.

MAURICE

Vive la France!

HORACE

Vive my arse! (pauses) So which university did you attend, then?

MAURICE

Sorbonne. Why?

HORACE

I went to Cambridge, me. (pauses) You obviously dropped out. I can see that. And did you?

MAURICE

Actually, it is none of your business. Now what do you want? I am very busy.

HORACE

Why did you need her to come back this morning? You had her yesterday. Couldn't you have finished painting her then?

MAURICE

I could not work with the bad light. Ask her yourself.

HORACE

You see more of her than I do these days. Are you screwing her?

MAURICE

Screwing? You mean like turning a screw into a small hole?

HORACE

Just answer the bloody question!
Are you fucking my wife, or not?

MAURICE

I do not fuck her! What do you think I do here? I am an artist. I paint her... that is all. And I pay her for her time. (pauses) Here. I will show you exactly what I do with her. See for yourself. Come.

He leads him towards the easel.

HORACE

I'm not interested in your artwork, matey. I just want to know what's going on with you and my wife, that's all.

MAURICE

Oh c'mon, Horace.

HORACE

All right. But don't expect any accolades from me.

MAURICE

So what do you think?

HORACE roars with laughter as he leans back to gauge a better angle of the painting.

MAURICE looks at him in bemusement.

HORACE

You've certainly got her character right, I'll give you that.

MAURICE

How do you mean?

HORACE

I bet she loves it. And does she?

MAURICE

Actually, I find your comments insulting. Constructive criticism I can take. You have gone down in my estimation. I thought you had more of an artistic background than you are portraying.

HORACE

I do. But you're no Picasso. Look at her. She's all over the place.

MAURICE

You are just not used to looking at abstract art. I am reinventing the past.

HORACE

Look, I don't want to disparage you, matey, but to me it looks like the work of a juvenile.

MAURICE

Now I know you are just being vindictive. It is not possible in my world to make such a stupid comment if you have any artistic values.

HORACE

In your solipsism I think you mean.

MAURICE

Pardon?

HORACE

Oh never mind. But it's definitely her, I'll give you that. I can tell by the right earlobe. It sticks out. Same as her nipple.

MAURICE

Is that all you see?

HORACE

It is. And why do you have to paint her half naked?

MAURICE

Because I like the flesh of a real woman.

HORACE

Do you only paint naked women, then?

MAURICE

Of course not. It is what you want to see that is of the essence with this kind of art. It is the illusion that tells the story. And you see her naked... Interesting... But I see her in many different lights, and so it is not just her beauty I engage with, but something much more ambiguous. Just look at her muscle tone for example. How many women of her age do you know have this kind of definition? Visualise her sensuality within her mirrored confinement. (pauses) It is the versatility within the reflection of her character that is paramount to the perception of the premise, and thus how you are going to connect with her upon first sight.

HORACE

What is that premise?

MAURICE

Undiscriminating beauty.

HORACE

Hm. Well. I suppose it's got its advantages. But she's got quite a temper when riled, I can tell you that for nothing.

MAURICE

Hot blooded, eh? Maybe you are her teacher.

HORACE

Yes. You've got it in one, matey. I can be a horrible human being when pushed.

MAURICE

I am not the Devil's advocate,
Horace. I just paint for a
living.

HORACE

Look, I won't beat about the bush
with you any longer. I want you
to stay away from her. No more
painting her, right?

MAURICE

Why not? There is nothing going
on, except what you see in the
painting.

HORACE

So why are you all hot and
bothered, then?

MAURICE

Obviously, because we Parisians
perspire much more than you super
cool Englishmen.

He shows the extent of his perspiration.

MAURICE /

The mark of a real man.

HORACE

Primitive man, more like.

(snarls)

Just stay away from my wife.

MAURICE

But there is nothing going on
between us. Ask her yourself.

HORACE

Not yet there isn't, maybe. But I
have a sixth sense when it comes
to these matters. Ask anyone who
knows me well. They'll tell you
Horace Nugents can smell a rat a
mile away. I'm perspicacious.

MAURICE

And I am a rat?

HORACE

No. You're a reptile. But you never know.

MAURICE

I find you so insulting.

HORACE

Then stay away from her.

MAURICE

But you will have to tell her, and maybe she will not like this. I know it because she adores to be painted.

HORACE

Rest assured, I'm going to speak to her too.

MAURICE

Are you going to support her?

HORACE

What do you mean?

MAURICE

I pay her for her time. She does not sit for free.

HORACE

Are you suggesting that I don't support my wife? That I choose to ignore her well-being?

MAURICE

Could be.

HORACE

Right then. First of all it's none of your g'ddam business. And secondly, I pay my share of the rent. Doris is a vegan, so she doesn't cook my meals, since she cannot stand the smell of meat or dairy products.

MAURICE

Oh.

HORACE

I take my laundry to the
launderette, because she cannot
stand the smell of washing
powder. We live a baseless kind
of existence... which is not
entirely my doing. So, if she
behaved like my wife, she'd be
treated as a wife... But she
chooses to live a detached life
from me. You can ask her yourself
if you don't believe me, but only
if and when I say so.

MAURICE

Fine.

HORACE

Right then.

HORACE collects his trolley case and exits.

MAURICE -

(knowingly)

We will see.

LIGHTS DOWN:

LIGHTS UP.

ACT 2

THE APARTMENT

In high spirits HORACE sets the dining table. He sports a
safari suit and cravat.

DORIS enters stage right. She wears hot pants, and a red
blouse, and carries a glass of Chardonnay at all times.

DORIS

I can't see why we couldn't have
gone out for dinner. You said...

HORACE

(intolerantly)

...Yes. Yes. Yes. I know, Doris,
but...

DORIS

...you cocked it up, again.

HORACE

I suggested Johnny Allen's, but they were fully booked tonight. And anyway, it'll be a lot easier here. It'll give me a chance to get to know our new resident playwright without being constantly interrupted by intrusive waiters.

DORIS

It's a lot of work for me though, isn't it? And who is this resident playwright of yours? You still haven't told me his name.

HORACE

Yusimi Yusimi. He's Turkish. He's here studying literature, according to Gordon. He knows him more than I do.

DORIS

Oh.

HORACE

His writing style slightly reminds me of Jacques Prevert - A French playwright and poet, well known for his excellent wit and poor grammar.

DORIS

So what's his play about, then? I remember you saying it has all kinds of things going on, and that there might be a part for me.

HORACE

It concentrates on the life and death of a French William Shakespeare.

She chokes on a mouthful of wine.

DORIS

(splutters)

Sorry, it went down the wrong hole.

HORACE -
That makes a change.

DORIS
Oh get to bed.

HORACE
I know it sounds absurd. But
it'll have audiences falling off
their seats.

She passes him a wry look, then exits.

She quickly returns with a salad bowl which she places down
on the dining table, as he stands back to oversee her.

HORACE /
You know, you've been very
efficient tonight, Doris. I'm
quite impressed. (checks watch)
They should be here any minute
now. I feel quite excited.

He exits, then returns with a basket of bread.

DORIS
Gordon should be doing this, not
us.

HORACE
I know. I know. Don't keep on,
Doris.

DORIS
He farts and you sneeze.

HORACE
Look, he would have if my flight
hadn't been cancelled. I
shouldn't even be here. It was
very much a last minute thing.

DORIS
So what about your whore in
Paris? And don't think you're
getting off with it that easily,
Horace Nugents. You're not off
the hook just yet. I want to hear
it from the whore's mouth that
nothing's going on between you
and her.

HORACE

I've told you there's nothing going on between us. She's an actor. Gordon wants her in this play because she's French, and that's all it is. (pause) She caught me at a low ebb. I let my guard down, slightly.

DORIS

I don't want to hear excuses.

HORACE

Leave it at that will you? (pauses) Anyway, this could really benefit your career... providing you don't get silly drunk like you did the last time Gordon came for dinner.

DORIS

I better not have anymore to drink, then. Another glass of this and I'll be all over the flipping place.

She cackles. He pours himself a brandy.

HORACE

Promise you won't show me up tonight, Doris. I want to create a nice pulse to the evening.

DORIS

I know. I'm not stupid.

HORACE

And no grovelling either. Just let Gordon and I to talk to Yusimi Yusimi without butting in.

DORIS

Fine.

Doorbell.

HORACE

(kerfuffled)

Right. He's here.

He brushes himself down and steps towards the door left of stage.

DORIS exits stage right.

He opens the door to Parisian, MONIQUE (30's). She is a sultry brunette dressed in a black slinky dress, seamless stockings and black stiletto heels.

HORACE gasps and grabs the door frame for support as his legs buckle beneath him.

HORACE /

(aback)

Monica! What are you doing here?

MONIQUE

(distressed)

You didn't come. I waited for you, but you didn't come. Why not?

HORACE

Ssh. Keep your voice down.
Doris'll hear you.

MONIQUE

What happened to you?

HORACE

(tuts and sighs)

You can't come here, Monica.
You'll get me shot.

He checks his shoulder.

MONIQUE

I had to see you, Horace. I thought something happened to you. I was worried.

HORACE

Appreciated... but you have to go.

DORIS reenters and brings two bottles of wine to the table.

HORACE shuts the door on himself. DORIS looks over with concern before she steps forward.

DORIS

Horace, who's that at the door?

HORACE

(to Doris)

No one, dear. I'm dealing with it.

MONIQUE

But when will I see you again?

HORACE

I can't say at the moment. Didn't you get my message? All the flights were cancelled due to the fog. I sent you a direct message. Didn't you read it?

DORIS

(suspicious)

Horace, what's going on? Who's there?

HORACE

(to Monique)

I'll call you tomorrow.

MONIQUE

No! Let me in, or I will scream.

DORIS peers over his shoulder.

DORIS

(furiously)

Who the fuck is this?

HORACE

(squirms)

It's okay, Doris. I've got it covered.

DORIS

Let her in!

HORACE -

Oh shit.

He steps aside. MONIQUE enters.

MONIQUE

(to Doris)

Merci beaucoup.

DORIS

I know who you are. What are you
doing here?

MONIQUE

What do you think?

HORACE

(interjects)

I think I can explai...

DORIS

(to Monique)

...Just tell me what the fuck is
going on?

MONIQUE

(to Horace)

Tell her.

DORIS

Tell me what?

MONIQUE

Tell her, or I will.

HORACE

Look, I can explain every...

DORIS

...OH SHUT UP, YOU TWERP.

(To Monique)

Did he invite you here?

MONIQUE

No he did not. I came to take him
back to Paris with me.

DORIS

(aback)

Did you?

HORACE

I'm not going anywhere. I have a
very important guest about to
arrive.

DORIS

(to Horace)

So you are together, then?

MONIQUE
(interjects)
He said his marriage was over.

He turns away and squirms.

DORIS
That's news to me. Are we over,
Horace?

HORACE
No, of course not. (pauses) It
just seemed that way at the time.

DORIS
And now?

MONIQUE
He said you were having an affair
with an artist.

He wipes his sweaty brow and sits deflatedly at the dining
table.

DORIS
That was just an excuse to get
you into bed. I'm not having an
affair.

HORACE
I never actually said that,
Monica. All I said was that she
could be...

MONIQUE
(angrily)
...Menteur!

HORACE
Look, can we just all calm down?

MONIQUE sits down at the table opposite him.

An awkward silence.

HORACE
Would you like a drink, Monica?

MONIQUE
Est-il Francais?

HORACE

Italian.

MONIQUE

Merci.

He pours Monique a glass of Italian red.

DORIS grabs the bottle of Chardonnay and pours her own.

HORACE

Olive, Monica?

MONIQUE

Sont-il bourres?

HORACE

Yes they are.

MONIQUE

Merci beaucoup.

He slides the bowl across the table. She picks one and pops it inside her mouth.

DORIS

No speaking French! Or you can both sling your hook right now!

HORACE

OK, Doris, calm down. (pauses)
Look, Monica, I'm sorry you've come all this way, but quite frankly I'm staying here.

MONIQUE

(angrily)

Why?

HORACE

I thought Doris was having an affair. It turns out that I was wrong. I imagined the whole thing. I was deeply chagrined. I felt slightly insecure. I just needed someone to listen to me.

MONIQUE

You used me.

HORACE

Not true, Monica. I did not.

MONIQUE

...But in bed you said you loved
me, remember? When you were
fucking me doggy.

DORIS dives across the table. HORACE moves quickly to block
her.

DORIS

YOU DIRTY BITCH! GET OUT! GET OUT

RIGHT NOW!

MONIQUE jumps out of her seat and steps away from the table.

HORACE

Doris, just hold on! She's come a
long way.

DORIS

HOW DARE YOU LET YOUR SLUT IN
HERE TO INSULT ME. GET HER THE
FUCK OUT BEFORE I KILL THE BITCH!

HORACE

Monica, you can't say things like
that. She's very sensitive.

Telephone rings.

Short silence.

HORACE /

Shit!

They stare at the phone.

DORIS

(to Monique)

Please, just leave, now.

HORACE

She'll go in a minute, Doris. For
goodness sake calm down.

DORIS picks up the phone receiver.

DORIS /

(to Horace)

It's Gordon. He wants to speak to
you.

She smacks the receiver into his groyne. He yelps, then puts the receiver to his ear.

HORACE

(irked)

Where are you then...? But we are waiting for you... Can it not wait...? Well thanks a bunch... I'll have to, won't I...?

He slams down the receiver in anger.

DORIS continues to give Monique the evil eye.

DORIS

(to Horace)

What's wrong now?

HORACE

Gordon can't make it I bloody knew he'd do this to me at the last minute. I can read him like a book.

DORIS

Now get her to leave before I do something I might not regret.

HORACE

Will you just shut up and let me think, Doris! (pauses) Right, so Gordon can't make it which means there'll be a spare seat at the table.

DORIS

No fucking way!

HORACE

I need her to stay for dinner, then she can leave immediately afterwards.

DORIS

If she stays, I go.

HORACE

Think about it, Doris. It makes utter sense.

DORIS

You get to bed! She's not staying! Get her out now, or I'm off!

MONIQUE

(dejectedly)

It's fine. Call me a taxi. I will leave.

HORACE

No wait! Doris, Gordon has left me to speak to Yusimi Yusimi. If she stays it will make a four.

A protracted silence.

DORIS

(to Monique)

If I hear one fucking word about your sordid affair with my husband I'll swing for you, I promise.

HORACE

Right, sorted. (contented pause)
I need to take a leak. I trust you won't claw each other's eyes out while I'm gone.

DORIS

It's fine. Go.

He exits stage right.

An awkward silence as they sit back at the table.

DORIS

This is your chance to leave. I'll tell Horace you left of your own accord. He'll understand.

MONIQUE

No. I am not leaving here without him. I have nowhere to go.

DORIS

Well you can't stay here, luv!

MONIQUE

Why not? I will sleep on your couch, then leave in the morning.

DORIS

Listen cloth ears. D' you think
for one moment I'm going to let
you take my husband away from me?

Toilet flush.

Short silence before he reenters and takes his seat at the
table.

Doorbell.

HORACE

Right! This'll be him. Now please
behave yourself, Doris, just this
once.

MONIQUE -

(snarls)

Ridiculous.

HORACE

Doris, just please, be nice.

He snarls as he opens the door to Maurice who smirks while
dressed in a red suit and white beret.

MAURICE

(jazz hands)

Ah ha!

HORACE

(snarls)

What'd you want?

MAURICE

Er. Well. Actually I...

HORACE

...I thought I told you to stay
away from my wife. Piss off!

He attempts to slam the door shut. MAURICE slips his foot
inside the gap.

MAURICE

Wait. Not too hasty. I have come
to...

HORACE

...I've said all I've got to say
to you. Now go away before I
knock your block off.

DORIS rushes to the door. MONIQUE climbs to her feet.

DORIS

Maurice, is that you?

MAURICE

It is moi, Doris. Please tell
your pig to let me in.

DORIS

But I left you a message. I
couldn't make it tonight.

He grabs his own crotch and squirms.

MAURICE

I need to use the toilet.

HORACE

No! Just fuck off before I lose
my temper.

DORIS steps between them.

DORIS

For Christ's sake let him use the
toilet. What's wrong with you?

HORACE

Just tell him to get lost before
I'm arrested for GBH.

DORIS

Of course you can use our toilet,
Maurice. But we're expecting a
very important guest so I'm
afraid you can't stay. I'm really
sorry but I did leave you a
Whatsapp message.

He enters as HORACE contorts with anger.

MAURICE

I'll try to be quick.

HORACE

Just hurry up about it. I'm going to time you. You've got one minute, or I shall personally come in there and throw you out.

MAURICE'S attention quickly turns towards Monique as she stands surprised to see him.

MAURICE

(shocked)

Monique. Mais qu'est-ce que tu fais ici?

They throw their arms around each other and kiss.

MONIQUE

Oh mon Dieu! Maurice! Oh mon Dieu! Que fais-tu ici?

DORIS

(aback)

Shit.

DORIS quickly exits stage right. HORACE looks on aghast.

MAURICE

I cannot believe my eyes, Monique. Ohmondieu!

HORACE intervenes.

HORACE

Alright! Alright! Alright! What d' you think this is, the Folies Bergere?

MAURICE guffaws.

MAURICE

Monique used to be my fiancée.

MONIQUE

We were going...

HORACE

...This is turning out to be a proper unforgettable evening. Would you like us to leave so you can be alone?

MAURICE gently releases himself from her grasp on him.

MONIQUE

(to Horace)

Maurice is the artist I was
telling you about, remember?

DORIS reenters and brings a pot of food to the table.

DORIS

(to Monique)

In the bed, doggy, was it?

MONIQUE

I was not in the bed, Doris. It
was in the car.

HORACE

(to Monique)

He screws my wife behind my back.

DORIS slaps his face.

DORIS

How dare you!

MAURICE sniggers.

HORACE

Well look at him standing there
like he's just won the lottery.
(grimaces) He gatecrashes our
apartment then to top that he and
Monica are past lovers. You
really couldn't make it up.
(bitterly) I suppose you want her
back now you've finished with my
wife.

DORIS

(to Horace)

Oh get to bed, you twerp.

She exits stage right. MONIQUE follows her.

MAURICE

You are being ridiculous, Horace.

HORACE

I don't know how I never saw this
coming.

DORIS brings a pot of fondue to the table. MONIQUE brings a
tray of cooked aubergines.

DORIS

C'mon, let's eat before it goes cold.

MAURICE rubs his hands together and licks his lips in salivation.

MAURICE

Hmm. Magnifique! Where shall I sit?

HORACE

You're not sitting anywhere, matey. Use the toilet and fuck off!

MAURICE

Oh please...

HORACE

The table is set for four and you are not one of them, so leave while you still have your teeth intact.

MONIQUE grabs MAURICE'S arm. She is joined by DORIS as she grabs his free arm.

DORIS

If Maurice goes, I go.

MONIQUE

Me too.

HORACE

(dispiritedly)

I see. Like that is it?

(to Maurice)

Well, you are popular, aren't you?

MAURICE shrugs his shoulders.

HORACE /

(to Maurice)

Are you sure you can fit them into your single bed?

DORIS

(interjects)

If not, I can always fit them into our double.

HORACE reluctantly pulls a chair out. He sits down at the table next to DORIS.

MAURICE takes a seat opposite HORACE and next to MONIQUE.

HORACE
I'm supposed to be having dinner
with Yusimi Yusimi. How on earth
has this happened?

MAURICE
It just happened, non?

He ignores the remark and they begin to tuck into the food.

MONIQUE
(to Maurice)
Il se comporte comme un cochon.

DORIS
No speaking French at the table!

MONIQUE
Oops. Sorry, I forgot.

HORACE
It's all right, Doris. It's no
different to what you call me
really.

MAURICE
(to Horace)
So whatever way you look at it,
then, you are a pig, non?

HORACE jumps out of his seat with a raised fist.

HORACE
THAT'S IT! OUT!

MAURICE
It was just a joke. Where is your
English humour?

HORACE
OK. LET'S HAVE IT OUT! GET UP!
COME ON GET UP!

MAURICE
Oh but I do not want to fight
with you, Horace. This is so
silly.

MAURICE reluctantly raises his fist. HORACE marches towards the door and opens it wide.

HORACE
Out! Before I have you removed.

MAURICE
Ohmôndieu! Doris, tell him it was only banter.

DORIS
I'm not getting involved. I'm too flipping hungry.

HORACE
They can call me whatever they like. But you keep your filthy mouth shut, right?

DORIS
(interjects)
Well, I'm qualified to do that.

MAURICE
I think you should just calm down Horace.

HORACE
Anymore of your quips and you're out the door. That's your final warning, matey.

DORIS
Horace, sit down and eat. You'll feel much better once you've eaten something.

They sit back at the table and eat and HORACE tops up their glasses with wine.

MAURICE
Red, please.

HORACE refrains.

HORACE
I'm not your servant.

MAURICE
Fine. I'll do it myself, then.

MAURICE picks up the bottle and pours his own. They tuck in.

MONIQUE

This is really nice, Doris.

DORIS

Thanks.

MONIQUE

The aubergine is perfectly baked.

DORIS

It's a Jamie Oliver recipe. I got it off the internet.

MAURICE

Hm... the olives. I adore olives with garlic and aioli.

HORACE

(proudly)

I made them myself. There's nothing to it really.

MAURICE

My compliments.

DORIS

You can buy them from the supermarket.

HORACE

True. But not as good as mine.

DORIS -

Debatable.

HORACE shows her a warning stare. MAURICE sniggers.

DORIS /

So, Monique, it looks like you've found yourself a bed for the night. You must be over the moon.

MONIQUE

Thank you, Doris.

DORIS

Not here! Maurice has got his own studio.

HORACE throws down his utensils in torment.

HORACE

No way! She can stay at Mal
Maison. It's just down the road.
I'll take her over there myself
later.

MAURICE

(to Monique)

No, no, non! Vous pouvez dormir
avec moi!

HORACE

(to Maurice)

You've got to be joking, matey!
She's not staying with you, so
forget it!

MONIQUE

Actually, I will sleep with
Maurice. After all we are not
strangers. We have slept together
many times.

(giggles knowingly)

Beaucoup de fois.

They burst into laughter.

HORACE

(to Monique)

You are not going to sleep with
him, are you?

DORIS

Oh, get to bed! She can sleep
with whoever she likes.

HORACE

Just stay out of this, Doris.

MAURICE

Monique is old enough to make up
her own mind where she wants to
spend the night, papa.

HORACE rips off his napkin and gets to his feet.

HORACE

That's it!

MONIQUE

(imploringly)

Ah... Ce soir je veux danser
juste et oublier toute la douleur
de l'amour.

MAURICE

Super...

MONIQUE

I just love to be in London. It
is so beautiful at night.

DORIS

Horace, sit down, you're crowding
my space.

He sits down again, but with a threatening stare at MAURICE.

MAURICE

Actually, I know a quaint little
French club in Piccadilly. Do you
know the one, Horace?

HORACE

No. I can't go anywhere. I'm
still waiting for Yusimi Yusimi
to show up.

(checks watch)

Where the hell is he gotten to?

DORIS

Maybe he heard all the shouting
and changed his mind.

HORACE

What the hell would you know?

MAURICE wipes his hands on a napkin and takes a deep breath
before he gets to his feet.

He looks down at HORACE who throws an olive into his mouth.

MAURICE

(grins)

Well, he is here.

HORACE looks up at Maurice as he sucks the olive.

HORACE

What did you say?

MAURICE

He is here.

HORACE

Sit down.

MAURICE

Yusimi not.

(smirks)

Or do you see me, Horace?

The olive gets stuck in HORACE'S throat as he digests Maurice's statement.

MAURICE /

(gasps)

Shit!

MAURICE moves quickly and give him the Heimlich Manoeuvre. The women jump out of their seats in shock and horror.

MONIQUE

Oh mon Dieu! What is happening?

DORIS

He's only choking. It's nothing to worry about, Monique.

MAURICE

Pour some water! Quickly!

The olive extracts from his mouth and flies across the table. DORIS fills a glass with water and gives it to him.

MONIQUE

He's pourpré.

MAURICE

He'll be fine in just a moment.

HORACE drinks the water.

DORIS

Horace, are you okay?

He clears his throat. They sit back down at the table.

MAURICE

Phew! That was close. We were very worried, Horace. You could have choked to death.

HORACE

(bitterly)

I should have seen that coming.
Very clever. Very clever indeed.

MAURICE

Yusimi Yusimi is my pseudonym.

HORACE

I can see that. I'm not stupid.
(ruminates) You must think I'm a
fool. And do you?

MAURICE

Non.

HORACE

Is that the play you gave to
Doris?

MAURICE

Oui.

HORACE

But I don't understand why you
did that when Gordon had already
sanctioned your play to be staged
at our theatre.

MAURICE

I know. But I wanted to surprise
you.

HORACE

No you did not, Maurice. You just
wanted to humiliate me, didn't
you?

MAURICE

Non! That is not true either. I
just thought...

HORACE

...So tell me what inspired you
to write a play about the rise
and fall of William Shakespeare?
You can't even spell his name
right. He wasn't French. He was
quintessentially English.

MAURICE

Yes. True. But that does not mean that he cannot be reincarnated as French, non?

HORACE

Fair point. (pauses) So do you want my assessment now that you're here?

MAURICE

Oui.

HORACE

OK then, I'll give it to you. And then you can fuck off back to your little studio.

DORIS

(angrily interjects)

Horace! Maurice just saved you from choking to death. Give him a break.

MAURICE throws up his arms in despair.

MAURICE

Oh c'mon, man.

HORACE takes a sip of water.

HORACE

To be honest it is a well-drafted play. I particularly enjoyed its contemporary theme. I thought it was poignant, well paced and thought provoking. Your characterizations are quite remarkable which for me create a surreal, yet enchanting tempo throughout each act. The dramatic exploits of the main protagonist is momentous. The central premise, that eerie question, is there life after death? Reincarnation is a very interesting theme to put out there, even in a comedic sense of the word.

He stares coldly at Maurice.

MAURICE

Is that it?

HORACE

I haven't finished.

MAURICE

Oh.

HORACE

Maybe the removal of places of rest would be beneficial for certain wider societies, I don't know. The Dead Playwright's social, spiritual and cultural well-being included.

MAURICE leans across the table with added enthusiasm.

MAURICE

Oh, I love it.

HORACE

Your play, Maurice, is written with a profound pitch and penetrating skill which asks fundamentally important questions about family values and respect for the dead, no matter their moral status. Your work has good structure without being polemical, so delivering an excellent pleasantry and plot. You have yourself a decent play. Now you can fuck off!

MAURICE

(aback)

Pardon? But I cannot wait to get started.

HORACE

Gordon and I haven't quite decided on that yet.

MAURICE

But I won the competition fair and square.

A silence as HORACE sits in his seat with a blank expression.

HORACE

You're quite a man, aren't you,
Maurice?

MAURICE

Pardon?

HORACE

You have what you came for, now
you can fuck off!

DORIS

(interjects)

Horace!

HORACE

Well... look at him sitting there
all chuffed with himself.

MAURICE

I just want...

HORACE

...Over my dead body, matey!

MONIQUE puts a comforting arm around Maurice.

HORACE /

D' you want everything I own.
Maurice? The shirt off my back
for instance, before you take
these two cock starved fans of
yours out clubbing, and then to
my bed? Or maybe you'd prefer to
wait until I'm completely out of
your way? I'll just kip on the
sofa shall I, and think about how
I might direct your play, and
even who I might cast... Doris
and Monica for instance? Is that
what I should do, Maurice? Tell
me because I'm completely
discombobulated by your audacity
to come here and gloat at my
expense.

MAURICE

Oh c'mon, Horace.

MONIQUE

Horace, I think you are just
being ridiculous.

HORACE

Am I, Monica? Am I really?

DORIS

Actually, I thought you gave Maurice an excellent overview of his play. It was really good. Just stop being so flipping churlish.

HORACE

(defeatedly)

Three against one.

MAURICE

Oh, be reasonable.

HORACE

Why should I? I don't owe you anything, matey. You gatecrash my dinner, then ask me to be reasonable? You've got some balls, I'll give you that.

MAURICE

Gordon said that you were expecting me.

HORACE

I wasn't expecting you. I was expecting Yusimi Yusimi.

Short silence.

MAURICE

Oh c'mon, Horace. It will be fun working with you.

Short silence.

HORACE

It's not going to happen, matey. In fact, I'd prefer it if you just left now.

MONIQUE

Oh this is so crazy.

HORACE

Is it Monica? So what are we going to do, then, sack the director?

DORIS

Oh Horace. Give him a break. He's worked really hard to please you.

MONIQUE

(to Horace)

What has he done to you?

HORACE ignores her and stares blankly at the wall.

DORIS

(clicks fingers)

Horace!

MONIQUE

Why is he acting like this?

DORIS

Ha! Horace Nugents, lost for words. I thought I'd never see it in my lifetime.

MAURICE climbs out of his seat despondently.

MAURICE

I think I should go?

DORIS

No. Wait a moment, Maurice.

Short silence.

DORIS /

Horace, come on.

Short silence.

DORIS /

Horace, please stop this bullshit silence!

Short silence.

MAURICE

Maybe he needs more water.

DORIS

He can have this then!

Without hesitation she picks up the jug of water and soaks him. He gets up and climbs the stairs.

DORIS

Oh, he'll be alright in a few
minutes. He just needs some space
to think.

DORIS fills their glasses with more wine.

LIGHTS DOWN:

LIGHTS UP.

BEDROOM

HORACE sits on the foot of the bed and stares at his
miserable reflection in the mirrored wardrobe.

LIGHTS DOWN: