

The Abandoned

written by

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EXT. A GREEN HILL, THE AUVERGNE - DAY - SUMMER 1913

FADE IN:

Strains of the opening bars of Canteloube's Bailerio; over the brow lies a field of yellow sunflowers in the distance.

Inside the field a girl aged 16, MARIE-LOUISE, is sitting cross-legged playing with her red dressed doll.

Along the dusty road running parallel approaches JEAN, also 16.

JEAN:

Marie-Louise! Marie-Louise!

She does not answer but giggles.

JEAN: (CONT'D)

Why do you hide in here?

MARIE-LOUISE:

Because I can

JEAN:

That's not a real excuse.

MARIE-LOUISE:

Of course it is - you couldn't see me could you?

JEAN:

I would've found you.

MARIE-LOUISE:

Only one of us was watching Jean, and it wasn't you.

JEAN:

I could hide too.

MARIE-LOUISE:

In a dung-heap perhaps.

JEAN:

You're ignorant and ungrateful. Your mother sent me to find you.

MARIE-LOUISE:

You're ungrateful. The Greeks used to kill bearers of bad news. I will let you live...at least for today.

JEAN:
You just pretend to hate your mum

MARIE-LOUISE:
We have a duty to parents I
suppose.

JEAN:
Pretense! You're not so passive.

MARIE-LOUISE:
And you are. Anyway I like it in
here.

JEAN:
Alone with sunflowers and a silly
doll?

MARIE-LOUISE:
Why not? What makes your world any
happier than mine?

JEAN:
I don't know.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Boy!

JEAN:
I'm not. Why do you say that?

MARIE-LOUISE:
Because you love me...boy.

JEAN:
I never said that!

MARIE-LOUISE:
Then you don't love me?

JEAN:
I never said that either.

MARIE-LOUISE:
So it's you that has no passion,
Jean. You are tiède.

JEAN:
Let me kiss you - I'll show you
passion.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Kiss a boy, never.

JEAN:
See I told you - passive

MARIE-LOUISE:
Nonsense - why start something with
a boy you wish to finish with a
man?

JEAN:
Why wait?

MARIE-LOUISE:
Love's a serious business. I won't
trade a diamond for a piece of
coal.

JEAN:
So you're looking for someone with
a large shovel.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Like yours?

JEAN:
Maybe...

MARIE-LOUISE:
Maybe not. Last summer, you peed
into the river; I was hidden in the
grass.

JEAN:
You're a good spy! If there's a
war I think you would win it for
France, you could hide anywhere.
So what did you think of it?

MARIE-LOUISE:
I couldn't see; your hand was in
the way.

JEAN:
Ah! No-one will ever be good enough
for you.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Romeo found Juliet.

JEAN:
Any prince who turned up in our
village would have to be lost.

MARIE-LOUISE:
 Jean, Saint-Floret is your
 paradise, not mine. I don't want
 my headstone carved by old Pierre
 or, worse still, his son. I want
 my life to mean something,
 something significant, someone like
 Marie Duplessis.

JEAN:
 Who?

MARIE-LOUISE
 Ha vulgaire! She was loved by
 millions.

JEAN:
 Loved? So she's dead then?

Marie-Louise looks irritated

JEAN: (CONT'D)
 How old?

MARIE-LOUISE
 Twenty-three.

JEAN:
 Who would wish to die so early?
 Not me.

MARIE-LOUISE:
 You will, here. I'd rather be a
 cereus than a peasant in Saint
 Floret.

JEAN:
 A cereus?

MARIE-LOUISE:
 Forget it. I should be in Paris,
 sitting with intelligent, sensitive
 people, talking politics and art. I
 want to be missed when I'm gone. I
 want to face God and be repentant
 for sins that were worth committing
 and not just for missing mass on
 Sunday.

JEAN:
 My grandfather used to tell me that
 when you're old you seem to wear
 winter clothes longer than summer
 ones

MARIE-LOUISE:
Pity your grandfather's eloquence
died with him.

JEAN:
Are your peasant girl dreams any
more alive?

Marie-Louise goes to slap Jean but he ducks

MARIE-LOUISE:
Gutter scum! Call me peasant once
more and I'll never speak to you
again.

JEAN
You never say nice things to me
anyway

MARIE-LOUISE:
Your heart would break if I chose
to ignore you.

JEAN (SARCASTICALLY):
Woosh! Your gracious mercy

MARIE-LOUISE:
When Verdi lay dying, the people of
Milan laid down straw on the
cobblestones so the wheels of the
carts that passed by would not
disturb him.

JEAN:
Was he a great General?

MARIE-LOUISE (SIGHS):
One day you will die here Jean and
no-one will care.

JEAN:
You will, eventually.

MARIE-LOUISE:
That can never be. Once I wash my
face of this village dirt it will
simply become a old childhood stain

JEAN:
What about the sunflowers?

MARIE-LOUISE:
 When I'm rich I'll buy a sunflower
 field and sit there as long as I
 like.

JEAN:
 Not today - your dinner is ready;
 you'd better come back with me.

MARIE-LOUISE:
 I'll walk by myself.

JEAN:
 Punishing me you highness? Of
 course I forgot to bring your
 carriage.

Jean begins to walk back toward the village.

MARIE-LOUISE:
 Wait!

They walk together. Marie-Louise begins to whistle
 Canteloube's Lo fiolaire.

JEAN:
 You shouldn't tease someone who
 cares for you if you can't return
 their affection.

MARIE-LOUISE:
 I do like you Jean

JEAN:
 Let me kiss you then.

MARIE-LOUISE:
 You can't afford it.

JEAN:
 Here's a centime.

MARIE-LOUISE:
 You trade a golden kiss for a
 penny?

JEAN:
 We live in the same village; your
 father is a farmer and your mother
 bakes bread, where do you get your
 snobbery from Countess?

MARIE-LOUISE:
 You say snobbery - I say potential.

JEAN:
And what will you do?

MARIE-LOUISE:
I'm considering; maybe a great philanthropist.

JEAN:
And where will you get the money?

MARIE-LOUISE:
I shall acquire it.

JEAN:
Marry it you mean. Some generosity when you can't afford a small kiss.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Very well, but here.

She shows Jean her cheek. He kisses it

JEAN:
Sealed; now you are my girlfriend.

MARIE-LOUISE:
I rented you a kiss, my heart's not for sale.

JEAN:
You just want to tease me.

MARIE-LOUISE:
But you want me to tease you.

Jean stops and catches Marie-Louise by the arm stopping her also. They are standing at a crossroads.

JEAN:
If I told you now to your face that I love you will you stop teasing?

MARIE-LOUISE:
Jean why be interested in starting things that can never be possible.

JEAN:
I love you, Marie-Louise, I always will.

MARIE-LOUISE:
You feel what isn't there. I shouldn't be part of your dreams.

JEAN:

Why not?

MARIE-LOUISE:

Because you aren't in mine.

Jean storms off down the other path while Marie-Louise continues on hers. Canteloube's Bailero begins again and fades as we watch Marie-Louise walk down toward the village.

CUT TO:

INT. MARIE-LOUISE'S COTTAGE, SAINT-FLORET - LATE AFTERNOON

Marie-Louise enters the house. Her mother, Clemence, is cooking and her father, Bertrand, is standing by the stove with a letter in his hand.

CLEMENCE:

Where have you been child? I told you to be back for dinner an hour ago?

MARIE-LOUISE:

I was playing in the sunflower field.

BETRAND:

Again? Why would anyone go to a field without working it?

MARIE-LOUISE:

I go there to dream.

CLEMENCE:

Leave that to bed-time, you should be playing with friends.

BETRAND:

Your mother is right. You don't want to grow up lonely do you?

MARIE-LOUISE:

I'm not alone, I have Jean.

CLEMENCE:

You are lucky to have him you treat him so badly.

BETRAND:

She must learn how to play the field then, eh?

MARIE-LOUISE:

Jean can please himself. He gives his friendship, I don't ask for it.

CLEMENCE:

He's the nicest boy in the village and he dotes on you.

MARIE-LOUISE:

He'll find another.

BETRAND:

Why's that then?

MARIE-LOUISE:

Because soon I shall be in Paris with men, not boys.

CLEMENCE:

I see; and just how will you get to Paris?

MARIE-LOUISE:

Crawl if necessary.

BETRAND:

Paris is a long way from here. You are rural. Your people are rural. Your Grandparents are buried here.

CLEMENCE:

And ours too

BETRAND:

Remember old Raymond; his boy. He had dreams, big ideas. Hated the village, hated his people. Where is he now?

MARIE-LOUISE:

Probably rich and living in a huge house, attending parties and meeting famous people

BETRAND:

Dead; his father lost a fortune sending him money and then paying to bring the body home.

CLEMENCE:

He sent letters bragging that he had a business and needed money to buy in; promised his dad thousands of francs in return for his investment.

BETRAND:

Lies, all lies. They found him in an alleyway. A bag of bones riddled with tuberculosis.

MARIE-LOUISE:

He was weak. I'm not like that.

BETRAND:

You belong here. You would be out of place in a city; ridiculed and used.

MARIE-LOUISE:

No I would be sophisticated and refined. I'll take a rich husband.

CLEMENCE:

Just like that. If I knew it was that easy I might have gone too and where would your father be now, or you for that matter

BETRAND:

There were plenty of girls back then my dear. Camille; she wanted me to marry her.

MARIE-LOUISE:

You don't mean Jean's mum?

CLEMENCE:

She threw him away - I picked up the pieces. That reminds me. You don't have to go to Paris.

MARIE-LOUISE:

I know - I need to go

BETRAND:

Paris is coming to us

MARIE-LOUISE:

What is that supposed to mean?

CLEMENCE:

I have been speaking to Jean's mum. His cousin Henri has been orphaned. A tragedy I believe but I didn't pry. The authorities have arranged for him to live with his Aunt and Uncle. His grandparents were born here in the village.

MARIE-LOUISE:

Did his parents leave him any money?

BETRAND:

I doubt it. He is nearly 17 so he will take some looking after.

CLEMENCE:

My little gold digger - your eyes have lit up I scarcely need to trim the lamp for supper

BETRAND:

There my little golden curls you shall have another friend.

MARIE-LOUISE:

I don't want to see him.

CLEMENCE:

But if he's Jean's cousin you will have to.

MARIE-LOUISE:

Why? We're moving in opposite directions.

BETRAND:

You're not in Paris yet.

CLEMENCE:

Marie-Louise, Henri is blameless; he's a victim of circumstance and it's our duty to help him.

MARIE-LOUISE:

And become infected?

BETRAND:

I think we bred a Medusa. There should be snake heads where there are golden locks.

MOTHER:

Eat your dinner and wash-up before
you go to bed.

CUT TO:

INT. MARIE-LOUISE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Marie-Louise is lying in bed. Canteloube's Pour l'enfant is heard in the background.

MARIE-LOUISE:

Maman and Papa belong in this village. Their legs are rooted in the soil, as surely as the apple tree in our garden. And when they die in their rural beds they will refuse heaven itself; they'd rather stay here and defy God. I can't be like them - I mustn't. And this Henri, who is he but another poor relation? Why would anyone choose to leave Paris to come here even if he has lost his parents? It seems everything that leaves here must find its way back. I would rather live in a Parisian sewer than a rural one. I don't want his friendship. How can he be of any use to me if he cannot help himself? I have decided I will hate him, hate him with all my heart.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAINT-FLORET VILLAGE SQUARE - MORNING

Canteloube's La Pastoura als camps plays. Jean is sitting on the wall of the well. Marie-Louise approaches.

MARIE-LOUISE:

Daydreaming boy?

JEAN:

Why, is that luxury reserved only for nasty, spoiled little girls?

MARIE-LOUISE:

Don't call me that!

JEAN:

But you are nasty and you are spoiled

MARIE-LOUISE:

You know what I mean...don't refer to me as a girl, besides if I'm nasty you deserve it and how could anyone can be spoiled in a place like this; that's a ridiculous idea...are you going to school?

JEAN:

Yes

MARIE-LOUISE:

Walk with me then

JEAN:

So I have a value then?

MARIE-LOUISE:

Jean, I like you. In our little world you're the only one I can say that too. But I would go mad if I had to live my whole life here.

JEAN:

Let's go away together then.

MARIE-LOUISE:

To Paris? You don't have the nerve

JEAN:

Test me.

MARIE-LOUISE:

What would we do?

JEAN:

Get jobs, find somewhere to live, get married.

MARIE-LOUISE:

A little shop girl eh? Working all day and then having to come home and cook for you?

JEAN:

But we'd need money to start...once we're settled things would be...

MARIE-LOUISE:
You want to live in the greatest
city in the world as a provincial!

JEAN:
We have to be practical.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Is there a difference? Besides why
get married at all; we could live
together.

JEAN:
But that's a sin

MARIE-LOUISE:
Who says it's a sin? Is God a
provincial too? Will you go
looking for God in Paris?

JEAN:
God's everywhere

MARIE-LOUISE:
Jean would you like to marry me?

JEAN:
Now you torment me

MARIE-LOUISE:
Renounce God then and I promise to
marry you

JEAN:
Why would you barter yourself with
God?

MARIE-LOUISE:
Am I not worth it boy?

JEAN (SILENTLY):
I renounce God

MARIE-LOUISE:
Louder

JEAN (SHOUTS):
I renounce God!

Down beside the schoolhouse figures turn toward the noise.

MARIE-LOUISE:
I believe you

JEAN:

You do?

MARIE-LOUISE:

Of course; now we can go for a picnic Sunday instead of church

JEAN:

But I can't do that my mother would be angry

MARIE-LOUISE:

Tell her you've renounced God

JEAN:

She'll make me go anyway

MARIE-LOUISE:

So you'll live a lie then?

JEAN:

For now, until Paris

MARIE-LOUISE:

How do I know you're not lying now?

JEAN:

I would never lie to you Marie-Louise

MARIE-LOUISE:

But you would God. That's a solemn vow Jean. I am impressed by your sacrilege. What depths have I uncovered here. I must hear your confession some time. What do you dream of?

JEAN:

Can't you guess? You.

MARIE-LOUISE:

Behind a table.

JEAN:

Better than a Parisian gutter

MARIE-LOUISE:

I hear one of those snipes is coming here

JEAN:

Henri, my cousin - he's an orphan.

MARIE-LOUISE:

A poor excuse.

JEAN:

How can such a pretty mouth form
such ugly words?

MARIE-LOUISE:

If I lived in Paris I wouldn't let
a little thing such as being
orphaned make me leave.

JEAN:

Maman told me they died in tragic
circumstances.

MARIE-LOUISE:

How romantic.

JEAN:

There are rumors in the village
that they were murdered. They say
Henri's father was a criminal; a
thief.

MARIE-LOUISE:

Now he sounds interesting
(Pause)

JEAN:

I stole something once

MARIE-LOUISE:

Jean goody-goody?

JEAN:

An apple from old Arnaud's orchard

Marie-Louise drops her books ostentatiously

MARIE-LOUISE:

Scandal, dishonor, infamy! We must
ensure that this remains our secret
Jean. If it ever got out, why the
village...

JEAN:

Bitch!

MARIE-LOUISE:

Fire now too, as well as a master
felon! I might be tempted to marry
you after all if..

JEAN:

If what?

MARIE-LOUISE:

If I had no intention of getting away from this miserable place forever. What's he like this loser cousin of yours?

JEAN:

Tall, like his dad.

MARIE-LOUISE:

He's been here before then?

JEAN:

No; I've never met him. Mama told me. You had better be careful how you speak to him.

MARIE-LOUISE:

I shall speak to the urchin as I choose. Why should I be afraid of the pup of a dead thief?

JEAN:

I hope he clouts you.

MARIE-LOUISE:

You would let him? Some beau you are. Is he good looking?

JEAN:

Will that make a difference?

MARIE-LOUISE:

No. I shan't want to know him, especially if he likes it here, but if he's prettier than you I may tease him instead.

The school bell rings.

JEAN:

We'd better hurry

MARIE-LOUISE:

You run along Jean

JEAN:

Messr. Fauchaux will keep you after school

MARIE-LOUISE:
He's tried that before

JEAN:
You're incorrigible

MARIE-LOUISE:
And you're naïve

Jean runs on ahead whilst Marie-Louise continues to stroll whistling Lo fiolaire again.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLERMONT-FERRAND RAILWAY STATION - MORNING, TWO WEEKS LATER

A steam train approaches the platform. The smoke ascends against the Puy-de-Dome. On the platform an elderly man JACQUES, 60, stands waiting as the passengers disembark. After a few moments a young man saunters out of the mist. Jacques moves forward.

JACQUES:
Henri, is it you?

The Young Man looks askance and continues to walk by. There are no other passengers. He walks to the platform end. A figure looms up behind him. The figure's sleeve has been pulled down covering the hand. He pushes his fist into the old man's back

STRANGER:
How much have you got old man?

JACQUES:
Please Monsieur I am a poor farmer;
I have no money.

STRANGER:
Yes, you do smell like a farmer.
There's a franc in your pocket,
yes?

JACQUES:
But it is a gift, for my nephew...
wait...how do you...?

STRANGER:
Uncle

JACQUES:
Henri?

Jacques turns to face HENRI, 17. He pulls his hand out of his sleeve to reveal his pointed two fingers that he used to fake a pistol barrel.

JACQUES: (CONT'D)
I thought you had not come. You gave me a fright.

HENRI:
Just a little game, eh - no harm done

They walk out of the station toward Jacques's donkey and cart

JACQUES:
It's a strange game considering what happened to your parents.

HENRI:
And that's a strange term to use when discussing them.

JACQUES:
Respect Henri. My brother Marcel was a good man before he left the village. He wrote me, he explained. He was starving.

HENRI:
I don't care that my old man was a thief or why he became a thief.

Both climb into the cart. Jacques takes a whip and gives the ass a lick. It moves off reluctantly in the fierce heat of mid-afternoon

JACQUES:
Henri, there are reasons, perhaps, why my brother was lacking in...

HENRI:
Everything except deception

CUT TO:

EXT. THE ROAD: LATE AFTERNOON

The ass stops abruptly in the road.

JACQUES:
Oh no, not again you brute

He cracks his whip but the donkey remains static

HENRI:

A close relation perhaps?

Jacques gives up. He picks up a basket from the rear of the cart and takes out some sausage and a bottle of wine

JACQUES:

Here. I brought it just for this.
We'll give Tetu half an hour.

HENRI:

You said there were reasons why my father hated me

JACQUES:

He didn't hate you Henri. Neither did your mother. Not the way you think.

(pause)

JACQUES: (CONT'D)

Your grandfather was a stern man. He was called Marcel too. Your father was nicknamed baby Marcel. As a child, he liked it, but as he got older they clashed all the time. They were too alike. When your father was 18 the arguing got out of hand and they had their first and last fist fight. My brother would have beaten him but old Marcel was a cunning one and hit your father with a club he'd hidden in his pants. After that my father taunted him mercilessly - 'baby Marcel' this and 'baby Marcel' that...

Henri laughs in an ironic fashion

HENRI:

He'd try that on with me - baby Henri - when we had our first fight; but there was a difference

JACQUES:

Yes?

HENRI:

I won. I was 15.

JACQUES:

Henri

(pause)

we live in a tranquil community. Not much changes and when things do, it's a slow process, almost invisible. Sure - people are born and people die, but they do it in turn, almost as if the village wills it.

HENRI:

Are you taking me to Paradise uncle? I'm a little young - I want to have a good time. I want to drink all the wine there is in the world; make love to as many women; I want to win a fortune, gamble it away and then win it back.

JACQUES:

To me Saint-Floret is heaven on earth. That is why I took the beatings off old Marcel, because I knew eventually I would get the farm.

HENRI:

And my father - what was his reward?

JACQUES:

Do you think I stole the farm from my older brother? It was his to inherit, but he didn't want it. I knew he didn't want it. I begged him not to go. I tried to persuade him we could work it together when my father died.

HENRI:

But he wouldn't take the whipping

JACQUES:

No, my father became too ill to dish it out and too weak for your father to pay him back in kind. The only thing they ever had in common was pain for each other. So he left. Despite it all I don't think he wanted to see old Marcel die.

HENRI:

So they both got what they wanted
in the end.

JACQUES:

Maybe, but old Marcel's last words
were 'baby Marcel'

HENRI:

He asked after my father.

JACQUES:

Or maybe he was taunting him with
his last breath, before he would be
judged himself.

HENRI

I doubt if old Marcel ever bent a
knee in devotion.

JACQUES:

He never missed a Sunday mass

HENRI:

Neither does the Pope. That's not
what I said

JACQUES:

I think he beat the goodness out of
my brother.

(pause)

I offered him his share when I
saved enough. I wrote him; he'd
been in Paris a while. You were
still a baby. He turned it down
and it was a tidy sum. I can make
more than that in one night
Jacques. I never asked him how but
I guessed it wasn't legitimate.

HENRI:

I think, Uncle, I may have been the
only legitimate act he ever carried
out.

Jacques looks askance

HENRI: (CONT'D)

Wasn't I?

JACQUES:
 God walks abroad in the quiet lanes
 of Saint Floret but I guess he
 tiptoes around Montmarte.

HENRI:
 Ah who cares anyway - I wouldn't
 have been the first bastard born in
 Paris, nor the last.

The ass moves forward

JACQUES:
 Talking of bastards, looks like
 Tetu is ready to go home.

Henri's face sags then hardens with determination. The cart
 moves on.

CUT TO:

EXT. JEAN'S HOUSE, SAINT-FLORET - EARLY EVENING

The cart trundles into the village and stops beside a
 farmhouse. A woman AUNT JULIETTE, late fifties, comes out.

JACQUES:
 Good evening Madame. I have
 brought the nephew.

JULIETTE:
 So I see

Henri stands up in the cart.

JULIETTE: (CONT'D)
 Good-looking too - a prince,
 perhaps, for one of our princesses.

Henri climbs down and grabs his baggage

HENRI:
 Auntie, there are no fairy tales in
 Paris.

JULIETTE:
 And I thought Paris was the city of
 dreams

HENRI:
 Only realists make things come true

JULIETTE:
Maybe after a little while here,
you will

HENRI:
Could it charm the charmless youth?

JACQUES:
What's the matter boy; don't you
like girls?

HENRI:
Of course.

JULIETTE:
Saint-Floret may be the oyster that
contains your pearl.

HENRI:
I'd take a necklace over a ring.

CUT TO

INT. JEAN'S HOUSE - EVENING

Juliette grabs a rustic loaf and begins to saw away at it.
Henri and Jacques enter with the baggage.

JULIETTE:
Are you hungry Henri?

HENRI:
Always

JACQUES:
We stopped and had some wine and
sausage.

JULIETTE:
You mean that ass stopped. You
should've left him, traded him in
for another.

JACQUES:
So he has his foibles. We must
look after our own.

JULIETTE:
That generosity will be the death
of you yet

HENRI:
Why don't you shoot him?

JACQUES:
 Because he's peculiar? If we used
 that as a yardstick we'd have to
 slaughter half the village

HENRI:
 I'll shoot him if you haven't the
 guts. I can shoot, my father
 showed me.

JACQUES:
 I thought you two didn't get on

HENRI:
 We didn't, I think he was trying to
 frame me for a murder he committed.

JULIETTE:
 Oh sweet merciful God!

HENRI:
 Just kidding Auntie

JACQUES:
 Henri, that's some joke for a boy

He whispers into Henri's ear

JACQUES: (CONT'D)
 You are, aren't you?

Henri breaks into a grin.

JULIETTE:
 Henri, we are respected here.

HENRI:
 I'm sure the shepherds of Saint-
 Floret are used to dealing with
 black sheep. Can I wash up?

JACQUES:
 There's fresh water in a bucket out
 in the yard

Henri goes out

JACQUES: (CONT'D)
 Well...come on...get it out

JULIETTE:
 This isn't going to be easy

JACQUES:
It's just bravado.

JULIETTE:
There's something disturbing there

JACQUES:
It can't have been easy, the way
his parents died

JULIETTE:
It's not that. His eyes they..

JACQUES:
They are striking

JULIETTE:
He looks so intently at you like
he's trying to work you out then,
suddenly his eyes change.

JACQUES:
You're nervous because he's trying
to get to know you?

JULIETTE:
No - more like a dismissal; as if
he doesn't consider you worth the
effort.

Henri enters

HENRI:
Some pretty smells out there

JACQUES:
What do expect my boy, Parisian Eu
de Cologne?

HENRI:
Don't worry Uncle, I've smelt shit
before; just a different type

JULIETTE:
Henri! Don't let the priest hear
that sort of language.

HENRI:
I can assure you Priest's can swear
better than men. Besides what do I
want with a stooge. The last time
I was in a church I was peeing in
the font.

JULIETTE

You haven't been to mass since you were christened?

HENRI

Not exactly, I was stealing the silver candlesticks off the altar

Juliette and Jacques look at each other and pass this off as Bravado.

JACQUES:

You will attend mass on a Sunday while you live under this roof. It would look queer if a young boy in the village didn't go to church.

HENRI:

Really?

JULIETTE:

What is it Henri? Do you blame god for your parents dying?

HENRI:

If that were the measure I'd be at Church every day.

Juliette runs upstairs holding her ears in shock

HENRI:

Auntie's a bit sensitive isn't she?

JACQUES:

You can't go about the village talking like this. We'll get a reputation. I'm not anything special but I am respected. Adopt the pace of life here; the school, the church.

HENRI:

I've learnt enough, but I am hungry.

JACQUES:

And you've scared away the cook?

HENRI:

Give me five minutes

Henri grins and goes upstairs. Jean enters

JEAN:
Is he here?

JACQUES:
Yes, upstairs with your mother

JEAN:
What's he like?

JACQUES:
He's different.

Henri comes back downstairs with Juliette; they're giggling.

HENRI:
Cousin!

He hugs him tightly lifting him from his feet

JEAN:
Henri! I've been looking forward
so much to...

HENRI:
But you're skinny, a bag of bones.
Don't you eat all this good healthy
food at all? I've lived on scraps
and could beat you to a pulp

He pops Jean back on the floor and shadow boxes with him.
Jean retreats nervously and bumps into his mother

HENRI: (CONT'D)
Okay Jean, I'm only kidding. No
need to run for help.

JULIETTE:
Henri, you are a naughty boy

JACQUES:
Boys, sit down.

HENRI:
Your Mum says I need a girl; any
available?

JEAN:
No

The table is ready. Jacques and Juliette say grace with
closed eyes.

Henri makes a sign of the cross pushing his index fingers up his nostrils. Jean chuckles and gets a slap over the head from Jacques.

FADE TO:

INT. JEAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is small. Jean climbs into bed. Henri is undressing. Jean puts his hands together and begins a silent prayer. He is naked and holding a pyjama bottom in his right hand covering his genitalia.

HENRI:

Hey Holy Joe - what are you after?

JEAN:

Just praying.

HENRI:

Nobody just prays. We're asking the guy to get for us something we can't get ourselves: a girl maybe.

JEAN (BLUSHING):

No

Henri removes the pyjama bottom displaying his penis

HENRI:

Try praying for one like this
cousin

Jean's eyes widen

JEAN:

Is it real?

HENRI:

You want an endorsement. I could give you the names of several satisfied Parisian ladies.

JEAN:

It's a sin

Henri picks up a rusty toy soldier

HENRI:

Do you like playing with your toys?

JEAN:

Used to

HENRI:

Well girls are toys for grown-ups,
and the real sin, cousin, is that
you are 17 and still a virgin.

JEAN:

Am I?

HENRI:

Show me your cock.

JEAN:

You can tell from just looking at
it?

HENRI:

You're a vierge alright

JEAN:

I have a girlfriend

HENRI:

Well she's never sucked that.

Jean reacts angrily

JEAN:

What? put it in her...

HENRI:

Introduce me and I'll see what I
can do

JEAN:

Her name is Marie-Louise - she
won't like you Henri.

HENRI:

Liking has nothing to do with it.

JEAN:

Better to love one person sincerely
than screw a dozen.

HENRI:

Only a virgin would ever say that
and mean it! Where is she now?

JEAN:

In bed I guess

HENRI:
That's the difference with us. If
she was my girlfriend I'd be in
there with her.

JEAN:
She hates you

HENRI:
They usually do, eventually. I
never had one hate me who hasn't
met me.

JEAN:
You'll see.

HENRI:
Do you want me to steal her away?

Henri grins and looks down at his penis. Jean begins to cry.

HENRI: (CONT'D)
Hey, I'm not interested in country
girls. A city girl knows how to
keep you hard. Sleep well cousin.

FADE TO:

INT. SAINT-FLORET CHAPEL - SUNDAY MORNING

The chapel is small and almost full. Jean enters with his parents and Henri. They squeeze into a rear seat and move over for Henri, who ignores them and moves further down, around halfway, attracting attention. The priest FR. PASCAL looks askew at the congregation who return to full voice. Marie-Louise is sitting on the other side. Henri begins to sing loudly above everybody else. Jean sees Marie-Louise gives him a look of disgust and smiles. Henri lets a bellow out and Fauchoux, sitting in front, jumps up off his pew in fright. Jean sees Marie-Louise turn her head away and shield her face with her hand. Jean feels affronted on her behalf but notices, moments later, that her body is shaking slightly. He suddenly realises she is giggling. He shuts his prayer book.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAINT-FLORET CHAPEL - MORNING

The Priest is talking with Jean's parents.

JACQUES:
Apologies Pretre; he is my
brother's boy - from Paris.

PRIEST:

A little loud, but enthusiastic - perhaps he may encourage some of the less involved amongst us.

Henri comes out with his hands clasped together as if in prayer.

PRIEST: (CONT'D)

What a conscientious young man. Do we have a budding novice in our midst?

Henri drops his hands and grabs the Priest's shaking them wildly

HENRI:

What's the pay like then?

PRIEST:

Pay? A poor priest must rely on the goodwill of the village.

HENRI:

Goodwill? Of French peasants? That's the road to poverty.

PRIEST:

Our Lord walked that road my son but look what he achieved.

HENRI:

Yes he certainly fooled a lot of people.

Jacques pulls Henri to one side and marches him off.

JACQUES:

Henri! Enough! You must show respect, especially to the father.

HENRI:

Respect Uncle; why? Is God in the field shouldering the yoke? Is he there underneath that hot unforgiving sun, sweating pounds for a meager existence?

JACQUES:

But God provides..

HENRI:

No Uncle - you provide. It's your manna they eat here not God's.

JACQUES:
But the church...it's the center of
our lives.

HENRI:
Yes they built it there to remind
you every day: the graveyard too.

Juliette joins them.

JACQUES:
Where's Jean?

JULIETTE:
Talking to Marie-Louise

Henri looks over at them

HENRI:
Who's the beauty then?

JULIETTE:
That's Jean's girlfriend.

HENRI:
Is it?

Marie-Louise is talking to Jean but glancing over at Henri
constantly

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CHAPEL GATE

Jean and Marie-Louise are together talking

JEAN:
I don't like my cousin

MARIE-LOUISE:
Why? I thought he'd be
interesting.

JEAN:
But you said you'd hate him.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Why should I hate him? He's just
another silly little boy

JEAN:
Silly enough for you to tease I
suppose.

MARIE-LOUISE:
 If I tease him it doesn't that
 prove I hate him; you hate me
 teasing you, don't you?

JEAN:
 I think that would lead to trouble.

MARIE-LOUISE:
 Who for, me or you?

JEAN:
 He won't understand...he may think...

MARIE-LOUISE:
 Oh it's okay baby, don't be
 afraid. You'll still be my first
 tease. Introduce us.

JEAN:
 No - I'm going home.

MARIE-LOUISE:
 Without Mummy and Daddy?

Jean storms off.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CHAPEL

Henri sees Jean walk away

HENRI:
 Uncle - shall we say hello to
 Jean's girlfriend?

JACQUES:
 Where's Jean gone?

HENRI:
 Perhaps he's picking flowers for
 her in the cemetery.

They walk over to Marie-Louise

JACQUES:
 Marie-Louise; this is Jean's
 cousin, Henri, from Paris

Juliette calls Jacques away to talk to the priest.

MARIE-LOUISE:

Don't you think 'from Paris' is the saddest thing one could say about someone?

HENRI:

How about 'from Saint-Floret'?

MARIE-LOUISE:

No, on the contrary, that's good.

HENRI:

I see. Well I hope to be 'from Saint-Floret' very soon

MARIE-LOUISE:

That would certainly make you more interesting.

HENRI:

Where's your boyfriend gone?

MARIE-LOUISE:

Jean? My boyfriend? Did he...but of course he would, wouldn't he?

HENRI:

Pity.

MARIE-LOUISE:

Save your pity, pauper 'from Paris'

HENRI:

Why, when it's so richly earned. If you are not even attractive enough for a mere farm boy what is there for me?

MARIE-LOUISE:

Jean is attracted to me. He has no choice in the matter.

HENRI:

Attractive and untouched - even worse.

MARIE-LOUISE:

Why waste the art of love here?

HENRI:

Who are you Monet? You paint with love do you? How does one achieve that?

MARIE-LOUISE:
And I thought Parisians were
sophisticated; no wonder you lost
the city.

HENRI:
I can never lose Paris

MARIE-LOUISE:
Then you're just here for the
summer are you?

HENRI:
Maybe. Would you like to know how
beautiful she is?

MARIE-LOUISE:
No - show me

Marie-Louise skips off. Jacques returns with his wife.

JACQUES:
Have you made friends then?

HENRI:
She's a child

JULIETTE:
And you are a man I suppose, at 18?

HENRI:
I think I've earned the right.

JACQUES:
Henri, even the hardest of men need
love.

Henri stares down the road at the retreating Marie-Louise

HENRI:
Yes Uncle, you're right; maybe I'll
try some.

FADE TO:

INT. SAINT FLORET SCHOOL - MONDAY MORNING

A musty classroom with poor furniture: MONSEIUR FAUCHEUX, 40
is teaching. The children are of mixed age.

FAUCHEUX:
Settle down please class, settle
down

FAUCHEUX: (CONT'D)
 Today we have a surprise. A new
 classmate. Henri - please stand.

Henri obliges

FAUCHEUX: (CONT'D)
 Henri is from Paris

There are some oohs and aahs from the class

FAUCHEUX: (CONT'D)
 Henri, perhaps you would like to
 introduce yourself.

Henri smiles mischievously.

HENRI:
 Good morning children!

CLASS:
 Good morning Henri!

HENRI:
 Yes, I am a Parisian, born and
 bred. I used to go to school in
 Paris, well for a while...

The class and Faucheux titter

HENRI: (CONT'D)
 But at 14 one is expected to earn a
 living and school can't give you
 that.

FAUCHEUX:
 On the contrary young man, a good
 education is the only way to earn a
 good living.

HENRI:
 Is it? Class, how many of you are
 going to be farmers?

A half dozen boys raise their hands

HENRI: (CONT'D)
 And Shepherds

Another three

HENRI: (CONT'D)
 How many lawyers and bankers are
 there among you?

No hands. A young boy, Maurice, answers.

MAURICE:
My dad calls me a prince sometimes,
when I'm good

HENRI:
Of what, cabbages? Ha! And where
are the princesses then?

No hands again and the class begins to giggle.

HENRI: (CONT'D)
Wives?

Some reluctant hands go up and the laughter dies away

HENRI: (CONT'D)
Education is redundant here.

MARIE-LOUISE:
I am not going to be a wife, not in
Saint Floret anyway

HENRI:
We have a princess then?

MARIE-LOUISE:
Better than in a kitchen in Saint-
Floret.

HENRI:
I shall die in Paris, like my
parents.

FAUCHEUX:
Henri, we are sorry for your
misfortune but the children please;
was it an illness?

HENRI:
They were murdered.

The children gasp again and one little girl, Sophie, begins to cry.

FAUCHEUX:
Surely not Henri - why would you
tell the children that?

HENRI:
Because I saw it.

FAUCHEUX:

I think we know quite enough about you for the time being Henri

HENRI:

Yes, that's enough of me but what of you. How many of you have been to Paris?

Nobody answers.

HENRI: (CONT'D)

Of course you haven't and, I dare say, perhaps may never see her. But I'll go back, when I'm ready. Back to the lights; back to nights in Montmartre and the Eiffel Tower overlooking us all higher in the sky than these little hills that surround you.

Henri is looking directly at Marie-Louise

FAUCHEUX:

Thank you Henri, but I am qualified to teach the children Geography. Will you retake your seat please?

HENRI:

No I don't think I will. Goodbye!

Henri walks out.

FAUCHEUX:

Well, my word!

Jean stands up and looks over at Marie-Louise

JEAN:

Monsieur Faucheux I would like to apologize for my cousin's behavior.

FAUCHEUX:

Thank you Jean for your courtesy but please sit.

Marie-Louise looks at Jean with contempt

FAUCHEUX: (CONT'D)

I hope you all will do your best to help Henri assimilate himself with our more gentele approach to life.

MAURICE:
What's assimilate?

FAUCHEUX:
It means to become part of something. We are part of Saint-Floret. We are assimilated into our village with each day we spend here.

SOPHIE:
That sounds like marriage

FAUCHEUX:
What do you mean girl?

SOPHIE:
Like we are married to the village

FAUCHEUX:
Yes, I suppose one could interpret it that way

MAURICE:
I don't want to be assimilated then

SOPHIE:
Me neither

The class begin to talk among themselves

MARIE-LOUISE:
Is this the first rebellion witnessed in sleepy Saint-Floret?

JEAN:
But we are a part of the village whether we like it or not, aren't we?

FAUCHEUX:
Children silence now! We have a long day ahead of us. You may go your own way when you come of age, by which time I hope to be absolved of all responsibility for you. Text books out please

The class take out copies of Hugo's Les Miserables

FADE TO:

INT. JEAN'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Jacques and Juliette are in the kitchen. Jean enters

JACQUES:
Good afternoon young Voltaire!

JEAN:
You'd better enjoy them then -
they're won't be many more

JACQUES:
Mon Dieu has Napoleon returned?

JULIETTE:
Big silly - if he wasn't dead he'd
be too old.

Jacques screws his face up and looks at Jean

JEAN:
Henri embarrassed us at school
today.

JACQUES:
His first day? Has he hit another
child?

JEAN:
No

JULIETTE:
Sacred Heaven, he hasn't hit
Monsieur Fauchoux?

JEAN:
No, but he may as well have

JACQUES:
Come on boy out with it; what has
Henri done?

JEAN:
He didn't tell you?

JULIETTE:
How could he? Isn't he with you?

JEAN:
No he left school just after it
started.

JACQUES:
Well he never came home

JEAN:
Perhaps he's gone home

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SUNFLOWER FIELD - LATE AFTERNOON

Marie-Louise is singing Canteloube's Chut Chut. Above Henri descends the hill. He ducks behind a small tree and smiles seeing the doll in her hand. Marie-Louise goes into the field of sunflowers. Henri comes out from behind the tree and makes his way down toward her.

HENRI:
Aren't you a little old for that doll?

Marie-Louise jumps up in surprise

MARIE-LOUISE:
Pig! Take your snout away from my flowers.

HENRI:
Your flowers? Another big shot telling peasants where they can and can't go.

Henri motions to go in

MARIE-LOUISE:
Go anywhere you like but stay out of here

He desists

HENRI:
You wouldn't happen to own the road too?

MARIE-LOUISE:
Feel free; use it to get back to where you belong

HENRI:
I think I belong in there with you

Henri pushes into the field. A call comes from behind.

JEAN:
I wouldn't if I were you

Both Henri and Marie-Louise swing round.

HENRI:
Wouldn't what?

JEAN:
It's private - to her

HENRI:
If I were a boy I wouldn't presume

MARIE-LOUISE:
What man would act like a loathsome
Peeping Tom?

HENRI:
Loathsome? Why? I can look at the
Mona Lisa without her consent?

JEAN:
It's a work of art

HENRI:
Then how am I being loathsome?

MARIE-LOUISE:
Your flattery has a dull edge. You
wound the boy but you won't prick
me.

HENRI:
Flattery; don't you think you're
special?

MARIE-LOUISE:
I don't need your sanction

HENRI:
What do you want from me then?

JEAN:
She wants nothing. Marie-Louise,
your dinner is ready

HENRI:
Everyone wants something, even this
maitre d.

MARIE-LOUISE:
You have nothing I want

HENRI:
Yes I do. What has the boy got?

JEAN:
I have family. I'll inherit.

HENRI:
 Nothing's always been good for me;
 never stopped me getting anything I
 wanted.

MARIE-LOUISE:
 Well I don't want Saint-Floret

HENRI:
 Let's leave it for Jean then?

Marie-Louise giggles. Henri moves into the field. The dark shadow of a cloud moves across the sun. Jean grabs Henri and pulls him back out. Henri pushes him away and Jean falls backward onto the road. As Jean gets up Henri knocks him down again with a punch

HENRI: (CONT'D)
 Get up again yokel, if you can.

Marie-Louise comes out of the field and grabs Henri by the arm.

MARIE-LOUISE:
 Leave the boy. Walk me back home

Henri grins at Jean and attempts to embrace Marie-Louise.

MARIE-LOUISE: (CONT'D)
 I said walk me home

Henri obeys and turns with her toward the village. Jean watches them go, tears simmering in his eyes. The sky has darkened appreciably, threatening rain. There is a distant roar of thunder from over the hill.

FADE TO:

INT. JEAN'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

The door to the kitchen is open. Jacques and Juliette are eating supper.

JULIETTE:
 We should look for him

JACQUES:
 Jean or Henri?

JULIETTE:
Henri. Jean will be with Marie-
Louise I expect.

JACQUES:
Oh yes, I forgot, he's her guardian
angel.

JULIETTE:
They're a good match.

JACQUES:
She may set Jean alight but does
the fire burn both ways?

JULIETTE:
She's young and has her dreams.

JACQUES:
They'll pass

JULIETTE:
Maybe they won't

JACQUES:
Then she'll starve

Jean enters. His clothes are roughed up, there are traces of
blood in his nostrils and his lower lip is swollen.

JULIETTE:
Gracious, look at your pants! I
haven't another pair for school.

JACQUES:
My god boy, were you kicked by
Tetu?

JEAN:
Running home, I slipped.

JULIETTE:
From Marie-Louise's? But you know
every stone between here and there.

JACQUES:
Funny.

JULIETTE:
You're amused are you? Then you
wash him, and the clothes.

JACQUES:

Funny, your nose is bloody and you've got a dirty arse. Did you fall twice or were you going so fast that you cartwheeled down the lane? Where's Henri?

JEAN:

I haven't seen him since he walked out of school.

JULIETTE:

We should find him.

JEAN:

We're farmers not shepherds.

JULIETTE:

It'll be dark soon

JACQUES:

I doubt if being out on a balmy Auvergne evening will unnerve him. I'm more worried that he's not alone.

JEAN:

Mum's right - we should look for him.

JACQUES:

Any ideas Jean?

JEAN:

I'll find him

Suddenly Henri appears

JULIETTE:

Gracious boy where have you been? - it's late

HENRI:

Late! Some people I know will be barely out of bed.

JACQUES:

What happened in school?

HENRI:

I excused myself

JEAN:

You embarrassed me

HENRI:
Sorry

JULIETTE:
How polite!

HENRI:
You misunderstand auntie; Jean's
quite capable of embarrassing
himself; he doesn't need my help.

Jean lunges at Henri but Henri fends him off easily

HENRI: (CONT'D)
You need lessons

Jacques gets between them and holds back Jean

JACQUES:
No-one's learning how to fight

HENRI:
Oh anyone can learn how to fight;
winning's the trick

Jean tries to break free from his Father's grip

JEAN:
You bastard

JULIETTE:
Jean!

JACQUES:
Upstairs boy, now!

Jean storms upstairs

JACQUES: (CONT'D)
Stop that stupid grinning boy, we
need to talk. Juliette, pass me a
bottle.

JULIETTE:
But it's only Tuesday

She goes into a cooler nook in the kitchen and retrieves a
bottle of wine.

JACQUES:
Leave us

JULIETTE:
But the child...

JACQUES:
Go to bed Juliette

She frowns and then turns around placing a kiss of Henri's cheek

JULIETTE:
Goodnight Henri

HENRI:
Goodnight Aunt. I'll make
breakfast tomorrow if you like

JACQUES:
Your aunt does the cooking. You go
back to school tomorrow

She retires and Jacques pours out two glasses of wine then picks up the water jug

HENRI:
I've drunk wine before, so has my
mother

JACQUES:
I'm sure, nevertheless

Jacques dilutes Henri's glass of wine

HENRI:
No school

JACQUES:
Henri, you've had precious little
education. This is your chance to
better your...

HENRI:
Chance? Chance is the pole we all
dance around. Chance will have me
sit at a desk, eight hours a day,
fifty weeks a year and learn all I
can about sitting in an office for
eight hours a day, fifty weeks a
year making fat profits for my
employer. No, I won't make Chance
my master. I make Chance my slave.

JACQUES:
You plan to marry into blue blood,
or maybe invent something eh?

HENRI:

They're your measures. If Kings and geniuses are so clever why do people starve?

JACQUES:

Because...they are so clever.

HENRI:

Algebra doesn't feed people. But yes, blood...power lies in the bedroom not the schoolroom; and not here in the field, or the valley.

JACQUES:

But where would France be without the small people - the Farmers, the Shepherds? What would they eat - grass?

HENRI:

If France had an epidemic that killed off all the farmers and all the shepherds, what do you think it would do?

JACQUES:

But that could not happen; not today

HENRI:

It would take it from someone else, that's what it would do.

JACQUES:

Just march into another country and steal it all, just like that?

HENRI:

Of course: isn't that the basis to every war?

JACQUES:

Well lucky France has everything she needs.

HENRI:

Yes. Too many shepherds and too many farmers

JACQUES:

Wars and disease - what has this got to do with you and Jean?

HENRI:
A little jealousy, perhaps.

JACQUES:
He's very close to Marie-Louise

HENRI:
Yes, he is.

JACQUES:
So you hit him, in front of her?

Henri rolls his eyes

JACQUES: (CONT'D)
I guessed. Henri, I won't force
you to school - I doubt if you'd be
welcome anyway - but you can't stay
idle. Tomorrow you go into the
field with me.

HENRI:
Or else?

JACQUES:
School

HENRI:
Impasse; okay it's a deal.

JACQUES:
You'd better go to bed - I'll call
you at five.

HENRI:
In the afternoon?

JACQUES:
Goodnight Henri, and make it up
with Jean. He'll still be awake.

CUT TO:

INT. JEAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Henri enters.

HENRI:
Cousin, hey cousin.

Jean doesn't stir

HENRI: (CONT'D)
I know you're awake

He shakes Jean by the shoulder. Jean shrugs his hand off and drags the bed sheet over the top of his body

HENRI: (CONT'D)
I walked her home but nothing happened

JEAN:
Liar.

HENRI:
I thought you were friends

JEAN:
We are

HENRI:
I didn't even get a kiss for my trouble.

JEAN:
Then where were you?

HENRI:
Wandering - I used to do a lot of that in Paris. I'm sorry about whacking you, but my patience was bred in alleys not cornfields .

JEAN:
A good excuse for bullying someone smaller

HENRI:
No, Christ, they were the worst. Try defending yourself against a four foot maniac with a kitchen knife.

Jean giggles

HENRI: (CONT'D)
Listen to this Jean.

Jean turns around

HENRI: (CONT'D)
My partner August and me ran a little con in some of the bars in Montmartre.

JEAN:
You a conman?

HENRI:
Just listen eh? Now a man won't let go of his wallet easily when he's being robbed. Break a finger, an arm - you don't get that piece of leather, with one exception.

JEAN:
Where?

HENRI:
The balls

Jean is intrigued

HENRI: (CONT'D)
This is how we played it. We'd sit in a bar - my friend August and I

JEAN:
A bar but...?

HENRI:
You poor little yokel, I've been in bars since I was 12. Will you shut up and listen? We'd sit at a table near the door and wait for the mark. You know how we'd choose the mark? Look at his shoes. If they were good quality the wallet would be too. After an hour, when he's getting nicely tipsy, August would go and fetch two drinks. I'd light up a cigarette and go join him only I'd trip up and fall straight into the mark, burying the cigarette in his crotch.

JEAN:
God!

HENRI:
The guy would be hopping around and I'd be apologizing and then August would slip in behind him and lift his wallet. Believe me when a man's balls are on fire nothing else matters.

JEAN:

But what's that got to do with four
foot maniacs with knives

HENRI:

One day, on the edge of the
district. We were broke and
starving so we ran the con. I was
making my move when this little kid
barged in front of me smoking a
cigarette. On cue he tripped on
the leg of a chair and plunged the
cigarette into a guy sitting at the
bar.

JEAN:

He was up to the same game

HENRI:

Sure; but he was no kid. He was a
hard little bastard with a cross
scar on his forehead. Someone cut
him up when he was eight. That
someone doesn't exist anymore.
This kid had a nickname: Louie the
blade; fascinated by knives. I saw
him once on the corner of Rue
Poulet taking two six footers
apart. He slashed one across the
upper thigh cutting the main
artery. The guy died in minutes.
The other one had a slice taken out
of his neck. He got away but no-
one ever saw him again.

Jean recoils

JEAN:

How did Louie know about the...?

HENRI:

Somewhere he must have seen us work
the con. Anyway, I made a big
mistake. I see Louie's partner
moving toward the door, so I
grabbed him, ripped out the
victim's wallet and threw it across
the bar. As soon as the crowd saw
it they grabbed Louie and
practically beat him to death.

JEAN:

But why try it with you there?

HENRI:

Louie was a cock sure bastard. It was his way of sending me a message. Taking my turf? He never guessed I'd turn him in. Honour amongst thieves and all that bullshit

JEAN:

What happened to the other guy?

HENRI:

I'd never really seen fear in someone's eyes until I saw it in his. I let him go. I'd got what I wanted.

JEAN:

But you didn't keep the wallet?

HENRI:

Too many witnesses, the con was up. I guessed the mark would be grateful - he was and so we ate.

JEAN:

Didn't the police arrest Louie?

HENRI:

After what they did to him? They just dumped him in an alley behind the bar

JEAN:

Did he live?

HENRI:

Unfortunately; I heard that when he woke up he could barely move. He lost half his teeth and it took a week before he could open his left eye. They'd broken one of his arms and stamped on both his hands, breaking most of the fingers. The swelling was so bad he couldn't even wipe his arse after a shit.

JEAN:

Did he ever recover?

HENRI:

Within three months.

Jean looks astonished

HENRI: (CONT'D)

I told you he was hard besides he had the best motivation.

JEAN:

What was that?

HENRI:

Revenge.

JEAN:

This is another world....When I pray at night I ask God to look after the farm so we can live and eat. I ask him to help me do well in school and to look after Mum and Dad and Marie... (coughs)I can't imagine praying to God to protect me from being killed.

HENRI:

Jean, I can't imagine praying for anything. God feeds the aristocracy not the poor.

JEAN:

But you steal from those around you.

HENRI:

An apprenticeship; the world will change one day and Henri will be ready for it.

JEAN:

Another 1791?

HENRI:

One is never enough if it doesn't deliver first time out, and they rarely do, and so they go on - that's why they're called Revolutions.

JEAN:

You talk of knives and beatings like my father would talk of ploughing or milking.

HENRI:

Violence is natural mon ami. It's here in Saint-Floret but you don't notice it.

(MORE)

HENRI: (CONT'D)
 In Paris the wolves have simply
 evolved to walk on two feet.

JEAN:
 So what did Louie do?

HENRI:
 Another night.

JEAN:
 But...

HENRI:
 I'm working for Uncle Jacques now

JEAN:
 You're not going back to school?

HENRI:
 There's nothing I don't know now
 that Faucheux can teach me. Look,
 if I knuckle down - Jacques lets me
 work the farm.

JEAN:
 At least you'll be safe

HENRI:
 You too: you can have your
 girlfriend all to yourself again

JEAN:
 She can see who she wants - I don't
 care.

HENRI:
 Of course you don't. Goodnight
 Jean.

FADE TO:

EXT. A FIELD - AFTERNOON, A MONTH LATER

Henri, shirtless, is harvesting. He whistles Canteloube's
 'Malurous qu'ò uno fenno' He takes a wine bottle and some
 sausage from a small satchel beneath a rock. He sees Jean
 and Marie-Louise walking together.

HENRI:
 Good afternoon Children!

JEAN:

Cousin! So that's the reason behind the detour.

MARIE-LOUISE:

Nonsense; how on earth could I have known? Besides, I told you I don't like him.

JEAN:

Did you tell Henri?

MARIE-LOUISE:

Why should I?

JEAN:

Then how do you expect the cat to leave the cream if you don't remove the bowl?

MARIE-LOUISE:

If he's such an 'experienced' man, he should know

Henri corks his wine and throws the last of his sausage into his mouth and begins to descend toward them.

MARIE-LOUISE: (CONT'D)

Jean, I asked him to walk me home - that's all.

JEAN:

To Henri that's like rolling back the covers

MARIE-LOUISE:

Since you became friends your manners have coarsened.

Henri approaches

MARIE-LOUISE: (CONT'D)

He wanted a kiss, and got one.

JEAN:

He did?

MARIE-LOUISE:

But not the one he expected

She brandishes her right arm.

HENRI:
School's out, but home's the other
way isn't it?

JEAN:
We like to walk together

HENRI:
You sound like an old married
couple. Any plans at all?

He speaks to Jean but looks at her. Marie-Louise grabs Jean's
hand

MARIE-LOUISE:
Jean's a handsome boy, why
shouldn't he?

HENRI:
You suit each other

Marie-Louise immediately withdraws her hand

MARIE-LOUISE:
Idiot!

HENRI:
I just assumed, but isn't the
ménage a trois a little
troublesome?

JEAN:
What do you mean?

HENRI:
You must get jealous of the
affection she pours out on that
doll? Want some advice Jean?
Kidnap the doll. Then she's yours.
So why has she brought you along
today?

JEAN:
Winter's coming; nice to enjoy the
last quiet...

HENRI:
Marie-Louise comes past, oh, twice
a week

JEAN:
She prefers to be alone sometimes

HENRI:
With her doll, oh, and talking of
dolls.

Walking up the road is another girl, AURELIE, 17.

AURELIE:
Jean and Marie-Louise! Aren't you
two married yet?

JEAN:
Hello Aurelie; what are you doing
out here?

AURELIE:
I don't really know - any ideas
Henri?

HENRI:
Help me with this wheat

AURELIE:
I'm no farm girl

MARIE-LOUISE:
No; now you're leaving school you
can be a wife

AURELIE:
Maybe I will. Maybe I get first
choice Marie-Louise; you have
another year to do.

JEAN:
You'd better grab Henri, Aurelie,
the whole village is after him

AURELIE:
He's a big boy

JEAN:
You're courting then?

HENRI:
Courting; you sound like your dad

MARIE-LOUISE:
We should go Jean; tea will be
ready

JEAN:
Henri, will you be long?

HENRI:
Yes, go eat children. I'm having a
late supper.

JEAN:
I'll get Mum to leave some.

Marie-Louise drags Jean away.

JEAN: (CONT'D)
Hey, what's the rush?

MARIE-LOUISE:
You are such a child.

JEAN:
And you're jealous. I told you
before he doesn't care.

MARIE-LOUISE:
And neither do I.

JEAN:
So you came this way for the
exercise?

MARIE-LOUISE:
Henri's right. Now you do sound
like my Father? I will walk when
and where I want. It's all
coincidence.

She strides off belligerently. Jean follows

FADE TO:

INT. SAINT-FLORET BAKER'S SHOP - MIDDAY, SUNNY

Marie-Louise is waiting to be served behind another customer,
a widow, MADAME ROUSSEAU, 70. The baker, a bachelor, HUSSON,
65, is serving her.

HUSSON:
There Madame, fresh

ROUSSEAU:
Is it? Let me squeeze it

ROUSSEAU: (CONT'D)
Not bad, better than Tuesday's. It
hardly lasted a day

HUSSON:

But Madame, in this heat...was it aired? My bread is always fresh, what I don't use I give the birds.

ROUSSEAU:

I'd bake my own, but since Gerard died, well

HUSSON:

Take on more help; surely he left you some money

ROUSSEAU:

Yes, everyone thinks that because he never spent a penny. Let me tell you he never spent a franc on me either. If he had money I don't know where he left it. Believe me I've looked.

HUSSON:

What about your son Simon?

ROUSSEAU:

He won't cope with it. He needs me. I worry for him when I'm gone. I'm tired but I need to keep going for his sake.

HUSSON:

But surely someone would take him on.

ROUSSEAU:

That's what I've been thinking. If I sell the farm they could adopt Simon, as it were.

HUSSON:

But who would buy it?

ROUSSEAU:

That boy Henri, Jacques's nephew

Marie-Louise drops her basket

HUSSON:

He's barely 18

ROUSSEAU:

Yes, but he's doing well

HUSSON:

After the start he made I suppose
he could only improve

ROUSSEAU:

He's keen on Aurelie Latreau

HUSSON:

Is he keen or merely...

MARIE-LOUISE:

You needn't be coy with me Monsieur
Husson. I'm old enough to know
what is what

ROUSSEAU

You are 16 and therefore not
entitled to know what is what.
Well, if he is serious, he and his
wife could do worse than start with
a smallholding like mine. Simon
will work cheaply provided he gets
his dinner

HUSSON:

Wife? I doubt if he'll alter his
ways just to relieve you of your
farm

ROUSSEAU:

What ways are those? So he pricked
the pomposity of a priest and a
schoolteacher, they've had it
coming for years. He's coming
round I hear, and there's two
things a man needs to settle - a
wife and a job

HUSSON:

There's something about him though
- like an itch you can't get at

ROUSSEAU:

He just needs someone like me to
point him in the right direction

MARIE-LOUISE:

Why would he listen to you?

ROUSSEAU:

Manners young lady; what do you
care what I do with my farm?
Perhaps you and Jean have your eyes
on it?

MARIE-LOUISE:

If your farm burnt down tonight,
with you inside, it wouldn't be too
soon. As for Jean, he may buy a
rotten farm in Saint-Floret but not
for me.

She storms out

ROUSSEAU:

The rude little bitch; always a
strange one like her parents

HUSSON:

They're just quiet people.

ROUSEAU:

I've seen Poincare more often.
Little Miss 'Too Good' will be glad
of my farm come five years, when
those big dreams of hers evaporate.

HUSSON:

Suppose you do sell, what will you
do with yourself?

She winks

ROUSSEAU

Play the Merry Widow Husson, play
the Merry Widow.

Husson baulks

CUT TO:

EXT. SAINT-FLORET VILLAGE SQUARE - MIDDAY

Jean is sitting by the well. Marie-Louise runs past.

JEAN:

Marie-Louise! What's wrong?

She slows but continues to walk unsteadily

JEAN: (CONT'D)

Are you crying?

He stands up and goes toward her. Her back is toward him.

JEAN: (CONT'D)

Is something wrong at home?

He goes to embrace her. She swings around.

MARIE-LOUISE:

I'm never marrying you, do you understand? I hate Saint-Floret and I hate you. Don't love me Jean, I beg you. I can't love you. It's not in me to do it. If I did I would be betraying both of us.

She rushes off home.

FADE TO:

INT. SAINT-FLORET SCHOOLROOM - MONDAY AFTERNOON

The class are being dismissed. Aurelie is talking to Marie-Louise.

AURELIE:

Have you fallen out with your fiancé then?

MARIE-LOUISE:

There's enough sheep in this village.

AURELIE:

I think it's sweet

MARIE-LOUISE:

You would my little lamb. Go now - Henri's waiting I expect

AURELIE:

You bitch! Henri can wait, just like he made me yesterday, and didn't turn up.

She walks off furious.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM

Jean looks out at Marie-Louise. She takes the road home and then suddenly runs the opposite way. He goes to her desk and opens up the lid. Her doll is inside

CUT TO:

EXT. A FIELD OUTSIDE SAINT-FLORET - LATE AFTERNOON

Marie-Louise looks for Henri but he is not there.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SUNFLOWER FIELD - LATE AFTERNOON

Above are dark and threatening clouds. Marie-Louise approaches and spies Henri across the road just inside the opposite field.

HENRI:

Looking for Jean?

She says nothing but is breathing heavily. They stare at each other. Her hair is sticky and disheveled and beads of sweat are dotted around her reddish face.

HENRI: (CONT'D)

That's not hate in your eyes Marie-Louise

He moves toward her. She steps backward into the sunflowers. Drops of rain begin to pepper them from above

HENRI: (CONT'D)

No, I've seen that look before, but never so thirsty

She is inside the field. Henri keeps coming, his lips dripping sweat and rain, while above them lightning streaks across the sky. She stops and Henri grabs her arms and pulls her to him. Thunder explodes above them. He kisses her and her body turns limp in complete submission. He lays her flat and climbs atop, crushing the flowers underneath them both. Marie-Louise's arms stretch out Christ-like as Henri slips his pants away. The rain is hammering now bending back the heads of the sunflowers.

Beyond the road where Henri stood seconds ago, is Jean, hair saturated, weeping silently and holding Marie-Louise's doll in his right hand

FADE TO:

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - THE FOLLOWING MORNING

Marie-Louise is walking to school. Jean is not sitting in his usual place at the well. She shrugs and carries on.

CUT TO:

INT: SCHOOLROOM - FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER

Marie-Louise enters. Jean is sitting at his desk. She goes to her desk and sits down. The schoolmaster enters

FAUCHEUX:

Settle down - today is History and the Napoleonic conquests leading up to the crushing of the third coalition at Austerlitz - page 11 please.

Marie-Louise opens her desk. Her book is underneath her doll. She picks up the doll and then drops it immediately. It is still saturated with rain. She looks over at Jean, picks up the doll again, slams her desk shut and hurls the doll across the room at Jean and runs out. Jean runs after her

FAUCHEUX: (CONT'D)

Well, my word, what was all that about? Jean, Marie-Louise - come back!

CUT TO:

EXT. SAINT-FLORET - MORNING

Jean catches Marie-Louise on the village road; he grabs her but she resists

MARIE-LOUISE:

You saw! Like some old lecher - you stood and watched, didn't you?

JEAN:

How could you...with Henri? I thought you hated him

MARIE-LOUISE:

I never said that

JEAN:

That's what you made me believe

MARIE-LOUISE:

There's a whole universe between what I say and don't say.

JEAN:

We'll see how smart you are when Henri leaves you?

MARIE-LOUISE:
He's going to leave, but when he
does he'll take me with him

JEAN:
And do what; run away to Paris?
Starve?

MARIE-LOUISE:
Better to starve there than grow
fat and old here.

JEAN:
Marie-Louise, you're a fool

MARIE-LOUISE:
A minute ago I was smart

JEAN:
He is still seeing Aurelie

She flies toward him throwing her fists.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Not true! Liar! Jealous dog! You
and that bitch Aurelie have planned
this to break us up

JEAN:
No, you're wrong twice. I haven't
spoken to Aurelie.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Oh, I see, so it was another case
of Peeping Tom then?

JEAN:
Not altogether. I was in my
father's barn. They came in
laughing and didn't see me. I hid
behind some bales of hay.

MARIE-LOUISE:
When was this?

JEAN:
Last night

MARIE-LOUISE:
Hah, you dirty minded pig. He'd
never...not the same night...you saw
them? You listened?

JEAN:
No, I sneaked away.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Like the jealous slug you are. I
don't believe you. I'm going home

She walks back about half way

MARIE-LOUISE: (CONT'D)
Twice - You said I was wrong twice.

JEAN:
Yes; I'm not jealous anymore

FADE TO:

EXT. THE SUNFLOWER FIELD - AFTERNOON

Marie-Louise is sitting with her doll. Henri approaches.

HENRI:
Are you in there?

MARIE-LOUISE:
Go away! Don't come in here.

HENRI:
Isn't it our field now?

MARIE-LOUISE:
And Aurelie...is it hers too?

HENRI:
That was another field.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Jean saw you

HENRI:
What does he know?

MARIE-LOUISE:
At least he cares for me

HENRI:
The way I do?

MARIE-LOUISE:
Better; I'm the only one in his
eyes. There's a crowd in yours.

HENRI:
What did he see?

MARIE-LOUISE:
You and Aurelie: in your Uncle's
barn.

HENRI:
What! Did the little fox snuggle
down in the hay, watching me make
love to Aurelie? Did his tongue
salivate when we clung to each
other like bears? Did he cover his
ears when we panted like dogs and
then screamed like wolves?

Marie-Louise covers her ears

MARIE-LOUISE:
Stop! Stop! He wouldn't...he couldn't
stay there. He left.

HENRI:
And ran straight to you? He saw
nothing, because nothing happened.

MARIE-LOUISE:
But the panting...like bears...

HENRI:
Ah, the Teaser doesn't like the
taste of her own medicine.

MARIE-LOUISE:
But you don't deny you took her
there

HENRI:
To let her down.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Why would you do that?

HENRI:
Better than outside her house -
having her cry and disturb
everyone. Have you seen the size
of her father? He could fight
bulls bare-handed. I had to make
her understand that I love another.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Love?

She rises from the ground

HENRI:
I call it love, because no-one,
ever, had my mind so bewildered.

MARIE-LOUISE:
But Aurelie..

HENRI:
Even with Aurelie, it was your face
I saw.

She goes out to him.

HENRI: (CONT'D)
Let me show you exactly how I
feel. Compare these silent lips
with the lies from jealous mouths.

She flops into his arms and he lifts her to her. Her body
brushes and detaches the head of one of the sunflowers which
drifts to the ground

FADE TO:

EXT. SAINT-FLORET SQUARE - A WINTER'S MORNING

The first snow settles on the village. Jean is sitting by
the well. Marie-Louise runs up

JEAN:
Come on we'll be late

MARIE-LOUISE:
Does it matter? It's the last
winter I'll be getting up early

JEAN:
So, a summer wedding is on the
cards?

MARIE-LOUISE:
Not ever having to listen to
Monsieur Fauchoux is enough

JEAN:
And Paris

MARIE-LOUISE:
Paris can wait for now

They both stop

JEAN:
You are changing Marie-Louise

MARIE-LOUISE:
And you disapprove?

JEAN:
No, I've never wanted you to be
anything than what you are.

MARIE-LOUISE:
I don't understand

JEAN:
I guess I always wanted to be by
your side watching you grow and
treasure each moment.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Jean, I'm stunned. You've never
spoken like this before.

JEAN:
Singing now the audience has gone

MARIE-LOUISE:
But...

JEAN:
No...don't stop me. Maybe it's
because you're happy, maybe I
realize now I can never take
Henri's place, maybe...no matter what
happens, I will always love you. I
cannot love anyone else.

MARIE-LOUISE:
I'm sorry Jean

JEAN:
Let's go to school

CUT TO:

INT. JEAN'S COTTAGE, KITCHEN - EARLY EVENING

Jean enters. Jacques and Juliette are talking heatedly with
another villager, PATRICE. Jean is ushered away

JACQUES:
Patrice, sit down, please.
Juliette, some brandy

Juliette takes a bottle from a cupboard. Jacques tries to guide Patrice to a chair but he swivels around on him.

PATRICE:
Brandy - that's good. Will that cure me then?

JULIETTE:
It will settle you

She pours a glass and hands it to him. Patrice swallows the lot

PATRICE:
Forgive me madam, perhaps I could take the bottle. Perhaps it will cure my Aurelie

JACQUES:
But are you sure?

PATRICE:
Am I sure that she's pregnant or I am sure your nephew is responsible?

CUT TO:

INT. JEAN'S COTTAGE, STAIRCASE

Jean gasps

CUT TO:

INT. JEAN'S COTTAGE, KITCHEN

JACQUES:
Has the doctor confirmed it?

PATRICE:
The girl knows, her mother knows.

JULIETTE:
But Henri and Marie-Louise are...

PATRICE:
I've seen her parents; warned them, if it's not too late. His games are over.

JULIETTE:
The poor girl: poor Marie-Louise.

PATRICE:
And poor Aurelie?

JACQUES:
Of course, Patrice...well we always
thought that her and Jean...

PATRICE:
You're lucky then, if she's...
untouched...Jean can have her back if
he wants her. Who will take my
Aurelie?

JULIETTE:
Shall I fetch Pascal?

PATRICE:
The priest? Father, bless this
slut for she has sinned. Let's
leave God out of it.

Jean enters

JEAN:
Does she know?

PATRICE:
Why the concern for her, she should
be the fat one. That would ground
her feather feet. I hope she is...

JULIETTE:
Merciful God no!

JACQUES:
She's just a child...surely...

PATRICE:
And Aurelie, what is she?

JEAN:
Does she know?

JACQUES:
Jean, go back upstairs

JEAN:
Does Marie-Louise know?

PATRICE:
She wasn't there - she's with him.

JACQUES:
Does Henri know?

PATRICE:
Does he care? Who knows who else
he's screwed?

JULIETTE:
Patrice, the boy!

JEAN:
Am I? Yes...I suppose I am?

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SUNFLOWER FIELD - DUSK

Marie-Louise is waiting. Henri appears. He is sweating and looks concerned. They embrace.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Henri, has something upset you?

HENRI:
Me, no...one of the villagers made a
remark that's all

MARIE-LOUISE:
A remark, what remark?

HENRI:
Ah, the usual thing, the old city
boy insults

MARIE-LOUISE:
Typical paysan! We'll show them
when we leave this shabby little
hovel

HENRI:
Let's go tonight then

MARIE-LOUISE:
Tonight! So soon, but...I can't
just...

HENRI:
Is this what my love has done to
you?

MARIE-LOUISE:
What do you mean?

HENRI:

When I first came here, I was contemptible in your eyes, I'd lost Paris.

MARIE-LOUISE:

You never were. I think I loved you the first time I saw you

HENRI:

No, not you; this is far too much. Where has the bravado gone?

MARIE-LOUISE:

Bravado? I have confessed my greatest secret and you mock me?

He grabs her

HENRI:

Marie-Louise, forgive me, my life has had few moments of tenderness. Sometimes I don't know how to react.

MARIE-LOUISE:

I'll tell them; mum and dad. I'll go in and...

HENRI:

No, don't. Pack a bag that's all and meet me back here at nine.

MARIE-LOUISE:

But I must...

HENRI:

Leave a note.

He kisses her hard

HENRI: (CONT'D)

I have enough for two train tickets. By the time we get to the railway station the first train to will be waiting. We can sleep on the way and be in Paris tomorrow night.

MARIE-LOUISE:

But how do we survive? Where shall we stay? How will we eat?

HENRI:

We'll see my friend August. You'll have a bed and supper. I'll find work and then we'll have our own place

MARIE-LOUISE:

I used to dream of living there, feted by rich admirers, going to lavish balls, sitting in cafes sipping...

HENRI:

That's not my Paris

MARIE-LOUISE:

No, and not mine now

HENRI:

Run home and get your things.

MARIE-LOUISE:

Yes Henri

She exits the field and runs down the road toward the village.

FADE TO:

EXT/INT. MARIE-LOUISE'S HOUSE - EVENING

Marie-Louise approaches the house. Voices are heard from inside. She steals in by the back door and goes upstairs to her room. She begins to pack a bag for herself. She hears her father speak Aurelie's name.

CUT TO:

INT. MARIE-LOUISE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

JACQUES:

I am telling you Patrice is livid.

BETRAND:

Anger is no proof

JACQUES:

Patrice is a hard headed oaf, I know, but he's no liar

CLEMENCE:
Henri's settled. He's a perfect
gentleman with Marie-Louise

JACQUES:
I know he's trying but...

BETRAND:
Jacques don't tell me you don't
trust him, not after him courting
our little girl

JACQUES:
We must let him speak in his
defense.

CLEMENCE:
He's not home?

JACQUES:
No - I was hoping he was here with
Marie-Louise.

BETRAND:
Is she home?

CLEMENCE:
I don't know

BERTRAND
You don't know! I've been working
all day - the least I expect is
that you know the time your
daughter comes home.

CLEMENCE:
And drinking half the night; don't
play the priest with me Bertrand.
I'll call her.

Clemence walks to the foot of the stairs

CLEMENCE: (CONT'D)
Marie-Louise, are you in bed?

CUT TO:

INT. MARIE-LOUISE'S BEDROOM

Marie-Louise does not answer. She is standing just behind
her bedroom door with her suitcase in her right hand.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN

CLEMENCE:
They must be together

JACQUES:
Well we'd better find them I
suppose

BETRAND:
I'll make up a light - we'll go
together. I want the child home
tonight. Don't tell her Aurelie is
pregnant.

CUT TO:

INT. MARIE-LOUISE'S BEDROOM

Marie-Louise staggers back and sits down on her bed. After a
moment she starts down the stairs.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN

Betrand makes up a lantern and he and Jacques go out. Marie-
Louise is looking in from the stair way. Clemence has her
head down on the kitchen table sobbing. She opens the door
and then closes it again and heads out the back door.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SUNFLOWER FIELD - LATE EVENING

Marie-Louise approaches. She is swinging her suitcase and
breathing hard.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Henri! Henri!

There is no sign of Henri

MARIE-LOUISE: (CONT'D)
Henri! They are coming; my Dad and
Jacques. We must go

She goes into the field.

MARIE-LOUISE: (CONT'D)
Henri, it's dark; are you there?

She sits down with her case

MARIE-LOUISE: (CONT'D)
Aurelie is lying. We will forget
them all soon.

CUT TO:

INT. JEAN'S HOUSE - LATE EVENING

Jacques and Bertrand enter. Juliette is sitting at the table
with Jean.

JACQUES:
Is he here?

JULIETTE:
Gone

JACQUES:
Gone?

JULIETTE:
Packed his case and left

BERTRAND:
But where - to my Marie-Louise?

JULIETTE:
Sweet Jesus! Is she not home then?

JACQUES:
We are looking for both of them

JEAN:
He won't take her

BERTRAND:
So sure are you Jean? But I'm her
father - I can't be as blasé when
her safety is at stake, never mind
her...well...sorry Juliette.

JEAN:
I know him

JACQUES:
Jean, I trusted him, I gave him
work, your mother fed him but did
we ever really understand him?

BERTRAND:
 Marie-Louise, she's a good girl but
 an idealist. She'll see the
 adventure not the consequences

JEAN:
 Henri knows that too.

JULIETTE:
 So he will take her - but we must
 stop them

JEAN:
 No, that's why he won't take her

JACQUES:
 Bertrand, forget the boy's riddles,
 we have to go - now

BERTRAND:
 But where do we look first?

JEAN:
 The field where Henri worked -
 they'll be there

JACQUES:
 Jean, time may be against us - are
 you sure?

BERTRAND:
 Jacques...come.

They go out. Juliette fusses around in the kitchen for a few
 moments and then sits down at the table again with Jean.

JULIETTE:
 They're not there, are they?

JEAN:
 No

JULIETTE:
 Your father will be mad at you for
 lying

JEAN:
 And you?

JULIETTE:
 When I was a young girl I was
 pretty, like Marie-Louise. She
 resembles me in a way.

(MORE)

JULIETTE: (CONT'D)

I was in love with another man
before Jacques.

(pause)

Jean I do love your father. He's a
good, decent man and yet, maybe
because it was my first crush, I
don't know, I would have given
everything to have
been with this boy.

JEAN:

Who was he? Was he from the
village?

JULIETTE:

That doesn't matter. He made me
promises and I believed him. Then
one day he left the village, just
like that. I still remember the
things we talked about and the
funny thing is I feel no sense of
loss. It makes me smile even.

JEAN:

What happened to him?

JULIETTE:

He's dead, that's all.

JEAN:

I'm sorry mum

JULIETTE:

She's in the sunflower field, alone

JEAN:

Yes, I'm sure of it

JULIETTE:

And you want to be the one to bring
her home

JEAN:

I owe it to her

JULIETTE:

No, there's no debt here; even on
Henri's side. There's only love.

JEAN:

I'll go to her - she'll be cold.
I'll be home soon maman

He goes out

JULIETTE:
Take care, Marcel.

FADE TO:

EXT. THE SUNFLOWER FIELD - NIGHT

Jean approaches the field from the road. Marie-Louise is inside. She rushes toward him.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Henri! Henri, you came. I knew
you would. I waited, I waited so
long.

She throws her arms around Jean and then, as quickly,
releases them.

MARIE-LOUISE: (CONT'D)
Jean!

JEAN:
He's not coming

MARIE-LOUISE:
Have they taken him?

JEAN:
Who?

MARIE-LOUISE:
All of them. He's innocent Jean.
Aurelie is lying. You must stand
by him. You must stand by us.

JEAN:
Henri is quite free Marie-Louise.
He's packed his things and
disappeared.

MARIE-LOUISE:
He is? Then I'm glad. He's got
away. He's going back to Paris

JEAN:
But he left you

MARIE-LOUISE:
He'll come back - he'll come back
you'll see. When that bitch is
revealed for the liar she is.

JEAN:
You're hurting - let me take you
home.

MARIE-LOUISE:
No Jean.

JEAN:
But your parents are worried

MARIE-LOUISE:
Then you go find them

JEAN:
It feels like snow

MARIE-LOUISE:
Yes, I know. I'll go now. Thanks
you Jean

JEAN:
Surely you knew I would come

MARIE-LOUISE:
As sure as I knew Henri wouldn't.

She leaves the field and begins to walk toward the village.
Flakes of snow begin to fall and land softly on Jean as he
watches her walk away.

Canteloube's La Pastourelle is heard.

FADE TO:

INT. JEAN'S HOUSE - LATE SUMMER 1914.

Jacques and Juliette are sitting in the kitchen.

JACQUES:
Looks like war to me

JULIETTE:
Surely not; over Serbia?

JACQUES:
Bah! If two generals lived next to
each other they'd start a fight if
they thought the fence between them
was taken an inch of ground more
than it should be.

JULIETTE:
Jean is 18 now. They'll want him.

JACQUES:

By the time they send their
recruitment sergeants out here
it'll be all over. He's safe.

JULIETTE:

And Henri?

JACQUES:

Well, if he's not dead already
they'll scoop him up and throw him
in at the front.

JULIETTE:

Poor Henri

JACQUES:

The boy was a fool. He had a good
job here. I couldn't give him the
farm; he knew was Jean's. But he
could have had his own
smallholding. He threw it all back
in my face.

JULIETTE:

But he must have got scared, over
Aurelie, and her lies

JACQUES:

He brought that on himself,
screwing her and then ditching her.
The disgrace ruined poor Patrice.

JULIETTE:

They didn't have to leave

JACQUES:

He was a proud man. I knew he would
but I'm the one left standing in
Church on Sunday with the gossips
still chattering away behind my
back; a whole year later. Well now
he's prime meat for the army and
it's his own fault.

JULIETTE:

A village isn't a village without
gossip. Do you think she's with
him?

JACQUES:

I feel for Bertrand and Clemence, I
wasn't surprised she ran away after
Henri.

JULIETTE:
They should have gone after her.

JACQUES:
And where would they look? If she went to Paris with little money the chances are they'd find her in the city morgue. Better they live without that. Better not to know.

Jean enters. He stoops a little.

JEAN:
Crows are after the crops again father. I think we need a better scarecrow.

JACQUES:
Perhaps you could do the job eh? Look at your pants.

JEAN:
I scraped my leg climbing the wall

JULIETTE:
She may not ever come back

JEAN:
She will and she will find me waiting

JACQUES:
But you...

JEAN:
It's alright, really Dad. I'm fine. The farm keeps me busy. One day I'll look up..

He goes up to his room

JULIETTE:
It breaks my heart to see him expecting miracles

JACQUES:
I'm more concerned for his health than his heart

JULIETTE:
You said it would be over by Christmas

JACQUES:

Once Generals get a sniff of war
their tails wag. Ever try dragging
a dog away once it has the scent?

(pause)

He's taken to the farm well hasn't
he?

JULIETTE:

But you've still much to teach him

JACQUES:

He's a bright lad but he's not a
general.

FADE TO:

EXT. BOULANGERIE, BOULEVARD MONTMARTRE, PARIS - AFTERNOON -
JULY 1914

The letters of the owner's name, Boulanger, are stencilled in
an arch across the window. A newsboy waves a paper in his
hand recanting the headline on the paper which reads: AUSTRIA
CHOOSES WAR. Several people begin purchasing papers.

CUT TO:

INT. BOULANGERIE.

BOULANGER, 55, is serving a customer. There are several
people waiting.

BOULANGER:

Marie-Louise! Marie-Louise!

Marie-Louise enters from the rear of the shop wearing an
apron and covered in flour.

BOULANGER: (CONT'D)

Can you serve young lady please?

MARIE-LOUISE:

Of course monsieur.

BOULANGER:

You have been baking yes?

MARIE-LOUISE:

Madame is training me

BOULANGER:

How much is it costing me in flour?

His wife appears

MADAME BOULANGER:

You old pinchpenny - Marie-Louise,
you never mind. We'll go looking
in the cellar tomorrow - my husband
has a pot of gold hidden somewhere
in this shop

BOULANGER:

There; please the customers may
believe you

OLD LADY IN QUEUE:

Roland, you old rogue, everyone
knows you have treasure.

MADAME BOULANGER:

You are right madame.

OLD LADY:

When's the last time you bought
your wife a new coat eh?

MADAME BOULANGER:

Oh, if only.

She smiles

OLD LADY:

You keep her looking like a frump
while your hoard grows bigger than
Aladdin's

Madame Boulanger frowns and goes into the back of the shop.

BOULANGER:

Madame Tournier - you will have me
sleeping like a dog on the couch
tonight. If I had a fortune would
I keep my poor wife working?

MARIE-LOUISE:

I can vouch for my employer
madame. He can't have two pennies
to rub together with what he pays
me.

BOULANGER:

You cheeky maid! Didn't I just
raise your salary by a sou the
other day!

A kerfuffle breaks out in the street.

BOULANGER: (CONT'D)
What's all the brouhaha for?

Two young men are fighting in the street.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Monsieur they are fighting!

One of the young men knocks the other to the floor.
Boulanger runs out. Marie-Louise runs into the rear to get
Madame Boulanger.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOULEVARD MONTMARTRE

ASSAILANT:
Filthy coward! Traitor to the
mother country!

He makes a vain attempt to kick the man on the ground but
Boulanger has him in his huge embrace

BOULANGER:
Peace, my friend, peace. What has
the fellow done to you?

ASSAILANT:
He has insulted the men of France

BOULANGER:
And how does one do that?

ASSAILANT:
We are at war sir. When one
pledges his soul for his country he
doesn't expect mockery from a
spineless wretch like him.

The man on the floor is holding his nose and blood is visible
between his fingers. A girl, CLAIRE, is cradling his head in
her breast.

VICTIM:
I have a spine and I intend to keep
it. You are welcome to donate
yours for France, along with your
heart, eyes, legs and arms for all
I care

The assailant lunges at him again

ASSAILANT:

You see! Foul cretin, you deserve
to die here at the hands of
Frenchmen, not Germans.

BOULANGER:

Get him in my shop out of the way.
And keep him quiet!

The girl drags the victim inside

BOULANGER: (CONT'D)

Young man, you are a credit to our
nation. He is probably not worth
hurting your knuckles over. Go
home. Go home to your parents.
They'll want to see you now.

The boy moves away. Boulanger moves back into the shop.

CUT TO:

INT: BOULANGERIE

The boy and the girl are in the corner. Boulanger's
customers have left. Marie-Louise and Madame Boulanger enter
from the rear of the shop

BOULANGER: (CONT'D)

Marie-Louise, fetch a towel.
Madame, see to this boy.

Marie-Louise goes back into rear

CLAIRE:

That swine out there - he could
have killed him

MADAME BOULANGER:

I doubt if a bloody nose will task
the undertaker

She treats the boy's wound and covers it with a cloth

BOULANGER:

So we are at war then? Not the
best time to belittle your
compatriots

BOY:

I want to be breathing this time
next year

MADAME BOULANGER:
Not through your nose at this rate

BOULANGER:
What are you afraid of anyway?
It'll be over by Christmas.

BOY:
I'm not scared; neither am I stupid

MADAME BOULANGER:
What will your girl think of you
with all the other boys in uniform?

CLAIRE:
You can't love a corpse - it
doesn't matter what it's wearing

BOULANGER:
How will you avoid the draft?

BOY:
I've avoided worse in my time

Madame Boulanger removes the cloth. The boy is Henri.
Marie-Louise returns with a towel. She moves toward Henri
and Madame Boulanger but she is looking at Boulanger.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Will this one do Monsieur?

BOULANGER:
Okay

She turns, sees Henri and screams

MARIE-LOUISE:
Henri!

HENRI:
Marie-Louise, my God, what are you
doing here?

BOULANGER
This is the one?

She nods

CLAIRE:
What does that mean? Henri, have
you been double dealing with me?

HENRI:
No, not with her, I mean not at
all; she's from a village

CLAIRE:
Not with her - then with who?

HENRI:
Claire, go back to the apartment.
I'll come along

CLAIRE:
Do you want to stay and get your
story right - is that it?

MARIE-LOUISE:
There is no story mademoiselle, at
least none you could understand

CLAIRE:
I understand it all, believe me.
He's a coward in love and in war.

HENRI:
Then find yourself another victim

She exits slamming the door behind

BOULANGER:
If you two have something to say to
each other please go into the back,
I have a business to run.

MADAME BOULANGER:
Come through - I'll make some
coffee

They go into the rear.

BOULANGER:
War on the horizon, star-crossed
lovers and all I want to do is bake
bread.

CUT TO:

INT: BOULANGERIE, BACK ROOM - AFTERNOON

MARIE-LOUISE:
Why did you leave me in Saint-
Floret?

HENRI:

Was it my idea? The gossips and all their hot air; they blew me away from you.

MARIE-LOUISE:

Liar! You ran away because of Aurelie.

HENRI:

Maybe; her old man's a big..

MARIE-LOUISE:

She was lying. She wanted you back - that's all

HENRI:

The scheming bitch...and now you do too

MARIE-LOUISE:

You bastard! I packed, I left my house to go to you; I never even said goodbye to my mother. I waited for Jacques and my father to go look for you and crept away.

HENRI:

So your father didn't say anything?

MARIE-LOUISE:

I never saw him again until morning

HENRI:

I did what I thought was best for you

MARIE-LOUISE:

You were best for me; every day since you left was torment. I ironed shirts, I cleaned, all to save enough so I could follow you.

HENRI:

How did you ever think you could find me? Where did you stay?

MARIE-LOUISE:

I was innocent. I headed for Monmartre expecting to walk straight into your arms. I slept rough for a couple of nights. Boulanger found me in his porch.

HENRI:
Anything could have happened to you

MARIE-LOUISE:
He offered me a job and a bed. I told him I was orphaned, but I don't think he believed me; anyway I'm practically an orphan now.

HENRI:
So you don't expect Papa to..

MARIE-LOUISE:
Leave him in Saint-Floret.

HENRI:
Well you found me

MARIE-LOUISE:
You and a friend; you have many more then?

HENRI:
Some - and enemies too.

MARIE-LOUISE:
You left some of those in Saint-Floret. Aurelie's dad..

HENRI:
His problem is he thinks she's an angel. I wasn't the only cherub preening those wings.

MARIE-LOUISE:
But the sunflower field

HENRI:
I never touched Aurelie from that moment.

MARIE-LOUISE:
It's difficult.

HENRI:
Then why did you come after me?

MARIE-LOUISE:
You know why

She begins to sob. Henri moves over to her and embraces her. Her head is buried in his chest. After a moment he lifts her head up toward him by the chin and begins to kiss at her tears. Then he kisses her strongly. Her arms flop by her side.

FADE

INT. A GARRET IN MONMARTRE - MORNING - A WEEK LATER

Henri's room is small. Marie-Louise is lying asleep in a bed in a corner. Henri enters. He walks over toward her and checks to see if she is still sleeping then goes toward the window and with a side glance looks down into the street.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE STREET BELOW THE GARRET

Two men are talking. One of them has a deep scar running vertically down the right side of his neck. He looks up toward the window

CUT TO:

INT. THE GARRET

Henri ducks his head away from the window. Behind him Marie-Louise stirs. She awakes and sees him.

MARIE-LOUISE:
What are you looking at?

HENRI:
It could rain today

MARIE-LOUISE:
Good, we can go out for a walk and
get soaked together like two
lovesick sponges

HENRI:
I can't, not today

MARIE-LOUISE:
Are the draftees looking for you?

HENRI:
Yes, yes, that's it

MARIE-LOUISE:
Then stay; I won't let them take
you from me, not after waiting so
long to get you back.

HENRI:
There's no food here

MARIE-LOUISE:
Mr Boulanger gave me a basket.
There's bread and cheese, a little
ham.

HENRI:
He doesn't approve

MARIE-LOUISE:
He's a man of faith. It's a sin.

HENRI:
Go back then, if it makes God
happy.

MARIE-LOUISE:
If I'm happy then God should be.
He didn't fire me

HENRI:
We've needed the money.

MARIE-LOUISE:
We'll survive. France has enough
men to win the war without you my
love

There's a knock at the door. Henri hesitates.

MARIE-LOUISE: (CONT'D)
Henri, why don't you answer it?

HENRI:
Wait

MARIE-LOUISE:
Is it them?

HENRI:
Be quiet

She grabs Henri by the elbow and retreats to the corner
attempting to drag him with her.

HENRI: (CONT'D)
 Answer it...go on

She moves reluctantly to the door. Behind her Henri bends down and pulls back a loose board. There is a revolver within. He tucks it into his belt behind his back. A voice is heard from the other side

VOICE:
 Henri, are you there? It's August

Henri replaces the floorboard, moves past Marie-Louise and opens the door. AUGUST, a small man with a small face and a smaller moustache, walks in quickly

AUGUST:
 Henri...bad news

Henri pulls him to one side.

HENRI:
 Marie-Louise - fetch me a newspaper

MARIE-LOUISE:
 But, if there's trouble...

HENRI:
 Fetch a paper

She goes out. Henri watches her descend the stairs.

CUT TO:

INT. GARRET STAIRWAY

Marie-Louise is at the bottom of the stairway. She opens the door to the street and slams it shut but remains inside

CUT TO:

INT GARRET

Henri keeps the doorway open to watch the stairs.

AUGUST:
 Louie's out of prison

HENRI:
 I thought I had acquired a shadow today.

AUGUST:
One of his men; he must know where
you are. You must leave

HENRI:
Where - to your place? Louie will
have worked that out already.

AUGUST:
Where can you go?

HENRI:
Enlist

AUGUST:
The front? You'd stand a better
chance with Louie - you may see him
coming.

HENRI:
Not that little shit. He'll want
every advantage.

AUGUST:
Why swap one enemy for thousands?

HENRI:
August, they have to train you
first. By the time I get to the
front it may be all over

AUGUST:
If not

HENRI:
I'll handle that then

AUGUST:
But they shoot deserters

HENRI:
Only if they catch them

AUGUST:
What about the girl?

HENRI:
I'll send her back to the Baker.
Let's put a tail on Louie and see
whose arse gets kicked first.

August nods and descends. Henri goes in and locks the door again and goes back over to the window

CUT TO:

INT. GARRET STAIRWAY

Beneath Marie-Louise retreats and hides underneath the last flight of stairs as August exits the building. She ascends back to the room

CUT TO:

INT. GARRET

Marie-Louise rattles the door.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Henri, let me in.

HENRI:
Are you alone?

MARIE-LOUISE:
Of course I am.

He opens the door and goes back toward the window.

MARIE-LOUISE: (CONT'D)
Who's Louie?

HENRI:
This is a bad start to our relationship. If I ask something I expect it to be done

MARIE-LOUISE:
Henri, no more secrets; I've given up everything. I want your trust not your supervision.

She embraces him and feels the gun

HENRI:
I told you I had enemies. Louie's dangerous. We have a history.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Threatening enough to make you leave me again?

HENRI:

He'll hurt you too, if you're with me. Louie has no foibles.

MARIE-LOUISE:

But enlisting...I can't let you leave me again...especially if it's for...

HENRI:

What do you suggest?

MARIE-LOUISE:

Leave Paris

HENRI:

My God, is it you saying this? This was your dream after all

MARIE-LOUISE:

There is no dream without you. We can make another Paris somewhere else.

HENRI:

You have something in mind?

MARIE-LOUISE:

Canada

HENRI:

Marie-Louise, do you know how I make a living?

MARIE-LOUISE:

In a bar, you told me...

HENRI:

I'm a conman. I rob people.

MARIE-LOUISE:

What?

HENRI:

It's what I know, what I was taught. My father - he wasn't much of one but he could steal; mother too. They operated scams. They kept a roof over our heads and their arses out of jail, but what money they made they spent or lost. What else could they teach me?

MARIE-LOUISE:
But they were murdered.

HENRI:
Life's a different type of
education. You learn to fend off
graduation.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Then we keep studying. Boulanger
has money.

HENRI:
The baker? He won't lend me...us, his
life savings

MARIE-LOUISE:
I know where he keeps it. He
trusts me.

HENRI:
But I'll be exposed if I leave here
now. I need to know where Louie
is.

MARIE-LOUISE:
No, we haven't time. I'll get the
money.

HENRI:
You've become a fine student.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Why?

HENRI:
You learned the first lesson
without any instruction.

FADE

EXT. A CORNER IN MONTMARTRE: EVENING.

A cobbled street in Montmartre: A single street lamp runs perpendicular to a wall. An alley way runs off to the left. Marie-Louise is standing in the pool of light beneath the lamppost. She is dressed in a dark coat and hat and there is a suitcase on the pavement next to her. A dark figure walks toward her. She whispers:

MARIE-LOUISE:
Henri...Henri

The figure veers away down a side street. Above her the lamp light flickers. Then it recovers. A soft voice comes from the alley way.

HENRI:
Marie-Louise.

She swivels in surprise and then goes to walk toward him.

HENRI: (CONT'D)
No...don't move.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Is someone here?

HENRI:
I don't know

MARIE-LOUISE:
Is it Louie?

HENRI:
August couldn't trace him. He's like a ghost. Did you get it?

MARIE-LOUISE:
Yes, it's here in my pocket; but why did we have to meet here? I'm scared.

HENRI:
My room feels like a coffin. I need to keep moving.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Then let me come out of the light

HENRI:
Wait. Have you see anything at all?

MARIE-LOUISE:
No, nobody. Henri...please!

HENRI:
Slowly then

She picks up her case and edges out of the light toward the dark alley. Halfway the sound of footsteps is heard again. She stops and looks behind her. Henri comes out of the alley. The lamp goes out completely for a second time when it recovers, LOUIE is standing there

LOUIE:
Henri, my old adversary; there you
are.

Henri and Marie-Louise do not move.

LOUIE: (CONT'D)
I called for supper tonight and you
were gone. I was worried.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Leave him be.

LOUIE:
Henri, now I am worried; you are
mute. Perhaps I can shock you back
into speech

He draws a gun

HENRI:
Louie, nobody shot you

LOUIE:
Bet you're wishing they had

HENRI:
We could be partners?

LOUIE:
Corpses smell. Kind of gives the
game away.

MARIE-LOUISE:
I have money. I have money, here,
if you leave Henri alone.

HENRI:
Don't Marie-Louise.

LOUIE:
What I have here is more than
money.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Here, leave us alone

She takes out the money

LOUIE:
Oh I will, I will leave you all
alone

He points the gun at Henri but Marie-Louise throws herself in front. A shot is fired and strikes her in the lower back. She falls into Henri's arms. Louie prepares to fire again. Henri lets Marie-Louise slide to the floor. Another shot is fired. Louie clutches at his leg, falls down and drops his gun. August comes out of the shadows.

AUGUST:

Henri, run!

Louie extracts a knife from his jacket and throws it into August's chest. He falls dead. Marie-Louise lies prostrate. Henri picks up the package of money and disappears into the alley.

FADE TO:

INT. A WARD, VAL-DE-GRACE HOSPITAL - TWO MONTHS LATER

Marie-Louise is lying in bed. Jean enters. He is carrying a bunch of sunflowers. He approaches her bed and strokes her hair.

MARIE-LOUISE:

Henri!

JEAN:

No, it's Jean

MARIE-LOUISE:

My letter

JEAN:

No-one knows, just me

MARIE-LOUISE:

My Parents

JEAN:

No. Have you seen him?

MARIE-LOUISE:

It's not safe

JEAN:

Are you?

MARIE-LOUISE:

Why shouldn't I be? I have nothing anybody could possibly want - money, respect...

JEAN:

And love?

MARIE-LOUISE:

Ha! I used to think no-one loved as much as me, but the harder I've loved, the more I've suffered. If I had hold of the surgeon's knife I would cut my heart out.

JEAN:

So it's over?

MARIE-LOUISE:

It had barely begun. I can't blame Henri. He is what he is, despite himself.

JEAN:

But he left you, again.

MARIE-LOUISE:

I wanted him to. Why stay with me and be killed by that lunatic? How would that help me? Help me and his child.

JEAN:

His child!

MARIE-LOUISE:

The doctor confirmed it. Jean, I have to go home, for the baby's sake. I'm afraid Papa will be furious. Will you take me to Saint-Floret? Will you talk to him - explain?

JEAN:

When people have been as worried as your mum and dad any truth is a comfort, even if it's a lie.

MARIE-LOUISE:

You're my only friend

Jean winces.

JEAN:

But I can't stay. I've been called up.

MARIE-LOUISE:

Will you leave me too?

JEAN:
It's my duty

MARIE-LOUISE:
To God and Country; once you placed
me above all else

JEAN:
And I still do

MARIE-LOUISE:
Jean; Henri may be at the front

JEAN:
A man that left his pregnant lover
wounded in the gutter to save his
own lousy neck!

MARIE-LOUISE:
Don't judge Henri

JEAN:
He leaves me little choice. I
would never...

MARIE-LOUISE:
And you would be dead. Jean, if
you find Henri I want you to keep
him safe.

JEAN:
But...

MARIE-LOUISE:
If you love me Jean, you'll do this
for me. Promise me.

JEAN:
I do; I promise

FADE

EXT. A TRENCH, VERDUN BATTLEFIELD - MAY 1916, DAY

The area around the front resembles a wasteland with no
vegetation, simply miles of trenches, mud hills, bomb craters
and wire.

Jean enters the trench passing corpses stacked where they can
to keep a clear path. He passes scores of pallid-faced
soldiers. He taps the shoulder of one soldier leaning against
the side of the trench.

JEAN:
I have to report to Captain Ricard,
do you know where he is?

The soldier does not stir.

JEAN: (CONT'D)
Are you asleep comrade? I'm
looking for Captain Ricard.

Jean shakes him by the shoulder and then turns him around.
The soldier's face has been obliterated by shell fire and the
dead body falls toward him. He recoils in horror and lets
the body fall to the floor of the trench. He hears laughter.
He turns to see three soldiers.

JEAN: (CONT'D)
Two fall guys for the price of one

SOLDIER 1:
Welcome to Verdun.

SOLDIER 2:
Welcome to the colon in Hell's arse

JEAN:
And what are we?

SOLDIER 1:
Haemorrhoids

JEAN:
And what was he?

SOLDIER 3:
The cure

JEAN:
What will you do with your comrade?

SOLDIER 2:
Prop him back up again

JEAN:
Are we so valueless before and
beyond Perdition?

SOLDIER 1:
You bury him then

JEAN:
What's his name?

They shrug their shoulders

SOLDIER 2:
Francois?

SOLDIER 1:
Claude?

SOLDIER 3:
Bernard? I think the nose is a
giveaway

JEAN:
No-one knows him.

SOLDIER 1:
I believe he had his mother's
eyes. That might help.

SOLDIER 2:
But we haven't found them yet

JEAN:
But there's nothing in his pocket -
letters, photographs, army papers,
his identification tag.

SOLDIER 3:
He put his head over the edge just
as an incoming shell exploded. The
shrapnel tore off the front of his
face. When we found him he had
nothing on him at all.

SOLDIER 2:
It's not unusual. Some of them do
it just before a push. They bury
their stuff. His is probably six
feet down by now. They go out
anonymously.

JEAN:
But why - they can't all be
disfigured?

SOLDIER 1:
Doesn't matter, if they don't make
it back, wounded or dead, by the
time this thing is over and we
recover the bodies, they'll be
indistinguishable from the mud.

SOLDIER 3:
Most, if not all, of their friends
will be dead.

JEAN:
They surrender their affiliation.

SOLDIER 2:
In order to prolong it.

JEAN:
And you?

SOLDIER 1:
I'm an orphan

SOLDIER 2:
We're all orphans

FADE

EXT. THE TRENCH - MAY 22ND 1916, MORNING

Heavy artillery opens up pounding Fort Douaumont. Troops are lined up ready to go over the top. Officers are pacing behind them bracing them for the whistle to advance. Jean has one hand clutching his rifle, the other the ladder leading up to the rim of the trench. He shivers with fear. The artillery stops and whistles are heard across the front. Jean clambers up and over onto the battlefield.

CUT TO:

EXT. VERDUN BATTLEFIELD - MORNING

Jean is charging toward the German lines. All around him men are falling, their wounds sprouting red poppies. The sky is suddenly filled with thousands of red poppy petals falling and covering the ground. As Jean nears the Fort an explosion erupts in front of him and a tidal wave of earth races toward him, lifting him off his feet. Everything is black.

CUT TO:

EXT. VERDUN BATTLEFIELD - DUSK

The battlefield is scattered with thousands of bodies. The figure of a WOMAN begins to cross the field. She has long blonde hair and wears a long red dress that drags behind her like a Bridal train. She is singing Canteloupe's 'Brezairola'. As she crosses the field she strokes the heads and brows of the dead soldiers lying about her and they begin to stir. She sits down on a small mound of earth. One by one the dead soldiers rise and move toward her, sitting down in a group beside her.

One soldier moves directly to her through the group. He nestles into her embrace and she cradles his head in her arms. In his eyes we see the future he has forgone. Then in his iris a poppy unfolds. Gently the woman closes his eyes.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. VERDUN BATTLEFIELD: MAY 22ND 1916, NIGHT

Jean is lying unconscious in a huge crater midway between the Trenches and Fort Douaumont. There are several corpses surrounding him. Above him the sky is clear. He begins to stir.

JEAN:

Heaven?

A voice is heard within the crater

VOICE:

You're in a rush aren't you?

JEAN:

I hoped I was in Heaven

VOICE:

Heaven's a poor dream when Hell hasn't finished with you yet

JEAN:

Do I know you?

VOICE:

I'm St. Peter, the gates are locked and I'm sending you back

JEAN:

Henri! Henri, is that you?

HENRI:

Be quiet. They'll hear. They have snipers listening and watching.

JEAN:

I'm can make you out now. What regiment are you with?

HENRI:

74th

JEAN:

129th - all this time and to find each other here

HENRI:

Not the best venue for a re-union

Henri's leg has a bandage around the top half just below the knee

JEAN:

Have you been hit?

HENRI:

My left leg; I think the bone is broken. I have a tourniquet which is holding, no thanks to the Germans. My friend here was administering it when they took the top of his head off.

JEAN:

We need to get back - we can't stay here

HENRI:

I'm not moving.

JEAN:

But if we attack again tomorrow you'll be blown to pieces by the artillery

HENRI:

Better than hit by a sniper and lying in pain for hours waiting to die

JEAN:

You have to try - I promised

HENRI:

You promised?

JEAN:

Marie-Louise: she made me promise if I found you, to bring you back

HENRI:

She's alive! I thought Louie had got her

JEAN:

You never even tried to find out?

HENRI:

I enlisted the next day. Louie was too strong, too many people and no place to hide, except one. I gave August's name - no-one cared. Look.

He produces his ID tag. Jean moves to him but a flare goes off above them and Henri pushes him back to the bottom

HENRI: (CONT'D)

Where is she now?

JEAN:

Back in Saint-Floret

HENRI:

Dreaming?

JEAN:

She has only one now

HENRI:

Don't tell - let her dream on

JEAN:

Won't you try?

HENRI:

Jean, I ran scams. I got away with it because I made sure the odds were with me. It must be 300 yards back to the trench.

JEAN:

I'll get you back

HENRI:

You'll get yourself killed. Go back alone. Keep the trump card, don't deal it to Death. Learn something from me.

JEAN:

I swore an oath

HENRI:

Why do you commit so much to a lost cause? Do you believe if you do this thing she'll finally love you in return?

JEAN:

No, not anymore

Another flare alights above them

HENRI:

Jean, my conscience is heavy enough. If there is someone up there, and I'm damned if I see any evidence of it at Verdun, I'd rather meet him here

JEAN:

Henri, my father and your father were different, as we are. We wear the shoes we're given

HENRI:

My father was a thief true, but he wasn't a bad man. He taught me nothing. I chose to be a thief.

JEAN:

I don't believe you

HENRI:

Two years in the army defying all the odds of survival, only to be rewarded by a holiday in the crack of Satan's backside and where we'll probably be dead by morning, and yet you remain a child of Saint-Floret

JEAN:

War's a human choice, God or no God.

HENRI:

Jean, I killed my parents.

JEAN:

We're not in school Henri

HENRI:

They were murdered because I crossed the wrong person. I didn't pull the trigger, but they're gone all the same.

JEAN:

But...

HENRI:

And I still chose that life, despite all.

(MORE)

HENRI: (CONT'D)

Jean, whatever self-sacrifice you are willing to make for my sake, is wasted on me. This is the one thing you cannot give to Marie-Louise.

Jean suddenly picks up his rifle and hits Henri in the face with the butt. Henri falls back unconscious. Jean unfastens the belts of some of the dead and ties both of Henri's legs together with one and another as a harness. He loops his rifle over his shoulder and crawls slowly out of the pit pulling as hard as he can but struggles. He abandons his rifle, throwing it back into the pit. He begins to drag Henri. A flare goes off overhead

CUT TO:

EXT. VERDUN BATTLEFIELD - GERMAN TRENCH, NIGHT

A GERMAN SNIPER spots the reflection of the Jean's rifle illuminated by the flare through binoculars

CUT TO:

EXT. VERDUN BATTLEFIELD - NO-MAN'S LAND, 50 YARDS FROM THE FRENCH LINES - NIGHT

Jean is dragging Henri, who is beginning to stir.

HENRI:

Jean, what the...?

JEAN:

Go back to sleep, we're nearly home

HENRI:

You broke my teeth

JEAN:

I should have done that back in Saint-Floret

HENRI:

You deserve her Jean, not me

JEAN:

You're going back to her

HENRI:

I can't be a farmer Jean

JEAN:

Yes, you can - we'll farm together

HENRI:

Christ, this is the land of Fools.

JEAN:

Henri, I've dragged your bloody backside across the darkest corner of Hades, my fingers and arms are numb and I'm so tired I wanted to quit an hour ago. I've done it all so you can make the woman I love happy again. I swear to God I'll leave you here now if you don't...

HENRI:

You're right Jean. I should go back. What I did was unforgiveable. If we make it Jean, I'll go to her - I promise

JEAN:

We'll make it

CUT TO:

EXT. VERDUN BATTLEFIELD, 10 YARDS FROM FRENCH LINES

Jean rests for a moment. Another flare goes up. Immediately a shot rings out. It catches Jean in the back between his shoulder blades. He recoils and drops the harness.

JEAN:

I'm hit Henri

HENRI:

Wait, I'm coming round.

Henri turns over onto his stomach and crawls up to Jean.

HENRI: (CONT'D)

They got you cousin, in the back

JEAN:

It doesn't seem to hurt. I must be so tired

HENRI:

I'll get help

JEAN:

No time - the sniper will finish me
off the next time a flare goes
off. We'll help each other

HENRI:

Sorry Jean, the odds are with me
now.

Henri moves past him crawling toward the trench.

JEAN:

Henri! Henri! Don't leave me!

A second flare is lit and another shot rings out. Jean's
helmet spins into the air and down into the trench

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. WARD, VERDUN BATTLEFIELD HOSPITAL - MORNING

Jean is asleep in bed. He stirs and calls to a nurse

NURSE:

So Rumpelstiltskin, you're awake at
last. Did you sleep well?

JEAN:

I made it?

NURSE:

You have your comrades to thank.
They dragged you back under sniper
fire.

JEAN:

My head hurts; Christ and my back.

NURSE:

You were lucky.

JEAN:

How is that lucky?

NURSE:

Any French soldier at Verdun, who
can breathe, is lucky. The first
shot entered your back just below
the shoulder bone. The second
shaved your skull behind the right
ear and took your helmet off.

JEAN:
How long have I been out?

NURSE:
A month or so.

JEAN:
But the bullet grazed my head you
said

NURSE:
Your wounds were not treated as
quickly as they should have been.
You caught a fever.

JEAN:
My cousin Henri

NURSE:
Yes?

JEAN:
Where is he?

NURSE:
Were you expecting a visit?

JEAN:
No, he was wounded too. His right
leg was broken. I dragged...we
crawled back together.

NURSE:
I can check but if it was a break,
chances are they have sent him back
to Paris.

JEAN:
Back to Louie: how long before I
get out?

NURSE:
There was some nerve damage in your
right arm and leg. We think the
bullet may have rattled your spine
on its way through. You may not be
able to hold a rifle or walk too
far.

JEAN:
Permanent?

NURSE:
I can't tell you that. The doctor...

JEAN:
Fetch him please.

NURSE:
But I'm sure he's busy. Rest and
he'll be over...

JEAN:
No. I need you to fetch him here
now or I'll get him myself.

He starts to climb out the bed

NURSE:
I'll go but he won't be happy

JEAN:
Good, that makes a war full of us
then.

CUT TO:

EXT. MONTMARTE BOULEVARD - A SEPTEMBER MORNING, 1915

Jean is outside Boulanger's baker's shop. He is holding a cane. He is dressed in uniform. He looks through the window. The baker is behind the counter, he is serving the only customer there. As Jean enters the customer exits

CUT TO:

INT. BOULANGERIE.

JEAN:
Good morning

BOULANGER:
And to you - always a pleasure to
serve a patriot

JEAN:
I'm not after bread sir, just some
information

BOULANGER:
It's a little early in the morning
to show someone how to bake a cake?

JEAN:
You remember Marie-Louise?

Boulanger walks away

JEAN: (CONT'D)
She worked here, I believe

BOULANGER:
Go look in the back - my wife is
confined to a wheelchair.

JEAN:
I'm sorry but...

BOULANGER:
She had a stroke, after I had to
tell her our life-savings had been
stolen

JEAN:
What has Marie-Louise...

BOULANGER:
She took them

JEAN:
She isn't a thief

BOULANGER:
Tell my wife that. Maybe she'll
rise and walk again.

JEAN:
She had a lover, Henri. If she
stole from you she did it for him

BOULANGER:
Oh I see. I'm sure my wife is
content knowing she's given up the
use of her legs for such a good
moral purpose

JEAN:
She was shot, not half a mile from
here by a man called Louie.

BOULANGER:
I warned her about him but...did she
live?

JEAN:
She's back home, but I need to find
Henri; he's in danger

BOULANGER:
He's got my money - why not my
protection?

JEAN:

I'll get your money just help me find him?

BOULANGER:

What am I? Do you think I'm party to the comings and goings of every Parisian scumbag and thief?

JEAN:

You must hear things. If Henri is in Montmartre, Louie will be after him.

BOULANGER:

Then why would he come back here?

JEAN:

To avoid spending the rest of his life expecting a bullet

BOULANGER:

If he wants to kill Louie - best of luck.

JEAN:

He has a child, a little girl. Her mother needs him. The child needs him. Here.

Jean removes his wallet

JEAN: (CONT'D)

How much did she steal for him?

BOULANGER:

50 francs

JEAN:

I have 10 - I can get the rest

He hands Boulanger 10 Francs

BOULANGER:

You a farmer's son - Why ransom your own future for those two?

JEAN:

A promise

BOULANGER:

Do you think you can pay Louie off?

JEAN:

All my life I dreamed only of making Marie-Louise happy. If it means bringing Henri back to her..

BOULANGER:

I don't know where your cousin is but Louie has a place on the Rue Foyatier. Keep your money, his currency is blood.

JEAN:

What does he look like?

BOULANGER:

He's small, around 5'2" and has a cross scar on his forehead. He's the foulest runt of an ugly litter.

JEAN:

Thanks again Boulanger. I'll see what I can do..

BOULANGER:

Keep the money, go home and win her heart. Paris is not for you; leave it to Henri and Louie

Jean goes into the street

CUT TO:

EXT. RUE FOYATIER - NIGHT - FOGGY

Jean is secreted in the trees just off the staircase. Footsteps approach from the street below, gradually getting louder. Jean eases back further into the trees. Two figures emerge from the fog - one tall and one small. They are conversing. He pushes his head forward and behind him a blade is thrust into his throat. The assailant pulls him back into the trees so they are completely immersed.

JEAN:

Louie, don't kill me. I'm a friend

VOICE:

If you're a friend of Louie I should kill you

The knife is lowered and Jean wheels on his assailant

JEAN:

Henri - you bastard.

The two figures stop talking and look their way. Henri closes his hand over Jean's mouth. The two figures resume their conversation. Henri is dressed in his uniform. He whispers and points to the two figures.

HENRI:

Louie.

A moment later the two figures break off. The tall one descends down the staircase and Louie goes into one of the apartments

HENRI: (CONT'D)

Jean, you are always talking too loudly in the wrong circumstances. You've nearly got us killed twice

JEAN:

Got you killed? I pulled you out of Lucifer's armpit and you left me there to die

HENRI:

How do you think you got back safe then? I had men go out after you

JEAN:

You did? Really?

HENRI:

What the hell are you doing here?

JEAN:

My right arm is weak; nerve damage. I can't hold a rifle properly. My battles are over.

HENRI:

Then why are you here? This is my war

JEAN:

Give it up Henri. I have money you can give to Louie

HENRI:

What? Are you still trying to get me to go back to Saint-Floret?

JEAN

She's waiting for you.

HENRI:

Leave Paris? No need. The war will win soon. It'll have killed everyone.

JEAN:

But you'll be dead anyway - you can't survive living the way you do

HENRI:

And be more alive in Saint-Floret? I can extend my run a little longer when I kill that vicious midget.

JEAN:

Henri...you have a child, a little girl - Ghislaine

HENRI:

You're lying. This is a ploy.

JEAN

If she were mine I wouldn't be here thinking of murder

HENRI:

Make her yours then. Tell Marie-Louise I'm dead. Tell her it's either you or live like a spinster.

Jean puts his hand into his coat pocket and pulls out an envelope

JEAN:

I have a letter for you

HENRI:

Jean, all your life you've cooed to that pigeon, now you're carrying messages for her

JEAN:

Just read it

HENRI:

Do I need to or could you just dictate it to me?

JEAN:

What do you mean? I haven't read it.

HENRI:

Here

He takes the envelope opens it up and takes out a single page. He unfolds it. There is nothing written on it. Then he tilts the paper toward him and the petals of a sunflower fall out.

HENRI: (CONT'D)
Do you have a pencil?

JEAN:
Here

He takes a pencil from Jean

HENRI
Give her this. I'll come. In a week; I'll come by train.

JEAN:
Come now, with me

HENRI:
Better it looked like my idea.
Take it.

He hands Jean the paper and then picks up the petals and pockets them all.

JEAN:
But what if Louie kills you

HENRI:
Then Marie-Louise wins either way.

JEAN:
How can that be if you're dead?

HENRI:
Her dream lives on, untarnished,
almost perfect.

A door bangs behind Jean. The small figure appears again on the stairs of the Rue Foyatier. Henri pulls out a revolver.

JEAN:
Will you shoot him in the back?

HENRI:
Who cares? As long as I kill him

JEAN:
Haven't you seen enough?

HENRI:

Jean, don't you get it yet? Louie killed my parents. That was part of his revenge for what I did to him. For all Louie knows and hopes, I'm lying in several parts across Verdun or some other hell hole. The odds are with me again.

JEAN:

Haven't you seen enough lives gambled at the front? I won't let you.

Jean grabs Henri's arm.

HENRI:

My turn Jean

Henri clubs him with the butt of the revolver. Jean falls to the floor semi-conscious. Henri moves away toward Louie who is now descending the stairs and disappears into the mist. Henri runs after him. Jean calls him back. A shot is heard. Jean passes out.

FADE

INT. JEAN'S BEDROOM, SAINT-FLORET - MORNING, TWO DAYS LATER

Jean is lying in his bed. His father comes in.

JACQUES:

Better?

JEAN:

I think so

JACQUES:

The swelling?

JEAN:

It's okay

JACQUES:

Wandering round Montmartre with a lump the size of Mont Blanc - is it any wonder you collapsed?

JEAN:

I'm home now

JACQUES:

You have a visitor

JEAN:
I can't tell her anything

JACQUES:
Tell her that then

He goes out and Marie-Louise enters carrying her sleeping child.

JEAN:
Marie-Louise it's nice of you to visit

MARIE-LOUISE:
When is he coming back?

JEAN:
I'm fine, thanks for asking

MARIE-LOUISE:
Jean I was here yesterday. I know you're okay

JEAN:
He hit me you know

MARIE-LOUISE:
Did you deserve it?

JEAN:
I was trying to save his life...for you!

MARIE-LOUISE:
Then when is he coming?

JEAN:
Marie-Louise, Henri belongs in the city

MARIE-LOUISE:
No. He belongs with me and Ghislaine

JEAN:
Here

He opens up a drawer at the side of the bed and gives her Henri's note. She reads it.

MARIE-LOUISE:
But that's Saturday! I told you he'd come

JEAN:
Marie-Louise, he might not be on
that train

MARIE-LOUISE:
Are you telling me he's lying?

JEAN:
No, not...

MARIE-LOUISE:
Then he's dead and you don't have
the guts to tell me?

The baby wakes and starts to cry. Marie-Louise rocks her

JEAN:
The truth is I have no idea. Henri
went after Louie. I tried to stop
him but he hit me. I heard a shot.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Did you run away?

JEAN:
No, of course I...

MARIE-LOUISE:
If he was dead there would have
been a body yes?

JEAN:
I saw no bodies, no Henri, no
Louie.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Then he's alive

JEAN:
I walked Montmartre the next day
until I...nobody knows anything

MARIE-LOUISE:
He killed Louie for me...for us.
That way he knew we'd be safe. Now
he can come home. You must take
me. You must take us both

JEAN:
I'll go but...

MARIE-LOUISE:
He survived a war, he survived
Louie - we must go to him

JEAN:
And if he's not on the train?

MARIE-LOUISE:
He'll be on it. Fetch me, early,
at my parents' house Saturday.

FADE

EXT. CLERMONT-FERRAND RAILWAY STATION - SATURDAY 14:45

The platform is busy with servicemen, wives and children as well as the locals. Jean, Marie-Louise and the child are waiting on the platform. The child is awake. Marie-Louise coos at her.

JEAN:
Do you want your shawl?

MARIE-LOUISE:
Is it cold?

JEAN:
To wrap around Ghilsaine

MARIE-LOUISE:
She'll be warm enough soon, in the
arms of her father

JEAN:
Even if he does, how can you be
sure he'll stay?

MARIE-LOUISE:
One look into her eyes, one look;
then, when he sees himself staring
back, he'll never leave.

Behind them a soldier whistles a Canteloube's 'Oï ayäi'

MARIE-LOUISE: (CONT'D)
Will you hold Ghilslaine?

JEAN:
Of course

MARIE-LOUISE:
I want him to myself for a moment.
Then I'll bring him to her.

She hands him the child. The porter comes from out of the station carrying a flag and proceeds along the platform toward the far end. He checks the time on his pocket watch. A sharp piercing whistle pierces the air.

MARIE-LOUISE: (CONT'D)
He's coming Jean, he's coming!

The train reaches the station. Marie-Louise is shaking uncontrollably.

MARIE-LOUISE: (CONT'D)
Jean, what if he's not there?

JEAN:
He'll be there

MARIE-LOUISE:
Thank you Jean you're...

JEAN:
A good friend, I know.

The passengers disembark. Marie-Louise is caught up in the crowd and now separated from Jean. She anxiously looks across the platform checking everyone disembarking. Suddenly she sees the back of a soldier step down.

MARIE-LOUISE:
Henri!

She runs toward him and swings him around, throws her arms around his neck and embraces him deeply, her eyes closed tightly. Then as suddenly she withdraws. It is not Henri. The soldier is embarrassed. His mother drags him away with a barrage of questions.

Marie-Louise wipes her mouth and looks up. The platform is empty. The porter ushers her to move from the edge as the train pulls out. She doesn't move. The porter leaves her where she is. She continues to look down the track.

Jean approaches her with Ghislaine.

MARIE-LOUISE: (CONT'D)
You lied Jean

She takes the baby and walks away

FADE

EXT. THE SUNFLOWER FIELD - AFTERNOON, SUMMER 1919

It is hot and humid. Jean limps slowly down the road from Saint-Floret. As he reaches the field he notices Marie-Louise sitting within and stops. Ghislaine is with her and they are playing with her old doll.

CUT TO:

INT - THE SUNFLOWER FIELD

Marie-Louise looks up and sees Jean through the stalks of the sunflowers. He looks straight ahead.

CUT TO:

EXT - THE SUNFLOWER FIELD

Jean lifts the head of a sunflower with his bad hand, attempts to stroke the golden petal but cannot hold on. He walks off. Canteloube's La Delaissado is heard.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END