

The Artist, His Muse, And Her Pig. (c) 2022 This play may not be used or reproduced without the express written permission of the author.

The Artist, His Muse, And Her Pig

Written

By

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Act 1

THE STUDIO

Scene one

Lights up.

Voluptuous actress DORIS is a brunette with long wavy hair and thin facial features. She has a sharp nose and she is (50 Something) She speaks with a London accent.

She lies back upon a chaise and her red peignoir hangs loose around her shapely frame, revealing her naked breasts.

Parisian artist MAURICE is tall, dark and handsome and in his (Mid-thirties).

He stands at the easel with brush in hand, while a dim fluorescent light hangs precariously above.

There is a door leading off along the back wall.

He steps towards her.

MAURICE

(Poetically)

Have thou a body? Oh beautiful Goddess!

She applauds as she cackles.

DORIS

Oh, Maurice, you're totally insane.

MAURICE

I know. And it's all down to you, Doris.

He returns to the easel and begins to paint her.

Long silence.

The fluorescent light begins to flicker. He throws up his hands in despair.

MAURICE

Oh this is hopeless! I am very sorry, Doris, but I cannot continue under this annoying light. I think I'm seeing double with all this flickering.

She shifts uncomfortably.

DORIS

Oh. Would you like me to go, then? I'll be happy to come back later, if you want?

MAURICE

No, no, non. Just give me a few minutes and I'll sort myself out.

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

DORIS

Are you sure, Maurice? I really don't mind, you know.

MAURICE

If you leave now, Doris, my inspiration will be lost for the whole day.

She climbs off the chaise and buttons her peignoir.

DORIS

Well, you knew I was coming. You could've changed the bulb. You've had all week to do it.

He turns to face her whilst clutching a glass of water.

MAURICE

I know. I know that, Doris. But I have enough to think about, what with my forthcoming exhibition. I really don't know if I am coming or going these days.

DORIS

Well, I don't mean to be rude, Maurice, but maybe you're overstretching it a bit.

MAURICE
It's practically finished, anyway.

DORIS
Oh, that's good. Can I see?

MAURICE
Oui.

DORIS
Awesome!

He joins her at the easel.

MAURICE
I just have to put the finishing touches to it.

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

DORIS
I see.

MAURICE
You know, I almost lost my vision completely, with the light.

DORIS
Really?

MAURICE
Oui.

DORIS
Hm.

MAURICE
You have amazing definition, Doris.

DORIS
(Bashfully)
D' you really think so?

MAURICE
Of course! You are my muse, non?

DORIS

Oh. Am I really, Maurice?

MAURICE

Oui! You know, any distinguished artist would have been happy to have had you as his muse, Doris.

DORIS

Oh, you don't really mean that, do you?

MAURICE

But I do. Sincerely.

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

DORIS

But she looks nothing like me, does she?

MAURICE

(Aback)

She's every inch of you, Doris.

DORIS

Well, she's not what I expected.

MAURICE

Because you're standing too close to her. Move back and you'll see it more clearly.

DORIS

Oh. Ok then.

MAURICE

Let me guide you.

He gently moves her back a couple of steps.

Is that better?

She sighs her disappointment.

DORIS

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

He chuckles.

MAURICE

No, of course they're not, Doris. What do you think? It's not an exact portrait.

DORIS

Is that why my noses are so pointed?

MAURICE

Illusion is the first of all pleasures. It's an illusion, Doris.

DORIS

(Dispassionately)

Is it?

Short silence.

MAURICE

Anyway, it is most definitely you. Look at her left ear.

She takes a closer look.

-

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

DORIS

Is that why you've painted my hair yellow and green? Was he mixed up at the time?

He chuckles.

MAURICE

Of course not, Doris.

Pause.

Maybe you should see it from a different angle.

She shifts to her left.

-

So what do you see now, Doris?

DORIS

I see two of me.

MAURICE

At last.

DORIS

Now I know what you meant, when you said you were seeing double.

MAURICE

Oh, Doris! You're so unearthed. You really need to get out more.

She looks at him dolefully.

Go out and visit some art galleries. It'll widen your knowledge of the arts.

DORIS

So is this how you see me, then?

MAURICE

No, of course not. I see you in many, many different lights, Doris. This is just one of those fascinating lights I'm exploring. I will paint an exact image of you if that makes you feel happier? But you'll have to pay for it. And I do not come cheap, that's all I'm saying, Doris.

DORIS

She looks like she's had cosmetic surgery.

MAURICE

Now you're being ridiculous.

DORIS

But look at her. She hasn't got any of my features at all. You could've hired anyone to lie on that bleedin' chaise for you. You didn't need me at all, did you?

MAURICE

Not true, Doris.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

Now you're just being silly, Doris.

DORIS

My face isn't round either. Everyone says I've got a long face. In fact, there is not one single aspect of this portrait, apart from my larger nipple and missing ear lobe that resembles me in the slightest.

MAURICE

(Iratly)

Well, I couldn't paint a nineteenth century witch, could I?

DORIS

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

MAURICE

Oh, Doris. I am reinventing the past. Please don't take it so personally? The painting has been particularly crafted for my exhibition.

DORIS

(Sardonically)

If only my Horace could see me in one of those fascinating lights of yours. He would feast in flippin' fervour.

He follows her towards the clothes rail.

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

MAURICE

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

She looks into his big blue eyes from close proximity.

DORIS

Do you?

MAURICE

Oui! And what if I had chosen another way? It would have surely incited a temptation between us, non? And what would your Horace say... That I'm an unscrupulous artist? The artist that went too far with his adorable wife? An artist not worthy of his own time?

She cackles.

DORIS

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

She snorts to mimic a pig.

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

MAURICE

Clearly.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

It's absolutely fine, Doris.

DORIS

So when is this exhibition of yours, then?

MAURICE

Next month, actually.

She walks around the studio and engages with his other work.

DORIS

Are all these paintings going to be exhibited?

MAURICE

Oui. Absolutely, Doris.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

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

She cackles.

DORIS

But what if someone recognises me as the woman in the portrait? What shall I say to them?

MAURICE

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

DORIS

Ok. I will, then.

MAURICE

Will you be able to come back in the morning, Doris? I just need to put some finishing touches to the painting.

DORIS

Yeah, but only if you fix that poxy light bulb.

MAURICE

I will, immediately.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

Only half an hour or so.

DORIS

OK then.

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

MAURICE

How does Horace keep up with that constant energy of yours, Doris?

She cackles.

DORIS

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

She cackles.

MAURICE

Oh, I'm sure he does. Deep down somewhere in his heart there is a man bursting with love and an incisive passion for muscle tone, and animal noises, let's not forget.

She cackles.

DORIS

I've not had one flippin' call from my agent in months. They've got this new girl answering the phones.

She mimics the girl's pathetic voice.

He's busy at the moment. Sorry, can you call back later?

MAURICE

I can see where you get your acting skills.

DORIS

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

She cackles.

MAURICE

Can you not change your agent?

DORIS

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

MAURICE

What about Horace? Can he not help you with your career?

DORIS

You must be flippin' joking. The only thing he responds to is his ego boosted. Twerp!

She cackles.

He rolls a cigarette, then lights up, before he picks up a carafe of wine from the drinks trolley.

MAURICE

Would you like one?

DORIS

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

She gets to her feet and he fills a glass, then hands it to her.

MAURICE

Enjoy.

She takes a sip.

DORIS

Hm. Nice. Where's it from?

MAURICE

Tesco.

She cackles.

DORIS

No, I mean which region, silly?

MAURICE

Oh. It's from the Loire Valley.

Short silence.

DORIS

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

She cackles.

MAURICE

Let's raise a toast.

DORIS

What to?

MAURICE

My forthcoming exhibition.

DORIS

Oh that. All right.

They toast.

MAURICE

Here. Take this.

He hands her an envelope from his back pocket.

DORIS

Oh thanks. I could really do with this extra cash at the moment. I've had nothing at all in months. And he doesn't give me anything. I have to support myself, you know.

Pause.

I don't know what I would do if I didn't have this model-thing-shit.

She cackles.

MAURICE

You're incomparable, Doris.

DORIS

Ha! Get off! I bet you say that to all your sitters.

MAURICE

I only have one muse, Doris.

DORIS

D' you really mean that?

MAURICE

Oui.

She steps forward and puts her hand lightly upon his chest. Their lips meet, before he pulls away, thus leaving her perplexed.

DORIS

It's the flippin' wine. It's gone straight to me head.

MAURICE

It's fine, Doris.

DORIS
I'm really sorry.

MAURICE
Don't be.

She hands him her empty glass.

DORIS
I better get going.

MAURICE
Thank you, Doris. I really appreciate it.

DORIS
Did you really mean what you said?

MAURICE
Oui.

DORIS
Then kiss me again.

MAURICE
But you're a married woman, non?

She ignores him, instead throws her arms around his neck and kisses him with passion, leaving him frazzled.

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

She cackles.

MAURICE
Ohmondieu.

DORIS
Bye, Maurice.

She blows him a kiss and exits stage left.

He sighs in relief.

Lights down:

ACT 1

The Apartment

Scene two

Split stage.

Staircase leads to a bedroom.

Down: Open plan living space incorporates a kitchenette. A door to the right leads off, and there's an entrance door to the left.

Lights up.

Overweight and bespectacled HORACE (50's) lies on the bed. He speaks on the landline phone. He sports a red cravat and paisley dressing gown and clutches a brandy glass in his right hand.

HORACE

Ha,ha,ha,ha,ha - That would be just my luck - I reckon, I should reach there around nine thirtyish - Will you pick me up, or shall I jump in a cab-? Excellent - I will.

Down: DORIS enters and raises her eyebrows to the sound of his bellowing voice.

-
(*Knowingly*)

Rightyo then, Stephen. Just let him know I rang him, will you-? That'll be great - Ciao, buddy.

He hangs up the phone, then picks up his laptop. He checks himself in the mirror, then descends the stairs with brandy glass in hand and laptop secured under his arm.

She pours a glass of wine for herself and confronts him.

DORIS

You're in, then.

HORACE

(Casually)

Either that, or it's a figment of your imagination, Doris.

DORIS

Who was that you were talking to on the phone?

HORACE

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

She turns away with a knowing look on her face.

DORIS

Liar.

HORACE

Who, me or Gordon, Doris?

DORIS

You.

He stomps over to the drinks table and pours himself another brandy, then sits down in the armchair.

HORACE

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

She gives him the finger.

DORIS

Go swivel.

He roars with laughter.

-

And how come every time I walk in you're on the phone upstairs to Stephen? I'm not stupid, Horace. So don't take me for a fool.

HORACE

Debatable.

Pause.

So you think Stephen doesn't exist, is that it?

DORIS

Probably not, for all I know.

HORACE

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

He opens his laptop and switches it on.

DORIS

Don't bother. I don't really care.

HORACE

Fine.

Pause.

You might be interested to know that I was offered a part in a play this afternoon. They're doing a production of War and Peace at the Globe.

She becomes interested and sits down on the sofa, as he begins to tap away on the keyboard.

DORIS

Well, what did you say?

He looks at her knowingly.

HORACE

Well, if you really must know, I turned it down, naturally.

DORIS

You did what?

HORACE

I turned it down. I'm far too busy at the moment.

DORIS

(Outraged)

You turned it down! You big nincompoop!

HORACE

That's right. Start insulting me, go on.

DORIS

I'm only asking.

HORACE

It wasn't big enough, if you really must know, Doris.

DORIS

You twerp!

HORACE

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

DORIS

Twat.

HORACE

For your information, Gordon and I have been putting our heads together and we've come up with an idea to stage a play of our own. I haven't told you this yet, but we've been running a competition to find an in-house playwright. And it seems we've found our person. I'm really excited about that.

DORIS

(Defeatedly)

I need a flippin' drink.

She gets to her feet and exits.

Silence as he continues to work.

She returns and stands over his shoulder, then looks at him with utter contempt.

HORACE

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

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

DORIS

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

HORACE

No, I didn't. They already have someone for Napoleon, I'm afraid.

She turns away in disgust.

DORIS

Oh, fuck off, you twerp!

He roars with laughter as she sits down again.

HORACE

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

DORIS

(Fractured)

Can'tcha see I'm flippin' desperate! I can't go on like this. I need to work.

HORACE

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

DORIS

But I can't. I've been with him flippin' years. Are you sure they're not auditioning for other parts? I bet you haven't even asked for me, have you?

HORACE

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

DORIS

Oh, don't be ridiculous!

HORACE

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

DORIS

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

HORACE

(Vexed)

Well he would! He just wants to get inside your knickers.

DORIS

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

She gets up and storms off.

HORACE (Aside)

I rest my case.

Flushing toilet.

DORIS (Off)

I'm classically trained, you know!

HORACE (Aside)

Hysterically trained, more like.

She re-enters with a face like thunder, and with another glass of chardonnay in hand. She takes her seat on the sofa.

DORIS

Oh, shove it up your arse!

HORACE

I'll have a go if you like.

DORIS

Oh, get lost.

HORACE

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

DORIS

You do it? I'm not your flippin' slave!

HORACE

I work, Doris.

She begins to channel surf the TV.

DORIS

So do I.

HORACE

Lying on your back, is not work, Doris.

DORIS

Is that what you think I do all day?

HORACE

It's one of them.

DORIS

You think I'm cheap, don'tcha?

HORACE

I don't think anything, Doris.

DORIS

Just because you can't get it up anymore, you think I'm getting it elsewhere.

HORACE

Oh, give me a break, will you?

DORIS

You started it.

HORACE

In that case let me finish it.

A long silence as he continues to work.

-

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

DORIS

I don't want anything from you.

HORACE

You know your trouble?

DORIS
No. Enlighten me.

HORACE
You're ungrateful.

DORIS
Ha! I'm ungrateful?

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

DORIS
I'm not bitter. I'm angry, that's all.

HORACE
Get better. Not bitter, Doris.

DORIS
Bollocks.

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

DORIS
Is there a part for me?

HORACE
There might well be, Doris.

DORIS
I will, then.

HORACE
No I'm serious, Doris. There's all sorts of things happening in this play we're going to put on. We've got witches, whores, murderers, gipsies, tramps and thieves. I'm sure we can find you something.

DORIS
You bastard!

She exits in a fury.

- Off
Are you ashamed of me?

She returns to the sofa.

HORACE
Only slightly, but nothing for you to worry about.

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

DORIS
Bastard!

He spills his brandy.

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

He climbs off his seat and exits.

DORIS
Well stop winding me up.

HORACE (Off)
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR BLOODY SENSE OF HUMOUR?

DORIS
Nothing. I still have mine.

She turns up the volume of the television.

He re-enters and pours himself another brandy.

HORACE
AND TURN THAT BLOODY THING DOWN.

DORIS
Go to hell.

HORACE
I SAID TURN IT DOWN!

He grabs the remote from her and switches off the TV.

DORIS

Just leave me alone!

HORACE

There's something you should know.

DORIS

What's that?

HORACE

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

She consumes his statement of fact.

DORIS

That's a bit short notice, isn't it?

HORACE

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

DORIS

Can I come?

HORACE

No. You'll just get in the way.

DORIS

I won't. Oh, please, let me come with you. I can visit Sacre Coeur while you're at the festival.

HORACE

No. I'll be too busy meeting people. You'll just get bored. Stay here. Give Maurice a ring. See if he wants you on your backside again.

DORIS

But I don't want to see Maurice. I'd rather come to Paris.

HORACE

(Angrily)

Take no for a bloody answer, will you?

She turns away in disappointment.

-

I'll be back Thursday. I'll take you out for dinner when I get back. I know a vegan restaurant that's just opened on the Bankside.

DORIS

I'll believe that when I see it. I hardly see you these days. We might as well be flippin' divorced for all you care.

HORACE

Maybe if you didn't spend so much time lying on your back things would be different.

DORIS

Maurice pays me for my time. I don't sit for free.

HORACE

Is that what they call it nowadays?

DORIS

At least he's not a pig.

HORACE

D' you have to boost his bloody ego all the time?

DORIS

He doesn't have one, unlike you.

HORACE

If you say so, Doris.

DORIS

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

HORACE

What figure are you talking about?

DORIS

Oh fuck off, you wanker!

She exits as the landline rings.

He picks up the receiver and listens.

HORACE

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

He slams the receiver down as she re-enters with her mascara smudged

DORIS

Who was that?

HORACE

Who'd you think?

DORIS

How dare you speak to my friends like that!

HORACE

Then tell him not to ring here anymore!

DORIS

But he's a friend.

HORACE

Then tell him to get lost!

DORIS

You horrible man!

HORACE

Just tell him to leave us alone, Doris!

DORIS

If you take me with you I will. I'll stop sitting for him.

A long silence as he knocks back his drink.

HORACE

D' you know what I discovered today?

DORIS

What?

HORACE

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

DORIS

Whoopy do.

HORACE

And that's official.

DORIS

So who are the other four, then?

HORACE

Well, there's Alan Mckenzie. Scott Richardson. Timothy Shaw. Gordon, and then me. I'm in the ascendancy, Doris.

Pause.

It's all the way up from here on.

Pause.

My endeavours haven't gone unnoticed. And it's about time too.

Pause.

I've given my life to the theatre. All these years of blood, sweat and tears. I deserve a little bit of gratitude.

Pause.

Well, aren't you going to congratulate me?

DORIS

Why should I?

HORACE

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

DORIS

I'll believe that when I see it.

Pause.

Anyway, Maurice has written a play. Will you critique it for him?

HORACE

Is there a ten pound note stuck to every page?

DORIS

Oh don't be ridiculous.

HORACE

I've got better things to do than donate my time to someone who fucks my wife.

DORIS

For your information, he doesn't.

HORACE

Well you've practically spent every day with him over the past month. It won't be long before he's sticking his tongue down your throat, will it?

DORIS

Ha! Don't be so silly. He's an artist.

HORACE

A fantasist, more like.

Pause.

I think you should stay away from him.

DORIS

That's absurd! Unless you take me to Paris with you.

HORACE

That's not going to happen, Doris.

DORIS

In that case, as you were, then.

HORACE

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

DORIS

Oh, get to bed.

HORACE

Still, I'd rather have my brain power.

DORIS

Ha! You just can't cope with the fact that I get my kit off for him, can you?

He throws his brandy glass at the wall in torment.

HORACE

THEN WHY DON'T YOU JUST GO AND FUCK HIM.

DORIS

FUCK YOU! BASTARD!

She unleashes her drink in his face, then exits in tears.

HORACE
I BET HE'S HAD YOU IN EVERY POSITION OF THE KAMA SUTRA.

Lights down:

Act 1

The Studio

Scene Three

Lights up:

MAURICE *twiddles with a guitar beneath a brighter fluorescent light.*

DORIS *appears stage left. She wears a suggestive pose. Her fake fur fully unbuttoned, revealing her bare chest and black French knickers, black stockings and suspenders.*

MAURICE
Ohmondieu! What is going on, Doris?

He checks his watch as he approaches her.

And on time too! Come, before you catch yourself a cold.

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

MAURICE
(Bemused)
Do you what, Doris?

DORIS

Oh, say I do, Maurice.

MAURICE

You do, Doris.

She falls into his arms and cackles wildly, before he kisses her pouting red lips, mimicking Cupid & Psyche.

DORIS

Do you like it, Maurice? Oh tell me you love it, I urge you to tell me.

MAURICE

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

He lifts her onto her feet, then guides her towards the chaise.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

Everything. Now park yourself down on the chaise.

She lets her fur fall to the floor beneath her feet, then lies back on the chaise.

He kneels down beside her then begins to stroke the fur.

DORIS

(Perplexed)

What are you doing, Maurice?

MAURICE

(Smitten)

Does it bite? Is it real?

DORIS

No, silly. I couldn't afford to buy real fur. It's an imitation beaver. Anyway, I wouldn't be seen dead wearing real fur. I don't agree with killing animals for their skin.

MAURICE

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

DORIS

Yes but be careful, it's moulting.

MAURICE

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

DORIS

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

MAURICE

You mean, losing hair, Doris?

She cackles.

DORIS

Yes, Maurice! Ha! Oh you know what I mean, silly.

MAURICE

Are you sure, Doris?

She cackles.

DORIS

Yes! Oh what are you like, Maurice?

MAURICE

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

She cackles.

DORIS

'ark at you! Oh, come on now, Maurice... stop. I haven't got all day. I've got to be at the chiropodist in half an hour flat.

MAURICE

Fine.

He climbs to his feet and ruminates briefly.

-

Where am I?

He collects his brushes at the sink unit, as she poses for him.

He goes to the easel and begins to put the finishing touches to the artwork.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

Oui. Now head up. Looking at me.

She exaggerates her pose.

DORIS

Like this?

MAURICE

Exactly like that, Doris.

He paints.

DORIS

Sorry about Horace being so rude to you last night on the phone.

Pause.

He's gone to Paris today. He can go and fuck himself for all I care.

MAURICE

Oh. So what's he doing in Paris?

DORIS

Checking out new talent, apparently.

MAURICE

How'd you mean?

DORIS

Oh, I don't know. I don't give a shit anyway. He can do whatever he flippin' well likes for all I care. I've had enough of his bullshit to last me a lifetime.

MAURICE

I agree.

DORIS

Yeah well, he didn't want to take me with him, did he?

Pause.
And I begged him as well.

Pause.

Fig.

MAURICE

Why?

DORIS

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

MAURICE

Oh.

DORIS

He said I'd just get bored... which proves he doesn't even know his own flippin' wife.

Pause.

He just makes me so angry sometimes.

MAURICE

Oh.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

So what will you do?

DORIS

I'd rather not go there.

MAURICE

Oh, I see.

DORIS

In case I've got the wrong idea, you know?

MAURICE

So what will you do without him tonight?

DORIS

Maybe I should let my hair down, and not just sit around waiting for him, like some fuckin' puppy dog waiting for its owner to come home.

MAURICE

I'm not doing anything, either.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

Why not? I'll wear my outrageous suit.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

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

DORIS

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

MAURICE

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

DORIS

Well he's not here, is he? And I don't give a flying fuck what he says.

Pause.

And d'you know he had the flippin' cheek to tell me that he was offered a part in a play. But when I asked if they were still auditioning, he just belittled me.

MAURICE

So when the cat's away...

DORIS

...the little mice definitely come out to play tonight, Maurice.

She cackles.

-

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

MAURICE

Good.

Short silence.

DORIS

You know, I think he's having an affair with a woman in Paris.

He shows his concern.

-

I found a piece of paper inside his jacket pocket. It had a telephone number written in red lipstick.

Pause.

Then I listened to a phone call he made to Gordon... he's a work colleague. They were laughing about some tart he's meeting up with when he gets there.

Pause.

I mean, what can I say to him? Who's that flippin' tart you're shagging in Paris?

Pause.

And what if I'm wrong? What if she's just a work colleague, and he was just joking with Gordon?

MAURICE

Ask him. You must.

DORIS

Maybe I should just flippin' knife him to death in his sleep.

She cackles.

-

I've seen this sort of thing happening to other people. I can't believe it would actually happen to me.

MAURICE

Confront him. You must.

DORIS

He's got this flippin' old pistol that his great uncle left him when he passed away. I was gonna take it out of the cupboard and shoot him while he was snoring. I would've enjoyed sticking it right up his flippin' nose and pulling the trigger.

She cackles.

MAURICE

Ohmôndieu! This is far too extreme, Doris.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

Me! He's jealous of me? But why, when he's the one having the affair, non?

DORIS

I know, Maurice.

Long silence.

-

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

MAURICE

Oui.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

It takes me forever to do anything, believe it.

DORIS

Aw, my neck is bleedin' killing me. Are you almost done?

MAURICE

Finally, it is all finished.

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

DORIS

That's much better, Maurice.

MAURICE

I am so happy it's finally finished.

DORIS
Well, I love it.

MAURICE
Merci, Doris.

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

MAURICE
You can have it if I fail to sell it.

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

DORIS
Oh shit! Look at the flippin' time! I better go, or I'll be late for the chiropodist.

MAURICE
It's only a quarter past.

DORIS
I know! I better get going. D' you think I'll make it in time?

MAURICE
Dressed like this... You'll be arrested for sure, Doris.

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

MAURICE
Well, hurry or you'll be late.

DORIS
Will I see you later, then?

MAURICE
Oui. Abientot.

DORIS
Abientot.

She bursts into non-operatic melody upon her exit.

He goes to the sink basin and turns on the tap.

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

MAURICE *turns around to see him standing there, looking vexed.*

MAURICE

Horace. What are you doing forcing your way into my studio?

HORACE

Where is she?

MAURICE

She's gone. You've just missed her actually. She left just one minute ago.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Pardon?

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

HORACE

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

He bangs frantically upon the door, rear of stage.

-

Doris! Doris! Come on out!

MAURICE

You will not find her there.

HORACE

Doris! Doris! I know you're in there! I've come to take you home! I'm not angry with you! Come on out!

He opens the door and peers inside, then quickly slams it shut.

MAURICE *guffaws as he rolls a cigarette.*

MAURICE

I told you.

HORACE *stands demented and flustered.*

HORACE

Just what are you sniggering at?

MAURICE

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

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Hashish!

HORACE

What's that wretched smell, then?

MAURICE *shows him the burning cigarette in hand.*

MAURICE

I smoke roll ups.

HORACE

Smells like hashish to me.

MAURICE

Would you like me to roll one for you?

HORACE

No, thank you. I don't smoke.

MAURICE

Are you sure it's not your cologne?

HORACE

Are you trying to be funny, matey?

MAURICE *sniffs the air in wonder.*

MAURICE

Fly killer. Disgusting! Where did you buy it? You should ask for your money back.

HORACE

Did Doris tell you I would be in Paris today?

MAURICE

Actually, she did mention something like that.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

What can I do about it?

HORACE

I know. I know. I'm just saying.

MAURICE

Doris is on her way to see the chiropodist. If you leave now you will catch her, I think.

Short silence as they make knowing eye contact.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Non.

HORACE begins to walk around the studio where he eyes the scattered artwork.

HORACE

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

MAURICE punches the air triumphantly.

MAURICE

Vive la France!

HORACE

Vive my arse!

MAURICE

It's not my problem if you English are apathetic.

HORACE

Don't underestimate us, matey.

Pause.

So which university did you attend, then?

MAURICE

Sorbonne. Why?

HORACE

Cambridge, me.

Pause.

You obviously dropped out. I can see that. And did you?

MAURICE

Actually, it's none of your business. Now what do you want?
I'm very busy.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Non. I could not work in the bad light. Ask her yourself.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

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

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Non! I do not fuck her! What do you think I do here! I am an
artist! I paint her... that's all. And I pay her for her time.

Pause.

Here. I will show you exactly what I do with her! See for
yourself!

He leads him towards the easel.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Oh c'mon, Horace, otherwise you will not be invited to my exhibition.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

So what do you think?

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

MAURICE looks on bemused.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

How'd you mean?

HORACE

I bet she loves it. And does she?

MAURICE

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

HORACE

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

MAURICE

You're just not used to looking at abstract art. I'm reinventing the past.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Now I know you are just being vindictive. It's not possible in my world to say such a stupid thing, if you have any artistic worth.

HORACE

In your solipsism, you mean.

MAURICE

Pardon?

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Is that what you see?

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Because I like my muse in the flesh.

HORACE

Do you only paint naked women, then?

MAURICE

Of course not. It's what you want to see that is of the essence with this kind of art. It's the illusion that tells the story. And you see her naked... Interesting... But I see her in many different lights, and so it's not just her beauty I engage with, but something much more ambiguous. Just look at her muscle tone for example. How many women of her age do you know have this kind of definition? Visualise her sensuality within her confinement.

Pause.

Her versatility within the reflection of her character is paramount to the perception of the premise, and thus how you're supposed to connect with her upon first sight.

HORACE

And what is that?

MAURICE

Undiscriminating beauty.

HORACE

Hm. Well. I suppose it's got its advantages. But she's got quite a temper when riled, I can tell you that.

MAURICE

Hot blooded, eh? Maybe you're her teacher, non?

HORACE

Yes. You've got it in one, matey. I can be a horrible bastard if pushed.

MAURICE

I'm not the Devil's advocate, Horace.

HORACE

She says I'm a misanthrope.

MAURICE

Are you?

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Why not? There's nothing goin on, except what you see in the painting.

HORACE

Are you sure?

MAURICE

I already told you that.

HORACE

So why are you all hot and bothered?

MAURICE

Obviously, because we Parisians perspire so much more than you super cool Englishmen, non?

He shows the extent of his perspiration.

HORACE

Hm.

MAURICE

A real man!

HORACE

Primitive man, more like.

Pause.

Just stay away from my wife!

MAURICE

But there's nothing going on between us. Ask her yourself.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

And I am a rat, I suppose?

HORACE

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

MAURICE

I find you insulting.

HORACE

Then stay away from her.

MAURICE

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

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Are you going to support her, then?

HORACE

What do you mean?

MAURICE

I pay her for her time. She doesn't sit for free.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Could be.

HORACE

Right then. First of all it's none of your god-dam business. And secondly, I pay my share of the rent. Doris is a vegan, so doesn't cook my meals, since she cannot stand the smell of meat or dairy products. I take my laundry to the launderette, because she cannot stand the smell of washing powder. We live a baseless kind of existence... which is not entirely my doing. So, if she behaved like my wife, she'd be treated as a wife... But she chooses to live a detached life from me. You can ask her yourself, if you don't believe me, but only if and when I'm with her.

MAURICE

Fine.

HORACE

Good.

MAURICE

Have you read my play?

HORACE

Look, just because someone writes a play, it doesn't mean I have a desire to read it. If you wanted me to read your play, you should've entered it in our *Play for Today* competition last month.

MAURICE

Fine.

HORACE

Right. Till next time.

HORACE collects his trolley case and exits.

Maurice

We'll see.

Lights down:

Act 2

THE DINNER PARTY

Lights up.

HORACE is in high spirits and sets the dining table. He sports a beige safari suit and cravat.

DORIS prepares food in the kitchenette. She wears denim hot pants, and a red blouse. She carries a glass of chardonnay with her.

DORIS

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

HORACE

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

DORIS

...You fucked up, again.

HORACE

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

DORIS

It's a lot of work for me though, isn't it? And who is this playwright? Have I heard of him?

HORICE

No, I doubt it. His name's Yusimi Yusimi. Apparently, he's here studying, according to Gordon. He knows more about him than I do.

DORIS

Oh. I see.

HORACE

His style reminds me of Jacque Prevert.

DORIS

Who's that?

HORACE

A French playwright and poet. He was known for his excellent wit and poor grammar.

Pause.

I'm just pleased we've finally found ourselves a resident writer.

DORIS

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

HORACE

It's about the life and death of French playwright William Shakespeare.

She chokes on a mouthful of wine.

-

I know. It's absurd. It'll have audiences falling off their stalls whilst wetting themselves with laughter.

DORIS

It went down the wrong flippin' hole.

HORACE

That makes a change.

She passes him a wry look, then fetches a salad bowl to the dining table.

He stands back to oversee her.

-
You know, you've been very efficient tonight, Doris. I'm quite impressed.

(Checks watch)

They should be here any minute now. I feel quite excited.

He fetches a basket of bread to the table.

DORIS

Gordon should be doing all this, not you.

HORACE

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

DORIS

He farts and you sneeze.

HORACE

He was going to if my flight hadn't been cancelled. In fact, I shouldn't even be here myself. It was very much a last minute thing.

DORIS

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

HORACE

I told you, it's over between us.

Pause.

She caught me at a low ebb. I let my guard down, that's all.

DORIS

I don't want to hear any of your feeble excuses.

HORACE

It's over! Now leave it at that will you?

Pause.

Anyway, this could really benefit your career... providing you don't get silly drunk like the last time Gordon came for dinner.

DORIS

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

She cackles.
He pours himself a brandy.

HORACE

Please don't show me up tonight, Doris. I want to create a nice pulse to the evening.

DORIS

I know. I'm not stupid.

HORACE

Good. And no grovelling. Just leave Gordon and I to talk to Yusimi Yusimi.

DORIS

All right. I will, then.

Doorbell.

HORACE

Right.

He steps towards the door left of stage.

She exits, door right.

He opens the door to MONIQUE (Thirty something). She's Parisian and sultry. She stands wearing a black slinky dress, seamless stockings and black stiletto heels.

He gasps and grabs the door frame for support.

-

(Quietly)

Monica! What are you doing here, for heaven's sake?

MONIQUE

But you didn't come. I waited all day for you. Why?

HORACE

Ssh. Keep your voice down.

MONIQUE

What happened?

HORACE

But you can't come here. You'll get me shot.

He checks his shoulder.

Monique

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

HORACE

Well you have to go.

DORIS re-enters and brings two bottles of wine to the table.

HORACE hides behind the door.

DORIS

Horace, who's at the door?

HORACE

(To Doris)

No one. I'm dealing with it.

MONIQUE

When will I see you again?

HORACE

I don't know. Didn't you get my message? All the flights were cancelled, due to the fog. I sent you a message. Didn't you read it?

DORIS becomes suspicious and approaches the door.

DORIS

Horace, what's going on? Who's at the door?

HORACE

(To Monique)

I'll call you.

MONIQUE

Let me in, or I will scream.

DORIS peers over his shoulder and spots her.

DORIS

Who the fuck is she?

HORACE

It's okay, Doris. Get back inside.

DORIS

No! Let her in!

HORACE

Oh, shit.

He steps aside for MONIQUE to enter.

MONIQUE

Merci beaucoup.

DORIS

What are you doing here?

MONIQUE

What do you think?

HORACE

I think I can explai...

DORIS

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

MONIQUE

Tell her, Horace.

DORIS

Tell me what?

MONIQUE

Tell her, or I will.

HORACE

Look, I'll explain every...

DORIS

...OH SHUT THE FUCK UP, YOU TWERP.

(To Monique)

Did he invite you here?

MONIQUE

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

DORIS

You did, did you?

HORACE

I'm not going anywhere. I have a very important guest coming to dinner.

DORIS

(To Horace)

So you're still together, then?

MONIQUE

He said his marriage was over.

HORACE *squirms.*

DORIS

That's news to me. So are we over, then, Horace?

HORACE

No.

Short pause.

I just thought it was going that way at the time.

DORIS

And now?

MONIQUE *interjects.*

MONIQUE

He said you were having an affair.

He wipes his sweaty brow, then sits down at the dining table.

DORIS

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

HORACE

I didn't actually say that, Monica. I said she could be...

MONIQUE

(Angrily)

...Menteur!

HORACE
Look, can we just all calm down for a minute?

MONIQUE sits down at the table opposite him. DORIS remains defiant and continues to stand.

Awkward silence.

HORACE
Anyone like a drink?

MONIQUE
Est-il Francais?

DORIS
No, it's Italian.

MONIQUE
Merci.

He pours Monique a glass of red.

DORIS grabs the bottle of white and pours her own.

HORACE
Olive, Monica?

MONIQUE
Sont-il bourres?

HORACE
Yes, they are.

MONIQUE
Merci beaucoup.

He pushes the bowl towards her and she picks one out.

DORIS
No speaking French, or you can both sling your hook right now!

HORACE
OK, Doris. Just calm down.
Pause.

Look, Monica, I'm sorry you've had to come all this way, but quite frankly I'm staying put.

Pause.

I really thought Doris was having an affair with the artist she sits for. It turns out I was wrong. I imagined the whole thing. I was chagrined at the thought of them together behind my back. I felt insecure. I just needed someone to listen to me.

MONIQUE

You used me.

HORACE

No. Let me finish...

MONIQUE

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

DORIS *dives across the table.* HORACE *blocks her path.*

DORIS

YOU BITCH. GET OUT. GET OUT NOW.

MONIQUE *moves away from the table.*

HORACE

Doris, hold on. Give her a chance to explain herself. She's come a long way.

DORIS

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

HORACE

Monica, you can't say that. She's very upset.

Telephone rings.

-

Shit.

MONIQUE

I'm sorry, Doris.

DORIS

Please leave.

HORACE

She'll be going in just a minute, Doris, for goodness sake.

They stare at the phone as it continues to ring.

DORIS *finally picks up the receiver and listens.*

DORIS

(To Horace)

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

She smacks the receiver into his groin as she gives Monique the evil eye.

He yelps in agony, then puts the receiver to his ear.

HORACE

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

He slams down the receiver, then ruminates.

DORIS *continues to stare threateningly at Monique*

DORIS

(To Horace)

What's wrong now?

HORACE

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

DORIS

Now get her out, before I do something I regret.

HORACE

Will you just shut up for one moment and let me think!

Pause.

Right, Gordon can't make it, so that means there'll be a seat at the table.

DORIS

No fuckin' way!

HORACE

I want her to stay for dinner, then she can leave.

DORIS

If she stays, I go.

HORACE

Think, Doris. It makes sense.

DORIS

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

MONIQUE

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

HORACE

No. Gordon's left me to speak to Yusimi Yusimi, so it makes complete sense if she stays and makes a four.

Protracted silence as DORIS contemplates the idea.

DORIS

(To Monique)

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

HORACE

Right then, sorted.

Pause.

I need to take a leak. I trust you won't claw each other's eyes out while I'm gone

He exits.

Awkward silence as they sit back at the table.

DORIS

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

MONIQUE

I am not leaving without Horace.

Short pause.

I have nowhere else to go.

DORIS

Well you can't stay here, love!

MONIQUE

Why not? I will sleep on your couch.

DORIS

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

The toilet is heard flushing.

He re-enters and takes his seat at the table.

Doorbell.

HORACE

That'll be him! Now please... behave, Doris.

MONIQUE

Ridiculous.

DORIS

Piss off!

HORACE

Doris, please, be nice.

He snarls as he opens the door to MAURICE, who stands smirking while dressed in a red suit and white beret.

MAURICE

Ah ha!

His smirk turns into a grimace as HORACE snarls.

HORACE

What'd you want?

MAURICE

Er... Well. Actually I...

HORACE

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

He attempts to slam the door shut, but MAURICE slips his foot inside the gap to stop him.

MAURICE

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

HORACE

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

DORIS *rushes to the door*. MONIQUE climbs to her feet and *shows interest*.

DORIS

Maurice, is that you?

MAURICE

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

DORIS

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

MAURICE *grabs his own genitals and squirms*.

MAURICE

But I need the toilet, please...

HORACE

No! Just fuck off before I lose my temper!

Once again he *attempts to close the door shut*, but DORIS *steps between them*.

DORIS

Oh let him use the toilet. What's wrong with you?

HORACE

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

DORIS

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

He enters and HORACE contorts with anger.

MAURICE

Oh, thank you, Doris. I'll try to be quick.

HORACE

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

His attention quickly turns to MONIQUE as she stands wearing a huge grin.

MAURICE

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

They throw their arms around each other and peck one another.

MONIQUE

Oh mon Dieu! Maurice! It's you! Oh mon Dieu! Que fais-tu ici?

DORIS

(Astonished)

Holy shit.

She rushes towards the kitchenette while they continue to embrace. HORACE looks on aghast.

MAURICE

I cannot believe my eyes, Monique. Ohmondieu!

HORACE *intervenens.*

HORACE

Alright! Alright! Alright! Put her down! Christ sake! What d'you think this is, the Folies Bergere?

MAURICE turns to him and *guffaws.*

MAURICE

She was my fiancé from...

MONIQUE

We were going to be...

HORACE

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

MAURICE *gently releases himself from MONIQUE'S grasp.*

MONIQUE

(To **Horace**)
Maurice is the artist I was telling you about.

HORACE
Really?

DORIS *brings food to the table.* HORACE *turns away in frustration.*

DORIS
(To **Monique**)
In the bed, was it?

MONIQUE
Actually, it was not in the bed.

HORACE
(To **Monique**)
He screws my wife behind my back?

DORIS *slaps his face.*

DORIS
How dare you!

MAURICE *sniggers.*

HORACE
Well... look at him standing there like he's just won the damn lottery.

Pause.
He gatecrashes our apartment, then to top that he and Monica are past lovebirds. You couldn't make it up!

Pause.
I suppose you want her back now you've finished with my wife?

DORIS
Wanker!

She marches back towards the kitchen. MONIQUE follows.

MAURICE
I think you are being ridiculous, Horace.

HORACE
I should've seen this coming.

DORIS *brings a pot of fondue to the table.* MONIQUE *brings a pot of cooked Aubergines.*

DORIS

Now, let's eat before it goes cold.

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

MAURICE

Magnifique! Where shall I sit, Doris?

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Oh, please...!

HORACE

Just because the table is set for four people, it doesn't mean you're not one of them, so leave while you still have your teeth intact.

MONIQUE *grabs Maurice's arm. She is joined by DORIS, who grabs his free arm.*

DORIS

If Maurice goes, we go.

HORACE

I see. All Right.

(To Maurice)

You are very popular, aren't you?

MAURICE *shrugs his shoulders in dismay.*

-

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

DORIS

Maybe not. But I can fit them into our double.

HORACE *reluctantly pulls a chair out, then sits down at the table next to Doris. MAURICE takes a seat opposite and next to Monique.*

HORACE

I'm supposed to be having dinner with Gordon and Yusimi Yusimi. How on Earth has this happened?

MAURICE

You didn't, Horace. It just happened.

Horace ignores his remark and they begin to tuck into the food.

MONIQUE

(To Maurice)

Il se comporte comme un cochon.

DORIS

I said, no speaking French.

MONIQUE

Oops. I forgot.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

(To Horace)

So whatever way you look at it, you are a pig, non?

HORACE jumps out of his seat and raises his fist.

HORACE

THAT'S IT. GET OUT.

MAURICE

It was just a joke. Where's your English sense of humour?

HORACE

OK. LET'S HAVE IT OUT RIGHT NOW! GET UP! COME ON, UP.

MAURICE

But I don't want to fight with you, Horace.

MAURICE reluctantly pulls back his chair and raises his fist.

HORACE marches towards the *door and opens it wide.*

HORACE

Get out, before I call the police and have you removed.

MAURICE

Ohmôndieu! Doris, it was only banter.

DORIS

I'm not getting involved. I'm too flippin' hungry.

HORACE

They can call me whatever they like. But you keep your filthy mouth shut.

DORIS

(Interjects)

I'm qualified to do that. She isn't.

MAURICE

I think we should just all calm down.

HORACE

Anymore of your quips and you're definitely going. That's your final warning, matey.

DORIS

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

They sit back at the table and begin to eat.

HORACE tops up their glasses with more wine.

MAURICE

Red for me, please.

HORACE refuses to pour his wine.

HORACE

Do it yourself. I'm not your servant.

MAURICE

Fine. I'll do it, then.

MAURICE pours his own glass of wine.

Quiet as they tuck in.

MONIQUE

This is very nice, Doris.

DORIS

Thanks.

MONIQUE

The aubergine is perfectly baked.

DORIS

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

MAURICE

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

HORACE

I made them myself.

Pause.

There's nothing to it really.

MAURICE

My compliments.

DORIS

You can buy them from the supermarket.

HORACE

True. But not as good as mine.

DORIS

Debatable.

HORACE gives her a warning look as MAURICE sniggers.

-

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

MONIQUE

Thank you.

DORIS

Not here! Maurice has got his own studio flat.

HORACE *throws down his utensils in torment.*

HORACE

No way! She can stay at MalMaison. It's just down the road. I'll take her there myself, later on.

MAURICE

(To Monique)

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

HORACE

(To Maurice)

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

MONIQUE

Actually, I will stay with Maurice. After all, we are not strangers. We have slept together many times in the past.

(Giggles)

Beaucoup de fois.

They burst into laughter as Horace looks on in dismay.

HORACE

(To Monique)

You are not sleeping with him.

DORIS

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

HORACE

Just stay out of this, Doris.

MAURICE

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

HORACE *throws down his napkin in anger.*

HORACE

That's it!

MONIQUE

(Imploringly)

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

MAURICE

Super, Monique!

MONIQUE

I love London. It is beautiful at night.

DORIS

Horace, sit down for fuck sake.

He sits down again with a threatening stare towards Maurice.

MAURICE

Actually, I know a little French club in Piccadilly. Do you know it, Horace?

HORACE

No.

MAURICE

It's quaint.

DORIS

I'll put on my outrageous dress.

MAURICE

Super, Doris.

HORACE

I can't go anywhere. I'm waiting for Yusimi Yusimi. Actually where the hell has he gotten to?

DORIS

Maybe he heard you shouting and changed his mind.

HORACE

What the hell would you know?

MAURICE wipes his hands on a napkin and takes a deep breath, before he stands up at the table. He looks down at HORACE who throws an olive into his mouth.

MAURICE

(Proudly)

Actually, he is here.

HORACE *looks up as he masticates the olive. His eyes wide and curious.*

HORACE

What did you just say?

MAURICE

I am here.

HORACE

What are you talking about?

MAURICE

Yusimi Yusimi.

Pause.

Do you see me, Horace?

Awkward silence as Horace begins to choke on the olive.

MAURICE

Shit!

MAURICE *moves quickly to give him the Heimlich Manoeuvre. The women move away from the table in shock and awe.*

MONIQUE

Oh mon Dieu! What is happening to him?

DORIS

He's just choking. Nothing for you to worry about.

MAURICE

Fetch water! Hurry!

The olive is extracted from Horace's mouth.

DORIS *hurries to the kitchenette, She returns with a jug of water. She fills a glass and hands it to him.*

MONIQUE

He's pourpré.

MAURICE

He'll be fine in a moment.

HORACE *feeds himself water.*

DORIS

Are you okay, Horace?

HORACE *clears his throat.*

They sit in anticipation as MAURICE wipes his brow.

MAURICE

Phew! That was close. You had us all worried, Horace. You could have choked to death.

HORACE

(Resentfully)

I should have known.

Long pause.

Very clever. Very clever indeed.

MAURICE

I have a pseudonym.

HORACE

I can see that.

Pause.

You must think I'm a fool. And do you?

MAURICE

Non.

HORACE

Was that the same play you asked Doris if I would read?

MAURICE

Oui. It was.

DORIS *climbs out of her seat.*

HORACE

Why did you do that when Gordon had already sanctioned your play?

MAURICE

I wanted to surprise you.

HORACE

No. You wanted to humiliate me in front of Doris, didn't you?

MAURICE

Non! That's not true. I just thought...

HORACE

...So tell me what inspired you to write a play focusing upon the rise and fall of Shakespeare? He wasn't French. He was quintessentially English as far as I'm aware.

MAURICE

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

HORACE

A fare point.

Pause.

So, do you want my assessment?

MAURICE

This is why I am here actually.

HORACE

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

DORIS

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

MAURICE *throws his arms up in despair.*

MAURICE

C'mon, man.

HORACE *takes a sip of water to clear his throat.*

HORACE

Fine.

Pause.

To be honest with you, it is a well-drafted play. I particularly enjoyed its contemporary theme. It was poignant, well paced, and thought provoking. The characterizations are quite remarkable, which for me create a surreal, yet enchanting tempo throughout each act. The dramatic exploits of

the main protagonist is momentous. The central premise, that eerie question, is there life after death? Reincarnation is a very interesting theme to put out there, even in a comedic sense of the word.

He takes another sip of water.

MAURICE

(Fervently)

Please continue.

HORACE

I haven't finished yet.

Short pause.

Maybe the removal of places of rest would be beneficial for certain wider societies. The Dead Playwright's social, spiritual and cultural well being included.

MAURICE *leans across the table with added enthusiasm.*

MAURICE

I love it.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Gordon says I'm going to be your in-house writer. I simply cannot wait! No more fluffing around in my studio.

HORACE

Did he indeed?

MAURICE

Oui. He called me to tell me himself.

HORACE

So, I suppose you think you've got one over me now. And do you?

MAURICE

Non! I want us to work together on my play.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Pardon me?

HORACE

Why did you lie about your nationality?

MAURICE

I think it's obvious, non?

HORACE

Well, you have what you came for. Now fuck off!

DORIS

(Interjects)

Horace, stop that!

HORACE

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

MAURICE

But... no, no, non! I want you to stage my play.

HORACE

Over my dead body!

MONIQUE *lends Maurice her sympathy as she puts a comforting arm around his shoulder.*

MAURICE

But why not, Horace?

HORACE

Because I don't like you.

MAURICE

Excuse me?

HORACE

D' you want everything I own? The shirt off my back, before you take these two cock starved fans of yours clubbing, and then to bed. Or maybe you'd prefer to wait until I'm

completely out of the way. I'll just kip on the sofa, shall I? Think about how I might direct your play, and even who I might cast... Doris, or Monica? Is that what I should do, Maurice? Tell me, because at this moment in time I'm completely discombobulated by your audacity to sit there begging me to work with you.

MAURICE

Oh, c'mon, Horace, don't be like this.

MONIQUE

Oh c'mon, Horace. You are being so silly.

HORACE

Am I, Monica? Am I really?

DORIS

Actually, I thought you gave Maurice an excellent overview of his play. It was really clever. So stop being so bloody churlish, Horace?

HORACE

Three against one. I see.

MAURICE

Be reasonable.

HORACE

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

MAURICE

Gordon asked me to come here. He said that you were expecting me.

HORACE

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

Pause.

And what exactly did Gordon say to you?

MAURICE

Just to come here and discuss the play with you. I told him we know each other and that you will not be very happy about this. He assured me that he would talk to you first and that

everything would be fine. He told me that you are very excited, and that you are eager to get working on it.

Short silence.

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

Short silence.

HORACE

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

MONIQUE

But this is so crazy.

HORACE

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

DORIS

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

MONIQUE

What has Maurice done to you?

HORACE ignores her question and *stares blankly at the wall.*

Long silence.

DORIS

Horace?

MONIQUE

Why is he like this?

DORIS

Horace Nugents, lost for words. I thought I'd never see it.

MAURICE *climbs out of his seat despondently.*

MAURICE

I think I should go?

DORIS clicks her fingers at Horace to register her, but he is oblivious to the people around him.

DORIS

No. Wait, Maurice.

Silence.

-

Horace, come on.

Silence.

-

Horace, now stop all this bullshit!

Silence.

MAURICE

Maybe he needs some more water.

DORIS

Here. Have this!

Without hesitation she picks up the jug of water and saturates him.

He quietly gets up and ascends the stairs.

MAURICE/MONIQUE

Ohmondieu! Oh!

DORIS

He'll be alright.

MONIQUE

So crazy!

DORIS cackles as she *fills their glasses with more wine.*

Lights down:

Lights up - Bedroom.

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

Lights down.

Lights up - Lounge.

DORIS *glides over to the CD player and turns on the music of Saint Germain.*

MONIQUE *gets to her feet.*

MONIQUE

I just want to dance.

MAURICE

(To Doris)

What is going to happen now?

DORIS

Oh don't worry, Maurice. I'll speak to him later, when he decides to get over himself.

MAURICE

But you heard what he said.

DORIS

It's not up to him. He's just the organ grinder's monkey. He thinks he's more important than he actually is.

MONIQUE *chuckles.*

MONIQUE

That's so funny, Doris.

MAURICE

Not really, Monique. This is my play we're talking about.

MONIQUE

I just want to dance.

DORIS *raises her glass and looks up towards the bedroom with scorn.*

DORIS

Come in number five! Where the fuck are you?

DORIS cackles.

MONIQUE *turns up the volume on the CD player. A party atmosphere begins to take shape.*

MONIQUE

I want to dance like crazy... Whoa! Whoa!

DORIS

We won't let him spoil our fun, will we? Miserable old fuck-pig!

DORIS *cackles.*

MAURICE *sits soberly at the table and looks on as they let their hair down to the music.*

MONIQUE

I love this music!

DORIS

Yeah, it's brilliant!

MONIQUE

I know.

DORIS *stops dancing and stares at MONIQUE with concern.*

DORIS

It is over with you and him, isn't it?

MONIQUE

Horace? Completely. Finished! Caput! Au revoir Horace Nugents!

DORIS *cackles.*

DORIS

Ha! Brilliant! I love it!

MAURICE *climbs out of his seat and walks towards the entrance door.*

MAURICE

I almost forgot. I have brought something for you, Doris.

He exits through door left, then returns with the painting wrapped in brown paper.

They stop dancing as he hands her the painting.

MONIQUE

What is this, Maurice?

DORIS

(Excitedly)

Is that for me?

MAURICE

Oui. You can have it.

DORIS

Really? Oh, Maurice, thank you!

She kisses his cheek.

MAURICE

It's yours to keep.

DORIS

(To Monique)

He knew how much I wanted this portrait.

DORIS rips off the paper and reveals the painting. She positions it upright on the dining table.

MONIQUE

Wow! It is very beautiful, Maurice.

MAURICE

Monique.

DORIS

Oh, thank you, Maurice. I'll treasure it forever. Actually, I'll hang it on the bedroom wall, so Horace can look at me before he goes to sleep.

(Realises)

Oh but what about your exhibition? I thought you said...

MAURICE

...I changed my mind.

MONIQUE

It is so amazing, Maurice.

MAURICE

She asked me if she could have it, so...

DORIS *kisses his cheek once more.*

MONIQUE

I just want to dance.

They dance.

Lights down:

Lights up: Bedroom.

HORACE *slowly removes his spectacles, then opens the wardrobe doors*

He takes out a carved wooden box, He opens the box to reveal a pistol. He loads a single bullet into the chamber, then points the gun at his reflection.

HORACE (*Aside*)

He's the enemy of your theatre. He's hostile to your world.

He speaks using an American accent.

Are you talkin' to me?

Pause.

Are you talkin' to me, punk?, eh?

He turns away in disgust, then lobs the pistol onto the bed.

Lights down:

Lights up - Lounge.

They continue to dance.

MONIQUE

Why are we waiting? Let's go out.

DORIS

All right then.

MAURICE

Doris, D' you like my outrageous suit?

DORIS

I love it, Maurice. But you look a bit like a pimp.

MONIQUE *laughs aloud as she throws her arms around him.*
He responds by pulling her closer towards him and kissing her neck.

MONIQUE

(Provocatively)

Tu aimes ma robe, Maurice?

MAURICE

Oui. Très sexy, tu es aussi belle.

She pinches his cheek, then kisses him on the lips.

DORIS *cackles.*

DORIS

Brilliant!

MAURICE

Je ressens quelque chose dans mon cœur pour toi. Quelque chose de spécial.

MONIQUE

Oui. Et moi aussi.

MAURICE

What are we waiting for?

MONIQUE

I am so happy.

MAURICE

Oui, Monique. Ça Dior est le destin.

MONIQUE

Quel beau destin, j'adore le destin! Le destin est magnifique!
Fais moi rêver!

MAURICE

I'm not going to let you out of my sight.

DORIS

Ha! Brilliant!

DORIS *cackles*.

-

Wait here. I'll put on a frock.

MAURICE

Super!

DORIS *takes the stairs and stops midway*.

DORIS

I won't be long.

MAURICE

Go!

MONIQUE *throws her arms around him once more and they smooch up to one another*.

Lights down.

Lights up - Bedroom.

HORACE *sits quietly on the bed sulking*.

DORIS *enters in high spirits*.

She ignores him and goes to the wardrobe.

She pulls out a black slinky dress, then turns to face him.

Doris

(Imploringly)

We're having so much fun downstairs. We're going out. D' you want to come with us?

Silence.

-

Oh come on, Horace. It'll be a right laugh.

Silence.

-

Oh cheer up, for god sake!

She holds up the dress for him to see.

-
D' you remember this? Vivian Westwood.

Silence.

-
I'll wear it for you, if you want?

Silence.

-
Look, it's no good just sitting here with your head stuck half way up your flippin' arse, is it?

She sighs compromisingly, then sits down next to him. She puts a consoling arm around him.

-
Why don't you put on your nice green velvet suit and come out with us?

Silence.

-
Oh come on, Horace, don't be like this.

HORACE

I can't. I'm finished, Doris. It's over. I'm over. I'm finished.

DORIS

Oh don't be silly. No you're not.

Silence.

-
You know, you've changed. You're becoming a stranger to me these days. I don't even know my own husband anymore.

HORACE

That reptile has destroyed me.

DORIS

Rubbish! He has not! That's just your paranoia at work!

HORACE

That toe rag has belittled me.

DORIS

Don't be so bloody ridiculous!

Pause.

D' you remember what you used to say to me?

Pause.

Forgive your enemies, nothing annoys them more.

HORACE

It wasn't one of mine.

DORIS

Whatever!

Pause.

He's a really nice guy... He really is. And it looks like he and Monique are going to start up their relationship again.

HORACE

I couldn't give a shit what he does.

Pause.

I loathe him. In fact, I wouldn't mind putting a bullet through his skull.

DORIS

Now you listen to me, Horace Nugents. You said his play was one of the best you've read in a decade. Just because he wrote it, you sit here like a defeatist, sulking like a juvenile. You've got egg all over your face, and all because you've been exposed as a pompous, self absorbed, miserable old fuck pig! And I have just about had enough of your selfish me, me, me attitude all the soddin' time! All you do is sit there going on about how fuckin' great you are! Character assassinating people who don't live up to your expectations! And d' you know something else? In all the years of our marriage, you've not once offered me a helping hand! How could you be so fuckin' high and mighty about your own successes while at the same time not give a flying fuck about mine? My life! You're an egotistical fuck pig, Horace Nugents, and right now I fuckin' well hate you!

HORACE

Gordon sent that tactile slime-ball here to destroy me. He's made himself my Nemesis.

DORIS

No! You just want to control everyone.

Pause.

Everyone feels the tension around you.

HORACE

Just leave me alone. I want to be alone.

Pause.

And you can have a divorce if it makes you happy.

DORIS

Stop!

She pins him down and slaps him about until she bursts into tears.

HORACE

Now leave me be.

DORIS

I should be the one sitting here with my head up my arse, not you. Your slut is down there with her ex and all you can do is hide. Go down and face them like the man I thought I married.

HORACE

I will. I'll confront him the Horace Nugents way.

He climbs off the bed and straightens his clothes.

DORIS

Stay calm, Horace.

HORACE

We'll see about that.

He stealthily grabs the pistol, then makes his way down the stairs.

DORIS *slides out of her denims and slips on her dress.*

Lights down.

Lights up: Lounge.

MAURICE and MONIQUE *quietly canoodle on the sofa.*

HORACE *approaches with pistol in hand.*

MAURICE

(To **Monique**)

So what happened after I left Paris?

Monique

I went to Canada to study theatre.

With a look of horror MONIQUE spots HORACE approaching.

-

Horace!

MAURICE jumps off the sofa and retreats with his hands raised.

MAURICE

Horace, what's going on?

HORACE

I am going to kill you.

He aims the pistol at him.

MAURICE

Please stop this nonsense, Horace.

HORACE

You know this pistol was my great uncle Charles's. He was a war hero.

MAURICE

Good. Good.

HORACE

He killed many of your lot with this mechanical device.

MAURICE

So are you going to shoot me with it?

MONIQUE steps between them.

MONIQUE

Please, Horace, don't do it. I beg you not to shoot him. I love him.

HORACE

Why not? He's turned my world upside down.

His hand begins to shake violently and he becomes unsteady on his feet.

She panics and exits through door right.

MAURICE

You cannot frighten me with this silly toy gun, Horace.

HORACE

You know everything was fine before you arrived. Why did you have to come here? You really should have heeded my advice and stayed away, punk.

MAURICE

I will go, then. Monique, let's go. He's lost his mind.

HORACE

Who's laying eggs now, punk?

He squeezes the trigger and a bullet hits the painting flush in the centre, tearing a huge hole in the canvas.

MONIQUE screams off stage as MAURICE dives for cover.

MAURICE

OHMONDIEU! DORIS! HELP! HELP US PLEASE!

HORACE

It's alright, darling. I'm just dealing with a reptile. I think he's cowering behind the sofa. But don't worry, I've got him covered.

MAURICE

HORACE PLEASE STOP THIS!

HORACE

Did you enjoy my wife? Oh yes... and dinner? That'll be five hundred pounds. And I only accept cash.

MONIQUE (Off)

HORACE, PLEASE LEAVE HIM ALONE!

MAURICE

HORACE, I BEG YOU TO STOP THIS!

HORACE

Give me one good reason why I should stop?

MONIQUE (Off)

PLEASE HORACE.

DORIS descends the stairs wearing her outrageous slinky black and gold dress.

She spots the destroyed painting.

DORIS

What have you done to my portrait? You twat!

She whacks him across the head, then takes the pistol from him.

HORACE

I was aiming at a reptile. I missed, unfortunately.

MAURICE appears from behind the sofa.

MAURICE

I'm not staying here a second longer.

MONIQUE appears from the bathroom and stands agape.

MONIQUE

Oh mon Dieu!

Maurice

C'mon Monique. Let's get out of this madhouse.

DORIS sticks her head through the hole in the portrait and stands deflatedly.

DORIS

Look at my portrait. It's ruined.

HORACE

It was an accident, Doris.

She discards the painting, then collects her coat.

DORIS

Wait. I'm coming with you. I'm not staying here with this twerp.

MAURICE
(To Horace)
You need help, man.

DORIS
And get to bed, you twerp.

MONIQUE
You are really crazy, Horace.

They exit.

He picks up the pistol and climbs the stairs.

Curtain.