

MARIUS

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

BY

MARCEL PAGNOL

TRANSLATED AND ADAPTATED
by MICHAEL JOHNSTON

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CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

ESCARTEFIGUE (60) captain of the harbour ferry

MARIUS (20) son of César

PIQUOISEAU (70) ex-sailor and drifter

STOKER (17) ferry-boat stoker and occasional waiter

FANNY (18) runs the sea-food stall

CÉSAR (50) patron of the Bar de la Marine

PANISSE (50) sail-maker and ship's chandler

BRUN (35) newly promoted Custom's Inspector

HONORINE (45) fishmonger and mother of Fanny

MAN, hotel porter

BOSUN of the *Malaisie*

The action takes place in the Bar de la Marine
in the Vieux-Port of Marseilles sometime in the 1920s.

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The scene for the whole play is the interior of César's bar in the Vieux-Port of Marseilles in the 1920s. The four 'entrances' to the stage are from the bar 'terrace' and out onto the port; from the 'kitchen' and César's room; from Marius's 'bedroom' through a 'lockable' door on which there is a hook with a straw hat hanging from it; and to the sea-food 'stall' run by Fanny. The stage props required are a small bar with bottles and glasses, a chaise-longue with a low table in front of it, a square café table with four chairs, a small crate with a sacking cushion almost offstage in the sea-food stall entrance, and a low stool, onstage adjacent to the terrace entrance. The presence of the sea-food stall is established by Fanny carrying panniers across the stage from César's kitchen and cellar to the stall, diagonally opposite. Establishing the wider location in a busy commercial seaport relies on the sound effects of shipping and ship-breaking, ships' sirens and seagulls.

ACT ONE

As the lights go up, Fanny is sitting on her packing case reading a fictional romance while waiting for the real thing. She is keeping an eye on her offstage stall. Marius is washing and wiping at the bar. His father, César, is asleep on the chaise-longue with his apron over his face. Escartefigue, captain of the harbour ferry-boat sits at the table drinking. Perched on the stool is an ageless down-and-out and former sailor, Piquoiseau, nursing a glass of rum.

After a period of harbour and shipyard noises, the shipyard's siren cuts through the din and the sounds of working subside. Escartefigue pulls out his watch.

ESCARTEFIGUE: You can set your watch by that hooter! (*Escartefigue lights a small cigar and looks over at César who has started to snore.*) Your old man sleeps like a log.

MARIUS: Sorry, what did you say?

ESCARTEFIGUE: I said César sleeps like a log.

MARIUS: Not surprising really. Up at three every day of the week and behind the bar until nine. That's the busiest time.

ESCARTEFIGUE (*tapping the side of his nose*): While you're all tucked up in bed.

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MARIUS: But I do afternoons and evenings.

ESCARTEFIGUE: When there's not a soul about!

MARIUS (*wiping his hands and coming to sit beside Escartefigue*): And what about you? Are customers rushing you off your feet these days?

ESCARTEFIGUE: About one passenger every two trips.

MARIUS: Nobody needs to take the ferry across the harbour nowadays.

ESCARTEFIGUE: Not since they built the transporter bridge. Before they put up that heap of scrap metal, my boat was always packed to the gunwales. I suppose it's more modern. Nobody gets seasick.

MARIUS: People got seasick on a trip across the harbour!?

ESCARTEFIGUE: Too true.

MARIUS: A one hundred metre crossing?

ESCARTEFIGUE (*indignantly*): One hundred metres! Every one of two hundred and six metres from one side to the other. I should know. Done it twenty-four times a day for the past thirty years.

MARIUS: Thirty years... (*He shakes his head.*) And it doesn't matter to you that others are passing you by?

ESCARTEFIGUE: What others?

MARIUS: The ones that go in and *out* of the port, instead of to and fro across it.

ESCARTEFIGUE: Why should I fret about *them*?

MARIUS: Well, because... because they're *going* somewhere. Don't you ever feel that urge ... (*He stops himself abruptly.*)

ESCARTEFIGUE: And what kind of urge would that be?

MARIUS: Just to put the tiller hard over, and head out to sea.

ESCARTEFIGUE: To sea? You must be mad.

MARIUS: Not me. And I think I've got you figured out.

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ESCARTEFIGUE: And what have you figured out then?

MARIUS: That you have this secret longing to sail out of the harbour.

ESCARTEFIGUE: A secret longing!

MARIUS: Don't think I haven't seen you. When you come in for an aperitif with old Caderousse, just back from Rio de Janeiro, or Captain Phillipeaux from Madagascar, you sit and talk with them for ages. I can see it churning you up inside.

ESCARTEFIGUE: But it gives me great pleasure to see old friends coming back safely – from long voyages.

MARIUS: Nothing more!?

ESCARTEFIGUE: Nothing at all! Listen Marius, I'm pleased as punch to be captain of my own vessel second only to the good Lord. But, as for Madagascar, I can't tell you how little that means to me. Now, speaking patriotically I'm perfectly happy the tricolour flies there, but I can't see a blind bit of benefit to me, personally. But as for *going* there; and in a *boat*!! No thank you!

MARIUS: Incredible.

Piquoiseau stands up suddenly and is seen in all his splendour. He has a little tin megaphone hung from his belt and holds an old maritime telescope.

PIQUOISEAU (*speaking through his megaphone*): Tomorrow morning at oh-nine hours, ship's company on deck in full dress uniform. Pipe the side! Leading-Seaman Piquoiseau. In the name of the president of the Republic, I create you Chevalier of the Légion d'honneur. Stand-at-ease.

ESCARTEFIGUE: You're off your head, Piquoiseau!

PIQUOISEAU (*briefly scrutinising him through his telescope*): Admiral Escartefigue, I'll have you reduced to the ranks. You'll be clapped in irons! (*He turns and marches out the terrace exit yelling through his megaphone.*) Admiral Escartefigue has been demoted! Admiral Escartefigue will walk the plank.

ESCARTEFIGUE: Did he pay for that drink?

MARIUS (*glancing at his sleeping father*): Not exactly ... He hasn't any money anyway. And he's just a harmless old sailor ... Sometimes, you know, he tells me stories about the old times in sailing ships ... so, now and again, I

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treat him to a glass of something ... I wouldn't mention that to ... (*He jerks his thumb at César.*)

Through the terrace entrance appears a skinny ragamuffin. He wears puttees and his baggy trousers are held up by a wide fabric sash wrapped twice round. On his head is a large peaked cap. His face and hands are blackened with filth and smoke. He is the ferry-boat's stoker. He gives a naval salute.

STOKER: People are waiting, Captain.

ESCARTEFIGUE: How many?

STOKER: One – but he's wearing a stiff collar and he has a cane. And on the other quay there must be four or five; waving kind of frantically.

ESCARTEFIGUE: I'll be there in just a moment.

STOKER: Aye-aye, Captain. (*He turns to go.*)

ESCARTEFIGUE: Bring the steam pressure up a bit and give them a couple of toots on the whistle. That'll calm them down.

STOKER (*running off*): Very good, Sir!

ESCARTEFIGUE (*calling out*): And don't open the whistle too wide. (*To Marius.*) Otherwise he can never get it shut again.

MARIUS: Bit on the skinny side, your stoker.

ESCARTEFIGUE: Don't underrate him. He's the best I've ever had.

MARIUS: I'd like to see him in the engine-room of a big steamer.

ESCARTEFIGUE (*taking offence*): On a big boat the stokers are only there to wield a shovel. But him; he just loves being as near the fire as a beefsteak. (*Two blasts on the ferry-boat's whistle.*) There you are; he's calling me. He really can't stand keeping passengers waiting. He's a good lad.

There is another blast on the whistle which doesn't stop.

ESCARTEFIGUE: God dammit! He'll waste all the steam. (*He exits by the terrace at a jog-trot, yelling.*) Imbecile! Idiot! What did I just tell you?

After Escartefigue exits the whistle gives a strangulated sob and stops. Fanny comes into the café from the fish stall and stands looking at Marius.

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FANNY: Yoo-hoo, Marri-*ousse*!

MARIUS: Yoo-hoo, Fa-*nee*!

FANNY: What are you thinking about?

MARIUS: Maybe even about you!

FANNY: Liar!

MARIUS: What makes you think I don't think about you?

FANNY: You only ever think about me when you see me! (*She comes up to the bar grinning.*) Treat me to a coffee, please.

MARIUS: Since the old man's asleep.

He fills two cups and they drink together.

FANNY: You didn't come to the dance last night.

MARIUS: Where was that then?

FANNY: At the Cascade.

MARIUS: Do you go there often?

FANNY: From time to time. There are some really nice people.

MARIUS: Name one!

FANNY: André, Monsieur Bouzique ... and Victor ... As a matter of fact I danced most of the evening with Victor.

MARIUS: Does he dance the same funny way he walks?

FANNY: That's wicked. But why don't you *come* there sometimes?

MARIUS: I can't dance.

FANNY: I could teach you.

MARIUS: No thanks.

FANNY: Where *did* you go, then?

MARIUS: Walking – breathing the sea-air.

FANNY: All on your own?

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MARIUS: I did run into Monsieur Brun.

FANNY: He's back then?

MARIUS: Yesterday morning.

FANNY: Wasn't he up in Paris?

MARIUS: Some sort of training course. He was only a deputy but now he's a full inspector.

FANNY: Do they make lots of money, inspectors?

MARIUS: You bet. He's a *white-collar* worker now. (*As they sip their coffees, we hear a distant ship's siren. It is a long, powerful baritone. Marius enjoys a delicious shiver and savours it for a moment.*) Hear that? She's from Saigon.

FANNY: How can you know that?

MARIUS: That's the *Yara's* siren. (*The siren sound again.*) Calling for the pilot.

As Fanny drains her coffee, César wakes up yawning and pulls the apron off his face just in time to see her. He stretches and stands up.

CÉSAR: Is your mother unwell, Fanny?

FANNY: Why do you ask me that?

CÉSAR: She hasn't been in for her usual aperitif. First time in ten years.

FANNY: I think she went to the dressmaker when she left the fish shop this morning. She's getting herself a new dress.

CÉSAR (*to Marius*): Was it you who offered Fanny a coffee?

MARIUS: Yes.

CÉSAR: Uh-huh.

MARIUS: It's freshly made. Would you like one?

CÉSAR: No thanks.

MARIUS: Why not?

CÉSAR: Because there'll soon be none left for the real customers.

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FANNY (*laughing*): Oh, Monsieur César! You're not going to weep over one cup of coffee, are you?

CÉSAR: It's not the coffee that matters; it's the principle.

MARIUS: What principle is that, then?

CÉSAR: Drinking up the whole shop while I'm asleep.

He walks slowly to the terrace door, gazes out and scratches his head.

MARIUS: If you wanted to insult me then you've succeeded.

CÉSAR: Insult! What insult?

MARIUS: At the age of twenty, if I can't be trusted to offer the odd cup of coffee, what does that make me?

CÉSAR: A dutiful son who must do what his father tells him.

MARIUS: I'm *nearly* twenty-one!!

CÉSAR: So what? I had to wait until I was thirty-two before my father gave me my last kick up the backside. That's what family meant in those days. We gave our elders respect: they gave us love.

MARIUS: With the toe of a boot!

CÉSAR: There was a lot less disobedience and ingratitude, let me tell you!

FANNY: If *my* mother gave me a slap, I don't know *what* I would do.

CÉSAR: What would you do? You'd go off and cry in the corner, that's all. And if your poor father was still around to give you a wallop now and then, it wouldn't do you any harm either. (*Marius and Fanny look at each other and laugh. César grumbles on.*) Just *you* have children then, and see how they muck up your entire life.

MARIUS: So now, I muck up his entire life! (*To César*) I do half the work round here.

CÉSAR: Which half? Just when you're needed you disappear. Pouf!

MARIUS: I spend all day behind the bar.

FANNY: That's true.

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CÉSAR (*to Fanny*): So – yesterday afternoon at five o’clock, when the *Paul Lecat* came in, and the terrace was swamped with thirsty customers – fifty at least, all yelling for the waiter – where was Marius? Disss-ap-peared!

MARIUS (*lying*): I’d gone to Caderousse to see about supplies of grenadine.

CÉSAR: You could have telephoned.

MARIUS: I wanted to stretch my legs.

CÉSAR: And the day before yesterday, in the morning, did your legs need stretching? Any time, and for no reason at all it seems to me, you manage to slope off for a couple of hours. And when you *can* be bothered to be here, you go about things like it was beneath you. You’d think you were some sort of temperance campaigner.

MARIUS: Perhaps I’ve got neurasthenia.

CÉSAR: Listen, don’t think you can put one over on your own father. I’ve heard it all. (*Turning abruptly to Fanny*) And you; you’d be better employed selling your clams than wasting time here. (*Fanny runs out laughing.*) The fact of the matter is you’re just soft and lazy. You’re just like your Uncle Émile. He’d never go out in the sun because he hadn’t the energy to drag his own shadow behind him. You’re a daydreamer; that’s what you are. You were *born* in this bar but, in all those years, you still don’t know your trade. That skinny stoker I hire on Saturdays knows the job better than you.

MARIUS: Oh yes. What can he do better than me?

CÉSAR: Anything! Everything! You don’t even know how to mix an orange and lemon curaçao. You never make two the same.

MARIUS: So what? Customers only ever drink one at a time so they’ve nothing to compare them with.

CÉSAR: That’s what *you* think. What about old man Dhellemmes? That splendid fellow came in here every day and drank a dozen of them. Any why doesn’t he come in here any more? He told me so himself. Your crazy concoctions risked spoiling his palate!

MARIUS: Spoil his palate! An old soak with a throat like a fur-lined funnel.

CÉSAR: There you go. Insulting the customers rather than learning your profession. All right then, for the tenth time, I’ll show you how to make an orange Picon, with lemon and curaçao. (*He goes behind the bar.*) Come over here and watch me. (*Marius comes up to the bar to watch closely. César takes a large glass, a carafe and three bottles. As he speaks, he composes the*

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drink.) First of all you put in one third of curaçao. Just a little third. Right? Next, one third of lemon juice, a slightly bigger third. Got that? Then, a generous third of orange Picon. Look at the colour. That's exactly how it should look. And finally, a *large* third of water. And there it is!

MARIUS: That makes four thirds.

CÉSAR: Exactly. I just hope that this time you've got the idea. (*He takes a swig of the drink.*)

MARIUS: In a glass, there are only *three* thirds.

CÉSAR: Don't tell me my own business. It depends on the size of the thirds.

MARIUS: Oh no it doesn't. There are only three thirds in anything.

CÉSAR: Then just you tell me, Master Clever Clogs, how I just put four of them in this glass?

Marius shrugs. César takes another hearty swig but suddenly remembers something else.

CÉSAR: And another thing! All those last drops! There's always one hanging from the neck of the bottle. You've never yet got the knack of hanging on to it. It isn't black magic. (*He takes the bottle of curaçao in one hand and pulls the cork with the other. He pours some into the glass, turning the bottle as he does so.*) As you pour, you turn the bottle just enough to keep the drop moving and then, watch now, with the cork, you catch the drop and push it back into the bottle. (*He does what he has described with the flourish of a master barman.*) And if you don't do it, the drop runs down the bottle onto the label – which is why all these bottles are easier to pick up than to put down. (*He makes a pantomime of not being able to get his right hand off the bottle of curaçao. Marius laughs at the show. Fanny re-enters, perches on her packing case and laughs too.*)

CÉSAR: You may well laugh.

He goes towards the terrace door, holding the bottle by the neck in his left hand. At this moment, in comes Panisse, followed by Monsieur Brun. Panisse is grey-haired and well moustached, of average height and with the beginnings of a pot belly. He is wearing espadrilles, in shirt sleeves and smoking a pipe. M. Brun, younger, wears a pince-nez and a very new, stiff and tall white collar. On his head he sports a panama and he wears a black alpaca frock coat. César gives them a mock bow.

CÉSAR: And here comes *master* Panisse, the master sail-maker of Marseilles.

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PANISSE: Good day to you, César, the port's master poisoner. (*He shakes hands with César and reacts with surprise at its stickiness.*) Oh! ...

CÉSAR (*showing him the bottle and pointing at the label*): It's an invention of my talented son, Marius. It's for catching flies – on the *outside*! Good morning, Monsieur Brun. They've made you an inspector then?

BRUN: It's official, dear friend. It's official.

CÉSAR: So what'll it be? A couple of coffees?

BRUN: Not for me, thank you. I've come to have a plateful of ...

FANNY: My special selection?

BRUN: Exactly that.

FANNY: I'll make you one of the very best.

BRUN: Half mussels; half clams.

PANISSE: And the very same for me, if you please.

FANNY: And two lovely sea-urchins, plumb in the centre, to give it a touch of style.

CÉSAR: A bottle of a light white wine to wash them down?

BRUN: If it's well chilled.

CÉSAR: Chilled? Leave that to me. You'll think it came from vineyards at the North Pole. (*While he uncorks the bottle, Brun and Panisse take their seats at the table. César comes over to pour the wine.*) So, Monsieur Brun; this Paris; is there anything there worth going to see?

BRUN: Oh yes! It's really impressive.

PANISSE: You know what? He went up the Eiffel Tower. Fancy that!

CÉSAR: Yes, but my impression is it's only half the size of our new transporter bridge.

BRUN (*laughing*): It's at least *ten* times taller.

PANISSE: You surely haven't measured it. How can you be so sure?

CÉSAR: All right; it might be a little bit taller but it doesn't have the width!

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Fanny brings in the plates. Brun carefully takes out a large white handkerchief and tucks it into his large white collar.

PANISSE: Thank you, my dear.

A woman's voice calls from beyond the stall exit, asking for service.

FANNY: Coming, coming! (*She exits.*)

CÉSAR: Did you have a good look round?

BRUN: I certainly did. Every evening, after the lectures, I went for a stroll along the boulevards.

CÉSAR: So, you ran into Landolfi then?

BRUN: Who's Landolfi?

CÉSAR: An old friend ...

PANISSE: He used to have a little tailoring shop on the quay ...

CÉSAR: Then he went and married a Parisian, and she dragged him off up there. Tall, fair-haired, a bit on the skinny side. Had a drooping eyelid; you *must* have noticed him.

BRUN: Sorry César, I never saw Landolfi.

PANISSE (*incredulous*): Although you went out for a stroll every evening?

BRUN: Without fail.

CÉSAR: That's it then. He must be dead.

PANISSE: How sad.

CÉSAR: Not surprising, really ... what with the climate up there and his poor health.

BRUN: Come on! Paris is a huge place. It's not like round here.

CÉSAR: Oh, it's huge. That's what they all say ... huge.

PANISSE: What – double the size of Marseilles?

BRUN: Twenty or thirty times would be more like it, I'd say.

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César and Panisse burst into mocking laughter.

CÉSAR: Thirty times Marseilles. And they say *we* tend to exaggerate! And you an inspector! What kind of nonsense is that? It's blindingly obvious that you come from Lyons, not Marseilles. (*The dockyard siren sounds*) Damn, damn, damn: twelve-thirty already!

He exits via the 'kitchen', almost running.

PANISSE: What's up with him?

MARIUS: Off to put on his glad rags. It's Monday, today.

BRUN: And what's so special about Mondays?

MARIUS (*conspiratorially*): On Mondays at twelve-thirty, my old man pops out to see his girl friend.

PANISSE: An Italian. A *real* woman!

He accompanies this account with hand movements at chest height.

MARIUS: No, everything's changed. He's found a Dutch woman, even bigger. Seems she goes to a deal of trouble; preparing tasty little treats for him. They have little picnics like real lovebirds.

BRUN: Charming.

MARIUS: But listen, don't give the game away. He thinks no one has any idea. Every time he goes out, he comes out with a whole raft of reasons and explanations. You'll see.

BRUN: It's not a crime for a widower to have a lady-friend.

PANISSE (*with a passionate sigh*): Ah, a widower! I beg you not to use that word in my hearing.

BRUN: Panisse! What's happened?

PANISSE (*pointing to a black crêpe diamond on his sleeve*): You haven't heard of my misfortune then.

BRUN: You don't mean? Not Madame Panisse?

PANISSE: It'll be three months tomorrow. My poor dear Felicity! She was always so cheerful and full of life.

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BRUN: My dear friend, I'm so sorry. (*Pause.*) There was nothing in the Paris papers.

PANISSE: It seems she had some sort of heart problem ... One of these things that just hits you suddenly, out of the blue ... On Friday evening, there she was tucking into a delicious aioli, with a big plate of snails and then a lovely piece of roast cod. Then on the Saturday, before she'd even had lunch, she breathed her last.

BRUN: So quickly! What a catastrophe!

PANISSE: Indeed. You can say what you like but there *are* times when the good Lord doesn't seem as kind as you'd expect. She was such a lovely woman, devout too, and she kept my seamstresses working like a team ... She was strict but always laughing and cheerful ... Always teasing and playing games with me ... In the mornings, when she was still in her nightdress, I loved to chase her round and round the dining room table. I'd give her little smacks and nips, but nicely, just to make her laugh, and then, to get her own back, (*sob*) she would, (*sob*) she would tickle me. (*He sobs for a moment or two into his handkerchief.*)

BRUN: Don't torment yourself with too many memories, dear friend. It will make you ill.

PANISSE: Maybe so: but when you know it can never happen again! What good does it do me now to be an adjudicator on the tribunal of the Chamber of Commerce? And that little hedge-trimmer I bought her for the beach house – who's going to use it now? (*He gives way to his sobs again.*)

BRUN: My poor dear fellow; what a blow! But, somehow, you must get a grip on things; find a reason for living.

PANISSE: And if I can't, what then?

BRUN: They say time is the great healer.

PANISSE: Time! Time! The more time passes, the deeper I sink into the pit. I cry all through the night sometimes. How much time does anyone need?

BRUN (*shaking his head sadly*): What else can one do?

PANISSE: Well that's obvious, isn't it?

BRUN: Steady on, Pannis.

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PANISSE: It's easy to say 'steady on' but you know very well there's only one solution. I think about nothing else. When you start making mistakes in customers' bills, or losing them altogether, what's the point in hesitating? I've no children. I'm an orphan – normal enough at my age, I suppose – so, where's the harm to anyone else.

BRUN (*alarmed; he puts an arm on Panisse's shoulder*): For pity's sake! Don't joke about such a serious matter. Give it more time. You'll see.

PANISSE: No, *no*, NO! (*He pauses as if coming to a final and terrible decision.*) Taking everything into account, what could be simpler? The final solution! (*Brun gasps and puts his hand to his mouth.*) I must ... yes ... no further dithering. Straight away! I must marry again.

BRUN (*with a gasp of relief*): You want to remarry?

PANISSE: As soon as possible! It's just too painful to remain single. If Felicity is dead then she's dead! No amount of wasting away on my part is going to bring her back.

BRUN: Perfectly true.

PANISSE: There will be some who'll say I haven't waited long enough, but I have a clear conscience ... After all, in only three months, I've wept for her more than some do in three years.

BRUN: How very sad.

PANISSE: Yes, well, there you are then. Each one of us has his cross to bear. (*He clinks glass with Brun and cheers up at once.*) Your very good health! Well then, what do think?

BRUN (*gently mocking*): It wouldn't surprise me to hear you'd already selected your new wife.

PANISSE: It's true; I have; and I'll be making my proposal one day soon, just as soon as the opportunity presents itself.

BRUN: Might one inquire ... ?

PANISSE: That, I won't tell you, not yet. But I will invite you to the wedding.

BRUN: I'll hold you to that.

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PANISSE: I'll have limousines for all the guests. Naturally I'm planning to invite my colleagues on the Industrial Tribunal, and all my customers ... and, of course, some close friends ... Only one person will be missing, and how I'll miss *her*. My poor dear Felicity! How she would have loved the celebration dinner! But there you are: the good Lord decided otherwise.

An off-stage cry is heard from beyond the terrace exit.

VOICE (*off-stage*): Panisse!

PANISSE (*without looking round*): What now!?

VOICE (*off-stage*): The Second mate of the *Malaisie* is in the store.

PANISSE: Aha! This could be a big order. They were in only yesterday inquiring about a complete set of sails.

BRUN: That's the three-master going off on some sort of scientific expedition? When does she sail?

PANISSE: In about a month; around the end of July, they say.

BRUN: Funny idea; a scientific expedition in a sailing ship!

MARIUS: Ah, but you see they're going to be measuring winds and currents from the Suez Canal all the way to the South Seas. And they do have an auxiliary engine in case of any emergency.

PANISSE: Who told you all that, then?

MARIUS: The ship's Bosun. He was taking a drink out on the terrace.

VOICE (*still off-stage*): Panisse! Are you coming or not?

PANISSE (*going and yelling out of the door*): Give a man a chance. You want me to have a heart attack, or something? (*He comes back to the table and, still standing, sinks the last dregs of his glass and shrugs.*) When one doesn't have a private income, what choice does one have? It's nothing but the daily grind for folk like me.

He strolls slowly out of the terrace exit.

MARIUS: Did I hear Panisse tell you he was going to remarry?

BRUN: You did; and for my money it does seem a bit soon.

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MARIUS: A widower for three months, but a cuckold for twenty years.
Who's the lucky lady?

BRUN: That's still a secret.

MARIUS: Not *much* of a secret, I'd say. It's pretty obvious he's got his eye on Honorine.

BRUN: Now *she's* not a bad looking woman.

Marius hears the return of César and dodges back to the bar.

MARIUS: Here he comes now. You watch.

Marius taps the side of his nose conspiratorially and picks up his newspaper. Brun acknowledges the signal and lifts his own paper. César enters from the kitchen, dressed like a dandy. He strolls to the terrace door and looks out, before turning to address no one in particular.

CÉSAR: I think I might just take a stroll.

MARIUS: Perfect weather.

CÉSAR: I might just walk into town; have a look around; here and there; round and about ...

MARIUS: Fine.

CÉSAR: There's the odd thing I might pick up, nothing special. Perhaps I'll walk as far as the Café Moustégui ... have some fish soup and maybe a beefsteak with a few frites ... just for the pleasure of it ... so, that's it then, I'm going out.

He turns to the door to make good his escape.

BRUN: There's no need to give us all these explanations, old chap.

CÉSAR: Who's giving explanations? It'd be a sad day if, at my age, I had to give the whole bar an explanation when the mood comes over me to take a stroll. I may have told you I was going to have fish soup and beefsteak at the Café Mostégui but that wasn't an explanation. That was simply information.

BRUN: Thanks for the information then ... If anyone asks for you, we'll send them up to the Café Mostégui?

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CÉSAR: No, not at all. No one is to come looking for me. I'm simply telling you – no, never mind what I'm telling you. If I want to go for a stroll I don't need to ask permission from a Lyonnais.

BRUN: No one has said otherwise!

CÉSAR: It's like the Inquisition. If I was ninety-nine and likely to wander off and get lost, I could understand people keeping an eye on me. But, dammit, I still have my head screwed on. I'm not going to topple into the harbour, am I?

MARIUS: Dad! No one suggested that. You're off for a stroll. What could be more natural?

CÉSAR: Naturally, I am going out for a stroll, but there's always someone who has to poke his nose into my business. It's like being under suspicion. Well, I won't be suspected in my own bar; not by a Lyonnais! *(There is a pause in hostilities. César adjusts his hat in the mirror. Brun goes back behind his paper. Then César comes over to Brun.)* Right then. Au revoir, Monsieur Brun. *(They shake hands.)*

BRUN: Au revoir, dear friend – and *bon appetit*.

CÉSAR: Thank you.

BRUN: Is she a good cook?

CÉSAR: Who are you talking about – she?

BRUN: Madame Mostégui.

CÉSAR: He's a widower like me. Does the cooking himself. Fine. *(As he reaches the terrace door, he turns and addresses Marius.)* I'll be back around six. If the van comes from Picon, get a dozen bottles. That'll be two hundred and forty francs.

MARIUS *(not entirely listening)*: Okay-dokay.

CÉSAR: Did you hear what I said? Twelve bottles; 240 francs. Will you remember?

MARIUS: Come on, papa. I'm not an idiot. You don't have to say everything twenty times. If the Picon van comes, I'll get 240 bottles, right?

CÉSAR: 240 bottles! For the love of God. A dozen bottles. If Picon's van comes take a dozen bottles. No, don't do anything. I'll telephone them. What

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a cross I have to bear. When they put you together, there were some important parts missing; that's all I have to say.

He exits, clearly manifesting his exasperation.

BRUN: A bit on the sharpish side today.

MARIUS: He's all right really but he flies of the handle when it suits him.

There is a quiet moment in the bar. We hear distant ship's sirens and first Marius and then Brun swat at a mosquito heard buzzing.

BRUN: Well now, I need to earn my keep. The Saigon steamer will be unloading within the hour. I need to get down there.

MARIUS: Yes, I heard her siren a while back. *(A little stiffly, Brun tries to rise to his feet but has to sit back down again.)* Monsieur Brun! You and Panisse are a pair, having a struggle to stand up. Are you unwell?

BRUN: You wouldn't expect that of a Lyonnais, now would you? I blame the climate down here, but really it's because I spend so long sitting down.

MARIUS: Here or anywhere, there's nothing as tiring as boring work.

BRUN: How very true. *(This time he makes it onto his feet.)* Right then, until tonight.

MARIUS: Until tonight. Go carefully.

Before Brun can exit, Honorine appears at the terrace entrance. She is a well-built matron of forty-five. She is wearing a new dress in striking colours and a pair of very large earrings. Fanny enters from her stall and comes forward to admire the dress.

HONORINE: Bonjour, Monsieur Brun.

BRUN: Bonjour, Madame Honorine. *(He exits.)*

HONORINE *(to Fanny)*: What do you think then?

FANNY: It really suits you.

HONORINE: This time she's set the sleeves in properly.

Honorine goes over to the bar, followed by Fanny.

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FANNY: I wonder if the waist is a little high.

HONORINE: No, no, that's what I asked for. I like the way it drapes so freely. My usual aperitif, if you please, Marius. (*Marius very carefully makes up an orange and lemon curaçao. Honorine addresses Fanny.*) Have you sold much this morning?

FANNY: Only about 80 francs worth.

HONORINE: That's because you're in here chatting rather than standing out there beside the dipslay!

FANNY: Mum, it's not a dipslay!

HONORINE: What is it then, Miss Smarty-Pants?

FANNY: It's pronounced dis-PLAY.

HONORINE: I don't know what life's coming to. Trying to teach your mother French? Let's have your account book.

Marius puts the drink on the bar in front of her. Fanny hands her a grubby little notebook. Honorine takes another out of her corsage. A stub of pencil is attached to it by a frayed string.

FANNY: Are you going to be here for a moment?

HONORINE: I suppose so.

FANNY: Then keep an eye on things, please. I'm just slipping over to the house.

Fanny exits and Honorine immerses herself in difficult arithmetic. Looking shifty, Piquoiseau appears at the terrace door. He looks to right and left, and takes a further step.

PIQUOISEAU: Marius!

Marius goes over to him. Honorine makes an exasperated sound and scribbles in her notebook.

PIQUOISEAU: Look! (*He brings out a letter and hands it to Marius who looks to see if Honorine has noticed this.*) Shall I tell you what he said to me?

MARIUS (*stage whisper*): Shush! Go out and round the back and wait outside my window. I'll talk to you there. Quick!

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Piquoiseau winks and taps the side of his nose then scuttles out. Marius tucks the letter into his pocket, straightens up, pulls down his waistcoat and, very obviously putting on a smile, goes over to Honorine and gives a polite cough. Honorine is not pleased to be interrupted again, right in the middle of 'carrying three'.

HONORINE: Now what?

MARIUS: It's just ... Honorine, are you going to be here for a moment?

HONORINE: You too!

MARIUS: I just need to go to my room for a moment. If anyone comes, give me a call. *(He goes quickly to his bedroom door and exits, leaving it slightly ajar.)*

HONORINE *(patting her hair and smoothing her dress)*: In sole charge of a fish shop, a sea-food dis-PLAY and a bar. And still only just over thirty! *(She struggles with her accounts.)* Sixty-eight and nine, give or take seventy-nine, and eight makes eighty-six and six more is ninety, or thereabouts.

Enter Panisse from the terrace.

PANISSE: Bonjour, Honorine. How's business?

HONORINE: Much as usual. About seven kilos of mullet, some dog-fish, a few bream and a couple of skate to Mostégui. Ninety and five makes ninety-five, or so they said in school.

PANISSE *(making small talk)*: I suppose the mistral kept everyone indoors this morning. But tomorrow, everyone will want fish.

HONORINE: Mullet is always good after the mistral.

She works on silently with her accounts.

PANISSE: I was just wondering if you'd be coming out to the beach house this Sunday.

HONORINE: The beach house? Well now; you know that would make twice in a fortnight!

PANISSE: If you wouldn't enjoy it, that's twice too often. But if you find it pleasant then it isn't often enough.

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HONORINE: I certainly enjoy it. The sea air, a pleasant dinner and very good wine. But that sort of thing gets people talking.

PANISSE: You know very well that whatever one does these days, people talk.

HONORINE (*becoming serious*): Panisse, let's be frank. You've been very gallant this little while and that's all very nice. But if you're not serious it might be as well to call a halt right now.

PANISSE: What do you mean – serious?

HONORINE: In my family, a woman's honour is sacrosanct ... with the exception of my poor sister Zoë, who felt she had to give it away every so often. Apart from her there isn't a single woman in my family that anyone could point a finger at. So! If we're not talking about marriage, you'd better say so now.

PANISSE: Honorine! This is all about marriage. It's always been my idea that ...

HONORINE (*going coy*): Well that makes things rather different.

PANISSE: If you come to the beach house on Sunday, well be in just the right mood to discuss all the details.

HONORINE: Yes, indeed. Sunday, then! Fanny's going to spend the day with Claudine in Aix and she won't be back until the evening. I probably won't even mention it to her.

PANISSE: Fanny's not coming with you!?

HONORINE: We can have our cosy little chat.

PANISSE: I suppose we can but, all the same, couldn't you bring her along too?

HONORINE: The truth is, well, I think I'd feel a bit embarrassed with her there.

PANISSE: Embarrassed? What about?

HONORINE: Just like a man! You sly devil! Who would have thought that, one day, you would be carrying me off to your beach house, all on my own ...

PANISSE: Hold on now, Honorine. I don't think we're quite in tune.

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HONORINE: If we need to sort out the details, I'm sure that won't take long. There's really only one thing to discuss and that's compatibility; complete compatibility between a man and a woman.

PANISSE: Absolutely right! No doubt at all. But it might just be there's a slight misapprehension creeping in. Are you, by any chance, under the impression it's *you* I want to marry?

HONORINE: What do you mean *impression*? Haven't you just told me so?

PANISSE: But NO! I haven't told you that at all! You're not the only person in your family.

HONORINE: You're not ... you can't be serious? (*She points dramatically towards the sea-food stall.*)

PANISSE: Who else?

HONORINE: Pannis, you're pulling my leg.

PANISSE: Oh dear, Honorine. You didn't think; well I mean, at your age ...

HONORINE: At *my* age? I'll have you know there are more attractive men than you who've been trailing their coats. My age? Coming from an old clown like you, with badly fitting false teeth! You can't have looked at yourself in the mirror lately. If my spider crabs weren't a bit fresher, I'd never sell a single one.

PANISSE: This isn't about spider crabs. We're talking about your daughter.

HONORINE: Fanny! How could you imagine ...? You couldn't even keep a grip on your first wife.

PANISSE: Just what are you getting at?

HONORINE: If they hoisted one of your sails between your enormous horns, you'd need a deep keel to keep you from capsizing.

PANISSE (*losing his temper finally*): You talk so much about others – perhaps you'd like to tell the world what you get up to in old Setton's warehouse with that goat Nestor, the principal trombone from the opera? (*He illustrates this with a coarse gesture of a trombone slide reciprocating.*)

HONORINE: How dare you!? Can't a poor, lonely widow talk to a friendly trombonist if she chooses to? My husband has been dead for two years now – and for the record, they don't allow cuckolds into Heaven!

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She crosses herself.

PANISSE: True – but that’s only because they can’t get halos on over their horns.

HONORINE: My daughter ... Fanny ... my own daughter.

PANISSE (*after a pause*): By the way, I was planning to settle a hundred thousand francs on her.

HONORINE (*starting off with a scornful laugh and gesture*): A hundred thousand francs! (*Then her voice goes an octave lower as she registers the size of the sum.*) A hundred thousand francs. (*Finally, asking, somewhat anxiously now, for reconfirmation.*) A hundred thousand francs?

PANISSE: A modest dowry.

HONORINE: Come on now, Panisse. You’re joking, aren’t you?

PANISSE (*conducting her to a seat at the table*): Honorine, dear friend, come and sit here. If you agree to my marrying your daughter, I’ll give her a dowry of a hundred thousand francs, and a pension of four hundred francs a month for her mother.

HONORINE: Ah no, that’s not my style at all; to sponge off my daughter. Never! I don’t want ANYTHING. (*Pause.*) However, I would want to come and live with you.

PANISSE (*with a shrug*): I’m sure it can be arranged but, in any case, she’d have a housemaid. And, of course, I’d leave everything to her in my will.

There is a pause. Honorine reflects and Panisse waits, with growing confidence.

HONORINE: Panisse, she’ll never agree to it.

PANISSE: But if she did, would *you* agree?

HONORINE: Well, naturally, I would never stop her doing what she really wanted. But she won’t say yes. I’m sure of it.

PANISSE: I’ve already spoken to her.

HONORINE: When?

PANISSE: Last Sunday, at the beach house, while you were making the bouillabaisse.

HONORINE (*taken aback*): And what did she say?

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PANISSE: That I should ask her mother. That sounded like acceptance to me.

HONORINE: The little madam! She's certainly kept *me* in the dark. Hold on. Had you already mentioned the hundred thousand francs?

PANISSE: No, not at all. (*Pause.*) It was she who actually brought up the subject of a dowry.

HONORINE (*with appreciation*): She's her mother's daughter.

PANISSE: And I'm ready to sign the papers; just as soon as you both say yes.

HONORINE: Well now, that's all very well, but she's a good thirty years younger than you.

PANISSE: That's hardly my fault. Honorine, she'll have everything a woman could want – money, clothes, jewellery.

HONORINE (*shaking her head*): You're a lovely man, Panisse, but I'm very much afraid she may lack the one thing that really matters to a young woman.

PANISSE: And what might that be?

HONORINE: You know perfectly well.

PANISSE (*preening his moustache*): Get along with you, Honorine. Don't talk about things you cannot know about!

HONORINE: I do know there's nothing more beautiful than love itself.

PANISSE: How right you are.

HONORINE: But it works best when you're eighteen years old.

PANISSE: That's perfect then because *Fanny* is eighteen.

HONORINE: But you're all of fifty!

PANISSE (*landing his killer punch*): True – but I also have six hundred thousand francs in the bank.

HONORINE: Panisse, a girl's nightdress doesn't have pockets. I'm thinking about *you*. There's no doubt it would be a fine arrangement for my daughter ... But if you can't 'perform' properly, I could see you getting another pair of horns – this time big enough to go through the bedroom ceiling.

PANISSE: All that again! All I'm asking from you is to say yes and you can leave the rest to me. That department's my responsibility, Honorine.

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HONORINE: All right then. I'll talk to her. But I can't give you an answer for a few days.

PANISSE: Excellent! In a few days then! I'll be waiting.

HONORINE: Only, first of all, if you don't mind, I'd like to look at your books, just to see if your business is on a firm footing. It's not curiosity, you understand. Just maternal instinct.

PANISSE: Come round tomorrow morning. I'll explain everything to you.

HONORINE: Tomorrow, or the day after, I'm not in a rush. (*She goes towards the stall exit and looks out.*) On second thoughts, here's Fanny coming back. We could go round there straight away I you like.

PANISSE: If you would like to; then certainly.

HONORINE (*calling*): Marius!

MARIUS (*offstage from the bedroom*): Hello!

HONORINE (*calling*): I have to go now.

MARIUS (*offstage*): Coming.

PANISSE (*stage whisper*): Just a thought, Honorine. You don't think maybe there's anything at all between Fanny and Marius?

HONORINE: Well, of course there is, and it's only natural.

PANISSE: What do you mean by that?

HONORINE: I mean that every Saturday night, in my husband's beach house, they used to sleep together.

PANISSE: Dear God! What are you telling me?

HONORINE: I'm telling you that, in those days, there was only one cradle.

PANISSE: Oh my goodness. You had me really worried there.

HONORINE: Right then, let's get going ... son-in-law!

PANISSE: After *you* ... mother-in-law!

They go out by the terrace door, arm-in-arm and Marius, entering from the bedroom, sees this and smiles. Street cries come from the quay outside. Fanny appears at the stall entrance. She is attractively dressed. She comes over to Marius who looks her over from head to toe.

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FANNY: And just who do you think you're looking at?

MARIUS: That's a pretty dress you're wearing!

FANNY: My mother made this for me. (*She pauses and then grins.*) I'd like to show you what's underneath but you'd run a mile, if I know you.

MARIUS: So you say!

FANNY: I do say, Marius. If a girl so much as looks at you, you run away.

MARIUS: Rubbish. You're a real tease, Fanny!

FANNY: And you're such a scaredy-cat, Marius. I think if a girl were ever to kiss you, you'd faint clean away.

MARIUS: I didn't faint when *you* kissed me, did I?

FANNY: When did I ever kiss you?

MARIUS: You did!

FANNY: When?

MARIUS: One evening, down at the harbour. We were playing hide-and-seek. I was fourteen and you; well you were eleven or twelve.

FANNY: I really don't remember.

MARIUS: We were just behind the sacks of semolina and all of a sudden you kissed me – right here. (*He touches his forehead.*)

FANNY: I never did!

MARIUS: And not just the once. Another day, out on the new quay ... Don't tell me you've forgotten?

FANNY: Well, part of the fun of hide-and-seek is the chance to give boys the odd kiss.

MARIUS: So you've kissed lots of others then?

FANNY: Perhaps ... It's so long ago.

MARIUS: Who?

FANNY: Let me think now. There was Victor, Mathieu, Louis ... all the ones in our gang.

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MARIUS: Well, well!

FANNY: And what about you? Didn't you kiss the other girls?

MARIUS: I don't remember.

FANNY: Well I remember you cuddled Césarine, and she gave you her head-lice.

MARIUS: Now I remember you slapped me once because I'd been hiding with her in the cellar.

FANNY: Nonsense! I couldn't care less if you choose to hide in the cellar with a tramp like that. What's that to me? And anyway, I'd be grateful if you wouldn't talk such rubbish. Especially now.

MARIUS: What do you mean *now*?

FANNY: Because.

MARIUS: What's changed then?

FANNY: Things.

MARIUS: What sort of things?

FANNY: If you'll promise not to breathe a word.

MARIUS: You know you can trust *me*.

FANNY: People say that and then blab things all round the town.

MARIUS: Don't tell me then. I'm not forcing you.

FANNY (*after a pause*): I think I'm going to get married.

MARIUS: You? Who to?

FANNY: Nobody else knows this yet but I'm going to tell you because you can maybe give me a bit of advice.

MARIUS: Right then. Who is he?

FANNY: It's not that I'm unhappy you know. And the shell-fish stall, well, I can't complain. But I'm eighteen now and that's the best time for it. I'll never be more attractive than now ... So, it seems to me, if the chance comes along it would be silly to let it slip.

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MARIUS: So ... Are you saying the chance has come along then? (*Fanny nods silently.*) Who?

FANNY: He's going to ask my mother.

MARIUS: *Who?*

FANNY: I really ought not to be telling you.

MARIUS: Then just keep it to yourself.

FANNY: You'll know soon enough, I suppose.

MARIUS: I don't need telling: it's little Victor. The whole world's known that for ages.

FANNY: Is that what you think?

MARIUS: Everyone's seen him, coming around to chat to you every evening, pretending he wants to eat shell-fish. The amount he eats, it's a wonder he doesn't come out in a rash.

FANNY: And what does that prove?

MARIUS: That he's a bit of a head case. And if you were reckoning on his getting the butcher's shop, his old man's still in the prime of life!

FANNY: Well I'm not waiting on anyone to drop dead; and I don't give a fig for Victor, so there!

MARIUS: Fine. So who is it?

FANNY: Panisse.

MARIUS (*incredulous*): Panisse! Old man Panisse?

FANNY (*nodding*): *Monsieur* Panisse. I thought I saw it coming ... then, last Sunday, he took us out to his beach house, me and Mum.

MARIUS: Don't be daft. It's your mother – that would make a bit more sense.

FANNY: Maybe, but while she was cooking the bouillabaisse, he and I went for a walk into the wood and, all of a sudden, he took his hat off, and went down on one knee.

MARIUS: Panisse? I wish I'd seen that! Did you have to help him up again?

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FANNY: He said he loved me and that I was the prettiest girl in the whole of Marseilles. And then he tried to kiss me.

MARIUS: *He* tried to kiss you? So then what?

FANNY: Then I gave him a slap – because that was the surest way to get him to ask my mother if he could marry me. So there it is.

MARIUS: You're joking?

FANNY: You don't believe me?

MARIUS: No, I *don't* believe you.

FANNY: Why not?

MARIUS: Because it's blindingly obvious it's your mother he's after. I saw her in her new dress and, just a few moments ago, I saw how she was speaking to him.

FANNY (*with a shrug*): Fine.

MARIUS: You'll never get me to believe for one moment that you'd ever *think* of marrying Panisse.

FANNY: So you don't want to give me the benefit of your advice.

MARIUS: My advice is when you want to wind me up you think of a story a little less daft than that one.

FANNY: Fine!

MARIUS: A man like that! With creases round his eyes like a pair of bellows!

FANNY: Ssh! Here he is!

Panisse appears in the terrace doorway, looking full of beans.

PANISSE (*with elaborate courtesy*): Ah, there you are my dear. Enjoying a well-earned break?

FANNY (*nods and preens herself*): Before the customers start arriving.

PANISSE: How sensible. (*He strikes a pose and recites a poem.*) "The sun is the king throughout the day,/ But keep your fair young cheeks away,/ For with his truly savage ray,/ As he burns harder yet and harder,/ He'll surely scorch your maiden's ardour." (*Fanny claps in appreciation.*) It's a gift, really, but I

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can always string a few lines of verse together, and the ladies are very partial to it.

FANNY: Did you make it up yourself?

PANISSE: I'd say yes if I wasn't certain you'd spot it on the big jar of sun cream in the chemist's window at the corner of the Rue Victor-Hugo. Anyway, the useful thing about a poem is you can drop it into a conversation at just the right moment. A couple of anisettes please, Marius!

FANNY: Is one of these for me?

PANISSE: Who else would it be for? Let's sit over there. (*He steers her to the chaise-longue and speaks to her quietly while Marius gets the glasses and bottles for the drinks.*) Your mother and I have spoken and I think it looks like we are all in agreement; if you will say yes.

FANNY: I did ask you for a few days, Monsieur Panisse.

PANISSE: No bad thing to keep a suitor waiting for his answer. Your "yes" will sound all the sweeter.

Marius comes over and places two glasses in saucers on the low table.

FANNY (*speaking louder to make sure Marius hears her*): Tell me, Panisse, how many workers do you have working in your sail loft?

PANISSE: Twenty-three, but I'm looking for three more now. I've just clinched a big order for the *Malaisie*, that big three-master that's going off to the South Seas. I'm going on board this afternoon to check the measurements. (*To Marius*) Hey Marius, let's have full glasses.

MARIUS: They *are* full!

FANNY: You fibber!

PANISSE: You charge two francs twenty-five centimes for that and we're short by at least the centimes.

MARIUS: All right, all right.

He tops up the glasses and both run over into the saucers.

PANISSE: Steady on. Now you're spilling it.

FANNY: I think he's a bit tired today.

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Marius says nothing. He corks the bottle and goes back to the bar. During the conversation that follows, Panisse holds his glass in one hand and the saucer in the other, drinking noisily from the saucer first.

PANISSE: A certain lack of manners in that young man. (*He takes a cigarette from his gold case then searches his pockets.*) Dammit! I've no matches.

FANNY: Just a moment.

She fetches the box on its special stand from the square table and strikes one of the matches herself before holding it to his cigarette. Marius, who has not missed a word, watches all of this with increasing anxiety.

PANISSE: How very kind of you, my dear. A bright match in a beautiful hand.

FANNY: I don't think I have nice hands. All that shell fish.

PANISSE: They are delicate little hands. (*He takes her hand and studies it.*) Finely shaped and delightfully warm ... And that's a very nice ring.

FANNY: You like it?

PANISSE: It seems to suit you. Is it gold?

FANNY: I don't think so. I got it in a lucky-dip.

PANISSE: You've never had a gold ring, then? But that's a gold necklace you're wearing?

FANNY: My necklace; yes, it is. Aunt Zoë gave it me for my first communion.

PANISSE: Very pretty... (*He takes hold of the necklace with the tips of his fingers and comes closer to Fanny on the pretext of having a closer look at it.*) Really very pretty ... And is that a medallion attached to it? (*He lightly brushes her skin to draw the medallion up from between her breasts.*)

FANNY (*moving away a fraction*): Let me get it out for you to see.

Panisse takes hold of the medallion and lowers his head to read the inscription.

PANISSE: What's that written on it?

FANNY: That's my date of birth.

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Panisse leans closer and closer, breathing heavily. Marius cannot take this any longer and coughs loudly.

MARIUS: Hum! Ahem! (*Panisse is miles away, lost to other considerations. Marius finally cracks.*) Fanny! Your mother's calling!

FANNY: I didn't hear her. You must be dreaming.

Panisse raises his head, somewhat embarrassed.

MARIUS: I tell you, your mother called. Three times!

PANISSE: If your mother needs you then she knows where to find you. (*Marius says no more and busies himself with unnecessary rearrangement of bottles and glasses. Panisse turns to Fanny.*) Let's talk seriously for a moment, my dear. Your mother and I ... we've talked figures ... we went round to the workshop and, well, you see ...

Panisse glances towards Marius, sees him listening, and lowers his voice so we can no longer hear. He and Fanny look at each other, smiling, their heads moving closer together. From time to time she looks at Marius to see what effect all this is having. Marius works his way towards the couple, vigorously wiping the neighbouring table then coming to clear theirs and wipe it. They stop talking.

MARIUS (*aggressively*): Is it me that's stopping you talking?

PANISSE: No.

MARIUS: But you were whispering and you stopped when I came over.

FANNY: We were talking about personal matters

MARIUS: Oh yes? I think when folk don't want the world to hear it's because they're saying something smutty.

FANNY: Smutty! Now you're being rude!

PANISSE: Marius! Just remember who you're talking to.

MARIUS: I'm speaking to the pair of you and I'm telling you it really pains me to see you there.

PANISSE: Then simply look away, young fellow.

MARIUS: And don't give me funny looks.

PANISSE: I'm giving you a funny look?

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FANNY: You're going soft in the head, Marius.

PANISSE: I think you've gone mad.

MARIUS: Better take care then. Some madmen are dangerous and I know one whose hand is just itching to give you a wallop.

FANNY: Marius!

PANISSE: Give *me* a wallop! (*Shaking his head sadly*) My poor little man!

MARIUS: Get up off that chaise-longue and take a step forward, then. That's if you're a real man.

PANISSE: Real man? I think, little boy, if I squeezed your nose it would dribble milk.

Fanny busts out laughing.

MARIUS (*sticking his nose forward*): Right. There's my nose. I bet you're afraid even to touch it.

Marius leans menacingly and shoves his nose in Panisse's face.

PANISSE (*in the calm before the storm*): Marius, take care now. I don't think you realise the situation.

MARIUS: Make me realise, then. It's the perfect moment. You cretin!

PANISSE (*standing up suddenly so that Marius steps quickly back*): You're calling me a cretin?

FANNY (*standing up and taking hold of Panisse to restrain him*): Panisse!

PANISSE: Let me go! This is men's business. Here, hold my hat. (*He hands his hat to Fanny and steps up to Marius. The two glare at each other, almost nose to nose. As the scene advances, the two men become more and more angry.*) Let's see your famous wallop then.

MARIUS: Let's see you squeeze my nose!

PANISSE: Stupid oaf!

MARIUS: Decrepit cretin!

PANISSE: Little twerp!!

MARIUS: Capitalist!!

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PANISSE: You're full of words but you're afraid to pitch right in!

MARIUS: You think you're full of threats but there's only one thing you're full of.

PANISSE: Dammit, if I wasn't holding myself back!

MARIUS: And if you weren't such an old greybeard.

PANISSE: If I tore it out by the roots, would that make you braver? I doubt that! *(At this very moment, a strident offstage voice from the terrace door yells out "Panisse!". Without moving from his position, nose to nose with Marius, he yells back.)* Yes!

VOICE *(offstage)*: Panisse! There's four people waiting in the shop to see you.

PANISSE *(yelling)*: Coming! *(He straightens up and hitches up his trousers with two hands and continues in a normal voice.)* This time you're in luck. *(He steps back a pace.)* Fanny, I must leave you for the moment, business calls. Will you do me the honour of coming round later for a little snack?

FANNY: Why not round here?

PANISSE: Because I refuse, from now on, to set foot in an establishment where the staff don't know their place.

MARIUS: Your pompous pretensions don't cut any ice with me.

PANISSE *(as if he hasn't heard Marius)*: Right then, Fanny. I'll see you shortly. Don't keep me waiting too long. *(To Marius)* Two anisettes at two francs twenty-five; that makes four francs fifty. Here's five francs. Keep the change, waiter.

He puts the money in Marius's waistcoat pocket and, taking his hat from Fanny, walks out without a backward glance. Marius is still rigid with anger but Fanny is smiling. There is a long and heavy silence.

FANNY: Marius, you were really rude then; making such a fuss about things that are none of your business.

MARIUS *(furious)*: And let me tell you that this is a *bar*; not some seedy *maison de rendez-vous*.

FANNY: For Heaven's sake; at least try to be polite to *me*.

MARIUS: You don't deserve it!

FANNY: Why ever not?

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MARIUS: If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, I wouldn't have believed it. That old codger!

FANNY: What old codger?

MARIUS: Didn't you see it? When he was breathing into your corsage, he was huffing and puffing and his cheeks were as red as two beef tomatoes. In all probability you could kill him.

FANNY: You were going pretty red yourself, even redder than him I'd say. Anyway, what possible business is it of yours?

MARIUS: You're right. I'm making a big mistake getting mixed up in it. I've plenty of other things to worry about. (*He goes back to the bar and rinses two or three glasses before pausing to speak again.*) It's just that, well, it would make me very unhappy to see you go down the road to ruin like your aunt Zoë.

FANNY: Don't I even have right to get married if I want to?

MARIUS: You have no right to marry a sixty-year-old widower.

FANNY: He's only *fifty*! And you know he's got lots and lots of money. I'd have a maid. And, he'll give me a dowry of one hundred thousand francs, so there.

MARIUS: Admit it then! You're selling yourself.

FANNY: And why on earth shouldn't I?

MARIUS: Oh Fanny! If you do that, you're the lowest of the low.

FANNY (*haughty*): If I had a maid, she would be lower than me.

MARIUS: I can't believe I'm hearing this ... Fanny, have you really thought this right through?

FANNY: Right through what?

MARIUS: You know perfectly well! When a girl gets married, she doesn't just go to the town hall and the church.

FANNY: It's where it all starts.

MARIUS: Starts yes; but then what, eh?

FANNY: A slap up dinner at the Restaurant Belle Hélène?

MARIUS: But after that? When you finish up alone together?

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FANNY: I'll just have to wait and see.

MARIUS: You'd have to ... to let him kiss you.

FANNY: Fancy that?

MARIUS: First of all he'd kiss you on the mouth, and then your shoulder ... and then ...

FANNY: Hold your tongue, Marius. You shouldn't talk to me about things like that!

MARIUS: Fanny, just make yourself think about things I just can't bring myself to mention. He's going to take you in his arms, the disgusting old goat. (*He dashes to the terrace door and yells out into the street.*) Disgusting old goat! (*Fanny laughs out loud at the spectacle. Marius comes charging back into the bar and squares up to Fanny.*) I know why you're laughing. But it isn't true. I deny it!

FANNY: What's not true?

MARIUS: You think all this will make me jealous, right?

FANNY: Hold on a minute. To be jealous, don't you first of all have to be in love?

MARIUS: Exactly! And I am not in love with you, am I?

FANNY: Don't I know it!

MARIUS: Just because we played hide-and-seek as kids, it doesn't follow we're in love.

FANNY: How true!

MARIUS: I mean, it isn't that I dislike you; no, it's not that at all. On the contrary, I feel a great deal of affection for you. No doubt about it. But if we're talking *love*, well, it isn't that – of course not. Mind you, if I had really wanted to. Who can tell? I mean, you are very pretty: it wouldn't have been difficult. But, as I said, I just didn't want to. It just that I know I can never get married; not to you or to anyone.

FANNY: You want to be a *monk*?

MARIUS: No. But I can't get married.

FANNY: That's stupid.

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MARIUS: Sorry, but it's the truth. *(At this point Piquoiseau comes trotting into the bar and whispers in Marius's ear.)* Straight away? *(Piquoiseau nods in confirmation and goes over to his usual stool and sits down.)* Fanny, will you look after the bar for me? Just for a few minutes.

FANNY *(apprehensively)*: What if customers come in?

MARIUS: Give them what they ask for.

FANNY: But I don't know the prices of the drinks.

MARIUS: There's the price list. You'll manage; somehow.

FANNY: Fair enough then. Just be sure and get back before four o'clock. I've got a date with Panisse!

MARIUS: I'll be back in twenty minutes.

He dashes out by the terrace, followed by Piquoiseau. Fanny stands wrapped in thought. Abruptly, the shipyard hooter sounds and gradually one hears the sounds of hammers on metal as work recommences. The lights go down.

End of Act 1.

ACT TWO

It is half past nine in the evening of the next day. César is counting up the days takings; Fanny is taking wicker panniers from her stall over to the bar kitchen. The Stoker, now dressed as a waiter and fairly clean, sits at the table, enjoying a beer and watching Fanny with obvious longing. César consults his watch.

CÉSAR (*to Stoker*): Dammit, half past nine. You, get your eyes off her and tell me if you've seen Marius.

The Stoker, without taking his eyes off Fanny, shakes his head. A customer on the terrace calls out "Can we have some service here?"

CÉSAR: Coming! (*However, he doesn't budge and continues to count the takings.*) Some folk have no patience. Still, business is business. (*He goes out carrying a couple of bottles of beer.*)

FANNY (*to the Stoker*): Who was the man who came for Marius just now?

STOKER (*confused at being addressed by his idol*): I might have known him if I'd seen him.

FANNY: He was very dark, but clean-shaven. Have you never seen him with Marius before?

STOKER: No, very sorry! Yes, I am very sorry.

FANNY: Why sorry?

STOKER: Because you hardly ever talk to me and when I get a chance like this, I don't know what to say.

FANNY: You haven't got a crush on me? (*The Stoker lowers his gaze with embarrassment.*) Well, I'm sorry too. Nothing doing. (*She goes out to her stall.*)

STOKER: That's why I get down in the dumps. But it doesn't stop me having feelings.

César comes barrelling back in with a stack of empty glasses in both hands and goes behind the bar. He brings a bottle of sparkling wine up onto the counter top.

CÉSAR: Now then, eager beaver. Panisse is outside his front door smoking his pipe. Run down and tell him I've chilled a bottle of Blanc de Limoux.

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The Stoker makes a show of debating the issue and then looks at César with a sulk and shakes his head.

STOKER: It's too far.

CÉSAR: Too far! Thirty metres; and downhill!

STOKER: What do *I* get for going?

CÉSAR: One decent swig of the Blanc.

STOKER: Okay. *(He gets up but only goes as far as the door where he yells at the top of his voice.)* Oy! Panisse! César's serving Blanc de Limoux.

CÉSAR: You little trouble-maker. Every thirsty beggar in the street will hear you. *(He hides the bottle under the counter. The sulking stoker returns to his beer.)*

STOKER: He's coming.

A moment passes during which César brings the bottle back up onto the counter and begins to unscrew the wire cage over the cork. Meanwhile, the Stoker busies himself setting out three glasses. Panisse arrives at the door, in shirtsleeves. He is also wearing extraordinary shoes with long, pointed toes.

CÉSAR *(holding a hand over the cork of the bottle)*: Panisse! You've been making yourself scarce. Haven't seen you since yesterday!

PANISSE *(very formal)*: Since you are kind enough to invite me, I am here. It would be very impolite to refuse a glass of Blanc de Limoux.

CÉSAR: How very true.

PANISSE: However, I'd sworn never to set foot in your establishment again and, in due course, that is a promise I intend to keep to.

CÉSAR: And might one ask why?

PANISSE: Because your son is an uncouth lout.

César shrugs his shoulders and is not immediately offended.

CÉSAR: As to that!

PANISSE: It's no simple "as to that", I can tell you. Next time I see him, I'm going to give him a smart kick up the backside.

CÉSAR: As to *that*! We shall see.

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PANISSE (*waving one leg*): Kindly notice, I am wearing these shoes specially.

CÉSAR: You come in here to tell me that?

PANISSE: Who better to tell than the lout's own father?

César bangs the bottle down on the counter and comes round to square up to Panisse while the Stoker tries valiantly to interpose himself.

STOKER: Steady on. Steady on.

CÉSAR (*brushing him aside*): If you lay a finger on my boy, I'll give you such a kick up the bum you'll taste the shoelaces.

PANISSE (*sniggering*): You and what band of barmen?

As they square up closer, the Stoker tries again to intervene only to be pushed away this time by Panisse.

CÉSAR: I won't need any help. Touch my boy and you'll wake up in hospital.

PANISSE: You don't frighten me!

The Stoker still tries to push them apart.

CÉSAR (*warming to the subject and pushing away the Stoker*): In fact, if you touch a hair of his head, it won't be the hospital you wake up in. It'll be the cemetery.

PANISSE: César, I've battered bigger men than you to death.

CÉSAR: A fight to the death then. It was your choice. (*Against the determined pushing of the Stoker, César presses forward with hands raised to strangle Panisse, who is backing off.*) Adieu, Monsieur Panisse.

Scared and seemingly resigned to his fate, Panisse backs onto the chaise-longue.

PANISSE: Adieu, César. (*The Stoker runs through the terrace door yelling for help, but, just as César's hands close round Panisse's throat, there is a loud bang. Panisse manages a strangled yell and points to the bar where the cork has popped and the sparkling wine is pouring out of the bottle.*) The Blanc de Limoux!

CÉSAR: Oh Lord. What a waste!

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César lets go of Panisse and runs back to the bar, shoving his thumb over the neck of the bottle. Panisse stands up and shakes himself down before running over and picking up two glasses which he holds forward to César. César fills both and the men sink their first glass swiftly. César fills them both again. This time they sip.

PANISSE (*as if nothing had happened*): It's not really chilled enough.

CÉSAR (*acknowledging the professional error*): It could have been colder. I'll put another in the well for tomorrow.

PANISSE (*holding out his glass for a refill*): Even so; it's not bad. Not bad at all.

César refills both their glasses and they raise them to toast each other like old friends. Both start to grin and then laugh.

CÉSAR: And next time you see Marius, no kicking, please.

PANISSE (*warmly*): I won't. It was just a question of my damaged amour-propre. Your health!

They toast each other.

CÉSAR: So what did he do this time?

PANISSE: He criticised my grey hairs as if it were my own fault I had any.

CÉSAR: But you must have said something to him, surely.

PANISSE (*feigning innocence*): Not a word.

CÉSAR: Come on! He'd never have lost his temper otherwise.

PANISSE: Why would I go looking for a row? I know my own strength, César, and I've learned to keep myself in check, in case a simple quarrel turns into a bloody massacre. I never said a word. I didn't even look at him. He just threw himself on me.

CÉSAR: Marius!

PANISSE: He was going to strangle me.

CÉSAR: Who on *earth* would do such a thing? ... I tell you though, something's bothering him.

PANISSE: Like what?

CÉSAR: Search me. Have *you* noticed anything out of the ordinary?

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PANISSE: I did notice he wanted to strangle me!

CÉSAR: Yes well ... apart from that?

PANISSE: Not a thing. But, I agree with you; he's changed. He used to be quite lively, chatting to all the customers. Not nowadays!

CÉSAR: What can explain it then?

PANISSE (*shrugs*): He couldn't be smoking hashish, could he?

CÉSAR: Marius?

PANISSE: Yes; like the Chinese. That sends you round the bend pretty quickly.

CÉSAR: Hold on now; just hold on. You're just a mite too ready to slander the reputation of a good family here. Opium, indeed! The very idea!

PANISSE: You did ask me if I had any ideas. That was just one of them.

CÉSAR: One too many! Listen, we're men of the world. Aren't we simply overlooking the obvious? (*Lowering his voice*) Would you happen to know if he has a mistress tucked away somewhere?

PANISSE: I've never heard any rumours.

CÉSAR: Well, is it *cherchez-la-femme*? It's lovesickness sends young men round the bend.

PANISSE (*sitting down suddenly, struck by a thought*): You don't think, by any chance, he might just be in love with Fanny?

CÉSAR: Not a chance. They've known each other since they were nippers.

PANISSE: I only ask because, well, I was sitting beside Fanny when he attacked me. (*He points to where he was sitting.*) Maybe he had the mistaken idea I was sweet-talking Fanny.

CÉSAR: You!?! (*He laughs*). He maybe off his head but not from being jealous of a man of *your* age.

PANISSE (*vexed*): Who says?

CÉSAR: No, listen; be serious. It's not Fanny. I reckon there's someone up in town giving him the run-around. (*He sighs.*) I'm just afraid it might be that young wife of Escartefigue.

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PANISSE: Her! She's made at least fifty happy by all accounts, but she surely wouldn't want to make the son of an old friend unhappy.

CÉSAR: All right then. So who do *you* reckon?

PANISSE: You'll have to ask Marius that one.

CÉSAR: As to that – well, I may have to. But, up until now, I haven't dared. He may be twenty-odd and maybe I still give him the odd clout when he really deserves it, but as to asking him about his love life – I haven't had the courage to get started.

PANISSE: Why ever not?

CÉSAR: Paternal propriety – a sense of what's proper for a father to speak about to a son.

PANISSE: What noble sentiments!

Panisse starts tugging at his left shoe, grimacing with discomfort.

CÉSAR: If you were a father, you'd understand. (*Panisse stands and hobbles. His foot is painful.*) Now what's the matter with you?

PANISSE (*trying to walk then sitting back down at the table*): My shoe. It's pressing on my bunion. I think I'll have to get rid of them.

César comes over and sits opposite Panisse to have a look at his problem, taking his left foot into his lap.

CÉSAR: Dear God, Panisse. These shoes are far too tight.

PANISSE: Yes, well, I did get married in them.

CÉSAR: I'm not sure you'll ever be able to get these off.

PANISSE: I'll go home and take a pair of scissors to them. On the other thing then: no hard feelings?

CÉSAR: None at all!

They get to their feet and shake hands. Panisse sets off for the terrace door, hobbling. He turns to deliver a parting word.

PANISSE: Don't get too worried about your boy. Nothing's forever, is it?

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CÉSAR: I think I can handle it. See you tomorrow, old friend and don't have any bad dreams.

PANISSE: No chance of that!

He limps off, hand on heart, smiling to himself.

CÉSAR (*stepping to the door and calling after him*): And don't go playing football in these shoes!

Ten o'clock strikes on the church clock. César goes back into the bar and cashing up. Honorine bustles in from the terrace.

HONORINE: Bonsoir César.

CÉSAR: Bonsoir Honorine. What brings you here at this time?

HONORINE: My usual Wednesday night. I'm off to Aix to see my sister Claudine and the train goes at eleven ... And seeing I'm a bit on the early side, I thought I'd drop in and share something with you.

CÉSAR: And what might that be, Honorine?

HONORINE: It isn't easy to talk about ... Well, it's about Fanny.

CÉSAR: You want to talk to *me* about Fanny?

HONORINE: About Fanny – and Marius.

CÉSAR: About Fanny and Marius? Better sit down then. What are you drinking?

HONORINE: The usual.

She goes to sit down at the table. César prepares two drinks.

CÉSAR: So: Fanny and Marius? (*Honorine still hesitates.*) What's so difficult?

HONORINE (*diving in*): The fact is – Panisse wants Fanny.

CÉSAR: Panisse wants Fanny? What for then?

HONORINE: To marry her.

CÉSAR (*flabbergasted*): What!! Panisse wants to marry Fanny?

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HONORINE: He asked me this morning.

CÉSAR: The daft old fool! He must be clean out of his mind. How sad!

HONORINE: That's pretty much what *I* said; but he wants an answer by tomorrow.

CÉSAR: So what has Fanny to say about all this?

HONORINE: She'll probably have him – that is if she can't have the one she really wants.

CÉSAR: Oh no! Don't tell me! And the one she really wants is – Marius?

HONORINE: Heart and soul.

CÉSAR (*taking the drinks over to the table*): Oh dear, oh dear. I think I'm beginning to see what all that business was about yesterday.

HONORINE: I mean, there I was, round at the house and I heard her crying, in her room. She'd been snuffling all evening, come to that. Anyway, I peeped in and there she was, stretched out on the bed, chewing her hanky. So, of course I asked "What's the matter?" "Nothing," she says, "well maybe I've got a migraine." So I said, "Better get round to the doctor's then." "But I don't need a doctor," she says, and goes on crying. "Well then", I said, "Listen Fanny, this is your mother speaking. You can tell me things you wouldn't tell anyone else. So tell me! What's the matter, then?" "Nothing," she says. So, anyway, I gave her a cuddle; I had a bit of a grumble; I even begged her to tell me. Dear God, it would have tried the patience of someone more saintly than me. I mean, if I'd tried that on my own mother, what a slap she'd have given me.

CÉSAR: I can just picture that. But then what?

HONORINE: Then, *then!* Finally, after all that tralala, she tells me she's madly in love with Marius and the pair of them talked all about it yesterday evening.

CÉSAR: But what did he say to *her*?

HONORINE: He doesn't want her to marry Panisse.

CÉSAR: That's a good start, but did he say he *loved* her?

HONORINE: That's the impression he gave her.

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CÉSAR (*with a theatrical wink*): And did they have a nice little cuddle?

HONORINE: I don't think so. He just "gave her that impression", like she said.

CÉSAR: That just doesn't add up. He "gave her that impression" but didn't give her a kiss?

HONORINE: That's her story anyway.

CÉSAR: So they want to get hitched?

HONORINE (*beginning to sob*): Marius said he could never marry her!

CÉSAR: Why in Hell not!?

HONORINE (*angry now*): He wouldn't tell her! My little darling more or less asks him to marry her and he won't even answer; just leaves her crying, without telling her why. I mean to say, César, what kind of behaviour is that? I mean, what does a Marseilles barkeeper's son want: the Princess of Monaco?

CÉSAR: Don't get upset, Honorine. Maybe he *doesn't* really love her.

HONORINE: Doesn't love her!? Then he'll be the last man in Marseilles who *isn't* in love with her. They all drool after her. And tell me this, then. If he doesn't love her, why was he so jealous of Panisse?

CÉSAR (*after a pause for thought*): I'm sure all this can be sorted out – to everyone's satisfaction.

HONORINE: Right then!! Get on with it and sort things out, pretty damn quick. Because if he's going to abandon my daughter and leave her to cry the whole night through, then I'm coming back here to set fire to this smelly flea-pit of yours!

CÉSAR: Hold on for a moment! We don't know for certain he's turned her down. We'll just wait for him here, and when he shows up I'll ask him to spell it out.

HONORINE: Not with me here.

CÉSAR: Why not?

HONORINE: Why not? Because, I know men. If he's gets the idea it's Fanny proposing to him, she'll never be able to make even the simplest remark without him saying to her, "Well, after all, it was you who asked to have me",

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or “just remember it was your mother who came and complained you were crying your heart out for me”, and on and on and on ... And then he’ll start to look down on her and then they’ll both be miserable. No, no, no; that would never do.

CÉSAR: All right, all right. I shan’t breathe a word to him. But she’s not got to say a word to him about Panisse. Fair’s fair.

HONORINE: And just why shouldn’t she tell him? It’s the truth, after all.

CÉSAR: Oh dear me! You say you know men but, let me tell you, I know women. When they’re married, at the least little spot of bother, she’s going to turn round to him and say, “And to think that, for the likes of you, I turned down Panisse. I could have been stinking rich; I’d have had a maid; and a car”, and on, and on. She’ll club him to death with Panisse. I know it all too well. I’ve heard it all before. Take my poor wife. With her, it was that fat cattle dealer who came asking for her. She banged on to me about it for twenty years. Can you imagine? Twenty years. (*He sighs reflectively.*) But what a woman! We’ll never see her like on earth again.

HONORINE: Fair enough. You don’t tell him about Fanny and I guarantee she won’t ever mention Panisse.

CÉSAR: Done!

HONORINE: I’ll drink to that!

They raise and touch their glasses and drink a silent toast.

HONORINE: So, you like the idea of our children getting married?

CÉSAR: Well, that’s as may be. (*He stands up.*) We’d better just be careful he doesn’t come back and catch you here. (*He goes to the terrace door and glances out.*) So, if this matter is to go ahead, what are you going to settle on her? (*He returns to sit at the table, opposite her, his back to the door. Honorine faces the door.*)

HONORINE: I’d give her the shellfish stand. If a good salesgirl runs it, it can bring in forty francs a day, net.

CÉSAR: *That’s* no great deal!

HONORINE: Come off it! Any number of fellows would be glad to have her without a sou. She isn’t some cripple I have to go out and buy a husband for!

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CÉSAR: She may not be a cripple but neither is my son bad-looking. Look anywhere you like in the whole of Marseilles. You might find some taller, or some heavier, but you won't find any more handsome than my boy Marius; not nowhere!

HONORINE: So, he's good looking. Does that mean he has to marry a Rothschild?

CÉSAR: Not a bit of it. But if children come along, straightaway they're going to need some spending money.

HONORINE: All right. When the children come along, I'll give them a nice little allowance, just as long as I have my fish shop. I could manage four or five hundred a month.

CÉSAR: Well – that might just about do.

HONORINE: And what are you going to give *him*?

CÉSAR: Well, naturally he'll go on working for me until I choose to retire. So that's free accommodation for a start. And I'll pay him fifteen hundred francs a month.

HONORINE: Oh, no! You'll have to do better than that.

CÉSAR: So what would you have me give them, eh?

HONORINE (*insistently*): At the very least, you'll have to give them . . .
(*Marius suddenly appears in the terrace door. Honorine sees him and immediately changes what she was about to say and her tone of voice. She has to grasp for something to say, as though she were continuing a conversation.*)
a couple of thick tuna fillets and a two kilo sea bass that's so fresh it's still flapping its tail.

CÉSAR (*baffled*): You want me to give him a two kilo sea bass with the tail still flapping?

HONORINE (*desperately winking and trying to alert César*): And I'll throw in some dogfish, some mullet and some of my special fish stock.

CÉSAR (*uncomprehending but trying to stay calm*): I think you've maybe had enough to drink.

He moves towards her to take her glass. She is able to say one strangled word.

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HONORINE: Marius!

CÉSAR: Marius? (*He turns his head at last and sees Marius.*) Yes, well then, that's right, of course, too right! Dogfish, mullet and, and don't forget we'll expect some langoustines.

MARIUS (*seeming very lively and happy*): Ordering up a bouillabaisse, are you?

CÉSAR: Yes, yes, that's right, son; a bouillabaisse. So, finally, you choose to turn up for work?

MARIUS: Yes, well I seem to have been longer than I expected. Sorry about that.

CÉSAR: Right then, Honorine. It's all agreed. We'll get it all sorted out tomorrow, the way we want it.

HONORINE: As quick as you can. A bouillabaisse like this can't be kept waiting. Now I must go and catch my train. Au revoir, César!

CÉSAR: Au revoir, Honorine. Until tomorrow.

HONORINE: Good night, Marius.

MARIUS: Good night, Honorine.

She exits and there is a pause. Marius walks over to the bar and then looks towards the chaise longue.

CÉSAR (*yawning*): Right, that's it.

MARIUS: Now then; what's this, you reckon? (*He bends down and picks up a gold cigarette case from under the chaise longue. He hands it over to César.*)

CÉSAR: It probably belongs to Panisse. (*He opens it.*) I don't mind if I do. (*He helps himself to a cigarette and puts it behind his ear.*) He must have dropped it during the fight.

MARIUS: *You two* had a fight!?

CÉSAR: Nearly. I'll give it back to him tomorrow ... (*He yawns again.*)

MARIUS: Isn't it past your bedtime?

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CÉSAR: What do you mean?

MARIUS: If you don't get enough sleep you can ruin your health.

CÉSAR: Thank you, Marius; you're a good lad. I'm just going. You'd better shut up shop. There won't be any more doing tonight, and staying open is only helping the electricity company.

MARIUS: Right; I'll batten down the hatches.

He sets about the task, sweeping with a broom and beginning to turn the chairs up onto the table and wipe glasses. He goes on doing this as the scene unfolds. César sits down on the chaise longue.

CÉSAR: So – where were you off to this evening?

MARIUS: There was a billiard game going at the *Brasserie de Flandres*.

CÉSAR: Who was playing?

MARIUS: The usual crowd.

CÉSAR: Maybe you were; or maybe you weren't.

MARIUS: What's that supposed to mean?

CÉSAR: Never mind. Hold your tongue for a minute. I've got more serious matters to talk to you about.

MARIUS: What sort of "serious matters"?

CÉSAR (*standing up*): It's like this. One day, young man, you'll have to think about settling down and getting married.

MARIUS: Me? Why should I?

CÉSAR: Because it's what a man does! It's only natural. And in a business like this, it's essential. You're not going to tell me you don't *want* to get married, are you?

MARIUS: Never given it a thought, really.

CÉSAR: Maybe now's the time to start thinking.

MARIUS: Why so?

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CÉSAR (*with slow emphasis*): Because Panisse has asked if he can marry Fanny.

MARIUS: I know that! But what's that to do with me?

CÉSAR: Don't act the daft lad with me. I know very well you're in love with her.

MARIUS: Who told you *that*?

CÉSAR: A little bird.

MARIUS: Then your little bird's a bit of a dumb-cluck.

CÉSAR: But it's *true*! You're in love with Fanny and, if I wanted proof, that set-to with Panisse is all the evidence a man needs! If they hadn't called him, you might have throttled him! Imagine: dead on the floor of this bar! (*He gestures as if to point out the body lying there.*)

MARIUS (*with a shrug*): We were simply arguing about something.

CÉSAR: About what?

MARIUS: Can't remember.

CÉSAR: It was about Fanny, wasn't it? You wanted rid of a rival.

MARIUS: What if I did then?

CÉSAR: It never occurred to you there might be an easier way? Like ask her to marry you.

MARIUS: But would she say yes?

CÉSAR: Like a shot.

MARIUS: Have you been speaking to her mother?

CÉSAR: Of course not! How could you suggest that? But I'm certain she'd say yes.

MARIUS: Perhaps – but, anyway, I've no plans to ask.

CÉSAR: Why not?

MARIUS: Because I don't *want* to get married and, besides, I'm not sure I love her enough for that.

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CÉSAR: Marius. You are one great big liar.

MARIUS: How so?

CÉSAR: Because you're lying! You love Fanny and you went mad with rage when someone else tried to take her away. But you won't pop the question yourself? Listen, if you really *are* mad then let's admit it and have you sent to the loony-bin. But if you're *not*, if you have the teeniest bit of trust in your own father, then tell me what's going on. Have you got some woman up in town, then?

MARIUS: Perhaps.

CÉSAR: Ha! I knew it! Oh, yes! I knew it all along! (*Pause.*) Well, who is it?

MARIUS (*not looking at him*): It's embarrassing to talk about these things.

CÉSAR: I'd be even more embarrassed to have to cart you off to the asylum, so tell me; who is this woman? It can't be love because you're already in love with Fanny.

MARIUS (*still not looking up*): Maybe I feel sorry for her.

CÉSAR: And pity's driving you round the bend?

MARIUS (*starting to wash glasses*): Look, I can see you're not going to let go if it, so I'll tell you. It's a woman ... I used to love her ... and she's madly in love with me ... If I told her I was going to get married, she'd get in a terrible state.

CÉSAR (*shrugging*): So! She'll be upset.

MARIUS: She might even kill herself.

CÉSAR: Unlikely.

MARIUS: Or she might even shoot *me*.

CÉSAR: Oh, no! Saints preserve us!

MARIUS: I need some time to get her used to the idea. So there you are. When you come to think about it, it's really pretty simple, isn't it?

CÉSAR: You call that simple! Listen, I won't ask you her name, but just one thing: tell me it isn't Madame Escartefigue.

MARIUS (*laughing*): No, Dad. Not her!

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CÉSAR: That's a relief. Now then; what are we going to do about poor Fanny?

MARIUS: Let's just take our time.

CÉSAR: But what if she goes and accepts Panisse?

He starts putting the day's takings into a bag.

MARIUS: Too bad.

CÉSAR: Too bad? Is that all you can say. (*He yawns prodigiously.*) Well, well, we can talk some more tomorrow, but after all this, I don't think I'm going to sleep a wink. Good night, son.

MARIUS: Good night, Dad.

César takes the bag of cash and sets off for the kitchen exit. Marius calls after him with a certain timidity.

MARIUS: Dad!

César turns to look at Marius.

MARIUS: I do love you, you know.

CÉSAR: What are you saying?

MARIUS: I love you very much.

CÉSAR: Well, and I love you, son. Why are you telling me this?

MARIUS: Because I can see you care for me and you're trying to do the best for me. And that makes me realise I love you.

CÉSAR (*moved*): Well, of course. You big softy!

Marius goes over to his father.

MARIUS: Good night, Dad.

César hugs him awkwardly and then puts his hands on his son's shoulders.

CÉSAR: I know I sometimes say you're the bane of my life but it isn't true, you know. Not a bit. Good night, son.

He exits. Marius remains alone, looking moved and sad. He goes back to the bar. After a moment, he lowers his head and silently drums his fists on the bar expressing his frustration. Suddenly Piquoiseau dashes in from the terrace.

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PIQUOISEAU: Marius!

MARIUS: He's back?

PIQUOISEAU: Not yet!

MARIUS: You had me worried.

PIQUOISEAU: And now he won't be coming. There are no more trains tonight.

MARIUS: He could already be in Marseilles; visiting a girl-friend.

PIQUOISEAU: If he's not on board by midnight then officially he's a deserter, and you can take his place. Are you all set?

MARIUS: Look.

From behind his bedroom door Marius fetches out his duffle-bag which he shows Piquoiseau and puts back again.

PIQUOISEAU: Let me carry it for you.

MARIUS: Not yet ... Nip out and keep your eyes peeled.

PIQUOISEAU (*with a thumbs-up gesture*): Aye, aye, Captain. But as soon as midnight strikes, I'll be back for you.

MARIUS: Whatever you do, don't make a sound. (*He gestures up at the ceiling.*)

PIQUOISEAU: Don't you worry! He'll be fast asleep.

As Piquoiseau makes his exit, Marius comes over and shuts the terrace door before returning to the bar where he starts sorting out some papers. There is a knock at the terrace door. He hides the papers and hurries back to open it. Fanny comes in quickly.

FANNY: Only me.

MARIUS: Now what?

FANNY: Nothing. But did my mother come in here before her train?

MARIUS: Yes. When I came in Dad was ordering stuff for a bouillabaisse.

FANNY: And when she left, did your father say anything to you.

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MARIUS (*with the tiniest hesitation*): Nothing in particular. Why do you ask?

FANNY: You know very well my mother has a vivid imagination. And now Panisse has told her about your row with him yesterday, she's written a whole romantic novel about it.

MARIUS: And what romantic novel would that be?

FANNY (*getting launched into it, just like her mother*): Well, she said to me, "The truth is Marius is jealous of Panisse because he has his *own* plans for you." So, I said, "Marius is more like a big brother. And besides, if he'd had any intentions, he'd have said something long ago." "That's all very well," she said, "but before giving Panisse his answer, I want a couple of words with César, just to see how the land lies." Imagine how I felt! "Mother," I said, "You can't do that! Think how it makes me look. Girls don't go round asking men to marry them. And anyway, if I did turn down Panisse, I wouldn't be short of other offers, as you well know. And besides, these are personal matters so you shouldn't poke your nose in. Thank you very much." So she just said, "Fine, fine, fine" and I went off to bed. But when I heard her leaving for the train, I suddenly realised she'd gone off an hour early and that's what made me get back up and come round here. I just wanted you to know it wasn't *me* that sent her round here in the first place.

MARIUS: Parents are always poking their nose into things. And, in any case, you're Panisse's fiancée now, aren't you?

FANNY (*laughing*): Not on your life. What you said to me made me have a good think and, this evening, after work, I went round to see him. There he was in his big dining room reading his paper, wearing huge thick glasses. He's got some lovely furniture in there though, I must say. Wine carafes in silver holders and carpets as thick as thick can be. Well, anyway, I told him, very politely. "Monsieur Panisse," I said, "I like you very much, but I really don't want to get married to you."

MARIUS: Was that such a good idea?

FANNY: But it was you who said I should turn him down.

MARIUS: You might just be being a little hasty. I ought to have kept my mouth shut and not taken such a responsibility on myself. Making you miss out on a golden opportunity.

FANNY: Don't you worry about me! There are plenty more fish in the sea.

MARIUS: And as for Panisse – well, he's not lost forever, I suppose. In the end, if you did want him, you could get him back easily enough.

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FANNY: Marius! You know perfectly well – Victor and Panisse – they were just to get you riled a bit, that’s all.

CÉSAR (*off stage and ‘upstairs’*): Marius!

Marius goes towards the kitchen exit and looks up.

MARIUS: Dad?

CÉSAR (*off stage*): Who are you talking to?

MARIUS: No one. Just finishing off.

CÉSAR (*offstage*): Are you talking to yourself then? Get off to bed smartish, but have a look at the third beer barrel. Make sure the tap’s turned off.

MARIUS: I’ll look at it and then I’m going to bed. (*Marius goes back over to Fanny.*) Listen, we can talk about all this in the morning. He could easily come creeping downstairs. I’ll see you tomorrow.

FANNY: All right, I’ll go since you seem to be throwing me out.

MARIUS: How can you say that?

FANNY: You’re entitled. It’s your place, after all.

MARIUS: Fanny, don’t go off in a huff. Not tonight, of all nights. Stay another five minutes.

FANNY: You’ve been looking at the clock ever since I got here. Are you expecting someone? Not that girl from the Regency?

MARIUS: No one, I promise. Come and sit over here.

FANNY: Have you something you want to say to me then?

MARIUS: Yes. (*She sits on the chaise longue.*) About Panisse: I want to talk to you like a brother.

FANNY: You’re *not* my brother!

MARIUS: You called me that yourself, not five minutes ago.

FANNY: Sometimes a girl says one thing when she means the complete opposite.

MARIUS: Whatever – well, anyway, I think of you as my little sister.

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FANNY: I don't *want* to be your sister! I *want* you, you, you!!! (*Fanny drops her head and starts to cry. Marius puts an arm round her and tries to lift up her chin but she pushes him away angrily and turns her back on him.*) Now you've made me say it, at least have the decency not to look at me.

MARIUS: I don't know what to say.

FANNY : So you don't love me. So why all these jealous scenes in front of Panisse or whenever Victor comes past? After my first communion, you said to me, "In eight years time, I'll be buying you another dress like this." That was eight years ago this week. Fine! That's it then. If you don't want me I'm going back to the convent, or maybe I'll ply my aunt Zoë's trade right in front of this bar to put you to shame.

MARIUS: Fanny, my darling!

FANNY: And what's all this darling business?

MARIUS: Because I do love you, and if I could get married, it's you I'd choose.

FANNY: Why *can't* you marry me? Is it because you've got a mistress? You might as well tell me. For a man, that's not so shameful. I've already asked the girl in the Regency Bar about you.

MARIUS: What did you ask *her*?

FANNY: If she was your girl-friend. She swore to me she didn't even know and, besides, she's getting married next week, to an Inspector of Weights and Measures.

MARIUS: Now what *must* she think of you?

FANNY (*standing up*): She can think what she likes. But you see here! I'm going to watch you night and day until I find out who this other woman is.

MARIUS: But there's no one, no one at all!

FANNY: Do you love her then! Is she prettier than me?

MARIUS: Fanny, cross my heart, there's no woman who has any importance to me.

FANNY: You mean you don't want me after all. Is it because of my aunt Zoë you don't want to marry me? You don't think I'm like her?

MARIUS: Of course I don't.

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FANNY: So what's wrong with me? Am I not clever enough? Don't I have enough money for you? Give me one good reason.

MARIUS: Fanny, if I told you, you wouldn't understand and you might well spread it around because you thought it was for my own good.

FANNY: Tell me and I swear before God I'll never repeat it to a living soul!

MARIUS: Fanny, I simply don't want to spend the rest of my life behind a bar counter, catching the last drop so it doesn't dribble on the label, or trying to put four thirds into a glass while, all the time, there are ships out there are calling me away, out to sea.

FANNY (*sighing and fatalistic*): So that's it. Now I understand. Old Piquoiseau has been turning your head.

MARIUS: No ... It's been a long time now I've felt this; long before he ever came on the scene. I was barely seventeen ... One morning, an enormous sailing ship berthed alongside, right in front of the bar, a full three-master carrying timber from the Pacific. The logs were black on the outside but honey-coloured under the bark, smelling of camphor and pepper. It had sailed all the way from Polynesia ... I got chatting with some of the crew and they told me such stories. They gave me some of their own rum to drink; strong, sweet and spicy. But the very next day, before I was up, they were gone. I just caught sight of it sailing away, getting smaller and smaller; off to Tahiti, or Bora-Bora. That's when it got to me.

FANNY: And was there a woman on that ship, a woman you're longing to see again?

MARIUS: No, I tell you, no! You see, you really don't understand.

FANNY: So it's really those *islands* you want to discover?

MARIUS: Polynesia, the whole South Pacific. I know I might be better never to go there and let them stay just like I picture them but I feel such a powerful urge to go. I can't explain it Fanny, but I feel such a longing.

FANNY: A longing so great you want to abandon me?

MARIUS: Whenever I go down to the jetty and look out to the horizon, I'm already more than halfway there. If I see a ship, I feel attached to it, by ropes, so tight I can hardly breathe ... Do you remember that time when we went up onto the transporter bridge, and you had vertigo and didn't dare look down? Well, it's like that for me. When I see a ship leaving harbour, I feel like I'm falling in and swimming after her.

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FANNY: But it can't be *that* serious. These are whims, the sort of schoolboy stuff you're supposed to grow out of.

MARIUS: It's a sort of madness, really. Yes, a real sickness. Or, maybe there's some witch-doctor out there who's cast a spell on me. We laugh at these things, but to me they're real enough. Time and again, I try to fight it: I think about you, I think about Dad. And then, there's a faint sea breeze and I'm infected again. Fanny, it's certain sure that one day I'll be gone. Like a madman, I'll give everything up and go. I don't want to be the one to spoil the rest of your life.

FANNY: If you don't want me, you've done that already.

MARIUS: You're young. You'll forget me.

FANNY: That would really suit you, if I didn't love you any more. I'm sorry, but that's something I can't do. Listen, Marius, for a quarter of an hour we've been talking nonsense. If you want to be a sailor, then, for Heaven's sake, go and be a sailor. It's a job, just like any other.

MARIUS: It's not like that! We're not talking about Escartefigue and his ferry. We're talking about Australia, China, and South America! Being that kind of sailor's wife is no life at all.

FANNY: If that's what you want, then I'll make it mine. I know I would be happy, just waiting for you, because then you would be mine.

MARIUS: You love me as much as that?

FANNY: More than that.

He looks at her, puts his hands on her shoulders, then folds her into his arms and kisses her. Gently, she pushes him away.

FANNY: We can talk about all this in the morning. I'd better say "au revoir". If I get back too late, the neighbours will tell my mother ... You haven't said you love me.

MARIUS: I love you, I love you. Whatever happens, I love you.

Looking back at him, she makes for the terrace door but there she hesitates.

FANNY: Marius, I have this awful feeling if I leave you now, I'll never see you again.

MARIUS: But why?

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FANNY: I don't know ... but swear to me that tomorrow morning you'll be here. Swear on your mother's grave.

MARIUS: I don't like swearing. That sort of thing brings bad luck.

FANNY: What brings bad luck is not telling the truth. You don't want to swear?

Silently he shakes his head.

FANNY (*running back to him and seizing his arms*): Marius – you're leaving tonight?

MARIUS: Perhaps.

FANNY: Why just perhaps?

MARIUS: Because it isn't a certainty ... There's a sailor on the *Coromandel*. He hasn't returned from leave. If he's not on board by midnight, I can have his berth.

FANNY: And you're waiting for someone to come and give you word?

MARIUS: Yes.

FANNY: Where's she sailing to?

MARIUS: Australia.

FANNY (*unable to repress a gasp*): How long before you would come back again?

MARIUS: Not less than a year.

FANNY (*wrapping herself round him*): Marius, not tonight! Go later, on another boat. I beg you, not now, not tonight. Stay a few more days.

MARIUS: It's too late. I've signed on. If he doesn't get back, I'll have to go.

The door onto the terrace begins to open slowly and it squeaks. Fanny hears this and rushes to try and stop it.

FANNY: No! He's not leaving.

But she is too late and Piquoiseau slips in. Sadly, he shakes his head and spreads his arms disconsolately.

MARIUS (*completely deflated*): He's back ... So that's it then!

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CÉSAR (*offstage*): Marius! What's going on? Who was opening the door?

Piquoiseau throws up his hands and skedaddles out of the door. Marius closes and locks it.

MARIUS (*calling back*): That was me. There were some glasses left out on the terrace.

CÉSAR (*offstage*): My fault, son. Sorry. Off to bed now. Good night.

MARIUS: Good night, Dad.

Fanny and he look upwards to César's room for a moment then Fanny speaks quietly.

FANNY: You see! God doesn't want you to leave me.

They are moving towards each other when someone raps on the shutters from outside. They move quickly towards the door into Marius's bedroom and stand frozen there, holding each other close. Panisse calls out from the terrace.

PANISSE (*offstage*): Hallo, César! It's me, Panisse.

Marius puts his fingers to his lips. Panisse rattles the shutters again.

PANISSE (*offstage*): Marius, are you there?

We hear the sound of an upstairs window going up.

CÉSAR (*offstage*): What do want? Do you know what time it is?

PANISSE (*offstage*): I've lost my gold cigarette case. You haven't found it, by any chance?

CÉSAR (*offstage*): Yes, yes. It's in the drawer behind the bar. I'm coming down. Marius!

Marius and Fanny slip silently into his bedroom and close the door. We hear it being locked. César makes his appearance, wearing an enormous nightshirt.

CÉSAR: Dammit, the boy's gone to bed leaving all the lights on.

He walks behind the bar, picks up the cigarette case and advances to open the terrace door. Panisse comes in and César hands him the case with a bow. Panisse takes it with a flourish and opens it to offer César a cigarette. César puts it behind his ear.

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PANISSE: Thank you, César. I was a bit anxious about it. Solid gold, you know. (*He steps back to get a better look at César.*) My, my; I've never seen you in your nightshirt before. Like a ship in full sail.

CÉSAR: I don't doubt you'd look every bit as handsome. Since you're here, shall we have a nightcap?

PANISSE: Gladly ... And I'll tell you why I got into that nonsense about asking if Fanny would marry me.

CÉSAR: And I'll tell you all about what the problem is with Marius. But we'll have to keep our voices down because he's gone off to enjoy his beauty sleep.

He picks up a couple of glasses and a bottle of brandy and puts them on the end of the bar. He and Panisse lean over it towards each other and talk so quietly they cannot be heard although their gestures are more dramatic than ever.

TEXT FOR PANISSE TO MIME (*as the lights go down.*): Listen. I don't want you to take me for an old satyr. But, put yourself in my place: a widower but still, you know, active. So then, there she was, looking so attractive. That's what got me going. But I ought to have twigged sooner she was only encouraging me in order to get Marius's dander up. Well there you are.

End of Act 2.

ACT THREE

Two weeks later. A clock strikes nine. Escartefigue, Panisse, César and Brun are playing cards. Around them, on the floor, are a fair number of empty bottles. At the bar, the ferry-boat Stoker is dressed as a waiter. Escartefigue is studying his hand, scratching his head. The others are getting impatient.

PANISSE: What's your problem?

ESCARTEFIGUE: I'm thinking!

A customer on the terrace calls for service.

CÉSAR (*to the Stoker*): Someone's calling!

The Stoker grabs a tray and rushes out.

CÉSAR (*to Escartefigue*): It'll soon be tomorrow?

BRUN: Come along, Captain. We're all waiting.

Escartefigue appears to reach a decision. He takes a card from his hand and holds it poised over the table. Then he changes his mind and puts it back.

ESCARTEFIGUE: It's an important decision. (*To César*) They've got thirty two. How many have we?

CÉSAR: Thirty!

BRUN: We're heading for thirty-four any moment now.

PANISSE: This trick will settle the game.

ESCARTEFIGUE: I'm asking myself if Panisse could trump me with a heart.

CÉSAR: If you'd been following the game, then you'd know.

PANISSE: (*To Brun.*) Will you listen to that! (*To César*) Why not just show your partner your hand. After all, you're already telling him all about it.

CÉSAR: I'm not showing him or anybody my hand and I haven't given him any information.

BRUN: The rules do say we should be playing silently.

PANISSE: If this were a championship, you'd have been disqualified.

CÉSAR: As a matter of fact, I've been to several championships, and I never saw such a sour puss as yours.

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PANISSE: I knew it. You're beaten. But insults prompted by your sour grapes cannot hurt the victors on the field of play.

CÉSAR: You know who you look like? That po-faced actor, whatsisname.

ESCARTEFIGUE: I'd still like to know if he could trump me with a heart.

César scratches his left year and coughs. Escartefigue doesn't see but Panisse does.

PANISSE: I really must ask you to stop giving signals to your partner.

CÉSAR: Listen, if I itch, I scratch; that's my normal practice.

PANISSE: You should be looking at one thing only and that's your own hand. (*To Escartefigue*) And that applies to you too!

ESCARTEFIGUE: Fine, fine.

He lowers his eyes but goes on huffing and puffing and making puzzled looks.

PANISSE: If you're going to go on pulling funny faces, I'm going home.

BRUN: Don't upset yourself, partner. Their goose is cooked.

ESCARTEFIGUE: I wouldn't hesitate if I knew whether Panisse could trump me with a heart.

PANISSE: How often must I tell you we shouldn't be talking; even to say "bonjour".

ESCARTEFIGUE: I'm not saying "bonjour" to anyone. I'm just thinking out loud.

PANISSE: Then keep your thoughts to yourself, please. (*César tries again to signal.*) You're at it again! Monsieur Brun, you watch Escartefigue and I'll keep an eye on César.

Panisse stares and glares at César.

CÉSAR (*to Panisse*): I wonder if you realise just how humiliating it is when you do that. You look at me as though I was a cheat. Not very polite behaviour on your part, I'd say.

PANISSE (*mocking*): Are you serious, César? Have I really hurt you?

CÉSAR (*apparently very moved*): When you take that sort of tone of voice with me; when you treat me like some sort of rogue – I don't say I'm going to start weeping but, inside here, you're breaking my *heart*.

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PANISSE: Come off it, César! Don't act the tragedian!

CÉSAR: I may not always behave like it but, at *heart*, I'm very sentimental. (*To Escartefigue, putting his hand on his chest.*) I tell you, my *heart* is broken. What about you? Don't you feel anything?

ESCARTEFIGUE (*baffled*): He wasn't speaking to me.

CÉSAR (*frustrated*): Mother of God!

Escartefigue finally gets the message. He lets out a cry of triumph and slaps a card on the table.

ESCARTEFIGUE: There!

Panisse looks at the card, looks daggers at César, and rises angrily to his feet.

PANISSE: Take me for a complete idiot? You said, "It breaks my *heart*" to let him know I could take the trick by trumping his heart. So now *he's* played the ace of hearts. Of all the dirty tricks! (*César assumes an air of injured innocence. Panisse throws his cards in César's face.*) Cheat; hypocrite! I'm crazy to play with a criminal like you! (*Striking his chest*) I'm Maître Panisse, master sail-maker of Marseilles, and you're just a petty port-side publican. (*He stomps out exclaiming "You're breaking my heart, indeed."*)

BRUN: I wonder if this time you really *have* made him angry.

CÉSAR: Well that's too bad – because *he's* in the wrong!

BRUN: He was wrong to get angry, but you were wrong to cheat.

CÉSAR: If a fellow can't cheat playing with his friends, it's hardly worth dealing out the cards.

ESCARTEFIGUE: Anyway, you were right, what you said. Hearts it was!

CÉSAR: He's having a hard time right now, poor chap. He's not been himself since Fanny turned him down.

BRUN: Was it because of Marius she said no? Maybe he holds that against you.

ESCARTEFIGUE: Well, I do say, they look a handsome couple.

BRUN: Is it out of consideration for his injured feelings you haven't announced the betrothal yet?

CÉSAR: Nothing to do with it! They're not engaged because neither of them has spoken to their parents yet.

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BRUN: Well that beats me. They go around all day looking at each other like honeymooners.

CÉSAR: It'll all finish up with a wedding: count on that! But, just for the moment, they haven't breathed a word to Honorine or me. Right then! A last drink and a quick three-hander to see who's picking up the bar bill?

ESCARTEFIGUE: Count me in.

César signals to the Stoker who attends to the drinks while he shuffles the cards and offers them to Brun to cut. Fanny comes in with a shellfish pannier from her stall. César deals.

FANNY: Bonsoir, César.

CÉSAR: Off to bed then?

FANNY: Not yet. I'm going to walk Mum to the station.

CÉSAR: Good girl.

ESCARTEFIGUE: Thirty!

BRUN: Thirty-one, without drawing!

CÉSAR: Thirty-two!

ESCARTEFIGUE: Thirty-three!

FANNY: Has Marius gone out?

CÉSAR: Did you want him?

FANNY: To help fetch the oysters down to the cellar.

CÉSAR: I think he's getting dressed.

ESCARTEFIGUE: Forty!

BRUN: I'll stick.

CÉSAR: Me too!

ESCARTEFIGUE: Clubs are trump. *(Lays down his hand and gathers up all the cards, shuffles quickly and deals.)*

Fanny goes over and knocks on Marius's door.

FANNY: Marius!

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Marius emerges in shirt sleeves and smart trousers, wearing an expensive belt with a large buckle.

ESCARTEFIGUE: A round of trumps!

The card players play.

FANNY: Can you help bring in the panniers?

MARIUS: Straight away!

ESCARTEFIGUE: Seven of diamonds!

CÉSAR: I don't believe it. You've done it again. There can't be anyone up there to protect us. No God, no Blessed Virgin either.

Marius puts his foot up on a chair and ties up his shoelaces.

FANNY (*grinning*): Off out, are you?

MARIUS: As usual.

FANNY (*stage whisper*): Eleven o'clock?

MARIUS (*stage whisper*): Count on it.

They go to the stall and he brings in a pannier of oysters.

FANNY: Thanks Marius. See you *tomorrow* then.

MARIUS: Tomorrow, Fanny. (*Lowering his voice*) Make sure she catches her train.

FANNY: I'm going with her to the station.

MARIUS: Perfect. (*He exits to the kitchen with the pannier.*)

FANNY: Bonsoir, gentlemen.

They all say good night to her without looking up and she exits by the stall. Marius then returns.

ESCARTEFIGUE (*to Marius*): She's a pretty one; as pretty as the Queen of hearts. Eh, Marius?

MARIUS: Very pretty. (*He disappears into his bedroom.*)

CÉSAR (*tapping the side of his nose*): If she knew where he was off to, she'd not be so happy, I tell you.

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BRUN: And why might that be; pray?

CÉSAR: Because the young master is off to see his *old* mistress. I reckon that's the real reason he's in no hurry to get engaged.

ESCARTEFIGUE: The rascal!

CÉSAR: A man doesn't get dressed up like that to go and play billiards. He's dressed for a night with her. This is his day, Wednesday.

BRUN: How do you know?

CÉSAR: You'll see for yourself in a moment. Out he'll come, ready for the off, and say, "Good night, Dad" then saunter out. But then he nips round the back, down the little lane, and climbs in through the window and locks his door from the inside.

ESCARTEFIGUE: What's the point of all that?

CÉSAR: The point? The clever monkey! I wake him every morning at eight and, of course, if the door is locked from the *inside*, I'm supposed to think he's fast asleep in there. But the thing is, I can't get in there to check up on him.

BRUN: That's very well thought out.

CÉSAR: He's not daft, my boy! When he gets back in the morning, he climbs in the window and then crawls out here like someone who's just woken up. But I discovered his guilty secret a couple of weeks ago.

BRUN: How?

CÉSAR: On the Thursday morning, I went down the lane myself and had a look in the window. I haven't told him yet. It's more fun to watch. (*The Stoker comes back in with a tray of glasses which he parks on the bar with a clatter.*) Hey! Take care with bar property. (*The Stoker off-loads the tray and sits behind the bar.*)

ESCARTEFIGUE (*shuffling the cards*): So, who's his mistress?

CÉSAR: No idea! We spoke about it once but he's giving nothing away. Even so, I'm sure it's some sailor's wife.

ESCARTEFIGUE: How do you figure that out? (*He deals.*)

CÉSAR: Because he spends the whole night there, which means her husband doesn't sleep at home every night.

BRUN: Maybe. (*He looks at his cards.*) Thirty-two.

ESCARTEFIGUE: Thirty-five.

CÉSAR: Forty. And everyone knows there are more cuckolds in the navy than anywhere else.

ESCARTEFIGUE: Say that again!

CÉSAR: I said “in the navy there are lots more cuckolds.” Forty-one! (*Escartefigue stands up and lays down his cards.*) Now what’s the matter? Have I offended you as well? I beg your pardon.

ESCARTEFIGUE: Whose pardon are you asking? The navy’s or the cuckolds’?

CÉSAR: Both, if you like.

ESCARTEFIGUE (*angry*): You think you can say sorry with that grin on your face?

CÉSAR: Come on, Félix! I wasn’t criticising *you* for being a cuckold. I know perfectly well it isn’t your fault. And besides, everybody knows about it.

ESCARTEFIGUE: Monsieur Brun didn’t know.

Brun coughs evasively.

CÉSAR: He *did*! We’ve talked about it, haven’t we Monsieur Brun?

Brun coughs discretely.

ESCARTEFIGUE: So I’m a cuckold; it’s not impossible: but that’s not important. You can slander *my* reputation: I don’t give a damn about that. But I totally *forbid* you to insult the honour of the French Navy! After the words I heard you utter, I can’t possibly continue to sit round this table with you.

CÉSAR: Oh come off it, Félix.

ESCARTEFIGUE: Not another word. I’ll return tomorrow to receive your apology. Bonsoir, Monsieur Brun.

BRUN: Now then, Captain ...

ESCARTEFIGUE: Save your breath, Monsieur Brun. (*He sets off for the door.*)

CÉSAR: If it’s an apology you want, I’ll make it now.

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ESCARTEFIGUE: No thank you. I demand a properly considered apology. You need to realise the full gravity of what you said.

CÉSAR: It was just a turn of phrase! I had no intention of insulting the French Navy. I admire the navy. I *love* the French Navy ...

ESCARTEFIGUE (*turning in the terrace doorway and interrupting*): Maybe you love the French Navy, César, but the French Navy has a one word reply, and that's *Merde!*

He exits.

CÉSAR: Can you credit how touchy he is?

BRUN: That's yet another game of cards unfinished.

CÉSAR: And it's not very fair what he's done to you.

BRUN: To me: in what way?

CÉSAR: He's managed to leave you with the bar bill.

BRUN: Pardon me! To leave *us* with the bar bill!

CÉSAR: Us? Well, shall we settle it with a quick game of *écarté*?

BRUN: It's a bit late and I haven't had my dinner yet.

CÉSAR: Just a swift hand, five minutes and then we're done.

BRUN: Go on then.

César shuffles, Brun cuts and César deals. Marius emerges from his room, ready to go out. He takes the straw hat off the peg on his door and puts it on.

CÉSAR (*winking at Brun*): You're off at last?

MARIUS: Yes, I'm going to the cinema.

CÉSAR: Come over and let's look at you. That's a smart get-up. Got enough money?

MARIUS: I have what I need.

CÉSAR: Enjoy yourself but don't be too late home!

MARIUS: Midnight ... One ... Good night, Dad. Good night, Monsieur Brun.

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BRUN: Good night, Marius.

CÉSAR: Good night. (*Marius exits by the terrace.*) You'll hear the key in just a moment ... I'm playing the king.

BRUN: That's a good start.

CÉSAR: And I'll take that with the queen. (*Playing as he speaks.*) The ace, the king, the jack, and the ten: that's three points to me and your deal.

BRUN: My deal. (*As Brun deals, César cups his hand to his ear.*) Is he there yet?

CÉSAR (*picking up and looking at his cards.*): You'll hear the key any moment now. I'll take one from the bank.

BRUN: Sorry. The bank is closed.

CÉSAR: So that's how it goes! (*He plays a single card.*)

BRUN (*playing his hand*): Trump, trump, trump; ace and the ten of spades! That's two points for me!

César cups his hand to his ear and creeps towards Marius's door.

CÉSAR: Here he comes. Come and listen. (*Brun gets up and creeps over to join him. They crouch like conspirators, grinning at each other.*) Hear him?

BRUN: He's got squeaky shoes!

CÉSAR: Don't give the game away! (*He turns his head away from the door and speaks in a loud voice.*) Trump, trump. The queen of hearts! I'll need a miracle now. (*He gestures at Brun to say something too.*)

BRUN: I've still got the ace of spades and the king of hearts.

The freeze and listen. A key can be heard turning in the door lock. They laugh silently and give each other the thumbs up.

CÉSAR (*stage whisper*): He has to give it one more turn. (*The key turns again. Then silence.*) Now he's off. The scallywag!

The two men go back to the card table.

CÉSAR: My deal. (*He deals.*) We've three points apiece. Who'd have children, I ask you? Twenty years old! Sleeping away from home already! That does something to me. And I play ... the king!

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BRUN: Again?

CÉSAR: I give you fair warning. I play the king every time.

BRUN: Now that might just seem more than a coincidence.

CÉSAR: It's not a coincidence but it's a tricky one to carry off.

BRUN: You wouldn't, by any chance, be suggesting that you're cheating?

CÉSAR: Who can tell? But since you'll never spot it, the game is not in question.

BRUN (*laughing*): If that's the way we're playing, I'd rather pay for the drinks straight away.

CÉSAR: As you wish: (*He counts up the bottles ranged around them.*) Four plus five plus six plus six; twenty-one francs altogether.

BRUN: Here you are then, and a couple of francs for the waiter.

CÉSAR (*nodding towards the Stoker now sleeping at the bar*): I'll give him his tip when he wakes up. I'll let you get off to your dinner. Bonsoir, Monsieur Brun and *bon appetit!*

BRUN: Until tomorrow, then.

He exits and César stands at the terrace door watching him go before bellowing at the top of his voice.

CÉSAR: Monsieur Brun!

BRUN (*offstage*): What?

CÉSAR (*very loud*): Don't tell a soul Escartefigue's a cuckold. It could get around. (*He goes back to the table and gathers up the cards. He gives a big yawn and murmurs to himself.*) Marius, I ask you. Well now, let's have a quick game of patience.

He begins to arrange the cards for a game of patience as the lights go down.

End of Act 3.

ACT FOUR

Three or four weeks later. A clock chimes eight. Brun is at the table dunking his croissant in his coffee. Panisse is drinking white wine. César is shaving at the bar with a large cut-throat razor. Crowd noises come from outside and, from time to time, we hear a brass band. Escartefigue and the Stoker come in, laughing, and stand at the terrace door.

ESCARTIFIGUE: They've got him down! Just as well. It'd be just too easy if all you had to do was hide in the coal-hole.

BRUN: Who's that then?

CÉSAR: Piquoiseau. He stowed away on the *Malaisie*, but they spotted him.

ESCARTIFIGUE: They chased him on deck and up into the rigging.

CÉSAR: He must have climbed up the anchor chain during the Mayor's speech.

BRUN: What was the Mayor making a speech about?

ESCARTIFIGUE: You may well ask!

CÉSAR: You should have seen it though. The *Malaisie* tied up at the quay. The whole crew lined up in their tropical whites. The Mayor came out onto the Town Hall balcony and made a speech. Superb sight!

PANISSE: She's one of the last of the ocean-going sailing ships. All the other ships in the harbour are going to sound their sirens when she casts off. She's a famous ship.

BRUN: And there are all those scientists on board.

CÉSAR: Huh! Scientists!

BRUN: The world's leading experts, or so they say.

CÉSAR: I saw some of them this morning. No beards, no spectacles: I tell you, they didn't look like experts to me!

ESCARTIFIGUE): And another thing – no uniforms!

BRUN (*smiling*): That does rather sum it up.

ESCARTIFIGUE: They're singling up the cables. That's what I call a real ship.

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PANISSE: For pity's sake! Stop going on and on and on about it!

ESCARTEFIGUE: Touchy, touchy! We ship's captains need to express our feelings.

PANISSE: Escartefigue, your little tub's scarcely worth *calling* a boat, never mind a ship. It's no bigger than a ballcock. You're captain of a harbour buoy; that's all!

CÉSAR: But it does have a propeller: a raft with a propeller.

ESCARTEFIGUE: *Two* propellers, please note; for maximum manoeuvrability.

PANISSE: Exactly. A bathtub with a propeller at both ends, and always going backwards. No bows; just two backsides; plus your backside, makes three!

He stomps off and exits by the terrace door, shoving the Stoker aside. The others look after him and then at each other.

BRUN: Dear me, Captain. He seems to have it in for you this morning.

ESCARTEFIGUE: I treat all such attacks with the contempt they deserve. (*He exits with as much dignity as he can muster, taking the Stoker with him.*)

There is a flourish from the brass band which then "marches off" during the scene until it can no longer be heard.

CÉSAR: I do like sea-shanties! (*He yawns profoundly.*)

BRUN (*looking at his watch*): Sleepy?

CÉSAR: So would you be, if you'd been up since three. Try it sometime. And this morning I need to go to a meeting of the Licensed Barkeepers Association.

BRUN: What's doing?

CÉSAR: We're organising a protest.

BRUN: Against what?

CÉSAR: I couldn't say exactly but every year we protest about something so I have to be there, to register my vote.

BRUN: Where's Marius then?

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César grins and taps the side of his nose.

CÉSAR: Still fast asleep. It's about time I called him. (*He goes over to the door of Marius's room and calls.*) Marius! Hello, Marius! You great big sleepyhead; what are you dreaming about?

BRUN: Of all his girlfriends, no doubt.

CÉSAR: Marius! Nine o'clock! (*Silence.*) I'll have to come in and yank the covers off! (*He tries the door but, of course, it is locked.*) Locked! (*To Brun.*) Here we go again. You know what this means.

BRUN: Maybe he's down on the quay to see all the fun.

CÉSAR: He's been wenching and that's the long and short of it. You saw the pantomime last Wednesday when he went out. Now you're going to see the second act: it's a real comedy.

BRUN: In what way?

CÉSAR: In the morning, he nips back in through the window, jumps into his work clothes, and then messes up his hair. When he comes through the door, he'll say, "Good morning. What time is it, Dad?"

BRUN: I'd love to stay for it but the *Paul Lecat* has just come into harbour and she'll be alongside in half an hour. I have to attend to my responsibilities. Put a coffee and two croissants on my slate, please, César?

CÉSAR: Another game of *ombré* tonight?

BRUN: But not *écarté*, thank you very much! Au revoir!

CÉSAR: Au revoir! (*Brun exits. César goes back over to the bedroom door and tries it again. He yawns and walks over to the terrace door, talking to himself.*) Oh, Marius, you tell me that you're sorry for this woman of yours but you've had all night to say sorry. At nine o'clock in the morning, you ought to be taking pity on your old man. I can hardly keep my eyes open.

César strolls back to the chaise-longue and settles down. He is just dropping off when Honorine enters from the terrace in full sail. She is carrying a man's trouser belt with a large buckle.

HONORINE: César!!

CÉSAR (*jumping up with shock*): What, what?

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HONORINE (*brandishing the belt under his nose*): Just you look at that!

CÉSAR (*looking briefly at it*): Looks a bit like Marius's. (*Honorine bursts into tears. César then panics.*) Oh no! Has he had an accident?

HONORINE (*incensed*): You can bet he's going to have one, the scoundrel! (*She sinks onto a chair, sobbing.*) César, they have to get married, straightaway!

CÉSAR: Dammit, don't cry: just tell me what's happened.

HONORINE (*more to herself*): I couldn't believe it. It was a total surprise. Last night, I went off to Aix, like I do every Wednesday ...

CÉSAR (*as suspicion begins to dawn*): You go to Aix every Wednesday?

HONORINE: To see my sister!

CÉSAR: Ayayaïe!

HONORINE: But, this morning, instead of coming back on the train, like I usually do, I came back with my sister's husband. He was driving in to get the express to Paris. So, of course, I'm here by seven and go home instead of straight to the fish shop. And in the front room, what do you think I see? Two little glasses, a bottle of apricot liqueur and – this belt!

CÉSAR (*who can't help smiling*): Well, I'm damned! I never would have guessed. But, come on, a belt doesn't mean anything just by itself, does it. Now does it?

HONORINE (*blowing her nose noisily*): I tell you, my blood ran cold. I went to Fanny's room, and gently pushed open the door. Oh Mother of God, what have I done to deserve this? My little pigeon asleep beside that man, that brigand, that thief in the night.

CÉSAR: And what had they to say for themselves?

HONORINE: They didn't even see me. Lying there, fast asleep: I felt such shame I crept away without making a noise.

CÉSAR: Marius, Marius! What *have* you done? What have you *done*?

HONORINE: Eighteen years old; that's all César! Eighteen! She'll finish up like her aunt Zoë! Who'd have thought it? Little Miss Goody-Goody. Miss Modesty of Marseilles, making out she was such a child!

CÉSAR: Let's just hope she hasn't made one of them yet! (*He laughs at his own joke.*)

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HONORINE (*indignant*): What do you mean; making jokes! Can't you see I'm all shaken up?

CÉSAR (*putting glasses and bottles up on the bar counter*): Of course you are. So what will you have to drink?

HONORINE (*sobbing*): Brandy. (*She sobs.*) Dear God, what a mess! What a mess!

CÉSAR (*pouring and serving*): Drink up and let's examine the situation. (*She has a few sips.*) Better now?

HONORINE: The situation? It's perfectly simple. Next time I see my daughter, I'll give her such a wallop she'll lose all her good looks, permanently.

CÉSAR: You're surely not going to kill her, just for this!

HONORINE (*furious*): I want to hack her into little pieces!

She grabs the ice-pick on the counter and starts to make for the terrace door. César catches her and holds her back.

CÉSAR: Honorine! For pity's sake, get a grip on yourself.

HONORINE: Let me go! Let me go! (*She collapses and César holds her by the wrists.*) I think I'm losing my mind.

CÉSAR: Come and sit down. Sit down here and take a moment to think about your own situation. That'll calm you down.

HONORINE (*sitting and sobbing*): I haven't got time to think about myself!

CÉSAR: It might just be the right time. If your own mother had taken an ice pick to you twenty-five years ago, when you were only just engaged to your fishmonger ...

HONORINE (*flustered by the recollection*): Oh, César! With you and me, it was completely different. We lived on the same landing and there was only a narrow corridor to cross. And besides, it was me that came to your room. In the present case, it's Marius who ... César! It's not fair of you to bring up such family matters!

CÉSAR: Damn it, Honorine! We'll get them married and in a couple of weeks everything will be sorted. Drink up and calm down. No need to be so upset.

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HONORINE: Your son is a dirty louse, César, taking advantage of my little child. He must have forced himself on her.

CÉSAR: She doesn't seem to have cried very loud for help. Come on, drink up!

HONORINE: You find this funny, do you?

CÉSAR: It's youth, Honorine, youth! That thing we've both lost somewhere, years ago.

HONORINE: You don't have to tell me! But even so!

CÉSAR: It goes so quickly and it never comes back, does it? *(She shakes her head sadly. He puts his hand to his ear.)* Look out, I hear Marius climbing in his bedroom window.

HONORINE: I'd better not catch sight of him, in case I claw his eyes out.

CÉSAR: Keep your claws for gutting fish, Honorine. Leave this to me.

HONORINE: Will you look at the state I'm in? I can't just go out onto the street.

CÉSAR: Right. Slip out through the kitchen. *(He puts his arm round her shoulders and shepherds her to the kitchen exit with solicitude.)* Don't cry any more. We'll get them married off. If you want to dry your eyes, don't use the roller towel. I've just changed it.

They exit and César returns immediately with a breakfast tray and sets the table for two, humming the "Wedding March". He puts the trouser belt into his apron pocket. He hears the key turn in Marius's door and steps behind the bar. Marius enters, hair dishevelled, rubbing the sleep out of his eyes.

MARIUS: Morning, Dad! What time is it?

CÉSAR: Just gone nine. You've finally woken up, then?

MARIUS: I was reading in bed last night and just went on and on. When I finally fell asleep, the sun was rising.

CÉSAR *(jovially)*: If I've told you once, I've told you a dozen times, reading is bad for you. Come to think of it, you're not looking all that well. You're pale as a sheet and your eyes look very heavy.

MARIUS: Really?

CÉSAR: If I hadn't seen you come out of your bedroom, I'd be asking myself where you'd been!

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MARIUS: Did you call me at seven?

CÉSAR: I did. But you just went on sleeping. We could hear your snores in the bar.

MARIUS: But that's impossible!

CÉSAR: What d'you mean, impossible?

MARIUS: Because ... well, because ... I never snore.

CÉSAR: You were snoring so loud the customers were laughing. I wanted to wake you but the door was locked.

MARIUS: Yes. Funny that. I must have done that without thinking.

CÉSAR: You're not a thinker. Right then, let's have breakfast.

The brass band is heard again. After a few bars, it 'marches off' again.

MARIUS: What's the band playing for?

CÉSAR: It's the farewell ceremonies. That ship's sailing today. Panisse made the sails for her. Remember?

MARIUS: The *Malaisie*?

CÉSAR: That's the one. *(He sits himself down and tucks in. Marius walks to the terrace door and looks offstage towards the ship.)* Come on, drink your coffee and have a croissant. Can't have you starving to death on a working day

MARIUS: Yes, yes. *(He comes back to the table and, standing beside César, pours himself a coffee.)* But she's not supposed to be sailing until next Monday.

CÉSAR: Who isn't?

MARIUS: The *Malaisie*.

CÉSAR: What's that to do with us?

MARIUS: Nothing. Nothing at all.

CÉSAR *(looking at his son's midriff)*: Anyone would think you were going to lose your trousers.

MARIUS: I think I'm getting thinner.

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CÉSAR: Too much reading. Go on reading like that and you'll finish up as thin as that ice-pick over there. Why don't you put a belt on?

Marius clutches at his trouser top and César looks away to conceal a smile.

MARIUS: You're right. I'll need to buy one.

Marius picks up his coffee cup and strolls to the terrace door and looks out. Behind him César is laughing. Suddenly, Marius starts back and returns quickly to the table.

MARIUS: Is that Honorine out there?

CÉSAR: Yes, she got back at seven this morning. Her brother-in-law gave her a lift. (*Marius seems very ill at ease. A moment passes while César looks at him.*) You young rascal!

MARIUS: What are you getting at?

CÉSAR (*grinning*): Nothing; nothing at all! Have you lost your appetite?

MARIUS: I'm fine.

CÉSAR: And how are things with your *former* mistress? The one you're not abandoning for fear she does something foolish? Are you still seeing her?

MARIUS: Yes, of course.

CÉSAR: Amazing! And a reader too!

MARIUS: What is all this about?

CÉSAR: Nothing, nothing; you young devil! (*There is a pause while César munches olives.*) Have you told her yet you're going to get married?

MARIUS: Not yet. I've given her to understand, you might say, that some day ...

CÉSAR: Very kind of you towards this lady but, looked at in the round, a bit less than kind to Fanny.

MARIUS: Why d'you say that?

CÉSAR: You're keeping the poor girl dangling! Can't you make your mind up?

MARIUS: I've been thinking really hard about it and, yes, I have decided.

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CÉSAR: Then what's stopping the pair of you telling your parents?

MARIUS: Now you're asking. I don't quite understand, but it's Fanny who keeps wanting to put it off.

CÉSAR: Now why would she be doing that?

MARIUS: I've no idea. When I ask her about it, she just says we have plenty of time.

CÉSAR: Bizarre!

MARIUS: It *is* bizarre. I really don't get it. I mean, last night, for example.

CÉSAR (*feigning surprise*): You saw her last night? When was that then?

MARIUS: After dinner, when I went out. You remember.

CÉSAR: Ah! That was your cinema, was it?

MARIUS (*embarrassed*): As a matter of fact, we went there together.

CÉSAR: So?

MARIUS: Well, at first she was talking all about marriage and planning her new house, like it was all decided.

CÉSAR: A "done deed," as they say.

MARIUS: Exactly – then, all of a sudden, the music seemed to change. She turned to me and said, "Maybe I'm really too young to get married. We'd be better to wait a little while and, anyway, I'm not sure if I really love you enough for that sort of commitment", and so on, and so on.

CÉSAR: And she told you all this after the cinema?

MARIUS: Yes, afterwards.

CÉSAR: Maybe the film put her into a bad mood.

MARIUS: I don't know. I even wonder if she isn't regretting turning down Panisse.

CÉSAR (*laughing uproariously*): Come off it! She doesn't give a damn for the old fool.

MARIUS: So what's got into her?

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CÉSAR (*becoming suddenly stern*): Nothing's got into her! It's your own damned fault!

MARIUS: My fault!

CÉSAR: Listen, Marius: you know nothing about women. I'm going to have to spell it out. Women are smart. You never need to tell them anything: they see everything, they understand everything, and they can guess everything. When she was talking all about marriage, she was waiting to see what your reaction would be and *you*, without even realising it, must have let your face fall a good ten centimetres. *So*, seeing that look on your face, she beats a retreat and says all these things about being too young, and so on. But as sure as I sit here, if you told her the wedding was booked for tomorrow morning, she'd be waiting at the church before the verger had the doors open.

MARIUS: You might be right.

CÉSAR: No 'might', dammit. I *am* right.

MARIUS: I'll go and talk to her.

CÉSAR: Good lad! And, listen to me, when you see her, talk about taking action *now*. Now, get off and speak to her as soon as possible. You've got to remember the story of her aunt Zoë, who wasn't really any worse than anyone else.

MARIUS: What's Zoë got to do with this and, anyway, what exactly did happen to Zoë?

CÉSAR: You don't know, eh? Well, Zoë was a pretty little girl, always cheerful, and never a naughty thought in her head. She worked in the match factory. I used to see her coming past on her way to work, such a picture in her little straw hat. All the men used to look at her. But she was so sensible and well-behaved too. Then, one day, boom, along comes this Spanish sailor. *She* thought they were going to get married and settle down here in Marseilles, all that tralala. Well, to put it politely, she let him have something on account and next thing she knew he was gone.

MARIUS: He abandoned her?

CÉSAR: Totally! So then, Zoë ... (*He throws his arms up in the air.*) Well, what can you expect? When a woman's deceived she feels she can never love any man after that. When Zoë lost her honour, she felt she hadn't anything else left to lose. For women, honour's like a match: use it once then throw it away!

MARIUS: Why are you telling me all this?

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CÉSAR (*sternly*): To make sure you understand where Fanny and her family are concerned, you're not to play games. Do you understand me?

MARIUS: Of course I understand you.

CÉSAR: Let's be clear: I'm not casting aspersions about Fanny's virtue. I've seen nothing; I know nothing. But if, between the two of you, there have been any conversations, any caresses even – well, all I can say is the sooner you get married the better. Trust me.

MARIUS (*hanging his head*): I'll talk to her, I promise.

CÉSAR: You do that; and don't mince words. We don't want you compared with that sailor of Zoë's. (*César stands up, looks down gravely at Marius, then heads for the kitchen exit before pausing. Drawing the trouser belt out of his apron pocket, he turns round to Marius.*) Here, catch! (*He tosses the belt onto the table.*)

César makes a dignified exit without looking back again while a puzzled Marius looks at the belt. Fanny then appears at the terrace entrance. Marius seems to make his mind up. He picks the belt up and goes towards her.

MARIUS: Fanny, take over for a moment, please. I'll tell you all about it when I get back but I have to go out and do something. The old man's sleeping. Ten minutes, no longer.

FANNY: Okay-dokay! I'll be waiting for you.

She seems very content. He dashes off. After a moment or two, Panisse enters and stands at the door for a while, looking out, then comes into the bar.

PANISSE: Where's *he* off to?

FANNY: Don't know!

PANISSE (*taking a deep breath*): Right then! Listen, I've got something to tell you; something serious and not all that easy to say.

FANNY: What's this about then?

PANISSE: About him. The problem is you'll think it's jealousy making me tell you when it's the very opposite. It's in his interest, and yours, of course.

FANNY: Well then?

PANISSE: You know he has this great urge to sail away?

FANNY: Oh that! That's all behind him now and ...

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PANISSE: Can you be so sure?

FANNY: He's more or less sworn to me.

PANISSE (*surprised*): So much the better, but, all the same, keep an eye on him. Especially this morning!

FANNY: What's special about this morning?

PANISSE: Because the *Malaisie* is sailing any moment.

FANNY: That's right. I saw everybody on the quay and the band playing; but, you know, that actually cheered me up because that was the only ship I was really nervous about.

PANISSE: With good reason.

FANNY: I was wrong, though. He's gone right off the idea.

PANISSE: Well she hasn't actually sailed yet and I'd rather tell you this while there's still time to do something. He's been pestering them for ages and now they've offered him a place. I don't know if he *has* left but, if he wants to, he has the chance right now!

FANNY: Who told you all this?

PANISSE: The second mate of the *Malaisie*. I made new sails for them. Anyway, where is he now?

FANNY: On some errand or other and, what's more, in his shirtsleeves. Maybe he did ask them if he could go but that must have been some time ago and, since then, things have been going rather well between us. No, I'm certain he's not going.

PANISSE: Fine! So much the better!

FANNY: And as for you; you ought to be ashamed; telling tales on a friend.

PANISSE: Fanny! You've really got me wrong. When I heard last week he was planning to ship out, I had a wicked thought or two, and even this morning, I was still tempted; telling myself that I would be the one to benefit if he went. I said to myself, "Fanny will forget him and, who knows, one of these days, I'll get my chance." But when I saw them hoist the Blue Peter and make all their last minute preparations, I decided I had to warn César.

FANNY: No, you mustn't. You mustn't warn *anyone*. It's all stuff and nonsense. You'll only make Marius angry.

The Bosun of the Malaisie appears at the terrace door, dogged by Piquoiseau.

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PANISSE: Well, here's a man who won't be laughing. Bosun!

BOSUN: Monsieur Panisse!

FANNY: Looking for Marius, are you?

BOSUN: Isn't he here?

FANNY: He had to run an errand.

BOSUN: Where to?

FANNY: I don't know.

BOSUN: I've come to say "au revoir". We're casting off within the hour. We're only waiting for the Pilot to come back from taking the *Paul Lecat* out.

FANNY: He said he'd be ten minutes.

BOSUN (*looking at his watch*): Fair enough. If I've time, I'll look in on the way back. Let him know.

He salutes both and makes to leave. César enters, dressed in his suit.

CÉSAR: Bosun! Off today then? Let me offer you the traditional parting toast. Panisse! Fanny! Let's wish them all "bon voyage".

PIQUOISEAU (*humbly*): Me too, César?

CÉSAR: You too, of course. (*César pours glasses of wine as the scene continues.*)

PIQUOISEAU: You see, Bosun. They're wishing me "bon voyage" as well!

CÉSAR: Now then! Even if you were an Admiral, you're long past retirement age.

PIQUOISEAU (*pleading with the Bosun*): But I know all about sailing ships.

CÉSAR: That'll do. Hold your tongue. (*With an air of solemnity*) We're going to drink a farewell toast. Always moving, a farewell toast; leaving behind family, friends and customers; heading into the unknown and even the chance of never returning. But we raise our glasses with a steady hand; the last drink on dry land! You're very good health.

PANISSE (*gesturing at César's smart turn-out*): Just looking at you: you're not by any chance setting sail yourself?

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CÉSAR: I'm not leaving, but I *am* going out. *They're* off to the land of the kangaroo. *I'm* off to a meeting with a bunch of baboons; the Licensed Barkeepers Association. They're going off for three years: me, I'll be back by noon. God protect us both. Good health!

Everyone raises their glasses and drinks the toast.

PIQUOISEAU (*begging*): You don't need to pay me. I don't eat very much and I've all that experience, especially in sailing ships. I've sailed across the Red Sea.

BOSUN: I've told you again and again. I can't take you. Many thanks, César. Au revoir to you all.

Everyone except Piquoiseau returns the salutation.

BOSUN: If I've any time left, I'll look in on the way back.

PANISSE: Very good.

The Bosun leaves and Piquoiseau slumps on the stool at the terrace exit, burying his head in his hands.

CÉSAR: You poor old fool. I can't understand this mad desire to bob up and down on the sea, never eating fresh food and sleeping hanging from the ceiling. You can't pour out a glass without spilling and, worst of all, it's impossible to play pétanque or enjoy a decent game of billiards. It doesn't bear thinking about.

An offstage voice calls out from beyond the terrace entrance.

VOICE (*off-stage*): Are you coming, César?

CÉSAR: (*Calling back.*) Coming! (*Gesturing at Piquoiseau.*) But the sad fact is, once sea-fever gets to them, there's no known cure. Well, I'm off. See you later.

He exits past Piquoiseau who shortly gets up and goes out too.

FANNY: There you are! The Bosun coming to say good-bye proves it. That proves Marius isn't going.

PANISSE: If that's what he was doing! If you're right, I'm very happy to have been wrong. But remember; what I told you was only for your own good. And I'll tell you another thing ...

At this moment Honorine appears from the stall entrance looking cross.

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HONORINE: Are we opening the stall at midday, today? Is that the plan?

PANISSE: Forgive her, Honorine. It's my fault. I was chatting away.

HONORINE: We all know you're a great one for blathering on! All right for you! While you gab away, your workers are getting on with it. But some of us have to work for a living. (*Panisse puts on an expression of mock horror and ostentatiously starts to tiptoe away to the terrace exit.*) Give me the keys. (*Fanny hands her the keys. As soon as Panisse has gone, Honorine hisses at Fanny.*) I came home at seven o'clock this morning. And I opened the door of your bedroom. (*Fanny's hand goes up to her mouth. She says nothing.*) My own daughter! Wouldn't it have been simpler just to get married first, and then the whole world would have been happy about it? Shame on you; and you the spitting image of my sister Zoë who made her mother die of shame.

FANNY: Mum, I can explain.

HONORINE: Don't bother! I don't need "explanations"! Doing it in your own house! Beneath the portrait of your grandmother; poor dear woman. And what about the neighbours? Did you think about that, miss? That dreadful woman next door with one eye stuck in the keyhole and her ear glued to the wall. I only hope this was the first time.

Fanny lowers her head and whispers, "No."

HONORINE: *Every Wednesday?*

Fanny does not reply.

HONORINE: Well that's all I needed to hear! You can go and tell Marius: he has to ask to marry you today, or else. He wants to see you in bed, does he? Well the price for that is marriage. Off to the church and the town hall at the double! And if he doesn't want you, then hard luck. You'll go straight round and accept Panisse. Once you're married, you can do what you like, but at least you'll have saved the family honour! And if that doesn't suit you then don't bother coming home. (*She goes towards the stall exit and turns there to look back. Fanny runs towards her but Honorine hold up her hand, wagging her finger and shaking her head.*) No, I won't kiss you. Get into the cellar and fetch the oyster baskets, and remember to sort through them down there and chuck out the dead ones so you're not doing it in full view of the public. Appearances are everything, in sea food just as in life! (*Fanny goes off to the kitchen while Honorine goes to the terrace door and looks out.*) And here comes the young goat himself!

Honorine exits quickly by the stall and Marius enters from the terrace. He goes to the bar and tidies up the counter top. A ship's siren sounds in the distance. He looks up and then shrugs. The Bosun appears in the terrace doorway, still dogged by Piquoiseau.

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BOSUN: Well then?

MARIUS: I can't do it; sorry, I just can't. I came looking for you just now to tell you ... and then ...

BOSUN: And then you didn't have the guts; that's the long and short of it! And to think of all the good things I said about you to the First Mate: that you were mad keen to go to sea; that your mother was the sister of a Breton sailor; that we were more or less cousins. Well, I'm going to hear all about my so-called cousin from here to the South Pacific!

MARIUS: I'm sorry for all that. Believe me: I needed more courage to make myself stay than to just come away with you.

BOSUN: It's that cockle-girl, isn't it?

MARIUS: Yes. We have to get married. This month.

BOSUN: You've let yourself be caught in the oldest man-trap of all. Right: as far as you're concerned, that's the end of ships. Believe me.

MARIUS: No! Going off today for three whole years; I just didn't have the right. But next year perhaps, I can sign up.

BOSUN: In a fishing boat maybe, getting together the bits and pieces for a Sunday bouillabaisse at the beach house. Well so what: that's none of my business now. We're stopping off at Toulon to take on the equipment, so I'll get someone to fill your place there. For a trip like this, they'll be queuing up.

PIQUOISEAU: Rangoon, Panang, Jakarta, New Caledonia ...

MARIUS: You're right. The chance may never come again. That's just my hard luck.

BOSUN: Right then, good bye. I won't send you any postcards. They'd just upset you.

MARIUS: No more than I feel right now, I can tell you.

BOSUN: Well. If you change your mind, you've only to walk up the gangway. But you really had better make it snappy!

He leaves, dogged by Piquoiseau still begging him for a berth. Fanny comes in from the kitchen with a pannier. She looks very sombre.

FANNY: Marius, I wasn't listening, but I heard.

MARIUS: Then you heard I kept my word. The ship's going. I had my place promised but I'm still here; washing glasses and polishing the counter.

FANNY: It proves you're an honest man. Well, I'm an honest woman. I'm not a man-trap ... If you want to, Marius, you're free to go.

MARIUS: Take care what you're saying. Now you *are* setting a trap. You want to see what I'm going to do. Right, now you can see. I'm stopping here with you.

FANNY: I've been doing an awful lot of thinking too. I've been watching you for a whole month now, and I can see you're already regretting what's happened between us, even though you've decided to stay and make good the damage. But you're not responsible for *anything*, Marius. The fault's all mine. I'll take the responsibility.

MARIUS: Do you imagine I don't love you, when I've made such a sacrifice for you?

FANNY: I believe you love me – in your own way. But I'm beginning to realise the ropes that tie you to that ship and, well, I just don't have the strength to hold you, against your will. You need to be *given* your liberty, and it's down to me to give it you. You really do prefer the sea to me, so you'd better go and get married to it. You and I can sort *ourselves* out later, sometime ...

MARIUS: Is that how much you love me?

FANNY: Yes; I love you that much.

MARIUS: But what about you, for the next three years? What are *you* going to do?

FANNY: I've told you. Wait for you. We agreed you could go off to sea *after* we were married. But I've been thinking about it. *Before* is better, because you might even come back cured of it. Marriage is a serious business. I don't want to risk making us both miserable.

MARIUS (*finding it hard to conceal his rising hopes*): Fanny, I ... I don't want to believe you're serious.

FANNY: Because it's too good to be true? It's not good but it *is* true. Get your duffle bag.

MARIUS: Fanny, take care not to say that, even once more!

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Piquoiseau has been creeping in from the terrace, little by little, and now shouts out.

PIQUOISEAU: She's said it! I heard her! (*He runs to the Marius's bedroom door, opens it and fetches out the duffle bag.*) Get a move on! The pilot's on his way already.

MARIUS: If I go, you'll soon forget me.

FANNY: That's what you'd like to think, because you'll forget me first. There's too much to see out there without me.

PIQUOISEAU: Aden, Bombay, Rangoon, Padang ...

FANNY: New Caledonia, the South Pacific. That ship's going to sail without you and you'll regret it for the rest of your life. What's the matter? Don't you really want to go now?

MARIUS: Of course I want to go! But you seem to be so relaxed now about my going.

FANNY: What do you want me to do then; weep and wail; throw myself on you to keep you from leaving?

MARIUS: No; I don't want that, but that's what I'm afraid of.

FANNY: Well don't be! You can see how sensible I am. Finally, I really understand you.

MARIUS (*suddenly*): This is your mother's idea, isn't it? She's just waiting until I leave so she can sell you to Panisse!

FANNY: If you need a reason, that'll do. It's true he asked me again, only this morning.

MARIUS: And what did you tell him?

FANNY: I didn't say "yes".

MARIUS: But you didn't say "no".

FANNY: One never knows what might happen.

MARIUS: So *that's* the reason for your generosity! I should have figured it out sooner.

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FANNY: It's not just for me, Marius. There's such a thing as family interests. One has to think about the future. My mother isn't getting any younger. And love doesn't last all life long, does it? There are more important things to think about.

MARIUS: Like money!

FANNY: Like money ... Like the sea.

MARIUS: Everyone goes for what they love best. You can go and marry Panisse's money if you want; but me, I'm free now, so I'll marry the sea. That's what's best for both of us!

FANNY: Yes; that's what's best; but if you really did love me, even for a minute, let me give you a farewell embrace, for the sake of friendship.

She walks towards him, arms outspread, but the siren of the Malaisie sounds clearly.

MARIUS: They're leaving!

Without a backward look, he dashes out of the terrace door with his bag. Fanny sinks onto a chair and buries her head in her arms on the table. After a moment, Panisse running comes in.

PANISSE: You've let him go! But I know someone who can hold on to him more tightly. (*He exits via the kitchen door, calling out.*) César! César! Come quickly!

After a moment or two Marius reappears, crestfallen, at the door of the bar, followed by Piquoiseau. Fanny, overwhelmed, goes towards him. Panisse returns disconsolate from the kitchen.

FANNY: You're not going?

MARIUS: I can't. My father's standing at the foot of the gangway. What can I do? They're already casting off.

PIQUOISEAU (*who is watching out of the door*): César's coming this way! He's well away from the gangway now.

FANNY: Go on, quick. Climb out of your bedroom window, and run like you were coming to see *me*. Go round by the Place Lenche. I'll try and keep him here. (*He seems about to protest.*) Marius! Don't say a word. Just go. (*She pushes him hard towards the bedroom door and he exits.*)

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Panisse and she look hard at each other for a moment and then he runs to the bar door. As he gets there, César arrives and enters.

PANISSE: César! Quick! Marius is off to the *Malaisie*. You need to catch him.

Fanny shoves herself between the two men and pushes Panisse back, laughing.

FANNY: You've got it all wrong. He's gone to the station to fetch my panniers.

CÉSAR (*looking patronisingly at Panisse*): What's biting you, then?

PANISSE: Things are going on here that are just too painful to look at. Open your eyes and you'll see.

CÉSAR: Daft old buffer! I've seen what's going on for a long time. Leave her alone. Good morning Fanny. How pretty you look this morning, my little pigeon. But anyone would think you'd been crying.

Panisse sits at the table, his eyes cast down, until he speaks again later.

FANNY (*all smiles*): Perhaps.

CÉSAR: Has Marius spoken to you?

FANNY: Yes.

CÉSAR: And it's all agreed?

FANNY: Yes.

CÉSAR (*holding her by the shoulders*): Wonderful! You can't imagine how happy that makes me. Dear little Fanny! Dear girl! (*He holds her and strokes her hair.*) I'm delighted to have a daughter-in-law as lovely as you.

FANNY: There are always lovelier ones!

CÉSAR: What's that? Do you know any of them? Go and look for them and they can take your place then! (*Fanny is looking all the time towards the bar door.*) What are you looking at? Are you waiting for Marius? You're not expecting him to stop off for lunch on the way home, are you? He'll be here in a moment.

FANNY: Of course he will.

CÉSAR: And now I'm going to tell you something. Come. (*He walks her over to the chaise-longue and sits her down. He sits beside her and talks tenderly.*) Can you imagine how long I've been thinking about it, this marriage?

FANNY: A couple of months, maybe?

CÉSAR: More like eleven years. I say eleven: it's nearer fourteen. You weren't any taller than a flower pot! One night, in the bar, his mother picked you up and said to you, "You're going to marry Marius, aren't you Fanny?" The whole bar was laughing but you didn't. You opened your lovely eyes and said, "Yes." And that's when I realised it too. Come on, little Fanny. Let's go for a stroll down to the port.

There is a single blast of the Malaisie's siren.

FANNY: But what about customers?

CÉSAR: Customers! Let them wait! Come on. Let's go and watch the *Malaisie* sailing. Come along, daughter-in-law.

FANNY: I'd rather stay here, with you, and talk about things, you know?

CÉSAR: Like what?

FANNY: Like finding a place to live.

CÉSAR: You'll be coming to live here! Do you think I could manage here on my own? Never! I'll admit it now. There are times when I bawl him out, but if I had to live six months without him, I think I'd go crazy. I've got plans all worked out. First of all ... (*Addressing Panisse*) I know you're interested but just turn your big ears the other way. (*To Fanny*) First, I'll move into Marius's room and you two can have mine ...

Another loud siren blast makes them all look up.

PANISSE (*in despair*): That's it. They're sailing.

CÉSAR (*full of joie de vivre*): Bon voyage! God bless her and all who sail in her. (*Fanny cries out; hand on heart.*) Yes, my room is much bigger and you can turn it into a something really pretty, just the way you want it. How about that?

FANNY: Yes. When you've a place of your own, it's easier to arrange it all to suit yourself.

MARIUS by Marcel Pagnol, a play in four acts, translated and adapted with the approval of the Pagnol Estate. © Michael Johnston: September 2010

CÉSAR: And then, right beside it, there's little room that I use just for storage. You know what we can put in there? (*Tenderly*) A little bed; a tiny little bed.

FANNY: Yes. Very little ... very little.

Suddenly, all the sirens in the harbour sound, one after another, as the ships mark the sailing of the great three-master. Pale as death, Fanny folds her arms across her chest, closes her eyes and falls forward. César catches her.

CÉSAR: Fanny, my little Fanny, what's the matter. Panisse! Get me some rum, quick. Fanny, Fanny!

Panisse grabs a bottle from the bar and the two men form a tragic tableau round Fanny. Piquoiseau appears in the doorway with a dreamy look on his face and sits on his stool.

PIQUOISEAU (*speaking sadly and quietly as the lights go down*): Suez, Aden, Bombay, Madras, Colombo, Malabar, Penang, Singapore ...

END